

PUBLIC HEARING
KEWEENAW COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
DECEMBER 17, 2025

A public hearing was held for the 2026 budget at 6:15 p.m. at the Courthouse in Eagle River, MI. The hearing was for the 2026 General Fund and Special Fund budgets.

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

Treasurer stated that there were no budget amendments, nothing changed. The numbers were the same as they were when previously presented to the board.

There was no public comment.

Motion by Rajala supported by Eckloff and unanimously carried to close the public hearing at 6:20 p.m.

OFFICIAL PROCEEDINGS
KEWEENAW COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
REGULAR MEETING
DECEMBER 17, 2025

The regular meeting of the Keweenaw County Board of Commissioners held on December 17, 2025, began at 6:30 p.m., at the Courthouse in Eagle River, MI following the public hearing. The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

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

Commissioner's present: Bob DeMarois, Randy Eckloff, Mike LaMotte, Don Piche, Del Rajala.

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

Motion by DeMarois supported by Eckloff and unanimously carried to approve the minutes from November 19, 2025 regular monthly meeting, the November 19, 2025 budget meeting and the December 5, 2025 special meeting as written.

The following reports were available: Treasurer, Sheriff, Maintenance and Mine Inspector.

Time was allowed for public comment.

Erik Campbell requested his comments be added to the minutes of this meeting. (See Attached)

The Board members gave reports on their respective committee meetings.

Motion by Edkloff supported by Rajala to pay the approved and audited bills in the following amounts: General Fund=\$182,627.45, Construction Codes Fund=\$2,172.20 911 Fund=\$9,414.53, Houghton County MCF Fund=\$1,551.24, Veteran Affairs Fund=\$615.60, Delinquent Tax Revolving Fund=\$222.50, Sewage Lagoon Fund=\$550.00. Board polled. Ayes: DeMarois, Rajala, Eckloff, LaMotte, Piche. Nays: None.

Health Insurance issues were still being worked on. Some bills have been written off.

The generator was put out to bid and bids were due at 4 pm on 12/17/2025.

LAB Electric LLC.: \$58,980.00

Keweenaw Power & Lite: \$42,900.00

Motion by Rajala supported by LaMotte and unanimously carried to table approving the generator bids.

Motion by LaMotte supported by DeMarois and unanimously carried to adopt the following budgets for 2026: General Fund, Friend of the Court, Courthouse Improvements, Building Codes, Register of Deeds Automation, Indigent Defense Fund, 911 Fund, Concealed Pistol Licensing, Sheriffs Training, Drug Law Enforcement Fund, Opioid Settlement Fund, Medical Care Facility, Probate Child Care and Juvenile Fund, Veterans Affairs/Veterans Affairs Grant Fund, DTRF, Kermit's Youth Fund, FRF Fund, and the ARPA Fund, Lagoon Fund, Tower Fund.

There were no budget amendments.

Motion by DeMarois supported by Rajala and unanimously carried to authorize the County Treasurer to make budget transfers between accounts and between activities without increasing the total board authorized fund expenditures. This is in accordance with the State's Uniform Budgeting Act.

Motion by Rajala supported by DeMarois and unanimously carried to adopt the following resolution opting out of PA 152. Board polled. Ayes: DeMarois, Rajala, Eckloff, LaMotte, Piche. Nayes: None.

WHEREAS, on September 27, 2011, P.A. 152 of 2011, an act to limit a public employer's expenditures for employee medical benefits plans, became immediately effective; and

WHEREAS, the County Board of Commissioners have reviewed the requirements of that Act; and

WHEREAS, in keeping with the County's established, long-range budgeting practices that actively balance the interests of taxpayers and County employees, and in keeping with the long-established practice of Keweenaw County employees working with the County to defray escalating costs associated with employees' medical benefit plans and having made wage and salary concessions; and

WHEREAS, Section 8 of Act 152 authorizes a local unit of government, defined to include a county government, upon a 2/3 vote of the governing body, to exempt itself from the requirements of the Act for the next succeeding year; and

