OFFICIAL PROCEEDINGS
KEWEENAW COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
REGULAR MEETING
July 22, 2026

The regular meeting of the Keweenaw County Board of Commissioners was held on July 22, 2026, at 6:30 p.m., at the Courthouse in Eagle River, MI and opened with the Pledge of Allegiance. This meeting was originally scheduled to be on July 15, 2026 but due to air quality, the meeting was postponed until July 22nd.

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

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

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

Motion by DeMarois supported by Eckloff and unanimously carried to approve the June 17, 2026 monthly meeting minutes as written.

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

Pat Coleman and Bob Pokorski asked to present under new business, item b) Approve Master Plan Draft for Public Inspection.

Pete Baril and Roy Manninenen were guests from the Western UP Health Department. They came to the Board requesting an increase in the county appropriation for the Health Department. Normally, the Health Department would send a letter, but they wanted to come in person to speak so that everyone would understand why they were asking for an increase. Appropriations have not kept up with inflation and despite downsizing through attrition, increases are needed. Grant money is a large part of Health Department spending, but grants come with strings attached, unlike county appropriations. There were three options that they requested the county to consider with no decision to be made at this meeting.

Time was allowed for public comment. There was considerable public comment regarding zoning. Public comment ended at approximately 7:35 pm.

Commissioners did their committee meeting reports.

Motion by Eckloff supported by LaMotte to pay the approved and audited bills in the following amounts: General Fund=$182,762.83, Construction Codes Fund=$1,393.78, 911 Fund=$706.44, Child Care Fund=$3,311.57, Houghton County MCF Fund=$1,284.36, Veteran's Affairs=$295.62, FRF Fund=$4,521.55, Courthouse Improvement Fund=$2,595.39 ARPA Fund=$778.51, Kermits Youth Fund=$574.31 Sewage Lagoon Fund=$6,414.16 Board polled. Ayes: DeMarois, Eckloff, LaMotte, Rajala, Piche. Nayes: None. Motion carried.

Motion by Rajala supported by DeMarois and unanimously carried to amend the Board by-laws by adding rule # 20 which will be the following:
The first public comment of the Board meeting,(#9 on the Board agenda), will be for agenda items only. The second public comment of the Board meeting, (#14 on the Board agenda), will be open to any subject. Both public comments will have a 3-minute time limit and people shall state their name and where they are from.

Pat Coleman and Bob Pokorski spoke to the Board regarding the proposed Master Plan. The project began in June of 2025 and after public meetings, a survey and incredible work by the Planning Commission, the Master Plan is ready for public review for 63 days. Motion by Rajala supported by DeMarois and unanimously carried to approve the Master Plan to be released for public review. There is a public hearing tentatively scheduled for September 28, 2026.

Motion by Rajala supported by Eckloff and unanimously carried to approve the Master Plan quarterly report requesting reimbursement in the amount of $22,049.71.

Motion by Rajala supported by LaMotte and unanimously carried to approve the Planning Commission recommendation to approve the rezoning request for Trails End Campground (in Grant Township) from Rural Residential (RRB) to Resort Services (RS2).

Motion by DeMarois supported by LaMotte and unanimously carried to approve the Planning Commission recommendation to approve the rezoning request for East Bluff Bike Park & Campground from (in Grant Township) Rural Residential (RRB) to Resort Services (RS2).

Motion by DeMarois supported by Eckloff and unanimously carried to approve to advertise now for a zoning consultant who will be rewriting the zoning ordinance after the Master Plan is complete. There is a MSHDA grant that should cover this.

Motion by Rajala supported by LaMotte and unanimously carried to approve the Memo of Agreement between Keweenaw County and the Michigan Department of State Police regarding the rights and obligations regarding the designation of the Negaunee Regional Communication Center as the Primary Public Answering Point for Keweenaw County E911 Service District. This is a five-year renewal contract.

Motion by Eckloff supported by DeMarois and unanimously carried to increase the medical death investigator on scene pay from $150 to $200.

