



Tuesday, September 17, 2024

Jewett to Finally Face Charges - Worth Repeating

by Linda Pepper

In June, Vice Chair of the BOC Brad Jewett was arrested during a sting operation involving prostitution. On September 3, he was arraigned and charged with engaging the services of a prostitute and using a computer to commit this crime. The court documents can be read on the 86th District Court webpage [HERE](#). Jewett plead not guilty. He was released on \$1000 bond and prohibited from use of the internet outside work. He was explicitly prohibited from use of a site called “skipthegames.com” or other dark web sites.

It’s worth noting that Brad Jewett voted in 2019 to disband the BOC’s Ethics Subcommittee without taking any action saying, “We can monitor ourselves.” **Let’s elect a commissioner that has the qualifications and character to lead us out of the mess that Jewett has made—elect Democrat Fern Spence for BOC District 4!**

Your Guide to Action in 2024!



Here’s your guide to taking action in support of Democratic candidates up and down the ballot in 2024. We need to not only elect Kamala Harris as POTUS, but every Dem candidate up and down the ballot needs your support and your vote! [Just click here for a complete directory.](#)

Ashlea Walter District #3 Incumbent Candidate

1. What was the main action by the BOC that motivated you to decide to take the action of running for the BOC?

I ran for election to the BOC in 2022 because I felt that enough was not being done to push back on poor decisions like giving away Twin Lakes, buying a completely unnecessary BearCat military-style vehicle, and creating a 2nd Amendment "sanctuary" in Grand Traverse County. I felt I could bring better decision-making and vision to the BOC and believe over the last couple of years that I have done that. We have more work to do and I'm stepping up to run for another term to continue to work strategically, thoughtfully, and reach across the aisle on important issues for the people of Grand Traverse County.

2. What are your main goals for the BOC if we have a Democratic majority? We have a huge opportunity if we were to gain a Democratic majority - a four year term! We are so, so, close! I can feel our momentum and the pendulum shifting. I look forward to working on initiatives through a "climate change is real" lens and working on efficiencies, energy savings, and a move toward renewable energy in all our decision-making from cars to buildings, and more. I also look forward to making headway as a regional leader on our housing crisis, with the recognition of the political will to take the necessary steps. I also look forward to exploring MI Tri-Share for the County as we look to help with our childcare crisis in the region. Lastly, we need to have a systems-approach with our mental health, jail, juvenile detention, substance abuse and addiction issues - we are looking at them and throwing resources at them as individual issues and not as a connected system.

3. If you are one of 4 Democrats on a BOC with a 5 Republican majority, how will you handle the inevitable frustrations?

I am no stranger to this situation. While it can be frustrating, it is a fact of life that you can't always get what you want, but you must keep pushing, finding consensus, and collaborating to make things better. Better is better!

4. What is your opinion of the Facility Master Plan? What is the most urgent to implement? I don't believe it is a perfect document, nor was I happy with the process, but it did shed light on major long overdue maintenance needs. I believe we need to invest in maintenance and energy efficiencies before building a bunch of new buildings. More study needs to be done and I look forward to a deeper dive.

5. What is the most important issue that you want to make significant progress solving in the next 4 years with or without a Democratic Majority? See above.

Betsy Coffia's Coffee Hour **September 9** by Jill Wellman

I attended Betsy Coffia's coffee today, where she discussed her busy summer meeting with farmers and stakeholders regarding the challenges facing local cherry growers. This year has been especially tough for them, beginning with a mild winter that allowed pests to survive and wreak havoc in the spring. The situation was worsened by warm, wet weather that arrived at just the wrong time, leading to significant crop damage—up to 70% of sweet cherries were unusable, and tart cherries fared similarly. Farmers invested heavily in trying to save their crops but faced higher labor and fuel costs alongside poor yields. Betsy is working closely with our farmers, advocating for relief and exploring options at the state and federal levels.

The farmers are seeking support, hoping the Governor will declare the situation a disaster and send a request to the USDA, potentially unlocking low-interest loans. However, even if that happens, the slow pace of government aid may not help in time for some growers. Betsy has spoken to farmers who are considering drastic measures, such as selling their land or pulling out trees to survive. She's researching past instances when the state provided direct financial support to farmers during poor harvests and is also addressing concerns related to international trade and visa programs, which impact the availability of labor. The conversation also touched on the need to diversify land use, with some growers eyeing solar arrays or agritourism to bolster income, though local zoning laws complicate these efforts.

