

Regular Meeting Minutes

Iron County Board of Commissioners

September 15, 2026

The regular meeting of the Board of County Road Commissioners of Iron County was held on Tuesday, September 15, 2026, 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 and Commissioners Chuck Battan, Ron Frailing, Dan Germic and Jim Cihak. Also, present: Superintendent Brad Toivonen, Finance Director Michelle Johnson, HR-PR Admin. Emily Bieghler, Maintenance Foreman Rob Johnson, Bates Twp. Supervisor Mike Stafford, Brian Schiavo, GEI, County Commissioner Ean Bruette and Attorney Mark Tousignant. Members of the public present: Patti Leonoff and Mark Bromley

ADDITIONS TO THE AGENDA

None.

MINUTES TO BE APPROVED

Moved by Commissioner Frailing, supported by Cihak, to approve the minutes of August 31, 2026, audit and regular meetings.

Voice vote, all in favor, motion carried.

DISBURSEMENTS TO BE APPROVED

- | | |
|-------------------------|----------------|
| a. Payrolls of: | \$179,925.17 |
| b. Prepaid Claims of: | \$562,240.28 |
| c. Account Payables of: | \$285,093.44 |
| d. Total: | \$1,027,258.89 |

Moved by Commissioner Battan, supported by Germic, to approve the Audit Committee Report dated August 31st, 2026, covering the above disbursements.

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

SUPERINTENDENTS REPORT

Supt. Toivonen reviewed his report:

Building/Inventory:

Dylon has been in contact with the sand vendor, and they are expected to start production and washing of sand. We would then begin hauling in a couple of weeks. If there are issues with this, we may need to change plans to get sand to the shops. Our early salt (to mix with sand) was delivered to both shops but no updates on MDOT salt have been received. The Fair Board okayed contractors using some borrow from the end of the mud run for the base of the new salt shed; the language will be included in the bid proposal. After onsite visits, Joe Goriesky recommended a 14kw sized generator to run the fuel pumps and doors in the event of an outage.

Primary Roads:

CR424 PH8 & PH9 culvert work has been completed by our crew. Patchwork should be completed in the next month. The Federal exchange buyout application for 2028 will be submitted for PH10 (E. Village limit to US2), paying .90 on the dollar.

Hagerman Lake Rd PH2 (Storti's to E. Brule Lk. Rd.) started last week, with gravel hauling and pulverizing. Paving should begin next week.

Gravel hauling on Ponozzo Rd. will begin this month, once the USFS hauling in that area is complete. A private contractor has been hauling gravel for the USFS from the Bush Creek Pit, causing a lot of complaints from residents and damage to the road.

GEI has submitted the corrected paperwork to MDOT for the FLAP grant (FH-16 US2 to Golden Lk. Cabins). If everything goes well, the project should be let in January 2027.

Local Roads:

Bacco has updated the project start for the Little Finland and Forsberg Rd. graveling to the beginning of October.

There has been some communication with the property owner interested in the abandonment on Little Finland Rd, but no paperwork has been filed. Recently, a question came up as to where Wildwood Lk. Rd. ends, and how that affects the ability of the public to launch boats off the end of it. Mark says the township, not the road commission, has jurisdiction over whether boats can be launched in that area.

After investigation into the platted right of way and culvert condition in the previously planned route for the US2-Hemlock Rive detour, changes to the route had to be made and were relayed to the Township at their September meeting.

The Iron River Twp. Supervisor has requested an estimate for doing part of Hamner Rd. in 2027.

Grader patchwork for the winter will be completed in Mastodon Twp, on CR424. Lake Mary Rd. had gravel work done on the South end. Information was provided to the Board regarding unincorporating a village and how that would affect the debts of the village, its employees and its roads.

Stambaugh Twp. is potentially doing overlays on W. Brule Lk and S. Brule Rd. in 2027. The Forestview Dr. gravel project was recently completed and invoices are expected soon. Brad and Mark reported on a right of way encroachment/ neighbor dispute on Stanley Lake Dr. The Board has requested the involvement of the attorneys from MCRCSIP.

Equipment:

#296 is still in Baraga being built, with tentative completion in October. The 2027 Western Star chassis is scheduled at the build plant in October, with a tentative November or December delivery date. The wing that was purchased for this truck earlier this year was 450 days out at that time, with a May 2027 delivery date, potentially delaying the completion of the truck once we receive from the factory.

Both CAT graders have been sold, and we are waiting to hear from Marquette CRC about the potential purchase of the last JD grader. The final two new leased JD graders have been delivered.