Motion by Rajala supported by Eckloff and unanimously carried to approve the following resolution opposing legislation to dissolve the Upper Peninsula Community Mental Health System into a single specialized regional mental health authority:
WHEREAS, the Upper Peninsula Community Mental Health (CMH) and Prepaid Inpatient Health Plan (PIHP) system has historically operated under a decentralized, community-based model intended to preserve local control, responsiveness, and accountability to the residents of each county; and
WHEREAS, Senator McBroom's proposal would require the dissolution and consolidation of all five Upper Peninsula CMHs into a single specialized regional mental health authority, thereby transferring governance and operational authority from local entities to a centralized regional structure; and
WHEREAS, the Keweenaw County Board of Commissioners recognizes and appreciates efforts to improve behavioral health outcomes in the Upper Peninsula, including efforts to expand access to psychiatric inpatient services, the Board finds that the proposed legislation presents substantial governance, policy, and fiscal concerns; and
WHEREAS, the proposed legislation is inconsistent with the longstanding principles of the Michigan Mental Health Code, which has favored decentralized, community-driven CMH systems over centralized institutional models; and
WHEREAS, a single specialized regional authority serving all fifteen Upper Peninsula counties would reduce local responsiveness and community control by removing decision-making authority from locally based CMH programs that understand the distinct geographic, demographic, and service delivery needs of their communities; and
WHEREAS, the proposal would effectively expose counties to expanded and potentially uncapped fiscal liability by eliminating the current statutory framework that defines and limits county financial responsibility, including formula-based protections established under Michigan law; and
WHEREAS, under the proposed structure, counties could become jointly responsible for the financial performance and obligations of a single specialized regional entity without clear statutory limits on deficits, extraordinary costs, capital obligations, or long-term psychiatric inpatient liabilities; and
WHEREAS, the proposed legislation would require the single specialized regional entity to assume responsibility for long-term psychiatric inpatient services, including facility ownership or leasing, staffing, and operations, without clearly identified and sustainable funding parameters; and
WHEREAS, psychiatric inpatient services are capital-intensive and historically underfunded, and any expansion of inpatient capacity must account for workforce constraints, regulatory requirements, and the limitations on the use of Medicaid and opioid settlement funds; and
WHEREAS, the County Board believes that durable improvements in behavioral health services in the Upper Peninsula should be developed through consultation with subject matter experts, local providers, county officials, and community stakeholders in a manner that strengthens services without undermining local governance or long-term sustainability; and
NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the Keweenaw County Board of Commissioners hereby opposes legislation that would dissolve the existing Upper Peninsula Community Mental Health system into a single specialized regional mental health authority; and
BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Keweenaw County Board of Commissioners urges the Michigan Legislature and all relevant policymakers to reject any proposal that removes local control, weakens community responsiveness, or imposes uncertain and potentially unlimited fiscal liability upon counties; and
BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Keweenaw County Board of Commissioners supports collaborative, sustainable, and community-driven approaches to strengthening behavioral health services in the Upper Peninsula, including solutions that address access, workforce, funding, and inpatient capacity without compromising local accountability.
AND BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, to send a copy of this resolution to the Governor of Michigan, the Michigan Senate, the Michigan House of Representatives, Senator Ed McBroom, and other interested parties. **(#26-6)**

Motion by Rajala supported by DeMarois and unanimously carried to approve the request for sealed bids for the replacement of the standby generator for the Courthouse/Sheriff Facility. Complete removal of the existing standby generator and furnishing and installation of a new Generac liquid propane fueled standby generator with automatic transfer switch is required. Bids will be due by Wednesday, August 19, 2026 at 4 pm.

Motion by Rajala supported by LaMotte and unanimously carried to approve the request for sealed bids for the replacement of four boilers for the Courthouse and Sheriff Facility. Complete removal of the existing boilers and furnishing and installation of new Weil-McLain liquid propane fueled cast iron boilers is required. The project also includes removal of the existing hot water heater at the Courthouse and replacement with a properly sized "water maker" (hot water tank) connected to the boiler system. Bids will be due by Wednesday, August 19, 2026 at 4 pm.

Motion by Rajala supported by LaMotte and unanimously carried to approve the Application and Final Payment (#4) for Fenty Contracting Co LLC in the amount of $47,573.74 for the security upgrade project.

Time was allowed for public comment. Again, the comments were predominantly regarding zoning.

There being no further business, motion by Eckloff to adjourn at 8:17 p.m. Meeting adjourned.

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Donald Piche, Chairman Julie A. Carlson, County Clerk