Another major topic was the recent Michigan Supreme Court ruling which requires the implementation of the 2018 ballot initiative for tipped wages and paid sick leave, a complex issue with potential impacts on both restaurant owners and servers.

Another Illustration of the BOC's BAD Choices BOC Regular Meeting September 18 9:00 am

by Linda Pepper

The agenda for this meeting is sparse. But in the choice of the County Treasurer candidate Jamie Callahan for the Parks and Recreation Board, we see another illustration of keeping all power in the hands of the Republican cabal. There were five interviewees for the Park and Rec board. Kay Ingraham is from Long Lake Township and has opinions about the management of county resources. Jessica Kempf has extensive experience with non profits to offer. Sarah Bye brings the viewpoint of the lower income residents and Diane Arnold is a business owner with a family that uses the parks. Callahan won the primary for county treasurer and is the likely winner in November. Why not appoint someone with a **diverse** set of experiences to the position? Oops, diverse a dirty word!

There is also an item "Forever Camp Greilick Endowment" with NO supporting documents. Glen Chown from the GT Regional Land Conservancy and Dave Mengebier from the GT Regional Community Foundation are back to discuss the endowment with the Board. They had been asking for \$500K. While all of us are in favor of more money going to support our county parks, without a documented plan, going forward a pledge seems more appropriate than an outright gift.

The third item is a report on the meeting with the Northwest Regional Airport Authority and the Leelanau BOC at the beginning of September. The airport is seeking a bond issuance of \$60 million (about half the money needed for an expansion) and to use the "full faith and credit" of Grand Traverse County to secure the best terms. I am not sure how much will be discussed at the meeting. There are many questions to be asked. Are the large numbers only in the four months of summer? Is there a plan for maintaining the extra areas and the cost of heating and cooling when not needed? I am sure these studies exist. Should the BOC examine them first?

