



Tuesday, October 15, 2024

VOTE!

Here is the link to the GT Dems recommendations

https://www.grandtraversedems.com/_files/ugd/e3d586_d509ab7f412c43dea18a7a14bd73fe10.pdf

First, we know that our democracy is on the line and so we will vote Democratic! (It is OK to vote for local Republican public servants like Sheriff Shea and Clerk Scheele and local township clerks like Judy Kramer in Green Lake). But this year we have the opportunity to vote for Kamala Harris and Tim Walz who are not a compromise. In the last two months we have watched them outline a future that is attainable and meaningful. I am excited to vote for them.

The rest of the candidates are ethical and forward looking people who will lead us away from this cesspool of despair that Trump and the Republicans who LIE with him have created. Barack Obama's ad for Elissa Slotkin is reason enough to vote for her. Besides who wants Florida Mike Rogers to team with Louisiana Jack Bergman . Callie Barr will be a Congresswoman to make Northern Michigan and the UP proud. No one could ask for a better Michigan House Representative than Betsy Coffia and I know Independent Cathy Albro shares all our Democratic values.

Our eight Board of Commissioner Candidates are the future. Let's replace morally bankrupt commissioners like Henschel and Jewett with Trenton Lee and Fern Spence. They are candidates with ideas and they care for their community. We need Jan Wyatt, Pam Kaiser and Linda Maginty to ask questions and look at issues with new eyes and fresh perspective. Our three veteran Commissioners TJ Andrews, Lauren Flynn and Ashlea Walter have stood up to the Republican majority and made a difference. The term is four years now. We need a new Board that can get things done!

We have the POWER. Vote and get all your friends and family to vote. We want to say Madam President, not because she is a woman and that is exciting, but because Kamala Harris is the leader we have been seeking to heal this Great and Successful Country.

Vote Early!

Voting early or absentee early helps Get Out The Vote (GOTV). Daily lists of who has already voted are available and help candidates and volunteers target voters who have not yet voted or are not frequent voters. It also reduces phone calls and text messages (and we all want that!). Thanks for voting early.

BOC to Hear Status on Dispatch Center and Appoint Interview Committee for 10 Boards October 16th 9am

by Linda Pepper

This is the last scheduled meeting until November 20th. There is a possible study session that could be designated a special meeting next week on October 23rd. The Consent Agenda has a few interesting items:

- ARPA Status Report: on the 28 projects, 13 are 100% paid and 4 more are above 75%. Six projects are still at zero percent
- The Sheriff's Office has 44 surplus property guns to be declared surplus.
- There will be more control of access doors at the Health Department building on LaFranier
- Power Island and the Civic Center are getting 71 new signs
- There is a request for help from the state on the dangerous Cedar Run Rd. and Gray Rd intersection
- A .5 acre section of Maple Bay Parks and Nature Area is requested for part of the Nakwema Trail to connect to Elk Rapids

There will be discussion of the Project Alpha and Cunninham-Limp recommendation of Partners in Architecture PLC for the LaFranier campus project. Four firms answered the RFP. Another interesting discussion may involve a Brownfield plan for LIV AE East Bay to build 170 single family rental units. It does require a public hearing (Not on the schedule). Thirty five would be reserved for 100% or less of Area Median Income families.

Another Brownfield Plan for the Boardman Building across from the City/County Building will have a public hearing. I would recommend reading the plan for the three floors.

<https://grandtraversecounty.civicweb.net/document/252153/Attached%20please%20find%20a%20proposed%20resolution%20appr.pdf?handle=CCDD629C589B4A3290B43F6C74B8DA4E>

Next is a Closed Session. It is unusual, in the middle of a meeting, inconveniencing the attending public.

Final Items:

- 2024 Apportionment Report to properly assess millage
- Appointment of interview committee for 10 boards and commissions positions.
- Update to Safety Policies - This may cause discussion as all guns except for law enforcement personnel are forbidden
- Staffing request for next year - This was a three hour discussion for 4 positions last week
- Proclamation of Youth Substance Use Prevention and Substance Misuse Prevention Month

That's all for now, Folks! See you after the election.

