The Marquette County Board of Commissioners met as a Committee of the Whole on Tuesday, March 26, 1996 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. Joseph, and unanimously carried by voice vote that the minutes of the Committee of the Whole meeting held on March 12, 1996 be approved.

Chairperson Corkin opened the meeting for public comment.

Rebecca Zhulkie, Ishpeming, Michigan, employed at the Marquette County Health Department as a Dental Hygienist Educator. Members of AFSCME group are concerned about negotiations and wish to speak directly to the County Board. The Health Department Union has 55 members of which 21 are professional staff and 34 support staff. They feel the Board of Health and its management have been unresponsive to their concerns. They have met 13 times since October 23rd of 1995. A major stumbling block in negotiations is wage equity for the professional staff. Management has proposed an across the board raise of 3.84%, however, the Health Department Professional Staff is 13% below the labor market average. It appears equity is not possible and management now proposes to do a new classification/compensation study. The Michigan Nurses Association (MNA) a while back received a 13% wage increase in their contract because the Health Department recognized they were underpaid. The matter was taken care of. Ms. Zhulkie believes the County Board has been given the wrong information and Health Department Employees want to set the record straight. There is a mediation meeting on Monday, April 1, 1996. Ms. Zhulkie thanked the County Board for taking the time to listen.

Sue Rader, of 155 S. Marigold, Ishpeming Township, has worked for 13 years at the Health Department. Health Department employees are not sure what information the County Board has received but strongly support the wage equity issue.

Larry Hill, Professional Class 6, an Environmental Health Specialist and has worked for the Health Department for 21 years. In 1986 his salary was red lined for eight years. He received no raises during this time but now labor market information shows he is 13% below average in the very same Counties that Morley surveyed. Morley was supposed to be a tool to base fair and equitable wages upon.

Carol Anzalone has worked for seven years at the Health Department as a secretary. She contended that a 10 year professional person left the Health Department to work elsewhere because of higher wages. Health Department support staff is in favor of the wage equity issue.

Jim Harrington, Health Education Department reviewed a Health negotiation worksheet which was distributed to Commissioners. The light type denotes management figures and the bold type denoted the AFSCME figures. He pointed out a number of discrepancies as summarized at the bottom that the Health Department total wage and compensation package which amounts to 3.8% for 1996, 4.75% for 1997 and 4.25% for 1998, which is a total three year package of 12.8% and not the 19.75% that is being touted by the Management.

Brenda Matta, Ishpeming, has worked 8-1/2 years with the Health Department. The recent agreement to provide the Health Department autonomy and implement an incentive plan is being met with skepticism. An Incentive Plan is supposed to improve employee morale and work quality but the compensation must also be fair. She questioned whether Staff seriously thinks that Health Department employees will work for less for a whole year in order to receive token incentives at the end of the year.

Chairperson Corkin pointed out that the County Board does not intend to negotiate labor contracts at a public meeting, however, the County Board desires to be fair and will pass this information along to the Health Department.
There being no further public comment, Chairperson Corkin closed this portion of the meeting.

It was moved by Comm. Seppanen, seconded by Comm. Arsenault and unanimously carried by voice vote that the agenda be approved with the following additions: Item 8a) Powell Township Request for Assistance with Tax Litigation by the Huron Mountain Club, Item 14) Update on the EDC Community Development Block Grant, and Item 14a) A Resolution of Concern regarding the EDC from Comm. Seppanen.

It was moved by Comm. Rapport, seconded by Comm. Seppanen and unanimously carried by voice vote that Claims and Accounts for the period March 8, 1996, through March 21, 1996 in the amount of $952,720.92 be approved.

The Committee considered a status report on the Renaissance Study, materials distributed by David Gillis, CUPPAD Regional Commission. Mr. Gillis was present and explained that House Bill 688 to enable the creation Renaissance Zones has passed the House Urban Affairs Committee. There are 17 other Bills required to modify various taxes that are stuck in the taxation committee. A public meeting is planned for May 29th in Ironwood by the Michigan Jobs Commission to answer questions about the Renaissance Zone application process. Applications will be due probably in August so it appears there will be adequate time for CUPPAD to complete the study.

Mr. Gillis reported that the Renaissance Zone Committee met five times and he presented an overview of their work so far. On the revenue side all K.I. Sawyer buildings were classified into five categories, industrial 46%, office 19.4%, commercial 17.9%, dorm 9.4% and warehouse 7.3%, with a total square footage of 2,519,900. The estimated value of these buildings is approximately $45 million.

