



Tuesday, October 1, 2024

Jewett Arraigned for Engaging in Prostitution, Pre-trial Conference Canceled

by Linda Pepper

In June, Vice Chair of the BOC Jewett was arrested during a sting operation involving prostitution. The court documents can be read on the 86th District Court webpage [HERE](#).

On Tuesday, September 3, Jewett was formally charged with two crimes: engaging services of a prostitute and computer use to commit a crime. Jewett pleaded not guilty. He was released on \$1000 bond and is prohibited from use of the internet outside work. He is explicitly prohibited from use of a site called “skipthegames.com” or other dark web sites.

Jewett’s case was removed from the calendar on September 24. From the record, next steps are unclear. District 4 voters should remember these charges because they speak to his honesty and they smack of hypocrisy.

Democrat Fern Spence is an excellent alternative candidate for District 4.

Vote Early!

Voting early or absentee early helps Get Out The Vote (GOTV). Daily lists of who has already voted are available and help candidates and volunteers target voters who have not yet have voted or are not frequent voters. It also reduces phone calls and text messages (and we all want that!). Thanks for voting early.

BOC to Hear Septic Plans, Reorganization of Facilities Department Wednesday, October 2 – 9:00 am

by Linda Pepper

This promises to be an interesting meeting. In the Consent Calendar there is a letter about ORV's using the side of Garfield Rd towards Kingsley in an unsafe and inconsiderate manner. That area is specifically mentioned in the ordinance as not being open to ORVs. I hope that item is pulled from content for commissioner discussion.

Under Departmental Items, there will be an update by Cunningham-Limp on their progress in planning Project Alpha (Emergency Services, 911 Center and Central Storage on the LaFranier campus). I hope there will be careful questions about the progress.

Next the Health Department will be present to answer questions about septic inspections. It is unclear where there is no information in the packet. Septic was discussed at the July 24 Study Session, with commissioners requesting the Environmental Health staff bring forward proposal options with potential costs and pros and cons to help the county discussion move forward.

The third major item is the Material Management Plan committee appointments and the appointment of the GTC Manager Lydia Gulow. Michigan's approach to planning for materials management - aka managing trash - has recently changed substantially and Grand Traverse County is partnering with Leelanau and Benzie to meet the new state requirements. We like to see this collaborative approach to address regional issues efficiently.

The final interesting item is the "Restructuring of Facilities" under Commissioner/Department Reports. I anticipate this will involve combining the Parks and Rec and Facilities Directorship and the appointment of Deputies. No paperwork accompanies this item.

Joint Meeting to Approve \$60M Airport Bond on Monday, October 14

I do want to remind you of the combined Northwest Regional Airport Authority, GT BOC and Leelanau BOC discussion of bonding \$60 million through the county for airport expansion. The date is Monday, October 14. Harold Lassers recently submitted a [Forum article to the Record Eagle](#) on this topic. It is certainly a conversation starter!

Employee Expresses Staffing Concerns to Pavilions Board September 26

by Linda Pepper

The Pavilions Board meeting started with Public Comment by a staff member with 8 years of experience at the Pavilions. She is concerned about the rehab pavilion, Maple, where most of the growth is occurring. She said staff need a lower resident to patient ratio because these are patients that have recently been in the hospital and have more acute needs. She expressed that the ratio should be no more than 8 patients to one staff (state required ratio) but she said it is often 10 to 1 staff. She noted transfers of these acute patients need two staff members and the therapists often need help. She also raised the concern that dietary has not been keeping the pantries well stocked and the staff is often letting in visitors when there is no receptionist at the main desk. Since rehab is leading the growth of the Pavilions, she believes it should be prioritized.