Betsy Coffia's Coffee
Monday, October 14th at TADL
by Linda Pepper

Seven voters joined Betsy at the TADL Coffee. The first set of bills that Betsy highlighted were recently signed into law and require screening for Dyslexia in K through 3rd grade. From 4 through 12th, screening occurs if symptoms are noted. Training for teachers was included and enough financial support to NOT make this an unfunded mandate. As a mom of a dyslexic daughter, I can tell you that, once they figure out the system of reading, they can evidence amazing talents that most of us do not possess.

One of the BRITE Acts to increase transparency and ethics has been passed by the House and sent to the Senate. It would enable the Secretary of State to act on violations of campaign financing in real time, instead of when the campaign is completed. Other bills to prevent the direct lawmaker to lobbyist path and to require more transparency about gifts, tickets and travel that lawmakers accept will be taken up later this fall.

There is now a small Tribal Liaison Office in the legislature so tribes can give input early in the legislative processes on issues that affect the indigenous people. The legislature and the governor did increase funding for mental health and safety in schools a few weeks ago.

Representative Coffia is working on relief for both sweet and tart cherry growers who suffered huge losses this growing season. A bill may be introduced soon. She has also seen movement to make the guardianship more scrutinized and regulated for mainly elders in Michigan.

The Zoom hour later had Representative Erin Byrnes and she answered questions about the BRITE bills. BRITE stands for Bringing Reforms for Integrity, Transparency and Ethics. She believes they will be taken up in the "Lame Duck" session. There are also 2 bills authorizing FOIA for the legislature SB 699-670 that will be considered. Thank you Representatives Coffia and Byrnes for informing the voters.

Pavilions Ad Hoc Committee Meeting
Monday, October 14th
By Linda Pepper

The occupancy at the Pavilions continues to increase. July was 164, August 167 and September 168. Right now it looks to be over 170 in October. This is fueled mainly by rehab, short-stay patients. The Cottages are also up from the 50's at the beginning of summer to 63 in September. The Cottages are still not profitable but the deficit is shrinking. The study to produce a master plan for the Cottages is proceeding and a written report by Dec. 1st is expected. The administration has completed the negotiations with the unions whose contracts expire at the end of the year. The staff is considering the terms and voting on them currently.

The recent survey by the state found 14 citations and none were causing immediate jeopardy. Some involved giving transfer notices when a patient was sent to the hospital and whether the bed should be held for their return. One was how a food transport cart was dried after cleaning and one was a minor handwashing violation. One involved calling a physician immediately when a patient's blood pressure was lower than usual. I hope to find the report on the Center for Medicare and Medicaid website and give more precise information in the next Beacon. It was an improvement since the last two surveys.

The next Board meeting is Thursday October 31st at 9 am at the Garfield Township Hall.

Budget Study Session Previews New FTE Requests Wednesday, October 9th

by Linda Pepper

The BOC Study Session was to discuss requests for 2 FTE's for the District Court and 2 FTE's for the Sheriff Department.

Possible new positions:

- Treatment Court Coordinator/ Probation Officer Supervisor for the District Court. Judge Cooney talked about the successes of the Sobriety Court and the Drug Court. This position would enable them to fulfill their mission more efficiently. Cost of salary and benefits about \$88K/year
- Community Outreach Court Coordinator: Judge Cooney also briefed the BOC on this position which would be a person working with homeless and other offenders to connect to services so they do not wind up back in court or in jail unnecessarily. This court operated from 2017-2020 when the coordinator left. This position would be split with the City of Traverse City and, including ancillary expenses, would cost about \$63K per year
- Sheriff's Office Crime Analyst: Captain Clark described this position as non law enforcement officer who would use crime information to enable detectives to focus on solving the crimes. The position would be about \$86K without benefits calculated.
- Jail Discharge Planner/Diversion Specialist: This person would help many of the inmates who are dealing with mental illness and addictions get the available help. There were no monetary estimates for this position.

