

**ALGER COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE MEETING**

August 6, 2009

Pursuant to recess, the Alger County Board of Commissioners convened in the conference room of the county building at 3:15 p.m. on the above date.

The meeting was called to order by Chairwoman Pullen with the following Commissioners present: Commissioners Doucette, Mattson, VanLandschoot, and Pullen. Absent – Commissioner Lindstrom.

The Board of Commissioners said the Pledge of Allegiance.

Public comment session was open. There was no public comment from the floor; thus, public comment was closed.

It was the consensus of the Board to look at the minutes and make a motion at Monday's regular board meeting.

On a motion by Commissioner VanLandschoot, seconded by Commissioner Doucette to accept the agenda as presented. Motion carried by the following vote: Ayes – Commissioners Doucette, Mattson, VanLandschoot, and Pullen. Nays – none. Absent – Commissioner Lindstrom.

Tom Jordan and Tony Radjenovich from MERS gave a presentation about their Health Care Savings Program. Tom said that the MERS premier health coverage is being terminated on January 31, 2010 because of issues between the health insurance department and MERS. He said the Health Care Savings Program is designed to help employees set money aside on a tax free basis to pre-fund their portion of retiree health care costs. There was much discussion on this. Tom is going to email Commissioner VanLandschoot and the Clerk a list of employers who offer this program in the Upper Peninsula.

Elizabeth Coyne from the Alger County Conservation District sent a letter requesting support and possible funding for a training opportunity that costs \$895. She is asking for any financial contributions that the County can give.

It was the consensus of the Board from a recommendation of the finance committee to approve the wage increase for Jill Maddox and Lori Erickson in the amount of \$.30 per hour split between the four counties. It was discussed at a judicial meeting that the wage increases were budgeted for at a rate of 2.5% in the Circuit Court budget and that it is nothing over and above their budget.

It was the consensus of the Board to authorize the Clerk to advertise for bids for three-year contracts for auditors and for remonumentation.

It was the consensus of the Board to have Pat come up with some millage language to maintain the level of taxation that was lost through the headlee rollback by August 10th at the next regular board meeting.

The letter from Loren and Pat Graham was discussed. Commissioner Pullen asked Rod DesJardins from the City of Munising if they were putting together a resolution for the Old North Lighthouse. It was the consensus of the Board to use the City's resolution as a template for our resolution. See the following letter:

Old North Lighthouse
Grand Island
Munising, MI 49862
July 24, 2009

Cathy Pullen
Commissioner, Alger County
County Building, 100 Court Street
Munising, MI 49862

Dear Cathy Pullen,

We are writing to inquire if Alger County would be willing to support the idea of our establishing a self-sustaining endowed museum open to the public in Old North Lighthouse on the north end of Grand Island. If so, would you send a letter of support to use for distribution to the aides of Senators Levin, Stabenow and Representative Stupak, who requested one? In this letter we will give the background of the request and also a list of organizations and individuals who have already written such letters of support.

As you may know, we have for many years been promoting a project that would establish a museum open to the public in Old North Lighthouse on Grand Island whenever the two of us are not able to continue to care for the lighthouse. We purchased the lighthouse from the Cleveland Cliffs Iron Company in 1972, when it was basically a ruin, and have restored it and collected historical materials and furniture within it.

The reason why this project is complex is that it involves a land exchange with the Forest Service. We own the lighthouse buildings, but not the land on which they sit. We have offered to exchange with the Forest Service four contiguous lots near the East Channel (South) Light (the largest undeveloped piece of private land left on Grand Island) for a smaller piece of land under the lighthouse buildings at North Light which would be a part of the museum (we are offering 2.3 acres of land valued by Swanson, Mercier & Associates of Marquette in November 2007 at \$162,000 in exchange for 1.44 acres of land under the lighthouse valued by Mercier at the same time at \$141,000.) The United States government (the Forest Service) would gain both in amount of land and in valuation as a result of the exchange.