Girard Markey, Equalization Director, was present and helped CUPPAD arrive at the $45 million appraisal figure, but pointed out that potentially the sale value of this property and the rate of absorption for 2.5 million square feet of space will lower the overall value. It may even affect the value of similar space throughout the whole County.

Mr. Gillis further reported that the service side of the study is more difficult to approach. They are attempting to estimate the cost required after the Caretaker Agreement expires for such services as police, snow plowing, and utilities. The time frame for the study provides that next month there will be a preliminary report available for reaction from various agencies.

Commissioners pointed out that when the Renaissance Zone Study claims no cost for a particular service, that really means no cost to K.I. Sawyer, however, the service is a cost to someone, most likely the County or another local unit of government. What is needed in the study is true cost.

Chairperson Corkin thanked Mr. Gillis and CUPPAD for taking the project on regardless if the Renaissance Zone Legislation comes to be. The information this study provides will be very valuable.

It was moved by Comm. Seppanen, seconded by Comm. Joseph and unanimously carried to place the communication on file.

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The Committee considered a request from Probate Judge, Michael J. Anderegg, to continue the Employment Skills Initiative Program through the Juvenile Division of Probate Court. Judge Anderegg was present and explained that the Employment Skills Initiative Program provides education and skills training with work related experience to youth at risk. The major source of funding for this program was a Kellogg Grant as a component of the County Employment Programs Department.
The Kellogg Grant commenced on December 1, 1994, with $121,895 allocated to the first year of the grant. We are currently in the second-year of the grant funding by Kellogg in the amount of $94,794. In the third year Kellogg funding will be approximately $53,000. In discussions with Bob Taylor, Employment Skills Initiative Staff, and Barry Sullivan, Juvenile Division, it is possible that this program could be continued for the remaining two years if the County Board would authorize the transfer of the Employment Skills Initiative to the Juvenile Division. The Employment Programs has an estimated fund balance of +$28,000 and revenue has also been received in the amount of $26,000 from other sources as a result of the Employment Skills Initiative Program. Bob Taylor will continue to work as a consultant to this program.

Judge Anderegg believes this program to be one of the most critical components available for positive youth development and deserves support from the County Board of Commissioners. He is not asking for any increased financial contribution or long-term commitment by the County. In the future should funding sources not be available the program will have to be terminated, however they will try to make the program self sustaining.

It was moved by Comm. Seppanen, seconded by Comm. Arsenault, and unanimously carried by voice vote, that the Committee of the Whole recommend the County Board authorize the transfer of the Employment Skills Initiative Program and the Employment Programs Fund Balance to the Juvenile Division.

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The Committee considered a request from Republic Township for assistance with the Republic Mine tax assessment. Gary Johnson, Republic Township Supervisor, was present and explained that with the formal closing of the Republic Mine, the ad valorem property tax must be set for both the mine and the mineral reserves. Mr. Johnson also reported that there are mineral reserves from four other closed mines in Republic Township that should be appraised and taxed. The law provides for a Township to implement a mineral tax roll, however, the services of a certified geologist would be required.

Civil Counsel David Payant was not sure that the values of past abandoned mines could be raised at this time, however, the Republic Mine would be a newly abandoned mine. The agreement says that if the Mine is abandoned then it must go on the ad valorem tax rolls, therefore, it must be appraised. The key to abandonment is the flooding of the pit. Should Cleveland Cliffs continue to pump the water from the pit they would remain under the Specific Tax system.

County Administrator, Dennis Aloia, asked a hypothetical question. He thought it reasonable to expect that Cleveland Cliffs and perhaps other mining companies would challenge any ad valorem tax values set on their properties. Would Republic Township then come back to the County Board for further assistance?

It was moved by Comm. Rapport, seconded by Comm. Arsenault, and unanimously carried by voice vote that the request from Republic Township for assistance to appraise the Republic Mine be referred to Staff including Civil Counsel Payant, Equalization Director Gerard Markey, the County Administrator, an invitation to Cleveland Cliffs to be involved, so that a proposal for appraisal could be developed and considered at a future Committee of the Whole meeting.

