



Happy Thanksgiving

Tuesday November 21, 2023

GTBOC Has Special Meeting November 22nd 9 am

by Linda Pepper

Since the November 15th BOC meeting was canceled, they are meeting this Wednesday to discuss:

- 2023 Amended Apportionment Report - Long Lake Township has reduced their millage by one mil (I do not know the reasoning behind the reduction) and Mayfield has increased their levy for fire protection.
- Adopting a policy for PILOT (Tax Exemptions for Affordable Housing). They could automatically grant all, deny all or require a decision with a hearing each time.
- Funding of courts, sheriff's department and health department

The 2024 budget needs to be finalized by the end of December and until the October 25th and November 1st meetings there had been no discussion of the new budget. There are 5 new commissioners and they need to be informed in order to intelligently prioritize spending. Although this is the day before Turkey Day, you may want to carve out time for the discussion.

Per Diem AdHoc Discussion November 2nd

I did not attend the meeting, but Commissioner Walter said there was a lawyer-suggested clause to prevent someone from double billing. An example would be to bill both GT County and BATA for attending a BATA meeting. This is not allowed. Also, the name is now Meeting Compensation policy, not Per Diem. They will present this for acceptance at the December 6th regular Board meeting. I hope to attach the new policy wording to this newsletter but if not it will be in the December 5th Beacon. *It is being reviewed by legal counsel, so I will send it with the December 5th Beacon.*

Great Explanation of Medicare for All

by Linda Pepper

I have been to hundreds of political meetings since 2014. Saturday November 11th's discussion of Medicare for All by Dr. Bob Lorinser was one of the best. The Democratic Club at NMC sponsored Dr. Bob and he put together an understandable explanation of a complex issue.

Several important points:

- Current bills being considered make it a single-payer health care program for all Americans.
- It is not socialized medicine as the government would only pay the bills, not employ most of the doctors and other health care providers.
- It would include medical, dental, hearing and vision coverage.
- It would also cover long term care.
- Health care costs \$4.7 trillion in 2023 which is \$13 - 14K per person.
- Government (Federal, State and Local) already covers about 50 %
- A single payer system would certainly save 10 to 20% in efficiency.

Some questioned whether it would raise taxes and it probably would. We are already paying by receiving lower wages so employers can offer health insurance. Would the unemployed be covered? We are already covering most of them by paying for Medicaid (which covers low-income people). Would non-citizens be covered? Yes, in most cases.

If you would like to read more go to [The Medicare for All Act of 2023 - PNHP](#) They explain the nitty gritty of the current bills before congress. I want to thank Dr. Bob for simplifying this complex subject. He made me ready to tackle learning more.

New Laws Taking Effect February 13th

The legislature adjourned early and now many of the laws passed in 2023 can take effect. It takes a higher number than a majority to have a law take immediate effect. Most laws take effect 90 days after the legislature adjourns for the year. Please read this Bridge article to appreciate all the Democratic led legislature accomplished. [Gun reform, tax cuts among dozens of Michigan laws taking effect in February.](#)

Why did the legislature adjourn early? The first reason is so the Presidential primary can be 5th in the nation on February 27th. Also, the gun violence prevention laws and the tax changes for working families and seniors can take effect, as well as many other beneficial laws. The second is that two Democratic Representatives won mayoral races and resigned to start those positions. That makes the legislature 54 to 54 until special elections can be held in about 4 months.

Is there still more to do? There are just under 200 bills that have passed this year and been signed by the governor. That isn't a record, but it is steady progress on many issues that affect Michiganders. Family leave needs to be addressed as well as better FOIA rules for the legislature and many others. A busy 2024?

Ad Hoc Committee at the Pavilions

Monday November 13th

Monday morning saw a positive meeting of the Ad Hoc committee of the BOC that is liaising with the Pavilions. As you all know, the county is helping the Pavilions to meet their bills. The amount at this time is about \$5 million and this will continue as the Pavilions put their finances in order. They are expecting money from the program that paid them to retain employees during the pandemic. That money has been approved and has one more hurdle to cross before they receive about \$6 million. They are owed about \$ 2.3 million from Medicaid settlements. that money will probably be received by Dec. 31st.

The most positive news was that their census of patients has been steadily climbing and on Nov. 9th it was 148 residents. They had been running in the 130's and, by streamlining their responses to patients who need care, they are having more people in the SNU. They also have an experienced interim CEO who has reorganized and refocused some positions to increase the number of patients and their quality of care.

They are focusing on training their staff in their new medical records and verification system. They are improving their serving of food quickly and are recruiting more staff to care for more patients. They are also developing their relationships with Munson to facilitate smooth movement of patients from hospital to skilled nursing care.

Lastly, they are close to settling the lawsuit with PACE (Program for All-Inclusive Care for the Elderly) and severing the current relationship with them. The Pavilions had been a major source of credit and expertise in developing this program for keeping elders in their homes. Another lawsuit is set for mediation right before Christmas. They will be interviewing for a permanent CEO after Thanksgiving and have a variety of talented candidates. Things are looking up at the Pavilions.

Betsy Coffia's Coffee at Lake Ann
Monday November 13th
How One Person Can make a Difference

By Linda Pepper

Small Groups Can Be Interesting!

There were only 7 people at the Red Door Cafe for the Coffee. However, we had a robust discussion of issues. An interesting fact is that a young man named Alex has been assigned as Betsy's "tracker". He is employed by a conservative entity to attend all of Betsy's events and take notes or record what she says. This is part of political strategies to catch candidates saying something that can be exploited. The funny part is that Alex had been working for Representative Roth in his legislative office right next to Betsy's on the 13th floor. We need to treat him kindly.

