

REGULAR MEETING

The regular meeting of the Board of County Road Commissioners of Iron County was held on Tuesday, June 10, 2025, at 8:30 a.m. in the Road Commission office at 800 W. Franklin Street, Iron River, Michigan.

Chairman Schmidt led the Pledge of Allegiance and opened the meeting.

Present for the roll call were Chairman Ernie Schmidt, Vice-Chairman Ron Frailing and Commissioners Dan Germic, Chuck Battan and Jim Cihak. Also, present: Superintendent/ Manager Brad Toivonen, Finance Director Michelle Johnson, HR-PR Administrator Emily Bieghler, Maintenance Foreman Rob Johnson, Fill-In Shop Foreman Duane Porier, Bates Twp. Supervisor Mike Stafford, Mastodon Township Trustee Dave Smith, Ean Bruette, County Commissioner, Attorney Mark Tousignant, Craig Richardson, Wickwire and Brian Schiavo, GEI Consultants. Members of the public: Patti Leonoff.

ADDITIONS TO THE AGENDA

None.

MINUTES TO BE APPROVED

Moved by Commissioner Frailing, supported by Cihak, to approve the minutes of May 13, 2025, audit and regular meetings.

Voice vote, all in favor, motion carried.

DISBURSEMENTS TO BE APPROVED

a. Payrolls of:	\$ 146,759.43
b. Prepaid Claims of:	67,726.84
c. Accounts Payables of:	108,613.84

Total: \$ 323,100.11

Moved by Commissioner Battan, supported by Germic, to approve the Audit Committee Report dated May 31, 2025, covering the above disbursements.

Roll call vote: Ayes- Cihak, Battan, Germic, Frailing, Schmidt. Nays-None. Motion carried.

SUPERINTENDENTS REPORT

Superintendent Toivonen reviewed his report:

Primary Roads:

Hagerman Lake Rd. PH1 and CR 424PH7 are ready to go and the MDOT Category "D" funds have been received. An extension to the 424 project will be calculated as a result of overall bid savings between the two projects. Construction will begin late August-early September.

Pavement marking on both sides of the County will be done this year, with Tobin-Alpha Rd. on the East side and another site to be determined on the West side.

Bacco will have the ER projects on Ponozzo, Warner Mine, Baumgartner, and Bates-Amasa should be completed by the end of June. Smokey Lk Rd. and Basswood have been pushed back until August due to a wait on the culverts.

Local Roads:

Chicagon Mine Rd. and Wagner Lk. Rd. both have an anticipated completion date of June 11th. Construction on Barry Rd. is tentatively scheduled to begin July/August, and both Kalla Walla Rd. and West Brule Lk Rd. should begin late August, early September.

Mr. Johnson contacted the office, and a one-week extension was given. Attorney Tousignant recommends criminal trespass charges be filed with the County at that time if the issue is not resolved.

The gate on Little Finland has been shut again despite the property owner being told he cannot put a gate up on a county road. We will be removing the gate.

Fleet / Equipment:

Shop Foreman Stolberg is on his way back from Boyne Falls with the wings for the new tandems.

Samsara is looking to host a western U.P. Samsara meeting here in Iron County and a few suggestions have been made for a location to hold it.

Bids for graders will be out in the next week or so, to be due in August.

Michelle has been doing research on spending limits and putting together a purchasing policy.

Employment Items:

There were two new HEOPS that started in May, one in each garage. One of the full-time Iron River HEOP's gave notice he would be leaving toward the end of June. Emily is doing very well as out HR-PR Admin. and Duane Porier began training as the Fill-In Shop Foreman last week. The new Mechanic's Aid started a couple of weeks ago and he is also doing very well; he will be training with Tyler for a few more weeks. The application period for the Mechanic position has been extended for two weeks. Five of the seven summer temps have started.

Bridges:

Brad met with Crystal Falls Township, MDOT and GEI on June 9th to discuss the Resort Dr. bridge and bike path grant. There is potential for an agreement between the Township and the Road Commission, which could allow the path to continue and eventually have the bridge removed instead of abandoning it. We are very unlikely to receive funding to rehab this bridge, but there is a bridge program for the removal of bridges that is an option. The grant has been approved to continue the path to Bewabic and efforts are being made to keep the project moving forward.