The committee considered a request from Powell Township for financial assistance in litigating the Huron Mountain Club appeal to the State Tax Commission. Sara Peitl, Powell Township Supervisor, was present and pointed out that the State Tax Commission has denied any help to Powell Township even though the State of Michigan would lose the most revenue. Powell Township needs financial help to fight the Huron Mountain Club appeal. The Huron Mountain Club has had the property appraised but will not share that appraisal with the Township. State Legislator, Michael Prusi, is working through the Legislature to see if the State Tax Commission can help, or else get the Legislature to appropriate funds into the State budget. It is estimated that $50,000 may be needed to defend an appeal before the Tax Tribunal.

Chairperson Corkin believed this issue to be very important and that the County should assist as much as possible to protect the tax base. It is an issue of fairness. Just because a large land owner can spend big dollars to get their taxes lowered by 35%, we should not just stand back and let this happen.
Comm. Joseph contended that the County cannot afford to fight every fight. He agrees that the rich land owners are taking advantage of the situation and Powell Township has no choice but try to defend their tax assessment, however, Marquette County cannot afford to take on this battle. He believed the Huron Mountain Club could be easily appraised. The property is a certain number of acres with so many acres of timber, the buildings are of a certain size and made out of certain materials. Our appraisal should stand up in any Court.

Comm. Arsenault agreed with Comm. Joseph regarding assessment law, however, no dollars were appropriated along with the passage of Proposal A to deal with appeals. If Powell Township loses this tax litigation it may set a precedent. If Powell Township wins it may protect other units of government in Marquette County and around the State. We need an expert to stand up at the Tax Tribunal. Comm. Arsenault is positive that the Huron Mountain Club is underassessed.

It was moved by Comm. Braamse, seconded by Comm. Rapport and unanimously carried by voice vote that the Committee of the Whole refer the Powell Township request to Staff for development of a shared cost agreement for consideration at a future Committee of the Whole meeting.

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The Committee considered a recommendation from the Central Dispatch Policy Board/Advisory Operations Committee for reorganization under P.A. 29. Civil Counsel, David Payant, explained that the Central Dispatch Policy Board and the Advisory Operations Committee can be combined under P.A. 29, making a board of 18 people. It would then be up to the County Board whether or not the new Central Dispatch Authority shall serve in a advisory capacity or operate independently.

Arlene Hill, Chairperson, Central Dispatch Policy Board, was present and explained that it was not their intention to pull out from the authority of the County Board, but to continue as an advisory board. The recommendation for reorganization is the consensus of many hours of deliberation and discussion.

It was moved by Comm. Seppanen, seconded by Comm. Rapport, and unanimously carried by voice vote, that the Committee of the Whole recommend the County Board approve the reorganization of the Central Dispatch Policy Board/Advisory Operations Committee under the new title Central Dispatch Authority. The makeup of the board shall be eighteen members as follows: 1 County Commissioner, 3 City representatives (1 from each city), 4 Township (recommended by Township Association), 1 Citizen at large, 3 Police 3 Fire 3 EMS (cities), and further that Civil Counsel draft the appropriate bylaws for the Central Dispatch Authority.

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The Committee considered a communication from the Municipal Employees Retirement, Lansing, Michigan, explaining what MERS members need to know about House Bill 5525. Randell Girard, Human Resources Director, was present and explained that House Bill 5525 would change the MERS from a State administered agency to an independent public corporation.

Mr. Girard is in favor of this legislation. MERS needs more flexibility. To become vested in MERS an employee must serve 10 years. Many employees leave work before they are vested, but the municipality pays into the MERS system and does not get a refund, which has resulted in a surplus of funds. A concern of MERS is that these funds may be a target for revenues by the State of Michigan. There are also many safe investments that would generate more revenue for the MERS system, but because of the State control MERS cannot invest in them. A two-thirds majority of the voting delegates must support the change to a public corporation at the MERS Annual Meeting for House Bill 5525 to take effect.

Comm. Joseph expressed concern that if more flexibility on investments were allowed, then some bad investments may be made. He thought the guarantee that the funds will be there when an employee retires better than higher interest on investments.

It was moved by Comm. Seppanen, seconded by Comm. Minelli, to place the communication on file.
It was moved by Comm. Seppanen, seconded by Comm. Rapport and carried on a voice vote 8 ayes to 1 nay (with Comm. Joseph voting nay), that the Committee of the Whole recommend the County Board write our State Legislators requesting their support for House Bill 5525.

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The Committee considered 1996 fees for the Big Bay Harbor of Refuge. Ron Koshorek, Resource Management Director, was present and explained that it is the time of year to set fees for the Big Bay Harbor prior to the opening in May. A summary of recent operating expense/revenue was distributed as well as the State Waterways Commission fee proposals.