Takeaways:

- The data gathering for the Cottages Master Plan is proceeding and a written plan is set for Dec. 1.
- The Pavilions applied to Rotary Charities for funds to pay for the Master Plan and for fundraising to implement recommendations.
- The state inspection was last week (9/16-20). They have not received the report yet.
- The Pavilions' Wellness Center received the top Simply the Best award recently for rehab and the Skilled Nursing Unit was third in their category.
- Union negotiations are proceeding. All three union contracts expire at the end of the year.
- The 2025 budget is being developed and should be discussed at the regular Oct. 31 meeting. They plan on both an Operating Budget and a Capital Improvement allocation.
- The August census was 167 in the Medical Care Facility (168 month to date in September) and 63 in the cottages (57 in June and 60 in July).
- They received notice of \$1.1 million from the State of Michigan as settlement from 2022 (the money will be here in November) and this makes the financial position look very favorable. They have large expenses coming up in October that total \$528K.
- Their billing department is struggling because of retirements and a hire that left quickly. A new experienced person starts next week and they will prioritize getting the billing caught up.
- They have hired and are training 14 more CNAs in September.
- They will resurface the pool for Aqua Therapy between Christmas and New Year's for \$27K.

There were further public comments from the CNAs at the meeting. They hope for another social worker as two is not enough. They do need more CNAs to get staffing levels to a more practical level. They did appreciate the pizza party after the state inspection. The next meeting is Thursday, October 31 at 9:00 am at Garfield Township Hall.

TJ Andrews Incumbent Candidate District 7

TJ Andrews has done an excellent job in the past two years. She is always prepared and asks probing questions that are needed. She works very well with opposing views and confidently represents our local values. You can see her biography and campaign information on the GT Dems Local Candidates site: [2024 Local Candidates | Grand Traverse Dems](#)

1. What was the main action by the BOC that motivated you to decide to take the action of running for the BOC?

When the BOC loosened our county's long-standing and nationally-recognized water quality protections for new construction in 2015, I realized my values and the values of many of my neighbors were not well represented on the county commission. Following years of working behind the scenes to support Democrats running for local office in our community, and when 2021 county redistricting created an open seat, I decided to take action and run for the BOC.

2. What are your main goals for the BOC if we have a Democratic majority?

My focus is on the foundations of good government, which transcend particular issues, operations or policies. We need to improve how the county manages our budget and spends public resources. Improvements would include regular and meaningful budget reviews, robust trends assessments, longer horizon projections for

revenues and spending, input from subject matter experts, and more. We also need to improve the way the commission approaches agenda-setting, decision-making and information-sharing with the public. We need to overhaul our approach to appointing citizens to community boards to recruit more local talent, support our appointees, and fill gaps to set boards up for success. We need systemic planning to guide spending and other decisions, capture outside resources and check our progress. With these foundations and political will, the county can effectively address emerging and existing community challenges, from housing to growth to infrastructure and more.

3. If you are one of 4 Democrats on a BOC with a 5 Republican majority, how will you handle the inevitable frustrations?

The same way we three Democrats presently on the BOC manage our current responsibilities - by being well-informed and prepared, by demonstrating respect and collaboration, and by finding and focusing on common interests - caring for our neighbors, spending public resources efficiently and protecting county assets.

4. What is your opinion of the Facility Master Plan? What is the most urgent to implement?

The FMP is flawed in part because it started with a conclusion (we should consolidate campuses) rather than a problem (can we improve how we manage our county facility assets to effectively serve this community for the next 50 years, and if so, how?). Each of the following are important to progress; we are capable of pursuing multiple in parallel rather than consecutively.

- I support the 911 dispatch and storage investments in Project Alpha now underway because these are important needs, there is unanimous support on the board and in administration to move these projects forward, and partial funding is already available.
- The FMP documented (albeit not particularly transparently) a significant backlog of deferred maintenance and security measures for existing county assets; an inventory and plan to address these is long overdue - the FMP was just the start.
- Modernizing and maintaining facilities related to law enforcement and public safety - the jail, courts and youth rehabilitation facilities - is another area with significant needs in our evolving community. We need collaboration with elected officials (judges, sheriff) and regional entities to develop and execute a comprehensive strategy. In my opinion, this is an urgent need that the FMP inadequately addressed.
- We will need to address expanding departments with inadequate facilities (e.g., the prosecutor's office and health department), though these are likely less urgent than those just discussed (dispatch, maintenance, public safety).

5. What is the most important issue that you want to make significant progress solving in the next four years, with or without a Democratic Majority?