There was about 3 hours of discussion of these four positions. Commissioners are very careful about adding new county employees, knowing that eliminating positions in hard times causes many problems. There was a lot of discussion of the fact that there are 33 corrections positions but there are usually only 30 positions filled. The commissioners wanted to know why one could not be converted into the Discharge Planner. Sheriff Shea needs the whole 33 FTE's to properly staff the jail and is reluctant to lose any.

The administration mentioned two more positions in administration including the finance office. More details on these possible FTE's will be brought to the Board.

The BOC decided to think about this and whether they will approve these positions is on the agenda of the October 16th meeting.

BOC to Ad Hoc to Study Septic Ordinance Changes October 2nd

by Linda Pepper

In Public Comment, the Former Head of the Opioid Task Force asked for a study session with the BOC to be scheduled so they can implement their Master Plan. Ann Sweeney from Peninsula Township and Christine Chrisman from the Watershed advocated for a point of sale septic system ordinance before the state imposes one. A BOC candidate gave a campaign speech.

The ORV problem near Kingsley is being worked on by the administration. It appears to be a township issue but the administration will report back. There was an informative report on the GTC Road Commission by Alisa Korn. ARPA recipients are responding to the prodding letter from the county.

Cunningham-Limp reviewed their actions. They intend to recommend an architectural firm in the next 2 weeks to the Project Alpha team. They are also putting out RFP's for a civil engineering firm next. The administration commented that there are many pieces of equipment being stored that could be sold or junked. Before they decide on the size of facilities' storage, this downsizing needs to occur.

The BOC set up an ad hoc committee to study their possible courses of action for a GT County septic ordinance. The State of Michigan is working on this and it will be advantageous to have a process in place before one is imposed upon the county by the state. The committee will work with the Health Department and other interested parties for the practical course of action. The members will be Chair Hentschel, Vice Chair Jewett and Commissioner Andrews who is an environmental attorney.

After a recess the BOC approved the County Resource Recovery Director Lydia Gulow and the proposed committee. They may add more members to the committee in the future. The BOC also discussed the combining of Facilities and Parks and Recreation departments under John Chase. They will be advertising for two deputy directors soon.

November Elections - Kyra and Kim for the Win in Supreme Court Race

by Linda Pepper

If you vote straight ticket in November, it will not mark the judge ballots. You want to vote for the Justices on the Michigan Supreme Court. I heard from the two Democratic nominees on Saturday at the Benzie Dems meeting. They suggested that you turn your ballot over and vote the non-partisan part of the ballot first. Then you can mark a straight ticket option.

The two Democratic nominees are Kyra Harris Bolden and Kimberly Ann Thomas. Kyra is currently a justice and since she was appointed, she must run for reelection to serve the rest of Bridget McCormick's term. Kim Thomas came from a modest background and now teaches at U of M law school. You can just remember Kyra and Kim or bring in the slate of worthy candidates you wish to vote for. The Michigan Supreme Court just helped increase our state minimum wage and earned paid time off. They also struck down some of the onerous restrictions on abortions. This court affects all our lives!

REMEMBER: Non-partisan races are not covered by the straight party option!

HELPFUL LINKS & INFO

BOC meetings are usually held at 9 am on the first and third Wednesday of the month.

You can find a link to the agenda and minutes at:

<https://grandtraversecounty.civicweb.net/Portal/MeetingInformation.aspx?Org=Cal&Id=418>

You can watch a livestream of the meetings and view replays of previous meetings online at:

<http://www.co.grand-traverse.mi.us/184/Board-of-Commissioners>

You will have to attend the in-person meeting in order to make a public comment. The BOC permits public comment for three minutes at the beginning and end of each meeting.

The BOC has nine commissioners – six Republicans and three Democrats – each of whom represents a district. You can find your commissioner at this link: <https://www.grandtraversedems.com/board>

You can find contact info for the BOC members here:

<http://grandtraverse.org/184/Board-of-Commissioners>

You can email all the commissioners at this address:

commissioners@gtcountymi.gov