

**COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
PERSONNEL, EQUALIZATION AND APPORTIONMENT/TRANSPORTATION/HEALTH AND
SOCIAL SERVICES COMMITTEE**

February 25, 2025

A regular meeting of the Chippewa County Board of Commissioners Personnel/Equalization and Apportionment/Transportation/Health and Social Services Committee was held on Tuesday, February 25, 2025, at the Chippewa County Courthouse in Sault Ste. Marie, Michigan. Chairman Damon Lieurance called the meeting to order at 11:03 a.m. with a quorum present.

MEMBERS PRESENT: Damon Lieurance, Justin Knepper, and Scott Shackleton

MEMBERS ABSENT: None

OTHERS PRESENT: Rob Stratton, Judge Blubaugh, Shelley Brosco, Jim Traynor, and Kelly Church

Approval of the Agenda

It was moved by Commissioner Shackleton, supported by Commissioner Knepper, to approve the agenda as presented. On a voice vote, the motion CARRIED.

Public Comment

No public comment was offered.

Personnel – Prosecuting Attorney request (Prosecuting Attorney Rob Stratton)

The Committee was given an overview of the request by both Administrator Church regarding the financials and from Prosecutor Rob Stratton with regards to the issues his and the Public Defenders Office being able to hire and retain attorneys in Chippewa County. The request would need to cover not only the staff of the Prosecutors Office, but also the staff attorney positions of the Public Defenders Office, including the Chief Assistant P.A. moving from a Non-Union 15 to 17, the Assistant P.A. (x2) and Assistant P.D. moving from Non-Union 12 to 14 and the Deputy P.D. Non-Union 13 to 15, plus the already approved special salaries for these positions. The total increase at the five-year rates of pay; which four of these positions would be at the starting level; would be an additional cost of just under \$70,000.00 at the highest rates of pay on the County pay scale, using the current benefit rates, which are subject to change. A lengthy discussion followed the overview including topics: public vs. private sector; the County's obligations to provide services; ways to improve retention and recruitment; increase networking for the job postings; the current competitive environment for attorneys; the local economics; housing and specialty courts were discussed.

It was moved by Commissioner Shackleton, supported by Commissioner Knepper, to approve the grade changes as requested and those presented; with the one (1) Chief Assistant P.A. moving to Grade 17; the two (2) Assistant P. A's and one (1) Assistant P.D. moving to Grade 14 and the one (1) Deputy P.D. moving to Grade 15, including the special salaries as currently listed on the County pay scale and following County policy. And to step up on the recruitment and advertising for the positions. On a voice vote, the motion CARRIED (2-1 with Commissioner Lieurance voting nay.)

Health and Social Services – Guardianship Services (Judge Blubaugh)

Judge Blubaugh and Probate/Juvenile Register Shelley Brosco briefly addressed the Committee, first thanking them for the quick action to put monies in place for those Chippewa County constituents that may need to have a guardianship appointment made on their behalf, but do not have the means of affording the needed services. Judge Blubaugh updated the Committee on actions and collaborations with other local agencies and the services of a new company out of Alpena have come together following the unfortunate death of a local community

member who helped a multitude of people in Chippewa County with guardianships, including pro bono work for those less fortunate.

Personnel Updates

The Committee was updated on the new Earned Sick Time Act (ESTA) that went into effect on February 21, 2025, which will change benefits for both full and part-time employees of Chippewa County. The part-time employees will all now be eligible to accrue 1 hour of sick time for every 30 hours worked; and our full-time employees are eligible for 72 hours of sick time per year, instead of the current 64; employees currently covered by a Collective Bargaining Agreement (CBA) will be adjusted accordingly when the various contracts open for negotiations. Part-time staff will now be able to carry over 72 hours instead of the current 40; and non-union full-time will maintain their 168-hour carryover; and those covered by the CBA will follow the contract until re-negotiated. The eight-hour increase will increase the sick time payout that happens for full-time employees each January, per policy. (For the 2026 payout it will only affect the non-union; those covered by a CBA will follow the contract) County policies No. 243 – Earned Sick Time Act (ESTA), previously called Sick Leave for Part-time Employees; Policy No. 230 – Sick Leave and Sickness and Accident Insurance Benefit and Policy No. 233 – Other Leave Time; will all be updated accordingly to meet the ESTA and to match language between policies.

It was moved by Commissioner Shackleton, supported by Commissioner Knepper, to approve the necessary changes for the Earned Sick Time Act (ESTA), as necessary, including increasing the Non-union sick time hours to 72 and maintaining the 168-hour carryover; with the policies and handbook to be updated accordingly. On a voice vote, the motion CARRIED.

This motion does not cover the current Collective Bargaining Agreements; those contracts will be followed until re-negotiated.

The Committee was then updated by Administrator Church with information only regarding House Bill No. 5046, which increases the per page for a transcript cost to \$3.75 from \$2.35 as of April 2, 2025. In addition several personnel issues that have been happening; the updates included problems with employees using all of their leave time and then using Leave without pay (LWOP), which causes issues with not meeting the minimum requirements for benefits and violates collective bargaining agreements; as the employees are supposed to have forty (40) hours per week; we have had a couple extensive long-term disability claims; that are hindering the offices they work for in their absence; the Sheriff's Office has hired their new Captains positions and has also had a couple employee issues that have been addressed. The Committee was updated on a payroll issue with regards to MCL 45.421; which will be corrected and submitted through payroll for approval; as previously sought attorney opinion has changed since March 2024. The MIDC was also briefly discussed as the new application will be due in April and the struggles of hiring attorneys; the Upper Peninsula Counties are split in the models are used to offer the Indigent Services; with eight (8) using the P.D. Office model and seven (7) using the Managed Assigned Counsel (MAC) model, which limits the local control.

The Committee was also updated on the Circuit Courtroom carpeting being completed and the recent water leaks in both the County Building and the Courthouse as well as the closure of the east entrance due to the snow and ice falling.

Committee Comments

Committee member Knepper asked that the previously pass motion to expedite the Opioid Settlement Committee and RFP be addressed.

Chairmans Comments

Chairman Lieurance commented that his priority is the little guy first; that he knows all the people working for the County are good people and that he doesn't want to forget about those in the lower pay grades.

Adjourn

It was moved by Commissioner Knepper, supported by Commissioner Shackleton to adjourn the meeting. The meeting was adjourned at 12:26 p.m.



Kelly J. Church, Recorder



Damon Lieurance, Chairperson