

OFFICIAL PROCEEDINGS
KEWEENAW COUNTY COMMISSIONERS
SPECIAL MEETING
June 30, 2025

The special meeting of the Keweenaw County Board of Commissioners was held on June 30, 2025, at 9:30 a.m. at the Courthouse, Eagle River, MI, opened with the pledge of allegiance.

The special meeting notice is below:

The primary purpose of the meeting is to reconsider the Board of Commissioner's 6/18/25 denial of a FOIA appeal. The denied appeal sought reversal of the Clerk's denial of a FOIA request for the following: "Any death records compiled or created related to the deaths of two individuals who were discovered at Isle Royale National Park on June 8."

The names and birthdates of the deceased individuals are known to the Keweenaw County Medical Investigator who pronounced the individuals to be deceased and who is presumed to have a written record of same. The names and birthdates of the deceased individuals will also be known within the Clerk's Office upon the filing of their death certificates.

The primary issue for consideration at the meeting will be whether the names and birthdates should be withheld on the grounds that release of the information might Interfere with law enforcement proceedings.

The Board may also consider whether release of the personal cell phone numbers of County employees (as requested by other individuals) would constitute a clearly unwarranted invasion of privacy and whether information already obtained by a single reporter from the Keweenaw County Medical Examiner and other sources should be confirmed for the benefit of all news media.

Commissioners present: Randy Eckloff, Bob DeMarois, Mike LaMotte, Del Rajala and Don Piche.

The special meeting was posted on the door of the Courthouse and on the Website.

Motion by Rajala supported by DeMarois and unanimously carried to approve the agenda as submitted.

Time was allowed for public comment. There was none.

Chuck Miller, County Attorney spoke extensively regarding the Freedom of Information Act and what some of the exemptions are that could potentially relate to this incident. The FBI asked that the names not be released because it "could" hamper the investigation of the deaths. The comment saying that the release of information "could" hamper vs "would" hamper was a politely worded comment and there were no protected orders filed with any court. The FBI and NPS were told that there was going to be a special meeting on Monday to reconsider the FOIA appeal and the county did not hear anything from either of them. The county also reached out to see if they were planning to release any information and the county was told that there was no plan in the near future. Attorney Miller covered many other options regarding exemptions but all in all, there were really no exemptions that would cover not allowing the release of names/death certificates once available in the Clerk's office.

Motion by Rajala supported by Eckloff and unanimously carried to release the names of the deceased on Isle Royale once available but to redact the birthdates and social security numbers.

Time was allowed for public comment and there was none.

There being no further business motion by Rajala to adjourn at 9:58 a.m. Meeting adjourned sine die.

Donald Piche, Chairman

Julie A. Carlson, Clerk