BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS   COUNTY OF MARQUETTE   APRIL 12, 2005

Minutes are Subject to Correction and Approval

The Marquette County Board of Commissioners met as a Committee of the Whole on Tuesday, April 12, 2005, at 6:30 P.M., in Room 231 of the Henry A. Skewis Annex, 234 W. Baraga Avenue, Marquette, Michigan.


It was moved by Comm. Pellow, seconded by Comm. Arsenault, and unanimously carried by voice vote that the minutes of the Committee of the Whole Meeting held on March 22, 2005 be approved.

Chairperson Corkin opened the meeting for public comment.

David Laurich and John Swanson, Upper Michigan Financial Services, addressed the Board regarding a building permit issue at 2366 U. S. 41 South, Marquette. Chairperson Corkin directed Steve Powers, County Administrator, to discuss the issue with Mr. Laurich, Mr. Swanson, and the Building Codes Department.

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

It was moved by Comm. Bergdahl, seconded by Comm. Joseph, and unanimously carried by voice vote that the agenda be approved with the addition of Item 11) County-wide Digital Orthophotography Bid.

It was moved by Comm. Bergdahl, seconded by Comm. Struck, and unanimously carried by voice vote that Claims and Accounts for the period April 1, 2005 through April 7, 2005 in the amount of $275,499.43 be approved.

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The Committee considered a Request from West Branch Township regarding Modification of Terms of IRP Loan. The County Board approved an IRP loan to West Branch Township for the operation of the fitness center in August, 2004. The loan amount was $235,000; 20-year amortization with a 15-year balloon; 5% fixed interest rate; monthly payment of principle and interest; backed by the full faith and credit of the Township. The current balance of the loan is approximately $230,615, with six payments being made.

On March 24, 2005, West Branch Township requested modification of the terms of the IRP loan to include suspension of all principle and interest payments for two years to assist the fitness center with its cash flow.

The IRP loan committee is supportive of the deferral of principle payments for two years. The committee feels it is necessary to receive some interest during the two years in order to pay administrative fees and the annual loan payment to USDA.

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It was moved by Comm. Struck, seconded by Comm. Arsenault, and unanimously carried by voice vote that the Committee of the Whole recommend the County Board modify West Branch Township’s IRP loan with a 2-year moratorium on principle payments and reduce the interest rate to 1.25% for 2 years. West Branch Township will have the option of making monthly interest payments or accruing interest during the 2-year moratorium.

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The Committee considered a Health Department Truck Purchase. The Board of Health, at its regular meeting of March 30, 2005, reviewed bids for the purchase of a new 2005 midsize pickup truck. The Board awarded the bid to Crown Motors of Negaunee in the amount of $13,875.20. Funds from the Public Improvement Fund would be used for the purchase, with the Health Department reimbursing the Fund over a four-year period.

The Public Improvement Fund has been used for other County vehicle purchases. While the purchase would be booked as a loan, no interest would be charged. This no-interest process has been used before.

It was moved by Comm. Pellow, seconded by Comm. Arsenault, and unanimously carried by voice vote that the Committee of the Whole recommend the County Board approve the purchase of the 2005 midsize pickup truck for the Health Department from Crown Motors of Negaunee in the amount of $13,875.20 with the funds to be withdrawn from the County’s Public Improvement Fund to be paid back by the Health Department over a 4-year period.

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The Committee considered an Annex Floor Covering Bid. An assessment of floor coverings, including carpeting and tile, in the Annex was completed earlier this year. The carpeting is worn, seams are torn, and carpet blisters exist in many areas. Some areas are beyond cleaning and shampooing. Each room was assessed and ranked.

Bids were requested for partial carpet replacement and tiling on the ground floor, seam repairs on the first floor, and partial carpet replacement on the second floor. The estimated carpet quantity is 17,000 square feet. The tile quantity is 570 square feet.

Bid packages were mailed to all local carpet businesses and advertised in the Mining Journal and on the County website. The total price is the bid price, with price per square foot information requested so the cost of any changes requested by the County, if any, would be known in advance. The work will be completed within 90 days of contract award. The 2005 budget includes $70,700 for floor covering projects.

It was moved by Comm. Joseph, seconded by Comm. Cihak, and unanimously carried by voice vote that the Committee of the Whole recommend the County Board award the floor covering bid to Carpet Specialists in the amount of $66,500 and authorize the contract.

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The Committee considered Non-Sufficient Funds Checks – Water and Sanitary Sewer Department at Sawyer. Commissioners questioned whether the water and wastewater department’s policy on non-sufficient funds checks was too severe. The current policy is that the County, upon notification of a non-sufficient fund check, will immediately turn off the water and charge a $20 NSF fee. This information is provided to new customers in their Utility Service Agreement and in the Payment/Past Due/Shut Off Procedures Memo.

Although the policy is immediate shut-off, this is usually not the case. With the majority of customers being renters, and with access being required inside the unit to shut off the water, the County coordinates access to the property with the landlords. Once the landlord is notified, a shut-off notice is placed on the unit. Depending on the landlord, access will be made within 24 to 48 hours of notification. Staff will also make courtesy calls to the residence with the intent to avoid shutting off the service.

Since taking over the system in October, 2004 there have been approximately 22 shut-offs. Only one of these shut-offs was for an NSF check. Each month approximately 294 past due notices and 76 shut-off notices are mailed.

