



Tuesday, February 17, 2026

The Beacon is a publication written by the Beacon staff; the editorial views expressed are those of the authors. The Beacon Editor can be reached at Beacon_Editor@gtdems.org.

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Board to Hear Update on Project Alpha on February 18

By Bruce Moore

Cunningham Limp, the Construction Manager for Project Alpha (replacement Emergency Communications Center, Emergency Management Center, and a storage building) will present an update on project progress at the February 18 Regular Meeting. The Board will also vote to approve contracts to move the next phase in construction. The Board will also vote on the purchase of a new \$360,000 911 call handling system (unbudgeted) and an emergency alert and notification system. The full [451-page packet is available on the County website](#).

Highlights of the Consent Agenda include contracts for the previously discussed housing study RFP, an RFP for an operational audit, a contract for performance reviews of the Administrator and Health Officer, \$168,000 for concrete sidewalk and stair replacement at the Historic Courthouse, and a Safe Harbor monthly report.

Project Alpha Proceeds

The DTE gas line issue has not been resolved; Cunningham Limp is waiting on a DTE Engineering report. The current milestone schedule presented by Cunningham Limp shows some materials orders starting on March 2, 2026, with job site mobilization beginning on April 13, 2026.

The Board will vote on an agreement with Cunningham Limp as “Construction Manager as Constructor” that is a standard American Institute of Architects agreement; the agreement has already been reviewed and approved by the County’s Civil Counsel.

Unbudgeted \$360,000 911 Phone System

The 911 Central Dispatch Department has a request for replacement of an existing phone system that “has created a myriad of malfunctions.” The packet contains proposals for the recommended vendor from the December, 2025 RFP, but little on the problems with the current system and why the replacement costs were not incorporated in the 2026 budget.

Treasurer’s Account Reconciliations Not Finished; Employees Fail Cybersecurity Exercise

By Bruce Moore

At the February 11 Study Session, the Board of Commissioners heard reports from the Treasurer on problems with monthly bank account reconciliations, the IT Director on problems with employee cybersecurity training, and the Health Director on progress with the process for prioritizing opioid settlement spending. The [full 105-page packet is available on the County website](#).

No commissioners were absent.

Account Reconciliation Problems Continue at Treasurer’s Office

At the February 11, 2026 Study Session, the Treasurer indicated that 45 items remain unreconciled as of February 11. Two employees left the last few weeks, leaving the department at half normal staffing.

The [outside audit for 2024](#) listed issues with the reconciliation of bank accounts within 30 days as a problem in the Treasurer’s department. At the [October 1, 2025 meeting](#), the Treasurer indicated that the department would be caught up by November 1, 2025.

It is likely that the problems will be noted in the 2025 audit. Because bond agencies use audit reports in setting ratings, continued problems could downgrade the County’s bond rating.

Readers Should Listen to AI Impact Forecast from County Investment Management Firm

Readers are encouraged to view the [County’s investment management firm’s discussion of AI risks on Traverse Area Community Media](#) beginning at time 1:29:30. While most AI forecasts focus on employment disruptions, this presentation focuses on business and business sector obsolescence and replacement.

IT Director Frustrated by Low Cybersecurity Compliance

The agenda topic on an AI Center of Excellence was primarily concerned with problems with employee cybersecurity training. During a December phishing test run by the IT department, 72 employees clicked on the simulated malware link—a 14.3 percent failure rate. Many of the employees didn’t complete the required remedial training. Cliff Dupuy, County IT Director said the following:

We just recently did a phishing exercise during Christmas. We had a 14.3 percent failure rate. 72 employees clicked on the link. We assigned them—I assigned them—remedial training. It was met

with so much pushback, I just finally gave up and passed everybody. We had people arguing that, no, I didn't click on it. It's all documented. And the training was 15 minutes. So the challenge we have, to be candid with you, is we have department heads and elected officials in different departments that will reach out to elected officials and call Mr. Alger and complain what a bad person I am and impugn my reputation and my experience and say that I'm just being obstructionist, can't give them what they want. And so then I have to kind of acquiesce and do what I'm told to do. I mean, that feels like a real vulnerability for the county.