Airport Expansion Bond – A Bad Idea

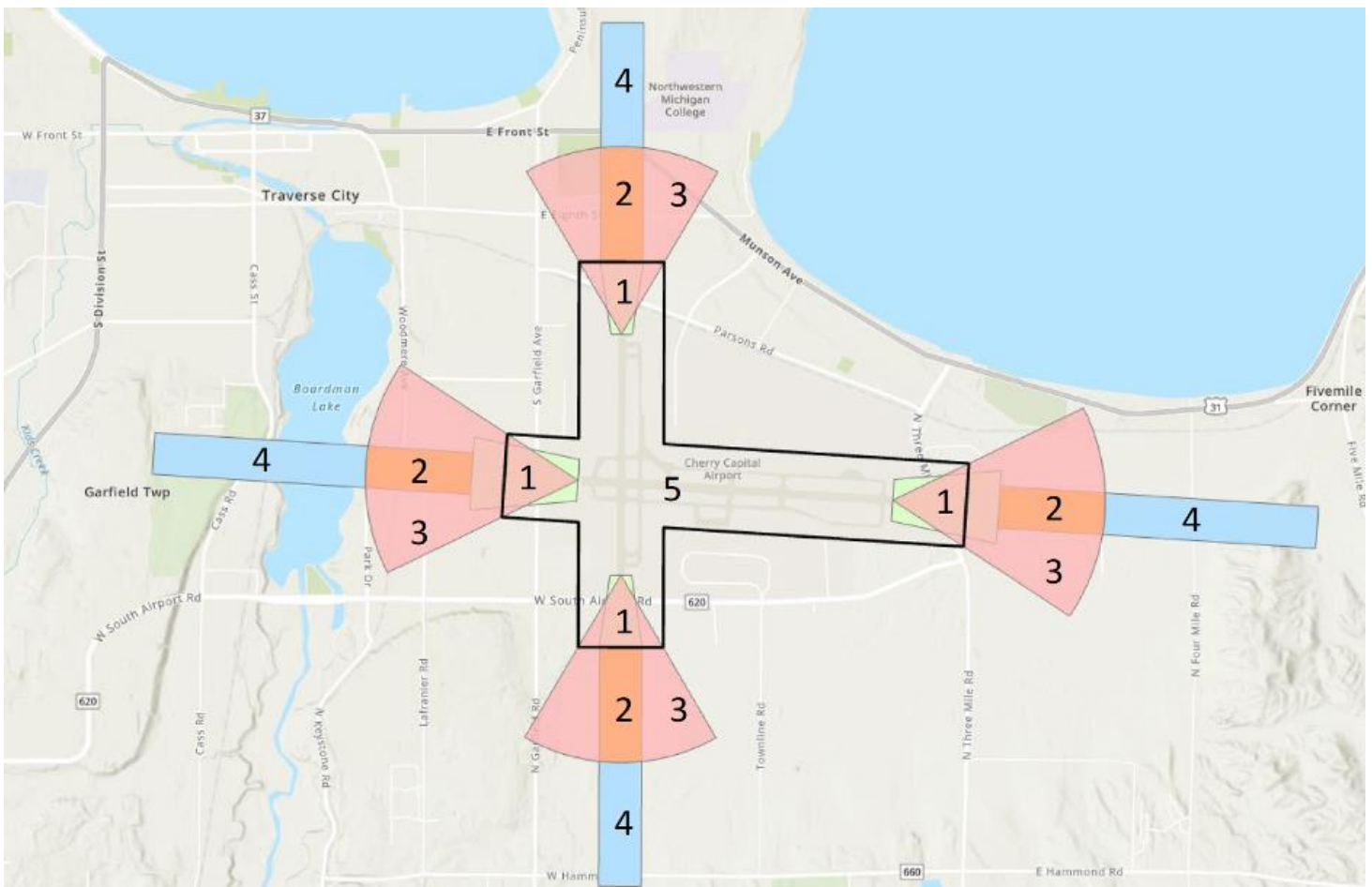
by Harold Lassers

Also on the agenda for the 18th is an airport expansion bond. The airport authority would like support from the BOC to more than double the number of gates at the airport. We have a beautiful airport that has served us well in the past, but this seems an unwise future step. Many of us have had the experience of sitting on the tarmac waiting for a gate at TVC, but I have yet to see all gates in use. The problem is that the airport does not have the

staff, especially for the late flight arrivals, to use the gates they already have. Given that we have been unsuccessful staffing all existing jetway gates, adding gates is not going to solve the current limitations.

The larger problem is that the airport location is not right for future growth. In April the *Michigan Aeronautics Commission* gave a report to the BOC showing that we have housing and occupancy levels in airport hazard zones that appear to already exceed the limits set by the Michigan Airport Zoning Act.

The hazard zone map they presented shows the areas where housing should be restricted; with zones 1&2 limited to 0-5 people per acre, zone 3 limited to 25 people per acre, and zone 4 limited to 40 people per acre. Risk increases with number of flights and occupancy density. There is already new construction and fairly dense housing in some of these areas. It was suggested that we could form an Airport Zoning Board and grant variances to these standards. That might be a short-term necessity, but it is not the right future path.



It is time to discontinue investment in the current airport. It has been an excellent facility in the past, but it is not the right location for future growth of the community. It is time to start finding a location for a new airport.

Minutes of GT BOC Meeting, September 4, 2024

By Sylvia McCullough

The BOC meeting was very straightforward with several reports given by the Road Commission, Networks Northwest, MSU Extension and the Community Development Block Grant Program (CDBG), as well as County Department reports.

Highlights are as follows:

Road Commission – Dan Watkins, Manager of GT County Road Commission, reported that the graveling program is underway as well as the last road brining and ditching in Grant Twp. Planning for winter is complete. Now planning for Spring 2025. Upgraded their sign and signal truck which will save the county \$12,000. Snow forecasting will come out at the end of October. They are considering replacing the double light at Traverse West High School with a single light due to traffic issues.

Networks Northwest (NW) Annual Report

C.E.O. Janie McNabb reported that NW is a ten-county regional organization with a \$10M budget. Focusing on Grand Traverse County (GTC), Ms. McNabb explained that NW runs workforce talent searches for counties. Their Youth Services Program featuring My Career Quest, worked with 2000 8th graders this year. Businesses bring their own materials. The program is very hands-on helping young people know there are career opportunities right here. They promote apprenticeships with specialized grants. Apprentices earn a paycheck while learning. In 2023, \$652,000 came to GTC. Trained 1,400 people in GTC in various companies: construction trades, medical, and manufacturing.

Commissioner Walters thanked Ms. McNabb and said that both she and her husband's companies have been recipients.

In response to **Commissioner Flynn**, Ms. McNabb said that finding applicants is their biggest issue because GTC is largely a retirement community. GTC has fewer working aged people, but numbers are inching upward. NW does have specialized programs to help employers find the right workers. Work at helping companies develop creative strategies: how to advertise, help them develop on the job training programs and apprenticeships to attract applicants.

