

**Observer Corps Summaries
January 2024**

Emmet County Commissioners

Date: 01/03/2024

Notes: Meeting began at 4:30 pm and adjourned at 4:45 pm.
No public comment was offered.
Votes for chair and vice chair split 4 - 3, with White selected chair, and Ahrens vice-chair.
The nomination of White for chair was made by Koontz, seconded by Gutowski.
The nomination of Ginop for chair was made by Laughbaum, seconded by Mapes.
White received 4 votes: Koontz, Gutowski, Ahrens and White.

Ahrens was nominated by Koontz for vice-chair, seconded by Gutowski.
Mapes was nominated by Laughbaum for vice-chair, seconded by Ginop.
Ahrens received 4 votes: Koontz, Gutowski, Ahrens and White.

Committee members will remain the same, with one change to Zoning Board of Appeals - Ahrens replacing Laughbaum.

Issues

To watch: None

Date: 01/08/2024

Notes: One item in New Business was to set a Public Hearing for the CDBG Housing Improving Local Livability (CHILL) Program grant. It was unanimously approved by roll call vote to be held at the next Board of Commissioner meeting on January 18, 2024 at 6 pm.
There was a request by Mr. Laughbaum to discuss transit funds, but it was agreed to put it on the next agenda (Jan. 18)
The Board went into closed session to discuss privileged communication from the County's attorney.

Issues: We should continue to monitor the Board's actions regarding transit and housing funds.

Date: 01/18/2024

Notes: Transportation: Laughbaum brought up the \$450K in ARPA funds that had previously been earmarked for public transit. He felt the money had languished long enough and should be distributed elsewhere now that there were "four Republicans" on the Board. His suggestion was to take those funds and an additional \$550K of ARPA money (which would come from the \$1M earmarked for housing) and use that for road repairs in the County. Ginop agreed and commented that the previous transit effort was unsuccessful. Koontz pointed out

that that would not be an equitable use of the funds as not every district would benefit from the money. In further discussion, it was decided to table the request to allow time for further discussion and consideration.

Emmet County submitted a letter of intent to apply to MSHDA (Michigan State Housing and Development Authority) for funds from a CHILL grant (CDBG Housing Improving Local Livability) which provides financial assistance to homeowners for home improvement projects (insulation, roof repair, windows, plumbing, etc.) In order for Emmet County to apply, a public hearing is required to be set and completed before the application can be uploaded. Per the guidelines of the grant, it states – “Provide for a minimum of two public hearings for the purpose of obtaining residents’ views and responding to proposals and questions. The first public hearing must be held prior to application submission to MSHDA and the second near the end of the grant term. The application deadline is February 12th, 2024. I believe this meeting satisfied the requirement for the 1st public meeting.

Issues

To watch: If appropriate, we may want to encourage a call to action to address the request for diverting ARPA funds from a public transit program in Emmet County to road repair.

Petoskey City Council

Date: 01/08/2024
Notes: Nothing to report

Issues

To watch: None

Date: 01/22/2024
Notes: Public Comment – Several city business owners expressed concerns about parking assessments, signage ordinances, absentee landlords and poorly maintained vacancies. There was also frustration about unequal enforcement of the existing laws and concerns falling on deaf ears. There was a vote to lift the current moratorium on short term rentals. There are 33 existing rentals and 7 pending.

Issues

To watch: None

Bear Creek Township:

Date: 01/03/2024

Notes: Housing: The "Hiawatha House" (owned by the township) repairs, updates, and cleaning are finished, 7 parties have applied to rent it, and as soon as credit checks are completed a tenant will be selected.

Issues

To watch: A member of the public known to be critical of the library asked when the library millage renewal is going to be voted on (the answer--the township has not been informed).

Public Schools of Petoskey

Date: 01/15/2024

Notes: There was a presentation from Alcona Health on providing a health clinic in the high school. This topic had been discussed at a previous special board meeting without the presence of Alcona officials. It sounds like Alcona would like to establish such a clinic and get state funding. My impression at the special board meeting was that the board was not enthusiastic, but that was not apparent from questions asked after this presentation.

Issues

To watch: Since there is no access to background information it is difficult for an observer to know if the comments or questions from board members stem from the information in their board packet or from elsewhere. Perhaps the committee on health would be interested in knowing more about this if they are not already aware.

Petoskey District Library

Date: 01/25/2024

Notes: Several "reports" were referenced and discussed by the members but were not available to the audience. One agenda item was removed at the meeting's beginning due to information being unavailable (training on new email accounts) This November, the PDL's 4-year millage renewal will be on the ballot. The library will have a float in the 4th of July parade. Friends of the Petoskey Library reported a cabin fever book sale on March 7th-9th. Construction on the building will be complete in the next few weeks. Treasurer reports a healthy year-end balance carry over to 2024. Nearly all the library usage areas are back to pre-covid levels. A new policy restricting all solicitation and petitioning on library property was proposed, voted on and passed. The library provides Notary services.

Issues

To watch: There may be some pushback from townships regarding the millage in November because of book banning and other issues.

Harbor Springs City Council

Date: 01/04/2024

Notes: Harbor Springs Planning Commission - The new student representative, M. Bowman was welcomed by the PC members. John Iacoangeli of Becket & Raeder is working with the PC to collapse Harbor Springs Zoning districts to make alternative housing available in the city. They hope to have a public hearing in February.

Issues: None

Date: 01/15/2024

Notes: Harbor Springs City Council - Three-hour meeting. The decision was made to place the electrical substation on Hoyt Road with underground lines. There was a discussion of the term limit survey with any action put on hold. Bluff rights, view and safety discussed, and a citizens committee will be formed. An IT services company was approved for the Police Department for the next three years. An out-of-town businessman sent his lawyer to explain the need to put a marijuana store on the ballot in HS. Snow removal expansion costs and problems in the CBD discussed with encouraging the DDA to encourage businesses to pay for their own snow removal.

Issues

To watch: None

Pellston Public Schools

Date: 01/08/2024

Notes: Nothing to report

Issues

To Watch: None

Board of Health

Date:

Notes: No meeting in January

Issues

To watch: None reported

Charlevoix County Commissioners

Date: 01/10/2024

Notes: YouTube audio is hard to hear.

Issues

To Watch: None

Date: 01/24/2024

Notes: Nothing to report

Issues: None

To Watch

Charlevoix City Council

Date: 01/02/2024

Notes: Preparations continue for the upcoming bridge closure.

Issues: None

To watch

Date: 01/15/2024

Notes: Nothing to report

Issues

To watch: None

Boyne City Council

Date: 01/09/2024

Notes: Approved 12.8-million-dollar sanitary sewer improvement project.

Issues

To watch: None

Date: 01/23/2024

Notes: The meeting continued for almost 5 hours. The Observer attempted to watch the second half later as recorded via Zoom, but very poor sound quality. Others watching made the same comment.

Issues

To watch: None

Boyne Valley Township

Date: 01/08/2025

Notes: Nothing to report

Issues

To watch: None

Cheboygan County Commissioners

Date: 01/23/2024

Notes: Tip of Mitt representative notified the Commission of state concerns regarding septic system education.

Issues

To watch: Observer used citizen comment time to encourage the use of zoom so people could attend meetings virtually. A couple other citizens supported that comment. Perhaps all County Commissions could be encouraged to do that -- from LWV of Michigan. The League could write a letter both commending those that do, and encouraging those who do not.