There is not just one important issue in our community that should be elevated while others are left to worsen. We have critical needs and real opportunities to address housing, homelessness, transportation, childcare, parks and protecting natural resources. The county is empowered to move the needle on all these issues, and our constituents expect that the county commission will lead regional efforts to improve all these community challenges. That means re-starting the Joint Housing Task Force and participating in a coordinated community effort to address chronic and temporary homelessness. That also means improving transportation for non-drivers (public transport, trails) and investing in childcare for public employees. It means supporting parks and

developing sustainability plans with planning, grant funding and collaboration. Foundationally, we need strategic planning to leverage resources and provide us with key performance indicators to measure our progress.

County Endows Forever Camp Greilick, Some ARPA Grants Not Making Progress September 18 BOC Meeting

by Linda Pepper

As usual, the meeting was more interesting than the agenda suggested. Commissioner Walter wisely pulled the ARPA report from the Consent Calendar, which prompted more action to be sure that all paperwork and money usage would conform to the requirements of the ARPA Act. Even if the funds are properly allocated by Dec. 31, 2024, if the funds are not spent thereafter, the county loses the funding. With millions still unspent, the Commission is looking for assurance the funds will in fact be spent, or else they can be reallocated by year end. A letter is being sent to all grantees who have unspent funds. The deadline for answering is Oct. 31, 2024.

The Commission on Aging Director Lana Payne discussed the grants they make to other agencies such as the Area Agency on Aging of Northwest Michigan. Commissioner Andrews commented on the useful and efficient process they developed to distribute taxpayer dollars into the community through partner organizations.

Next, there was a presentation by Grand Bay Promotions Media Relations about the public relations work they have performed and what they expect for the \$48K contract for 12 months. They did extend the contract for another year.

The Ad Hoc interview committee recommended that Muriel Peavler be appointed to the Commission on Aging Board and Jamie Callahan (Candidate for County Treasurer) to the Parks and Rec. Commission. Ms. Peavler was acceptable but the appointment of a person soon to be County Treasurer was questioned. There was a motion to divide the two appointments but that was defeated. Mr. Callahan is a former Boy Scout who has volunteered with Parks and Rec for several years and both appointments were confirmed.

The next discussion was nearly an hour about the Forever Camp Greilick Endowment. After lots of opinions, the BOC voted to give funds from the marijuana licensing money collected this year for \$250K before the end of September (to satisfy the Community Foundation requirements for a distribution yet this year) and then to match every \$2 from the fundraising campaign with \$1, up to \$250K. An agreement about the services that will be rendered to the county for the money must be completed and signed.

During Department and Commissioner reports, Maxwell Cameron, the new Community Development Coordinator, was introduced. He started 2 days earlier. His position was created in the 2024 budget last December.

The BOC also approved \$20K for the Kingsley Civic Center South for 2024 by extending the past agreement.

There will be a joint meeting of the GT BOC, the Leelanau BOC and the Northwest Regional Airport Authority on October 14 at the airport. There will be a discussion of using the full faith and credit of Grand Traverse County to bond \$60 million for about half of the proposed expansion. What have been your airport experiences in the last few years at Cherry Capital?

TVC Almost Back to Pre-Covid Traffic

by Jim Storey

Link to the NRAA September 24th Meeting: <https://1drv.ms/w/s!ApK7GP-6NwStgoonGM6ynPPreeYJpA>

Main Points from the meeting:

Cherry Capital Airport staff will participate in training to better serve Autistic customers as they use airport facilities; e.g., terminal and all amenities.

Cherry Capital Airport annual passenger numbers are up 55K passengers from this time one year ago; almost back to pre-Covid numbers.

Potential Acme Drain District Discussed

by Jim Story

Link to Sept. 26 GTC Road Commission Meeting: <https://1drv.ms/w/s!ApK7GP-6NwStgoop11BFIUgmu-ZyLQ>

Interesting Points:

- Drain Commissioner Smits may wish to establish a drain district near the Meijers in Acme. Please read more about it in the report.
- There is concern about the Gray and Cedar Run intersection. There may be even more traffic after the roundabout is built at the M22 and M72 intersection near Tom's West Bay.
- The RC has been buying some new equipment and reselling it while it still has significant value. This enables them to almost recover the original cost.
- Please read Jim's interesting report on the GTCRC.