MSU Extension Program Report for 2023-2024

Jennifer Berkie, Adm. Officer reported that they are funded by state, federal, county and grant dollars. They have 392 unique programs in this county including face to face programs, videos and zoom. Agricultural focus is their cornerstone. You may read her report on some of their programs in Grand Traverse County here: [MSU Extension Program Notes.docx - Google Docs.pdf](#)

Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) 2022 Closeout Public Hearing

The Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) program is a U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) initiative that provides annual grants to cities, counties and states to develop urban communities. For 2022, twelve projects were completed using all the grant funding.

Public Comment – none

CDBG Second Public Hearing 2023 Public Hearing – part of the funding can only be used for emergency repairs. \$9.1 M available to disburse. Some of it is in the form of loans, some not. Funds come back from repayments when a house is sold.

Public Comment – none

Department Reports

Chair Hentschel reported that the Pavilions is now operating in the black. Their next hurdle is the Cottages which are still operating in the red. Great efforts are being made to get them updated. There will be a donation drive on the million-dollar level to raise funds to make this possible. He also reported that the number of flights planned for Fall makes the airport the fastest growing in the country. It is owned by GTC & Leelanau County who work together. More to come in the coming weeks from Airport Manager Kevin Klien. He reported that there will be a ribbon cutting ceremony at Camp Greilick celebrating the purchase of this newest county park, which is not yet open to the public.

Hentschel also reported on the MAC (Michigan Association of Counties) Conference will be held in October. They are looking at an event where people can interact with the commissioners. He has asked the conference if they would like to have GTC have a presence perhaps after the work session. He felt that he had learned a lot about counties at these sorts of informal gatherings. Need a sponsor to get the word out.

Commissioner Brad Jewett – The Garfield Township board has narrowed down three applicants for Supervisor. Mr. Jewett asked for a moment of silence for the little eight-year-old boy killed at King’s Court Mobile Home Park in Traverse City yesterday. Asked for thoughts and prayers. He also reported that the new BATA Garage is now open on Garfield. They have an offer on their Diamond Dr. property. It is currently being used for training and bus storage. Operations will be fully moved by October.

Commissioner Nelson – Reported that the DPW has lost their director. He asked for grace for that department. The Airport Commission set a record for passenger movements in July. Nelson claimed the planned expansion is moving forward to add more gates. Commissioner Nelson also reported that the Horse Show ends Sept 22nd. Tues – Sat folks can attend for free. It is a world-class competition with top competitors. Entry is \$15 on Sunday which goes to non-profits locally.

Commissioner Penny Morris – As a member of Community Advisement Group, she was advised that the BOC could have a tour of the new mental health facility. She reported that Michaels Place will have a presentation at the Park Place Hotel on Oct 3, 2024. A Northern Lakes Mental Health report is also coming up.

Cliff DuPuy - The new IT program is up and running but staff needs to finish entering permits. The department is fully staffed but very busy. They will put information on the website for users to inform people about what to expect. Nate Alger reported they are working on how to use videos. Meeting adjourned.

November Elections - Remember the Judicial Races - Repeat

by Linda Pepper

If you vote a 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. By the way, the Michigan Supreme Court just helped increase our state minimum wages 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 voting option!

Traverse and Leelanau Indivisible Host A Celebration of Democracy



And what a celebration it was! Inspiring speeches by State Reps. Coffia and Roth highlighted their work to find common ground for the benefit of Northern Michigan. John Hunter of Leelanau Indivisible talked about the heritage and passion of the Indivisible movement.

Christina Schlitt of the League of Women Voters Grand Traverse Area spoke of their unerring commitment to objectivity and election integrity. Michelle Crocker, Leelanau County Clerk, was recognized for her long service to the county as the senior election official and spoke about the integrity of our electoral system and the commitment of the fine workers that make it strong. Finally, John Coleman of the Sheet Metal Workers

International Association gave impassioned testimony about the economic challenges, mental stresses and education requirements confronting working people across Northern Michigan and the nation.

Traverse and Leelanau Indivisibles are grateful for the support of our sponsors, presenters and the hundreds of citizens that attended the event. Now let's get to work to elect those that reflect our values!

Jim Horn of Traverse Talks created a 3 minute video of the Celebration.

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/boc>

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