



Tuesday, March 4, 2025

The Beacon is a publication written by the Beacon Staff; the editorial views expressed are the views of the authors.

BOC Evaluates Plan to Expand Nurse Coverage to Nights at Jail

Wednesday, March 5, 2025

by Linda Pepper

This agenda presents as another mundane meeting. The Consent Agenda includes a letter from Rock Creek Homes praising the code enforcement and building permits staff for their knowledgeable and helpful work ethic. Howe Ice Arena needs \$148K of new dehumidifiers and the Health Department's Environmental Health staff need 2 new Sierra vehicles.

The three main topics are:

- GTC Road Commission update by Dan Watkins, Road Manager
- A Public Hearing to amend the ORV ordinance to allow ORVs on Garfield Rd from Mayfield Rd. to the northern limits of the Village of Kingsley.
- Amending the GTC Jail contract with current provider ACH for 24 hour nursing coverage (currently nurses are there from 6 am until 10 pm). This will cost about \$289K for 10 months. The contract will need to be renewed at the end of 2025.

I recommend that you read the explanation from ACH of what they provide and what they do not. Below is the link. Please read pages 5 & 6.

https://grandtraversecounty.civicweb.net/document/261095/ p_span%20style= color_000000;font-family_Ti me.pdf?handle=7B2820BE813A40DD828C7E34604A9861

Please note that an Addiction Professional and a Discharge Planner are not included. The board approved reclassifying a corrections position as the discharge planner in the 2025 budget. Are they providing addiction counseling by some other agency?

No closed session is scheduled. Let's hope that it is a routine and productive meeting.

BOC Studies Changes to Ethics Code, County Accounting Structure

Feb. 28

by Linda Pepper and Bruce Moore

There were three topics for this study session: (1) Ethics Code, (2) Finance - All funds discussion and (3) current status of the BATA lawsuit. The Ethics Code had been reworked by the legal counsel. The commissioners discussed establishing a “standing” Ethics Panel or appoint one as needed. Most staff incidents are handled by administration and human resources. A panel would be needed if administration or elected officials are involved. The current policy has no enforcement mechanism. Legal counsel is going to present two versions for the BOC to consider, including notification, appeals process and either a standing or ad hoc Ethics Panel.

Finance Director Dean Bott educated the commissioners about the more than 50 funds his department administers. He included what many of the funds covered and their source of revenue. He also explained how they relate to the general fund. The commissioners need to understand the financial working of county government as that is their first duty as county commissioners.

The BATA lawsuit was scheduled to go to trial in March but because BATA has decided to first appeal some evidence rulings, the trial will be postponed until those issues are decided.

During discussion of the ethics policy, Commissioner Hentschel dismissed the current effort, noting that the commission voted on the current policy in 2019 and since there is no ability to do anything other than censure or remove commissioners from liaison roles—but not remove them from statutory appointments like his appointment to the NRAA—there was no need for a new policy. Commissioner Nelson concurred. Morris and McAllister were largely silent during the discussion.

In second public comment, Bruce Moore noted that the primary focus of the policy was dealing with conflicts of interest, and that one of the first actions of the Board on January 2, 2019 was to rescind the appointment of Susan Odgers to the TADL board due to her husband, Commissioner Mair, voting for his wife’s appointment. See “UPDATE – Legal opinion: Odgers’ TADL appointment invalid” in the January 15, 2019 Record-Eagle. Moore also noted Commissioner Jewett’s conflict of interest in casting the deciding vote for his appointment to the BATA board was central to the ongoing lawsuit with BATA, and that the ethics policy was really aimed at avoiding always-expensive litigation. He noted that censure had two roles; to admonish the person violating the policy and make voters aware of the transgression.

BOC Proceeds to Next Step with Septic Ordinance

Feb. 19 Meeting

by Linda Pepper

I predicted that this meeting should be mundane and it mostly was. Public Comment included a representative from Aspire North (real estate trade group) who had suggestions for the Onsite Wastewater and Sewage Disposal Regulations. They will be considered with public comment on the ordinance. Jeff Shaw from the Board of Public Works informed the BOC that BPW will not participate in Project Alpha and is committed to improved communication with the BOC.

Actions:

- Project Alpha is moving forward with design and cost estimates coming soon.
- The Central Dispatch request for renewal of the Smart 911 technology was approved.
- The upgraded GIS software to be cost shared by all the departments that use it was approved.
- The board started the process to take public comment on the proposed Onsite Wastewater and Sewage Disposal Regulation. The health department will work to include this as part of a BOC meeting in the future. This was unanimously approved after some discussion

Commissioner Hentschel reported that the Grand Traverse Chapter of the Michigan Townships Association passed a motion supporting a uniform procedure to request financial support from the county. A county workgroup to discuss a process for distributing Opioid and Marijuana funds met Feb 24. Commissioner Andrews reported that the Pavilions are starting a search for a new CEO and that Harm Reduction Michigan has Naloxone dispensing boxes (repurposed newspaper boxes) and is looking for additional locations, particularly in townships.

The BOC had a closed session to discuss the BATA lawsuit and took no action after they returned to open session. There was a pretrial conference the next day that resulted in postponing the planned trial.

