

**CHEBOYGAN COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS  
COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE MEETING  
July 28, 2009**

The regular meeting of the Cheboygan County Board of Commissioners was called to order in the Commissioners Room by Chairperson Linda Socha at 9:30 a.m.

Roll called and a quorum present.

**PRESENT:** Commissioners Socha, Makima, Redmond, Page, Wallace and Bolinger

**ABSENT:** Commissioner Mushlock (excused)

Commissioner Bolinger gave the invocation and Commissioner Wallace led the Pledge of Allegiance.

**Motion** by Commissioner Bolinger, seconded by Commissioner Redmond, to approve the agenda as presented. Motion carried with 6 yes, 0 no and 1 absent.

**CITIZENS COMMENTS** – None

**SCHEDULED VISITORS/DEPARTMENT HEAD REPORTS**

Peter Amar, Coordinator of the Cheboygan County Human Services Coordinating Body and Board Member of the Michigan 2-1-1 initiative which is spearheaded by the Michigan Association of United Ways, addressed the Board. He said 2-1-1 is a nationally recognized telephone number for access to health and human services and volunteer opportunities. The process to bring this service has been begun and requires a multi-level approval process. Mr. Amar said plans are to be part of the Midland Call Center. The anticipated startup cost would be about \$1 per person per year, or approximately \$26,354 for Cheboygan County. Discussion held. Chairperson Socha directed the county administrator to draft a resolution of support for the next meeting.

**BOARD MATTERS FOR DISCUSSION**

District Court Judge Maria Barton explained that currently the 89<sup>th</sup> District Court has a full-time (35 hour) Civil/Traffic Deputy Clerk, a part-time (28 hour) Court Recorder/Deputy Clerk and a full-time (35 hour) Court Administrator. Due to the fact that on June 9, 2009 Liz Pilon was appointed as Chief Magistrate for Cheboygan County to replace Becky Phillips who retired effective July 6, 2009 a vacancy in the Civil/Traffic Deputy Clerk position was created. Judge Barton requested Tracy Lindsay's position as Court Recorder/Deputy Clerk be changed to a full-time (35 hour) position. Ms. Lindsay would continue as the court recorder; however this would allow her additional time to work in our Civil/Traffic Department when she is not recording and eliminate the need for training. Judge Barton also requested to make the full-time (35 hour) Civil/Traffic Deputy Clerk position a 21-28 hour part-time position.; and to change the Court Administrator's position from a full-time (35 hour) to a full-time (40 hour) position. She said Jodi Barrette has assumed additional responsibilities with the retirement of Becky Phillips. Savings to the county for these changes, including the change in Magistrate's hourly wage which was approved in June, would total either \$8,726 if the Civil Traffic Deputy Clerk worked 28 hours per week or \$10,864.56 if the position was a 21 hour per week position. When asked by Commissioner Page what prompted this reorganization, Judge Barton said with a full time position open, she look at ways to save money and this makes sense from a financial aspect. Ms. Kortz said she has actual comparables from other counties, but job duties have not been compared and studied. Chairperson Socha said these types of requests usually are made at budget time and since the requests have not been reviewed by Human Resources it would be the consensus to move these three action items to a business meeting as soon as additional information can be gathered.

Drain Commissioner Dennis Lennox addressed the board in regards to a bill he incurred regarding legal fees. He told the Board that his office is not running a deficit and he plans to submit a fee schedule shortly for board approval. Mr. Lennox said the Hubbard Law Firm, which consulted with is the top drain commissioner law firm in the state. He said he felt county's civil counsel opinion on the matter was not correct, as was confirmed by Hubbard Law Firm. Mr. Lennox apologized that he did not

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consult the board but had believed due to the small expense it was under his discretion. He said he has a legal obligation to perform his duties as drain commissioner until drainage districts in the county are abandoned or legislation is passed that abolishes his position. He said he plans to request at a future meeting a transfer of \$600 from the per diems line item, which he does not plan to use, to cover the legal bill and ensure his office has the resources it needs. He said he is working with the County Treasurer to establish a revolving fund; and appreciated the opportunity to clarify these issues. He refused to discuss the matter further except in closed session because of an ongoing legal matter. Chairperson Socha stressed to Mr. Lennox that he had no authority to go outside the county's civil counsel and said taxpayers have already paid for the time and effort spent by civil counsel on the issue. She referred to a memo of January 2009 from Mr. Lennox regarding per diems, requesting wages be zero and per diems go to \$3,000. When asked by civil counsel, Mr. Lennox said he would provide a copy of the Hubbard Law Firm correspondence to him. Chairperson Socha said Mr. Lennox sent letters to Hebron and Munro townships prior to receiving an answer from Mr. Graham. Lennox said a petition was recently taken out for a new county drain. Commissioner Page said supposedly there is not a lot of work to do in this office, but the point is this office is costing more than it has in the past. Mr. Lennox criticized previous Drain Commissioners for not perform their duties. He said there were up front costs and much research to ascertain the status of the drains in this county. Civil Counsel Bryan Graham explained that when a county hires civil counsel, civil counsel works for the board and all elected officials, if the civil counsel has a conflict a matter then can be referred to the prosecutor, if both civil counsel and prosecutor have a conflict, then by statute the Board is obligated to hire outside counsel to give that opinion. Mr. Lennox said there is no litigation, there was no lawyer retained; it was a one time matter for a second opinion. Commissioner Bolinger said Mr. Lennox was wrong about former drain commissioners they have done a good job. No action taken.

Community Development Director Steve Schnell showed informative statistic from two reports, on on the Economic Stress Index - Unemployment, Foreclosures, Bankruptcy and another titled Net Jobs Gain/Losses by Metropolitan Statistical Area from 2004 through the first quarter of 2009.

**CITIZENS COMMENTS – None**

**BOARD MEMBER COMMENTS**

Commissioner Page reported attending a Region 9 Council on Aging meeting in Alpena. He said a new elder index has been compiled which shows the poverty level for a single person to be \$10,400, the average social security for a widow is \$1,000 per month, interestingly a widower average's \$1,300 per month. The elder index reflects transportation and medical cost; for a single person to live alone costs about \$1,400 per month. All of these indicators are telling us many elderly citizens are under heavy stress. He said with 2010 budget before the House, the Governor has proposed an increase for some elderly programs such as MI Choice, as it is cheaper to have elders stay at home. He said all major state departments were told to expect about a 15% cut.

Commissioner Bolinger said the District 4 Health Department stresses the importance of flu vaccinations. Commissioner Socha said there are many concerned with the flu and the swine flu this fall. She said as the economy worsens the 2-1-1 program would become more important.

Commissioner Wallace said REA's are to be receiving federal stimulus money for broadband for rural areas. Commissioner Page said we keep hearing the Broadband Coop should be able to benefit some from this.

**Motion** by Commissioner Redmond, seconded by Commissioner Makima, to adjourn to the call of the Chair. Meeting adjourned at 11:20 a.m.

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Mary Ellen Tryban  
Cheboygan County Clerk/Register

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Linda Socha  
Chairperson