Interesting Podcast - Traverse Talks

Subject: Ethics at the GT BOC

by Jim Horn

Jim has an informative podcast from the League of Women Voters Candidate Forum. It features the questions and answers about ethics on the GT BOC. Link below:

<https://podcasts.apple.com/us/podcast/traverse-talks-a-podcast/id1740974973?i=1000670933068>

Viral TikTok Spilling Over to...the Beacon

by John DeSpelder



What the . . . ?

Tons of people are doing double takes around the GT area, and millions more are doing the same on social media channels around the nation. No, it is NOT the usual BS Trump fanboy in his lifted pickup, rolling coal (look it up) in a neighborhood near you, it's the Harris/Walz campaign reclaiming the flag for all of us!

The GT Dems have a new social media channel on TikTok, [gt.dems](#), and it's gone viral. Thanks to the visionary leadership of the newest member of the social media team, who prefers to keep a low profile, the video of a rusty white pickup flying Old Glory and the Harris/Walz colors has garnered more than 4 million views as of Sunday morning, just five days after it was posted!! Our own TikTok channel has 2+ million views of this one video, and it's being seen by millions more on Twitter (X), Facebook, Instagram, Threads, and who knows where else. We have 8,000 followers on TikTok, giving us a gigantic audience for each new video that we launch.

We've struck a chord

We think this video is resonating with its audience because many people supporting Democratic candidates are experiencing relief. Sharing our patriotism and flying our flag is something we're proud to do, and trucks like the one in our video are appearing all over the nation. Of the 9,500 comments that viewers have made on our video, overwhelmingly they're expressing relief that we aren't ceding the flag to MAGA anymore, enthusiasm for Democrats up and down the ballot, and the strong urge to go out and make 2024 a huge year for Dems everywhere.

Why this matters to the GT Dems

TikTok is new territory for the GT Dems. It's opening doors to young voters that are otherwise nearly unreachable. Many citizens that are coming of voting age are only getting their information via social media channels, largely via TikTok. Even though TikTok is a national audience, we are reaching local voters by posting local candidate videos in response to comments about the pickup truck video. As of Monday morning, Trenton Lee's video had received more than 4,000 views, Fern Spence's videos have had over 8,000, and Betsy Coffia's videos had been watched more than 24,000 times. In addition, [Blue Voter Guide](#) discovered the video and has started adding links to their list of endorsed Democratic candidates, giving TikTok viewers direct access to lists of down ballot Dems, which will translate into increased down ballot voting.

Boomer response to the phenomenon

At the Obama dinner Friday night, I spoke with dozens of people about the Harris/Walz truck video. At least half of them had already seen the video—and none had seen it on TikTok, so we know that it's being shared everywhere. In fact, my son, who lives in California and has nearly no social media presence, told me that he'd seen it too.

More than two dozen Obama Dinner attendees took part in a "Let's learn to speak Gen Z" video shoot (see below). While we may not totally "get" TikTok, we get that we are reaching younger and first-time voters and that they are crucial to our big Blue win in 2024!



November Elections - Kyra and Kim for the Win in Supreme Court Race

by Linda Pepper

If you vote straight ticket in November, it will not mark the judge ballots. You want to vote for the Justices on the Michigan Supreme Court. I heard from the two Democratic nominees on Saturday at the Benzie Dems meeting. They suggested that you turn your ballot over and vote the non-partisan part of the ballot first. Then you can mark a straight ticket option.

The two Democratic nominees are Kyra Harris Bolden and Kimberly Ann Thomas. Kyra is currently a justice and since she was appointed, she must run for reelection to serve the rest of Bridget McCormick's term. Kim

Thomas came from a modest background and now teaches at U of M law school. You can just remember Kyra and Kim or bring in the slate of worthy candidates you wish to vote for. The Michigan Supreme Court just helped increase our state minimum wage and earned paid time off. They also struck down some of the onerous restrictions on abortions. This court affects all our lives!

REMEMBER: Non-partisan races are not covered by the straight party option!

HELPFUL LINKS & INFO

BOC meetings are usually held at 9 am 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=Ca1&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/boc>

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