Pavilions DHHS Board Makes Progress in Hiring CEO, Positive Net Income Feb. 27, 2025 by Linda Pepper

The Chair, Mary Marois, reported that they have received over a hundred applications for the CEO position. They are reviewing them and rating them as A, B and C. Applicants in the “C” category will soon receive notice that they will not be considered. “B” applicants will have further consideration and either move to the “A” category or to the not considered “C” category. The first consideration will be completed by the second week in March. The chair is also formulating questions and an equitable process for hiring.

The packet included the paperwork on the January 9th inspection. The staff have crafted solutions to all problems and the ideas have been accepted. These papers detail the incident that led to the former CEO’s resignation. Link to the packet: https://www.gtpavilions.org/media/uploads/updated_february_27_2025_dhhs-pavilions_board_packet.pdf. The results of the inspection starts on page 18 of the packet. The Master Plan for the cottages will be discussed at the March 27th board meeting.

The interim CEO’s report included:

- The census for January was 178 and for Feb to date it is 181. This is steady upward progress.
- They are hiring 5-8 workers per month and find that people that start as universal workers and then train as CNA’s (Pavilions pays for training) tend to stay. They see the job and want to do it.
- There is a new Director of Nursing who has been with the Pavilions over 15 years.
- They are concentrating on repopulating the Aspen pavilion that has been closed since Covid. It should be completely operational by July 1st.
- They are planning on having a company do a “mock” inspection later this spring to identify and address any problems before the official inspection in the fall.
- Recent efforts improved quality measures from 2 stars to 4 stars; this is especially gratifying because most other facilities have lost stars.

The financial picture is also positive with a net income of \$52K. The cottages are still operating at a loss but they are taking steps to improve that situation. The board did amend the budget as the census is higher than the budget was based upon. They approved new vinyl flooring for Willow (\$20K) and a new campus utility vehicle with a snow plow for \$28K. The next meeting is Thursday, March 27, at 9 am at the Garfield Township meeting hall on the second floor.

ACTION For the Week!

Each issue of the Beacon we will ask our readers to take at least one simple action to protect our democracy. Please join us.



✓ It's the job of Congress—not the President—to set budgets and make cuts.

✓ The courts should not have to bear the burden because Congress refuses to act.

✓ Please protect our federal workers from unjust layoffs!

Congressman Bergman Clocks Out

by Bruce Moore

The form letter below from Congressman Bergman that many constituents received last week is fascinating for several reasons, the most significant of which is that for the first time, Bergman **does not praise or attempt to defend Mr. Trump** or Mr. Musk. After four years of railing about Congress' control of the purse strings, he is **totally silent** about Musk's actions to take control of the Federal budget. Better yet, his office is sending out the **wrong letters** to constituents; I didn't call to oppose Musk's actions, I called to ask for the Congressman's advice on how I can protect myself given that Musk and company are collecting personal bank account numbers. Bergman has clocked out.

Call Bergman's office to encourage him to clock back in and assert Congressional control of the budget. Point out that Musk and Trump are not on the ballot in 2026, but that Congressman Bergman is. If the Washington voicemail box is full, call the Traverse City and Gwinn offices.

- Washington office: 202-225-4735
- Traverse City office: 231-944-7633
- Gwinn office: 906-273-2227

JACK BERGMAN

1ST DISTRICT, MICHIGAN

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

COMMITTEE ON ARMED SERVICES

COMMITTEE ON VETERANS' AFFAIRS

COMMITTEE ON THE BUDGET

February 25, 2025

Dear Bruce:

Thank you for contacting me regarding Elon Musk and his role with the U.S. DOGE Service Temporary Organization. It is an honor to serve the people of Northern Michigan and the Upper Peninsula, and I appreciate your thoughts on this important matter.

On January 20th of this year, President Donald J. Trump signed an Executive Order, E.O. 14158, creating the U.S. DOGE Service Temporary Organization which is colloquially referred to as DOGE. The American people voted for President Trump and entrusted him to pick leaders who would put American interests first, and this includes Elon Musk. Whatever actions Musk and DOGE take, they are accountable to the people through President Trump. They serve at his will, they're not unaccountable. As your Congressman, I will continue to work with President Trump and all of his appointees to put Michigan's First Congressional District and our Nation First.

Again, thank you for contacting me with your thoughts. I am here to help in any way possible, so please do not hesitate to call if I may ever be of service. You can also visit my website at <http://bergman.house.gov> to learn more about the many services with which my office is happy to assist. I look forward to hearing from you again soon.

Kind regards,



Jack Bergman
Member of Congress

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/>

You can watch a livestream of the meetings at:

<https://www.tacm.tv/govtvnow.asp>

The BOC permits public comment up to three minutes each at the beginning and end of each meeting. Public comment remotely is not allowed. If you wish to make a public comment, then you will have to attend the in-person meeting.

The BOC has nine commissioners – five Republicans and four Democrats – each of whom represents a district. You can find your commissioner at this link:

<https://www.gtcountymi.gov/184/Board-of-Commissioners>

You can email all the commissioners at this address:

commissioners@gtcountymi.gov