There are also problems with employees not signing the Acceptable Use Policy without consequences. Dupuy later said this:

We have individuals who feel that they don't need to sign that (the AUP) so they've never signed that acceptable use policy, but they continue to use enterprise applications.

BOC Lowers PILOT Subsidy from 120% AMI to 100% AMI

By Bruce Moore

At the February 4 Regular Meeting, the Board of Commissioners voted to adopt an Interim Guideline Checklist for Rental Housing Projects Involving Tax Increment Financing (TIF) or Payments in Lieu of Taxes (PILOT), and discussed a proposed RFP for a housing study. The [original packet for the February 4, 2026 meeting is available on the County website](#). The [minutes are also available on the County website](#).

Commissioner Nelson was absent.

Board Approves Interim Guidelines for TIF and PILOT Projects

The current policy on TIF and PILOT housing projects was approved at the January 17, 2024 meeting and set the ceiling for project eligibility at 120% of Area Median Income (AMI). At the 2024 meeting, Commissioner Andrews advocated for the 100% ceiling, but was unable to convince commissioners to support the 100% ceiling.

At this meeting (February 4, 2026), the discussion was not about the proposed 100% AMI ceiling, but on the minimum percent of the project to be allocated for renters who make less than 100% AMI. The recommendation from the TIF, PILOT, and Brownfield Ad Hoc was a 20% minimum; Commissioner Walter advocated for a higher floor, but was unable to convince other commissioners to raise the floor. Note that only the portion of the project with rents aimed at less than 100% AMI is eligible for TIF or PILOT subsidies. The market-rate portions are not eligible for subsidies.



Commissioner Walter advocated for raising the minimum fraction of below-market-rate housing for a TIF/PILOT/Brownfield project above 20%. Note that only the below-market-rate housing is eligible for TIF/PILOT/Brownfield subsidies. Photo by Bruce Moore

Board Discussed Housing RFP, Directed Staff to Make Changes and Bring Back for Approval

The Board discussed a proposed Request for Proposal (RFP) for a housing study and came up with a number of changes for Administration to incorporate into the RFP. The most recent Housing North market study was in 2023, and did not cover several areas where the Board wants information to inform policies on TIF, PILOT, Brownfield and other housing-related issues. It will come back to the Board for approval, probably in the Consent Agenda.

Board Requests Meeting Minutes from Other Organizations Where BOC Appoints Members

The Board of Commissioners appoints members to a number of other boards, but only some send minutes for inclusion in the Board packet. The Board requested minutes with 30 days of approval from all organizations to which the Board makes appointments. The Board additionally asked the Administrator and Civil Counsel to prepare a list of boards that are statutorily or otherwise required to send annual reports and other minutes to the Board.

This should make it much easier for the public to keep up with what is happening in all of the various governmental entities.



ACTION FOR THE WEEK

**Join a board:
BATA needs a rural member
East Bay has posted openings**

East Bay Township has openings for a planning commissioner, two zoning board appeals members, two board of review (property tax) members and a food security advisory member. For information go to <https://eastbaytwp.org/government/employment.php>.

BATA needs a rural member. The application form is available at <https://www.gtcountymi.gov/FormCenter/Board-of-Commissioners-5/Boards-and-Commissions-Appointment-Onlin-44>. For more information, see <https://www.gtcountymi.gov/344/Bay-Area-Transportation-Authority>.

Contacting the Beacon

The Beacon Editor can be reached at Beacon_Editor@gtdeems.org.

Helpful Links and Info

BOC meetings are usually held at 9:00 am on the first and third Wednesday of the month. Find a link to the agenda at: <https://grandtraversecounty.civicweb.net/Portal/MeetingInformation.aspx?Org=Cal>

Watch the livestream of the meetings at: <https://www.tacm.tv/govtvnow.asp>

The BOC permits public comment for up to three minutes each at the beginning and end of each meeting. Public comment remotely is not allowed. If you wish to make a public comment, you need to attend the meeting.

The BOC has nine commissioners—five Republicans and four Democrats—each of whom represents a district. Find your commissioner at: <https://www.gtcountymi.gov/184/Board-of-Commissioners>

Email all commissioners at: commissioners@gtcountymi.gov.

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