It was moved by Comm. Heikkila, seconded by Comm. Joseph, and unanimously carried by voice vote that the Committee of the Whole recommend the County Board modify the current policy, to-wit: if the customer’s utility bill is current, but the payment is made with an NSF check, allow the customer 5 days to come and pay the $20 NSF fee and make their account whole. If they fail to pay or make acceptable payment arrangements, then the shut-off process will begin. If the customer account is past due, and payment is made with an NSF check, the service will be immediately disconnected.

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The Committee considered a Code of Ethics. Commissioners were previously provided a copy of the National Association of Counties Code of Ethics for County Officials at the January 18, 2005 meeting during public comment. Harley Andrews, Civil Counsel, was directed to review the code and provide a possible recommendation. Mr. Andrews recommended the Board not approve the code. Mr. Andrews felt that while the principles articulated in the code are very good, the principles are currently being followed by County officials now. And while a code of ethics should contain guidelines on what is considered ethical or unethical behavior and consequences for unethical behavior with investigative and enforcement provisions for violations, there are no such investigative, enforcement, or disciplinary processes in the NACO code.

Comm. Pellow feels this code is a very good set of guidelines and brings the Board a good standard to follow. Other Commissioners agreed with Mr. Andrews’ response, feeling the Commissioners have their own ethical ideals to follow, with the public having avenues to pursue against those individuals who do not meet ethical standards, but were not against adopting the code.

Mr. Andrews suggested a name change from Code of Ethics, with its more formal connotations, to some kind of guideline, with a more informal connotation, may be more applicable.
It was moved by Comm. Pellow, seconded by Comm. Cihak, and unanimously carried by voice vote that the Committee of the Whole recommend the County Board adopt the National Association of Counties (NACO) Code of Ethics as a guideline for elected and appointed officials of the County but not employees of the County.

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The Committee considered a County-wide Digital Orthophotography Bid. In 1999, the County produced and adopted a Geographical Information System (GIS) Implementation Plan. Since that time, staff has made significant strides in accomplishing the objectives of the Plan. One goal that has not been realized is acquisition of digital orthophotography.

A Hazard Mitigation Grant recently secured included funding ($20,831) for orthophotography of an area of nearly 1/3 of the County. With this “start”, staff began to develop a collation of partners to facilitate photography of the balance of the County and have assembled sufficient resources to accomplish this task with 90% coming from out of County sources.

RFP’s were distributed and bids returned. Staff reviewed submittals for responsiveness, experience and history of firms, types of equipment used, compliance with insurance requirements, schedules favorable to the County, and fee for services.

Proposals were reviewed by the GIS Core Group (Steve Powers, County Administrator, Brent Nault, Information Systems Manager, Joe VanOosterhout, Director of Central Dispatch, Dwight Sunday, Equalization Director, and James Kippola, Planning Manager). It was the consensus of the group that 18” pixel, color orthophotography by Kucera International, Inc., best fits the needs of the County.

Funding for the project is being assembled through a coalition of agencies. Primary sources are a Hazard Mitigation Grant, 2004 Homeland Security, and the Center for Geographic Information.

Comm. Pellow questioned why the low bidder was not recommended. Al Feldhauser, Senior Planner, advised that submittals were evaluated based on a number of factors including experience, equipment, and schedules, in addition to the bid amount.


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Chairperson Corkin opened the meeting for public comment.

Kelly Matthews, Big Bay, and a member of the Citizens of Big Bay, addressed the Board regarding sulfite mining in Big Bay.

There being no further public comment, Chairperson Corkin closed this portion of the meeting.
COMMISSIONER COMMENTS, STAFF COMMENTS, AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

Chairperson Corkin stated that he and Comm. Struck attended a Water/Wastewater meeting at Sawyer with the Operations Authority and representatives of the townships and the community. There was a good discussion between the parties, with County staff doing a good job in explaining various issues that the citizens had questions on. The consensus of those present was that better communication is needed between all involved. The townships will be setting up a meeting with the DEQ to see what requirements and expectations are needed in taking over the system. Additional meetings, perhaps monthly or so, are planned. The meeting provided good information to all concerned.

Comm. Struck thanked Chairperson Corkin and the staff who attended the Water/Wastewater meeting for attending the meeting and providing much needed information.

Comm. Cihak stated he is pleased that the meetings are taking place, with more meetings being planned, and hopes that the goal is to turn the water/wastewater system over to the townships. He invited Comm. Pellow to attend those meeting because of her expertise in this area, feeling her input would be beneficial. Comm. Pellow stated she would be glad to attend the meetings.

Comm. Bergdahl announced that the EDC hired a new director, Jamie Harrington, who started Monday. Comm. Bergdahl will be attending the MEDC meeting Wednesday in Marquette. One and one-half to two full-time persons are planned for the EDC.

There being no further business to come before the Committee of the Whole, the meeting adjourned at approximately 7:30 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,

Laurie A. Skytt
Marquette County Deputy Clerk
MARQUETTE COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

Tuesday, April 12, 2005, 6:30 P.M.
Room 231, Henry A. Skewis Annex, Marquette, MI 49855
www.co.marquette.mi.us

1. ROLL CALL.
2. APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES of the COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE MEETING
HELD ON MARCH 22, 2005.
3. PUBLIC COMMENT.
4. APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA.
5. Review of Claims and Accounts.
6. Request from West Branch Township re: Modification of Terms of IRP Loan.
11. Aerial Photography
12.  
13. 
14. 
15. 
16. 
17. PUBLIC COMMENT.
18. COMMISSIONER COMMENTS, STAFF COMMENTS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS.
19. ADJOURNMENT.