The Marquette County Board of Commissioners met as a Committee of the Whole on Tuesday, April 28, 1998 at 6:00 p.m. in Room 231 of the Henry A. Skewis Annex, Marquette, Michigan.


It was moved by Comm. Arsenault, seconded by Comm. Tuominen, and unanimously carried by voice vote that the minutes of the Committee of the Whole meeting held on April 14, 1998 be approved.

Chairperson Corkin opened the meeting for public comment. None was forthcoming.

It was moved by Comm. Roberts, seconded by Comm. Joseph and unanimously carried by voice vote that the agenda be approved with the following late addition: Item 9) Freedom on Information Act Policy.

It was moved by Comm. Roberts, seconded by Comm. Arsenault and unanimously carried by voice vote that Claims and Accounts for the period April 9, 1998 through April 23, 1998, in the amount of $994,751.47 be approved.

The Committee considered a proposal from the Family Independence Agency Board and the Marquette County Health Department Dental Clinic Advisory Board regarding Indigent Adult Dental Services. Dr. Randall M. Johnson, Health Department Director, was present to discuss the proposal and answer questions.

The FIA Board and the Dental Clinic Advisory Board met on April 14, 1998 and established four principals which constitutes their recommendation to the Marquette County Board of Commissioners for initiating an Indigent Adult Dental Care Program:

1. All the dollars formally allocated for the Regional County Hospitalization (RCH) Program be shifted to the adult indigent health care needs. For 1998 this will include all but $1 of remaining funds from the RCH Program.

2. These monies should be utilized for delivery of direct adult dental services.

3. A pilot program be initiated at the Marquette County Medical Care Facility whereby dental services would be provided to those residents. An assessment will be the initial step in determining and prioritizing needs, as well as determining how best to provide for identified needs.

4. The Dental Clinic Advisory Board structure will be revised to reflect representation of adults.

Dr. Johnson further explained that the funds for the Indigent Adult Dental Care Program will be separated for accounting purposes, and the Indigent Adult Dental Care Program must be reviewed and approved annually. The program may be expanded to other nursing homes and senior centers after the assessment.

It was moved by Comm. Roberts, seconded by Comm. Arsenault, and unanimously carried by voice vote, that the Committee of the Whole recommend the County Board approve of the Marquette County Indigent Adult Dental Care Plan.

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The Committee considered the acquisition of the former National Weather Service Building. Hal Pawley, Airport Manager, was present to discuss the acquisition and answer questions.

In 1977 the County granted a deed of easement to the National Weather Service (NWS) for construction of a Weather Observation and Forecast Office at the Airport. The agreement provided that upon discontinuance of use of that weather station, the easement would be terminated and the building either removed or turned over to the County. The NWS has constructed a new weather stations at the Airport and terminated use of the former one. The Airport Board has informed the NWS its desire to have the building transferred back to the County. The building is cross shaped, with a north south portion 48 x 27, and an east west portion 27 x 20. The building is in good condition and would be suitable for use as administrative space or a small commercial building.

Hal Pawley further explained that two years ago the Airport had people interested in renting the building but no one is seeking it at this time. The County should acquire the former NWS building in order to control all properties leading up to the sale of the present Airport.

It was moved by Comm. Arsenault, seconded by Comm. Tuominen, and unanimously carried by voice vote, that the Committee of the Whole recommend the County Board approve of the surrender by the NWS of the easement for the property and transfer ownership of the building to Marquette County, and authorize the Chairperson to execute the release of easement and transfer documents.

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Steve Powers, County Administrator, provided an update on the KI Sawyer Railroad Spur. The project involves the elimination of the Freedom Boulevard Railroad Crossing and the plan includes Category A MDOT funding, rail safety dollars from the State of Michigan, and potentially funds from CDBG. If CDBG funds are not available the Road Commission may proceed with the project as part of the Bridge Deck Project which is already underway and funded in the amount of $469,000.

Mr. Powers noted that the project situation seems to be changing weekly and he will provide another update at the next Board meeting.

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The Committee considered Freedom of Information Policy #105.14 as presented by Harley Andrews, Chief Civil Counsel. Last year because of legislative changes Civil Counsel Harley Andrews was designated as the FOIA Coordinator. The FOIA legislation also provides that a unit of government should have a written FOIA policy. Marquette County previously never had such a policy so this is what is before the Committee for its consideration.

The policy provides for various departments to have limited authority in responding to FOIA requests, an appeal process, and establishing appropriate fees related to the processing of FOIA requests. Civil Counsel Andrews also provided a Freedom of Information Act Request and Response forms.