Truck #231 has been permanently retired. The crew started using the tablets for pre-trip inspections this week.

Employment:

Surveys have gone out to both the summer and probationary employees, all with a positive response.

Bridges:

MDOT Local Bridge Program applications for the FH-16 N & S bridges and the removal of the bridge on Resort Dr. were submitted in April; selections for the Superior Region will be held in Marquette on September 25th. Statewide selection will be in October. As reported at the September Great Lakes District meeting, 300 applications were submitted, totaling \$460 million in repairs. State funding is \$80 million, with a new additional allocation of \$100 million from the NRF and a potential extra \$150 million this year.

A few minor changes were made to the plans for Idlewild bridge, to be resubmitted to MDOT, with hopes of a January letting. Conversations with the USFS have been ongoing regarding the FH-16 bridges and how the current bridge restrictions will affect the Silver Branch project. Although the USFS is open to helping with the required bridge project match, levels of available funding with the current administration are unclear.

The consulting firm hired by MDOT to audit bridge inspections throughout the state has required the load ratings of the Bates-Amasa Rd.-Paint River bridge be reduced. New signs have been posted and both WKIB and The Reporter have generously advertised a PSA for us. With the reduced 42-64-75 weight limits, no overweight loads will be permitted to cross the bridge.

2026 Flooding:

Completed repairs and emergency costs of approximately \$200,000 have been submitted, with reimbursement expected to be around 75%. Estimates for the sites requiring EGLE codes and standards upgrades will be put together this week and will likely be between \$6-\$8 million. ICRC would have a 25%/ \$2 million dollar match. We are looking at applying for a SIB loan to cover the 25% and take full advantage of the available FEMA funding to get as much road work completed as possible.

General/Misc:

Mike Phillips (MCRCSIP) will be here October 1st for the annual Western U.P Roadeo. The Rural Task Force meeting is being held in Gogebic on September 17th, and Sam Minguel (CRASIF) will be here for a half day on October 15th for a safety meeting. Policies for purchasing, AI, social media and return to work are in the

works.

The bill for increased competitive bidding threshold bill has passed, increasing to \$75,000 for normal purchases and \$250,000 for emergencies.

MDOT was recently awarded an additional \$278 million in federal funding, equating to about \$68 million to road commissions for 2027 federal aid project funding.

Fiber Optic- Information has been coming out about potential grant opportunities. Brian Schiavo, GEI, provided an update to the Board about the continuing permit issue frustrations. There is potential for one more year of fiber optic installation in the county.

Drain Commission-The board has been in at Sunset Lake since August 8th. The lake level remains low due to lack of rain. A new CRA legislative priority has begun, aimed to return the drain commission duties back to the County.

Commissioner Battan asked about where the generators would be placed and the bidding out of the equipment. Foreman Johnson advised the Oss garage generator would be located on the East side of the building due to the location of the breakers. The location of the Iron River garage generator is yet to be determined. Only one electrician responded to look at the sites. Additionally, using Sourcewell satisfies the bidding requirements through a cooperative purchasing process.

DELEGATIONS

Bates Twp. Supervisor Mike Stafford reported that the issues with log trucks speeding seem to have gotten better. He believes it is being patrolled more.

County Commissioner Bruette reported that there were issues with all the proposals received for Cooks Run that need to be worked out; nothing has been decided.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

Equipment: Commissioner Battan inquired about the sander that is being installed in the Foreman pickup.

Parks and Recreation: Commissioner Germic attended the most recent meeting and there is money left in the forest fund that can be used for projects.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Mark Bromley asked about the status of the Idlewild bridge and getting boats in and out of the lake for the season.

OLD BUSINESS

None.

NEW BUSINESS

UPDATE ON INVESTMENTS

Finance Director Johnson provided the Board with the status of the MERS Defined Benefit Plan, OPEB and the MERS Retiree Trust as of 2nd quarter, 2026 and the current CD's and interest earned as of August 31st.

PORTABLE TRAFFIC SIGNALS

Following brief discussion, it was moved by Commissioner Germic, with support from Cihak, to purchase the rented portable traffic signals from Action Traffic for \$57,000.

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

2026 BUDGET AMENDMENT #2

The amendments were presented by Finance Director Johnson.

Motion to Commissioner Battan, support from Cihak, to accept the amendments as presented.