Seasonal Mooring Fees: These rates are for boats which moor at the facility for the entire season or a pro-rated portion. The intergovernmental agreement with the State suggests we follow the State recommended fee structure. The County Board has, in the past, adopted lower rates in an attempt to increase use at the facility. It is the opinion of staffs that the lower rates are necessary to attract use of the seasonal mooring facility. Staff recommends the County Board keep the 1994 fee levels.

It was moved by Comm. Minelli, seconded by Comm. Arsenault, and unanimously carried by voice vote, that the Committee of the Whole recommend the County Board approve the Seasonal Mooring Fees at the Big Bay Harbor of Refuge at the 1994 levels.

Transient Mooring Fees: Consistent with past practice, for transient boats using the facility for a 24-hour period, staff recommends the County Board adopt the State recommended fee structure. These fees are equitable in that most of the refuge harbors use this rate structure, and further adopting higher rates would require approval by the State Waterways Commission.

It was moved by Comm. Rapport, seconded by Comm. Seppanen, and unanimously carried by voice vote that the Committee of the Whole recommend the County Board adopt the Michigan State Waterways Commission rates for Transient Mooring at the Big Bay Harbor of Refuge.

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The Committee considered four budget amendments involving "carryover" funds from last year’s budget. Gary Yoder, Finance Manager, was present and explained the budget amendments.

Budget Amendment #18 carries forward the remaining balance in the budget established last fall for:
1. Security at K.I.Sawyer A.F.B.
2. Cooperative Extension Youth and Families Kellogg Grant.
3. Sheriff Substance Abuse Grant.
4. Kellogg Grant for Juvenile Division.

Budget Amendment #19 adjusts General Fund amounts for 1995 encumbrances.

Budget Amendments #20 & #21 adjust Public Improvement Funds for outstanding encumbrances, and also carry forward various projects which have not yet been completed.

It was moved by Comm. Braamse, seconded by Comm. Rapport, and unanimously carried by voice vote, that the Committee of the Whole recommend the County Board approve of the budget amendments for the 1995 Carryover Funds as presented.

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It was moved by Comm. Rapport, seconded by Comm. Seppanen and unanimously carried by voice vote that the Committee of the Whole refer a request from David Roberts, Marquette County Clerk for a half-time Court Clerk to the Administrator for review and recommendation.
The Committee considered an update on the EDC Community Development Block Grant Funds. County Administrator, Dennis Aloia, reported that he has discussed the matter with Jay Scherbenske and that there are some areas in his report that needed amendment. They are waiting for further information on several loans, for example, Jay Scherbenske did not include the Pelletec Loan in his report because he was told by an official in Lansing not to worry about it. Administrator Aloia however insists that all loans be included in the report.

Administrator Aloia further reported that they have made progress and the report is on the right track, but probably will not be done before he leaves Marquette County. Once all the information has been provided we still need a letter from the State of Michigan indicating all that all questions have been answered. The report is in the hands of the EDC right now. Administrator Aloia cannot do much more. It could be done in the next week or two but he cannot guarantee it.

Comm. Seppanen expressed some concerns regarding the EDC and presented a resolution to be considered at the Committee of the Whole meeting in two weeks should the CDBG report not be completed.

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

There being no further comment, the meeting was adjourned at 8:15 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

David J. Roberts
Marquette County Clerk
MARQUETTE COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE
Tuesday, March 26, 1996, 6:00 p.m.
Room 231, Henry A. Skewis Annex, Marquette, MI 49855

1. ROLL CALL.
2. APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES OF THE COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE MEETING
   HELD ON March 12, 1996.
3. PUBLIC COMMENT.
4. APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA.
5. Review of Claims and Accounts.
6. Renaissance Zone Report by Dave Gillis, CUPPAD.
7. Continuation of Employment Skills Initiative Program (Kellogg Grant) through the
   Juvenile Division.
8. Republic Township request for financial assistance to appraise the Republic
   Mine Properties.
9. Recommendation for reorganization of the Central Dispatch Policy Board -
   Advisory Operations Committee.
10. What MERS Members need to know about House Bill 5525.
11. 1996 Fees for the Big Bay Harbor of Refuge.
13. Request for Half-Time Court Clerk for the County Clerk's Office.
14. EDC - CDBG
   (90) EDC Awards
15. 
16. 
17. PUBLIC COMMENT.
18. ANNOUNCEMENTS.
19. ADJOURNMENT.