It was moved by Comm. Roberts, seconded by Comm. Joseph, and unanimously carried by voice vote, that the Committee of the Whole recommend the County Board adopt the Freedom of Information Act Policy #105.14.

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Chairperson Corkin opened the meeting for public comment.

Steve Bailey, City of Negaunee, was present and commented on the JBF report that was presented last week. The 569 jobs presently at Sawyer is approximately 72% of the previous 780 civilian jobs which is very admirable and compares favorably to other bases around the Country. Mr. Bailey contended that the goal of 2000 jobs by the year 2000 is not likely to be reached. It would be 250% of the jobs that were previously at Sawyer and it is not a realistic goal.

Mr. Bailey also contended that the current leases in effect at the Airport are being subsidized by the County at the rate of $160,000 a year and with the subsidy at the present Airport this amounts to approximately $460,000 a year, despite the Air Force Base Conversion Authority spending millions of dollars. This year it will cost approximately $3,047,000 to operate KI Sawyer and in the year 2002 it will be over $4 million. In 2003 when the Air Force completely pulls out these funds will have to come from somewhere in the County budget.
Mr. Bailey questioned whether the County Board could actually afford it. If Sawyer cannot generate enough revenues then the County will need a millage, which would be unlikely to pass because people don’t want to provide welfare for AMR, Red Fox Woods, etc. If the County Board doesn’t have the funds to operate the Airport in 2003 then we are heading towards a potential disaster. Mr. Bailey suggests that the County Board stop, look at its options and hold meetings with the public before plunging over a cliff.

Art Ogness, City of Ishpeming, was present and noted he came to the County Board over a month ago with an experimental aircraft facility project proposal which would provide for Airport related jobs but has heard nothing yet from the County Board.

Mr. Ogness noted that a February 12, 1998 newspaper article indicated one of the main reasons to move the Airport to Sawyer was for job retention and creation. The data in the JBF report indicated it has cost the taxpayers approximately $20,000 per job created. For every dollar earned $1.80 is spent and the additional funding comes from the taxpayers.

Mr. Ogness contended that this type of activity is really welfare and there is no reason to believe that Sawyer will be managed better than the present Airport which has always been subsidized. We cannot continue to pay for this folly.

Mr. Ogness believes he speaks for all taxpayers and senior citizens who cannot leave the area and recommends that the County Board first stop the spending of dollars at Sawyer and destroying the present Airport, then establish an airport authority that will operate in the black. If Commissioners don’t heed this recommendation they will be replaced in the upcoming election.

There being no further public comment Chairperson Corkin closed this portion of the meeting.

Chairperson Corkin noted that the figures presented during public comment by Mr. Bailey are not true. The JBF report showed that with some minor adjustments in a few more years Sawyer will be generating enough revenues to be self supporting. There will be no millage required of the taxpayers. Chairperson Corkin also noted that Mr. Bailey is presently the Treasurer of the Negaunee Public School Board which a recent newspaper article shows that the Negaunee Schools are broke.

Comm. Arsenault also disputed the figures being presented during public comment. The truth is that the $160,000 loss at Sawyer is without the subsidy. This cost does not include the $350,000 the County pays annually for the present Airport. Once the present Airport closes there will be approximately a $190,000 surplus. Based on these present figures in 10 years that will be an additional $2 million.

Comm. Arsenault noted that the Business Plan for Sawyer shows that it will be millions of dollars in the black. The funds provided by AFBC include $500,000 for fire protection and $350,000 for police protection. Their budget should not be compared to the County’s budget. It will not cost $850,000 per year for police and fire protection at Sawyer.

Comm. Arsenault also noted that the SEV at Sawyer is up approximately $13 million. The 167 AMR jobs were going to leave this County but by moving AMR to Sawyer these jobs were retained. AMR now has in excess of 200 employee.

Comm. Chikak agreed that the AMR jobs were retained in Marquette County but contended that even though AMR said they were going to move to Texas they couldn’t because their mechanics would not move. So AMR was caught in a difficult position and would not have been able to move as they threatened.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 6:50 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

David J. Roberts
Marquette County Clerk
MARQUETTE COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE
Tuesday, April 28, 1998, 6:00 p.m.
Room 231, Henry A. Skewis Annex, Marquette, MI 49855

1. ROLL CALL.
3. PUBLIC COMMENT.
4. APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA.
5. Review of Claims and Accounts.
6. Marquette County Indigent Adult Dental Care Plan.
7. Acquisition of Former National Weather Service Building.
8. Sawyer Rail Spur Update (No Packet Materials).
9. 
10. 
11. 
12. PUBLIC COMMENT.
13. ANNOUNCEMENTS.
14. ADJOURNMENT.