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

RESOLUTION-PLOW ACT

Supt. Toivonen explained the PLOW Act resolution as presented and included below:

WHEREAS, the Iron County Road Commission is charged by state law with maintaining safe and efficient transportation on county roads and highways for the residents, businesses, emergency responders and visitors to Iron County; and

WHEREAS, county road agencies provide critical winter maintenance services, including snow and ice removal operations that allow law enforcement, fire departments, emergency medical services, school transportation, utility crews and the traveling public to safely access Michigan's roadways during winter weather events; and

WHEREAS, many county road agencies throughout Michigan, particularly in northern Michigan and the Upper Peninsula, conduct snow and ice removal operations on a near-daily basis during the winter season, often under severe weather conditions that include substantial snowfall, extreme cold temperatures, and prolonged storm events; and

WHEREAS, county road agencies operate specialized heavy-duty snowplow trucks equipped with front plows, underbody blades, wing plows, and material spreaders that are essential to maintaining passable roadways and ensuring continuity of transportation services; and

WHEREAS, modern diesel emissions systems installed on these specialized winter maintenance vehicles have demonstrated significant reliability challenges during snowplowing operations due to the unique operating conditions associated with winter maintenance activities, including prolonged idling, low-speed operation, stop-and-go movement, repeated maneuvering, highly variable engine loads, and extreme temperatures; and

WHEREAS, emissions-related system failures frequently result in engine derating, reduced vehicle performance or complete removal of snowplow trucks from service during active winter weather events when reliable operation is most critical; and

WHEREAS, county road agencies serve as "re-responders" during winter weather emergencies by opening and maintaining roadways so that police, fire, emergency medical services, utility crew and other emergency responders can perform their duties; and

WHEREAS, emergency vehicles are currently afforded exemptions under federal diesel emissions regulations in recognition of their public safety mission, yet municipally operated snowplow equipment performing similarly critical public safety functions is not included within those exemptions; and

WHEREAS, the PLOW Storms Act would recognize the unique operational requirements and public safety role of municipally operated snow removal equipment by including such vehicles within the existing emergency vehicle framework of the EPA Clean Air Act while engaged in winter maintenance operations; and

WHEREAS, passage of the PLOW Storms Act would improve the reliability of winter maintenance fleets, enhance public safety, reduce costly downtime, and help ensure continuity of essential transportation services during severe weather events;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the Iron County Road Commission hereby expresses its strong support for the PLOW Storms Act and urges its prompt consideration and passage by the United States Congress; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Commission respectfully urges Michigan's congressional delegation to support legislation recognizing the critical public safety role of municipally operated snow removal equipment and the need for reliable winter maintenance operations; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that a vote hereon be taken by aye and nay and spread at large on the minutes of the Board.

The resolution was adopted with a motion by Commissioner Germic, and support from Commissioner Frailing.

Voice vote, all in favor, motion carried.

RESOLUTION-FEMA DR4925-MI

Commissioner Cihak moved for the adoption of the following resolution:

WHEREAS, it is the intent of the Iron County Road Commission to receive Public Assistance Funding from the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) to provide disaster relief from the severe storms and flood events that occurred between April 10th, 2026, and April 21st, 2026, and later declared on June 30th, 2026. (FEMA-DR-4925-MI).

AND WHEREAS, the cost share to receive such funding is 75% Federal, 25% Non-Federal for all sites and projects approved by FEMA,

AND WHEREAS, to receive Public Assistance Funding it is necessary for the Iron County Road Commission to be designated as a subrecipient through the State of Michigan's Public Assistance Grant Program for FEMA-DR-4925-MI,

AND WHEREAS, it is necessary to complete agreements, forms and contracts for such funds,

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, that Bradley Toivonen, Superintendent/ Manager is herewith authorized and empowered to enter into and sign any and all documents necessary to receive the funds for the project(s) listed above.

Voice vote, all in favor, motion carried.

POLICY #31, AMENDMENT #2-SOIL AND EROSION PREVENTION AND SEDIMENTATION CONTROL PROCEDURES

Commissioner Frailing requested the addition of "and/or Engineer" to Section VI., last paragraph. Motion by Commissioner Germic, support from Frailing, approve Amendment #2 to Policy #31 with the additional language.

Voice vote, all in favor, motion carried.

ATTORNEYS REPORT

Attorney Tousignant appreciates the direction given on matters presented during the Superintendent's report.

COMMISSIONERS' COMMENTS

None.

At 10:29 a.m. with no further business to come before the Board, it was motioned by Battan, supported by Germic, to adjourn.

Ernie Schmidt, Chairman

Michelle Johnson, Clerk of the Board