The application for the rehabilitation of the FFH-16 N. & S. Br. of the Paint River was confirmed as received and the grants will be awarded in October.

Misc:

Advertising on behalf of MDOT has gone out for the milling and repaving of some areas on US-2, east of FFH16, with bids due June 12th.

MCRCSIP:

The trial for Treeline Dr. has been rescheduled for September 30th – October 10th.

CRA:

Ed Noyola testified in support of increasing both the regular non-competitive bid threshold and emergency non-competitive thresholds for county road agencies. Senate Bill 288 was also introduced to amend the Open Meetings Act regarding grounds for going into closed session when a public body consults with its attorney.

Finance & HR Meeting:

With the State contract revisions in progress, there was discussion about increasing the overhead rate. Schoolcraft RC presented some good information about calculating different rates as per the contract. Michelle has been looking at how these other options could benefit us.

SAM:

Eleven of the seventeen western U.P. road commissions were represented at the May 15th SAM meeting held

at the Oss garage. Plans are to meet twice per year going forward. Our Foremen were able to take a lot out of this meeting, and it is anticipated that attendance will grow.

Michigan Dept. of Treasury:

The final review of the FY2024 audit is expected to be completed this week by the Local Audit and Finance division of Treasury.

EGLE-Urban Ave. Tanks:

A letter from the Remediation and Redevelopment Division of EGLE was received, referring to the underground storage tank leak in 1997 on the since sold Urban Ave property. Brad has a call out to another road commission that recently received a similar letter and will be going through the files in hopes the compliance paperwork was simply misfiled.

Fiber Optic:

Now that Highline is managing the crews themselves, it appears they are more organized this year. Any new permits issues will go through Oxcart. Work for this year is anticipated to go from the Crystal Falls area, through Mansfield, the Mastodon Camp 5 area and back through Alpha. Michigan Broadband has submitted permits in the Smokey Lake Rd area.

Parks and Rec:

Supt. Toivonen hopes to have the estimate for ditching near the driveway to the hatchery done in time for the June 24th Parks and Rec meeting.

Drain Commissioner:

Boards are in on Stager Lake and Fortune Lake. There have been a few calls on the level of Sunset Lake, but after all the rain, the level is still high.

Commissioner Battan inquired about fixing washouts on US 2.

DELEGATIONS

Mastodon Township Trustee Dave Smith had questions about the liability to the fiber companies if there were to be road damage caused by the fiber optic installation. He offered to volunteer his time and equipment to pull in the gravel from the shoulders back into the road in Mastodon. Although greatly appreciated, many concerns, especially with liability if he were to be hit, do not permit this. Several other options were discussed.

County Commissioner Bruette asked if there was an update on the tariffs on the truck we are waiting for. Nothing new to report on it.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

None.

PUBLIC COMMENT

None.

OLD BUSINESS

None.

NEW BUSINESS

WHITECO LLC SETTLEMENT AND RELEASE AGREEMENT-RAWNICK RD. DAMAGES

Attorney Tousignant reviewed the agreement and recommended the Board authorize Supt. Toivonen to sign it. Moved by Commissioner Cihak, supported by Germic, to authorize Supt. Toivonen to sign the release agreement and accept a \$35,000 settlement with WhiteCo LLC for repairs to Rawnick Rd.
Roll call vote: Ayes- Battan, Frailing, Germic, Cihak, Schmidt. Nays-None. Motion carried.

UPDATE ON INVESTMENTS

Finance Director Johnson provided the Board with an update on the funding of the MERS Defined Benefit plan, MERS Retiree Health Trust and the OPEB waivers for FY2023 and 2024. A corrective action monitoring request has been received from the Dept. of Treasury as a condition of having received the Protecting Michigan Pension grant.

ATTORNEYS REPORT

None.

COMMISSIONERS' COMMENTS

Commissioner Frailing requested an update on a policy regarding gates in the right-of-way.
Commissioner Schmidt asked about road abandonment when there is water access within the right-of-way.

At 10:04 a.m. with no further business to come before the Board, it was motioned by Germic, supported by Cihak, to adjourn.


Ernie Schmidt, Chairman
Michelle Johnson, Clerk of the Board