If this exchange can be accomplished, we (Loren and Patricia Graham) will donate the lighthouse, its contents, and an endowment in a life insurance policy of \$1,000,000 for the perpetual support of the museum. We estimate that the endowment would bring in about \$50,000 a year for costs of preservation. We think that caretakers would often be volunteers granted the right to live in the lighthouse for the summer in return for showing the facility to tourists and doing light maintenance work. Heavy work would be contracted out by the board of trustees of the museum and paid for out of the endowment. We intend that the members of the board of trustees of the museum would be predominantly local people.

We have been working on this project a long time and have received letters of support for it from the following organizations:

The Historical Society of Michigan
The Alger County Historical Society
The Munising Rotary Club
The Marquette County Historical Society
The Marquette Maritime Museum
The American Lighthouse Foundation
The Lighthouse Preservation Society
The United States Lighthouse Society
The Great Lakes Lighthouse Keepers Association
The Great Lakes Shipwreck Historical Society
The Central Coast Lighthouse Keepers Association

In addition, US Senators Levin, Stabenow, Kennedy and Representatives Stupak, Kildee, and Capuano have all supported the Old North Lighthouse Museum project.

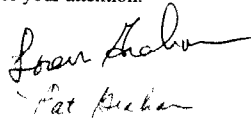
A lawyer from the Office of General Counsel of the US Department of Agriculture (the Forest Service comes under the USDA), James Snow, also supports the plan, and visited the lighthouse just a week or so ago, along with staff members of Senator Levin, Stabenow, and Representative Stupak. Snow has promised to work with the congressional offices in trying to get the land exchange authorized.

Harold Chase, legislative aide to Senator Levin, previously located in Traverse City, but now in Washington, DC, came with Snow to the lighthouse and suggested that it would be good to get support for the project from "local government," specifically, Grand Island Township and Alger County. Hence we are writing you now, as we are also writing Doris Bateson of Grand Island Township and Ron DesJardins of the City of Munising..

We would be delighted for members of the Alger County government to visit us at the lighthouse over the next few weeks. A passenger ferry runs to the island in the summer, and we can provide transportation to the lighthouse.

Thank you for your attention.

Sincerely,



Loren and Patricia Graham

It was the consensus of the Board to approve membership to the Greater Munising Bay Partnership in the amount of \$400. Monies are to come from the Commissioner's budget in the dues and memberships account.

It was the consensus of the Board to approve payment to NorthCare Substance Abuse Services in the amount of \$14,922. Alger County will receive an estimated \$43,477 of liquor tax by the State Treasury in 2009. Monies are to come from the substance abuse account. Alger County has received \$29,844 and the next payment to Alger County should be in October. Accordingly, 50% of these funds must be distributed to the regional Substance Abuse Coordinating Agency.

There was no old business to discuss.

It was discussed that board bills will be done on Friday, August 7, 2009 at 4:00 p.m. by the audit committee.

It was the consensus of the board to approve to the financial reports for all funds. A full 30-page report is available upon request with the Treasurer.

It was the consensus of the Board to approve Resolution No. 2009-19 In Support of HB 4893.

Commissioner Mattson talked about the judicial committee. Commissioner Doucette wrote his committee notes and gave a copy to each commissioner. Commissioners VanLandschoot and Pullen talked about the airport.

Correspondence was discussed and will be placed in the file. Commissioner VanLandschoot talked about an email he received regarding a Hiawatha National Wildfire Plan for the Lost Lake / Powell Lake area.

Public comment session was open. There was discussion that John Cotey from AMCAB needs a secure room for four filing cabinets. There was no other public comment; thus, the public comment session was closed.

It was moved by Commissioner Doucette, seconded by Commissioner Mattson to adjourn this meeting. Motion carried by the following vote: Ayes – Commissioners Doucette, Lindstrom, Mattson, VanLandschoot, and Pullen. Nays – none. Absent – none.

Catherine A. Pullen, Chairwoman
Alger County Board of Commissioners

Mary Ann Froberg
Alger County Clerk