Betsy's highlights:

- HB 4516 to formally expand state domestic violence resources to Tribal service providers has been enacted into law.
- A bill to allow pre-registration for voting when 16 years old. They can only vote at 18 but this primes them to vote and forms the "voting habit". This has passed and will become law. It has increased voter participation in other states.
- Working on a package of bills to protect persons placed under guardianship or conservatorship. An Office of Guardianship will help enforce accountability.
- Election worker protection passed last week and would be handled by law enforcement (Health care workers are also similarly protected)

She is working on a package of 3 bills called the Safe Patient Care Acts that prevent nurses from being fired or disciplined because they refuse mandatory overtime. It also includes mandatory nurse to patient ratios by department and making this information available on hospital websites. A veteran nurse was there and related that they are being asked to care for more patients with fewer support workers each year. When asked why unions can't bargain this, it was explained that many nurses don't have unions. There was a recent hearing and the hospitals seem unwilling to work toward a compromise. The bills will probably be voted out of committee in the new year.

In case you were wondering, bills that got part way through the lawmaking process do not have to start over next year. 2024 is part of this legislative session. After the next election in November 2024 and seating of the new legislature, any unfinished bills must start at the beginning of the process again.

There was considerable discussion of the weak financial disclosure law in response to Proposal #1. Because it does not include spousal holdings and other necessary provisions, Betsy said a bipartisan caucus of mostly younger lawmakers will form to push for increased transparency and to rethink Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) and Open Meeting Acts (OMA). Currently the legislature and the governor's office is exempt from all provisions of these laws. That needs to change. As usual, it was a pleasure to see Betsy's command of our issues in northern Michigan.

Northern Lakes Community Mental Health (NLCMH)

Board Meeting: Two Steps Back

By Carlton Ketchum/Traverse Indivisible

Expanding on Mardi Link's excellent reporting in the November 17 Record-Eagle...

The contracted CFO firm, Rehmann, missed the 10/31 deadline to provide a “full report” on NLCMH’s finances. Rehmann was contracted at \$45,000 a month on October 1. October 19 BOD minutes reflect that “... Rehmann group will give a full report next month (November)”. The board didn’t question the delay.

After postponing governance discussion for months and an October board retreat that focused solely on the current governance model, Chairman Ben Townsend announced the formation of an ad-hoc committee to explore governance models. Townsend appointed himself, Penny Morris and Mary Marois to the committee. This committee’s duties also include review of by-laws changes necessitated by the change in the enabling agreement.

The acceptance of blown reporting deadlines and stifling of discussion of governance is both disappointing and unsurprising. More importantly, these actions represent two steps back in the board’s quest for transparency.

Why the continual focus on governance? Good corporate governance fosters a culture of integrity and leads to a positive performing and sustainable business. Good governance signals that an organization is well managed and that the interests of management are aligned with other stakeholders. When you think of NLCMH governance, are these objectives being met?

Public participation is required to meet these governance objectives. What can you do? Plan to attend, either in person or virtually, the next NLCMH board meeting, December 21, 2:15 pm at the NLCMH Traverse City office, 105 Hall Street. In the interim express your concerns to the NLCMH board. Links to the board’s email address, November 16 board meeting screencast, and December virtual meeting can be found at www.northernlakescmh.org/about-us/board-of-directors/

Linda's Corner

I have never attended the Christmas Parade of Lights until Saturday evening. It was a perfect evening, cold but not freezing or windy. There were so many floats and so many lights. My daughter in law who was in marching bands wondered why there were none in the parade. I will have to see if I can find out why. But all in all, we had a lovely evening starting the Holiday Season.

Many of us are excited and relieved that the UAW strike against the Big Three Automakers has been settled and approved. I had a conversation with Erin Slomers who belongs to Local 2145 of the UAW who are on strike against Blue Cross/Blue Shield. (UAW also represents other workers) Erin's Local handles setting up the BC/BS plans in businesses. They have been on strike for over two months. They have three issues. First, outsourcing to overseas contractors and second, health care for retirees. The third is wage increases. You may see Erin and her office mates picketing in Traverse City. Please give them encouragement as we know *when unions do better, the rest of workers also do better*.

At the last BOC meeting, my first public comment was for all the commissioners to use their microphones. When I can't get to the meetings, I depend on the recordings. With my computer volume to the maximum, I still struggle. They received it well and it provided some levity for the rest of the meeting. But it is an issue of transparency to the GT community. I did comment later telling them to hire a planner. They didn't enjoy that nearly as much.

I hope to see you at Wednesday's BOC meeting. But I understand how busy Thanksgiving time is.

Happy and Healthy Thanksgiving from all of us at the Beacon.

HELPFUL LINKS & INFO

BOC meetings are usually held at 9 a.m. on the first and third Wednesday of the month.

You can find a link to the agenda and minutes at:

<https://grandtraversecounty.civicweb.net/Portal/MeetingInformation.aspx?Org=Cal&Id=418>

You can watch a livestream of the meetings and view replays of previous meetings online at:

<http://www.co.grand-traverse.mi.us/184/Board-of-Commissioners>

You will have to attend the in-person meeting in order to make a public comment. The BOC permits public comment for three minutes at the beginning and end of each meeting.

The BOC has nine commissioners – six Republicans and three Democrats – each of whom represents a district. You can find your commissioner at this link: <https://www.grandtraversedems.com/bo c>

You can find contact info for the BOC members here:

<http://grandtraverse.org/184/Board-of-Commissioners>

You can email all the commissioners at this address:

commissioners@gtcountymi.gov