WHEREAS, by exempting itself under Section 8 of Act 152 for calendar year 2026, Keweenaw County is allowed prudent time to continue making changes over time that yield significant reductions in health care costs in a manner that is fair to both taxpayers and employees; and

WHEREAS, exempting Keweenaw County from Act 152 for calendar year 2026 is equitable considering that Keweenaw County's employees have already demonstrated by their actions a continuing willingness to fairly share in the burden of meeting the significant economic challenges associated with Michigan's long recession; and

NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, that acting pursuant to the authority granted a county under Section 8 of Act 152, the Keweenaw County Board of Commissioners hereby exempts Keweenaw County government from the requirements of P.A. 152 of 2011 for calendar year 2026. (#25-7)

Joe Foster was present to update the Board on the Survey and Remonumentation Grant Program and to present the 2026 grant application in the amount of \$35,315.00. Motion by Eckloff supported by LaMotte and unanimously carried to approve the 2026 grant application.

Motion by DeMarois supported by Eckloff and unanimously carried to reappoint the following:

PLANNING COMMISSION

Reappoint John Parsons

VETERANS AFFAIRS COMMITTEE

Ned Huwatschek

UP 911 Authority

Curt Pennala

Department of Health and Human Services

Frank Ozanich

Motion by Rajala supported by Eckloff and unanimously carried to appoint John Wilhelm to the 911 Committee.

Vacation time for employees was not changed at this time.

Motion by Rajala supported by Eckloff and unanimously carried to table the Computer Security Training.

Motion by Rajala supported by DeMarois and unanimously carried to move forward to help Houghton Township in any way they can, regarding potential consolidation of their Township.

Motion by Rajala supported by Eckloff and unanimously carried to approve the revised Union Contract.

Motion by DeMarois supported by Eckloff and unanimously carried to approve the property/liability insurance and have Piche sign the MMRMA Insurance forms.

Time was allowed for public comment.

There being no further business, motion by Eckloff to adjourn at 7:38 p.m. Meeting adjourned.

Donald Piche, Chairman

Roxanne Billing, Deputy Clerk

My name is Erik Campbell and I live at 6341 Sand Point Rd, Lac La Belle.

After the Board of Commissioners' recent decision to reject the Black Bear, Inc. rezoning request, I am concerned that a building permit was subsequently approved for Resort Service infrastructure located within the same residentially zoned section along Sand Point Road.

While the permit labels the construction as a "driveway turnaround" its design and function serve as an accessory to Black Bear, Inc. Mt. Bohemia bus operations. In zoning practice, infrastructure is evaluated based on the use it serves, not solely by the label applied. The underlying function of this driveway turnaround serves Resort Service operations and is prohibited within a residential community. It raises serious concerns about ethical administration of the zoning ordinance.

The Black Bear Inc. "driveway turnaround" construction undermines the Board of Commissioner's recent rezoning decision. Even if unintended, it creates the perception that legislative determinations can be effectively bypassed through administrative interpretation. That perception is troubling, as it has broader implications for zoning governance and public trust in the process.

Allowing this type of incremental infrastructure approval could set a precedent whereby a denied rezoning is later achieved piece by piece, without the public review and legislative process that zoning is intended to provide.

I also want to emphasize the importance of maintaining transparency and fairness in zoning administration. The sequence of events — the rezoning denial, followed closely by zoning approval of Resort Service "driveway turnaround" — understandably raises questions among residents about consistency, interpretation, and process. Ethical zoning administration depends on the neutral application of standards, respect for legislative intent, and avoidance of even the appearance of preferential treatment.

As you move forward, I respectfully ask the Board to closely monitor zoning and permitting actions related to Sand Point Road and Black Bear, Inc. Residents are looking to the Board for leadership and oversight to ensure that zoning decisions are implemented as intended. I urge you to review this "driveway turnaround" permit and consider whether revocation is appropriate, so that any necessary infrastructure is approved through the proper process and located within an appropriately zoned area.

Thank you. Please add this comment to the minutes of this meeting.

Erik Campbell

