

SPECIAL MEETING
MEETING MINUTES HOUGHTON TOWNSHIP BOARD
WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 20, 2024
Houghton Township Community Building

CALL TO ORDER AND PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE:

Supervisor Robbie Fischer called the special meeting to order at 1:00 pm and led the Board and those in attendance in the Pledge of Allegiance.

MEMBERS PRESENT: Supervisor Robbie Fischer, Deputy Clerk Linda Paradiso, Treasurer Mary Long, Trustee Tom Hall, Trustee Jim Huovinen

MEMBERS ABSENT: Wanda Kolb, Clerk

GUESTS PRESENT: Mel Jones, Steve Kline, Kathy McEvers

AGENDA: The Notice of Special Meeting served as the agenda for the meeting.

PURPOSE OF THE MEETING: Meeting regarding the absence of a Township Clerk and Treasurer following the General Election Nov. 5, 2024.

DISCUSSION:

Clerk: No township residents have been identified for the current job. Jen Salo, a summer resident of Gitche Gumee Bible Camp, has expressed interest. Given current state law, she would need to change her residency to Houghton Township.

To relieve the Clerk of some of the duties currently assigned, and if asked by the new Clerk:

- Mel Jones is willing to serve in the Deputy Clerk position and is available to carry out the Clerk financial and employee federal and state reporting duties.
- Lisa Koljonen has been approached regarding the assigned Clerk financial responsibilities, has expressed interest, but is not available to take on the Deputy Clerk position.
- Cemetery legal documents and records would continue to be handled by the Clerk. Trustees, volunteers and Houghton Township maintenance are willing to assume primary responsibility to show prospective buyers available grave sites and report outcomes to the Clerk.
- Linda Paradiso is willing to continue to perform election-related duties.

Treasurer: Julie Hamilton was contacted by Mel Jones and may be interested. Mel will provide Julie with Mary Long's contact information so that more detail regarding full job responsibilities can be discussed. No other township residents have expressed an interest in the job. Once the Treasurer is selected, a Deputy Treasurer will be named.

Robbie asked if we had a Houghton Township resident contact list so that we might do a mass email and/or mass mailing to all residents as some may be unaware that, after January 2, 2025, we are without a Clerk and Treasurer. Linda will provide a resident contact list to the Board.

Contacting our State Legislators: Jim Huovinen suggested contacting our State Representative, Greg Markkanen and State Senator, Ed McBroom and their legislative aides again. The questions the Township would pose are:

1. Houghton Township has no Clerk, effective January 2, 2025. A previous Houghton Township Supervisor, Mel Jones, with 40+ years of experience with Houghton Township governmental duties and responsibilities, has expressed a willingness to be the Clerk. Mr. Jones is no longer a resident of Houghton Township but resides in nearby Calumet, MI. Our understanding is that the Clerk must be a resident of the Township. In this extreme situation, is there a possibility that the State would allow a former resident with this vast experience and familiarity with Houghton Township governmental responsibilities to take on this job? If not, the Township will be left without a Clerk and will be no longer viable as a Township. The County and State would then have to intervene on how to pay our bills after January 2, 2025, and govern Houghton Township going forward.
2. Given the requirements for meetings as outlined in the Open Meeting Act (MCL-Act 267 of 1976), smaller Michigan townships with populations of less than or equal to 300 continue to struggle to fill township Board positions due to their small population size and part-time availability to participate fully in meetings in person. Michigan townships of 300 or less population represent only 4.8% of the townships (59 of 1240 townships). We respectfully ask that the Senate further amend Senate Bill 870 to allow remote meeting full participation of public body members who are unable to attend a meeting in person due to temporary physical absence from the township locale, or to provide emergency legislation to do so.
3. Further, we ask that the amended Senate Bill 870 allow up to \$5000 in start-up costs to secure equipment in the physical township meeting location to allow for remote meeting access for both public body members and the public. This may include, but is not limited to, a computer, a screen, speakers, mountings, and an annual subscription fee to business software (e.g., Zoom, Microsoft Teams, etc.).

The next Special Meeting regarding this topic will be **December 4, 2024, 1:00pm** at the Houghton Township Community Building.

The meeting was adjourned at 2:00pm.

-CERTIFICATION-

I, the undersigned, Linda Paradiso, the duly qualified deputy Clerk for the Township of Houghton, Keweenaw County, Michigan, DO CERTIFY that the foregoing is a true and complete copy of the certain proceedings taken by the Township Board of said Township at a special board meeting held on November 20, 2024.



Linda Paradiso

Deputy Clerk, Houghton Township