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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@gt Dems.org.

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Board to Review Existing TIF Policy, Anticipating East Bay TIF Application

By Bruce Moore

The Board will review the existing Tax Increment Financing (TIF) policy at tomorrow's (March 4) Board of Commissioners meeting. This review is in anticipation of an application for TIF funding of an East Bay Township Corridor Improvement Authority (CIA) that will probably come before the Board later in March. The Road Commission will give an update, but did not get slides to the County in time for inclusion in the packet.

Jail boarding agreements with Leelanau, Benzie, and Clare Counties on the Consent Agenda provide a window into the population, staffing problems, and maintenance/parts problems at the Jail.

The full 190-page [packet is available on the County website.](#)

What is TIF?

A TIF agreement allows the County (or City etc.) to give revenue from future appraised value increases to a Township, Downtown Development Authority or some other governmental entity. The amount of the future revenue is dependent upon inflation and appraised value growth (new construction) above inflation. The agreement can specify whether inflation growth stays with the County or not.

In agreeing to a TIF, the County Government is agreeing to give up control over future revenue to another governmental entity. This could lead to an endless series of requests as each township will vie for its own set of pet projects.

While there may be enough revenue headroom to give up some revenue for entities that get TIF proposals in quickly, it is likely that there would not be sufficient revenue to accomodate later TIF proposals.

What Does TIF Have To Do with Airport Bonds?

In March, 2025, the County's bond consultant issued a memo that showed a likely bond rating downgrade if the County were to accept credit risk for the airport bonds. This memo assumed no revenue growth. A later memo in the Fall of 2025 included a forecast of revenue growth and indicated that a bond rating downgrade would be unlikely.

Accepting credit risk for the airport bonds makes it much more difficult (if not impossible) for the County to give away future revenue via TIF without risking a bond downgrade for future projects, such as Project Alpha, the Government Center rehab or the Jail replacement.

Current TIF Policy Requires Specific Infrastructure

The Board will review the current (2012) TIF policy in anticipation of East Bay Township's application for TIF funding of a Corridor Improvement Authority. The current (2012) TIF policy requires specific projects; the East Bay CIA probably would not meet this requirement unless it is modified to list specific projects with maximum dollar limits for the project.

The TIF, PILOT and Brownfield Ad Hoc reviewed the existing TIF policy and policies from several other Michigan counties at a February 25 meeting, and recommended that the full Board review the existing policy before the East Bay CIA TIF is presented.

The policy begins on [page 180 of the 190-page packet available on the County website](#).

Jail Boards Approximately 50 Out-of-County at Peak Times

The Consent Agenda contains a cover letter from the Sheriff reviewing housing of overflow from the Jail in Leelanau, Benzie, and Clare Counties. The number housed outside the county reached approximately 50 inmates several times in 2025, and would have been higher had early release not been granted by various courts in some cases. The Sheriff summarized the situation thus:

Housing agreements with Leelanau, Benzie, and Clare Counties allow for boarding approximately fifty (50) inmates. In 2025, boarding levels reached approximately fifty inmates on several occasions, coinciding with a few days where the total jail population was approaching 200 inmates. In coordination with the courts, early releases have been utilized when appropriate....

Due to housing design and classification constraints, the jail operates most effectively with a population of approximately 140–145 inmates.

The section on [Jail boarding agreements and related operation discussion begins on page 125 of the 190-page packet](#).

Existing Jail Structural Integrity Review

The structural cracks [that appeared in the Jail last fall](#) continue to be investigated. The Board will hear a presentation on the current status of the investigation which includes:

- Crack gauges to monitor changes
- Studies to determine differential settlement
- Ground penetrating radar studies
- Installation of a basement groundwater monitoring well

No presentation is included in [the packet beyond a brief cover sheet on page 179 of the 190-page packet](#).

Some Dam and Lake Level Issues to be Delegated to Drain Commissioner

At several meetings last fall, the Board reviewed liability, contractual and logistical problems with the maintenance of dams and court-ordered lake levels at several lakes in the county. The maintenance of these lake levels and dams is not a statutory duty of the Drain Commissioner. The resolutions to be discussed covers the Drain Commissioner taking on some responsibilities for dam inspections, lake level maintenance, and advising the Board on Skegemog and Elk Lake issues. The agreement expires at the end of 2026 unless extended.

The dam and lake level resolutions begin on [page 185 of the 190-page packet available on the County website](#).

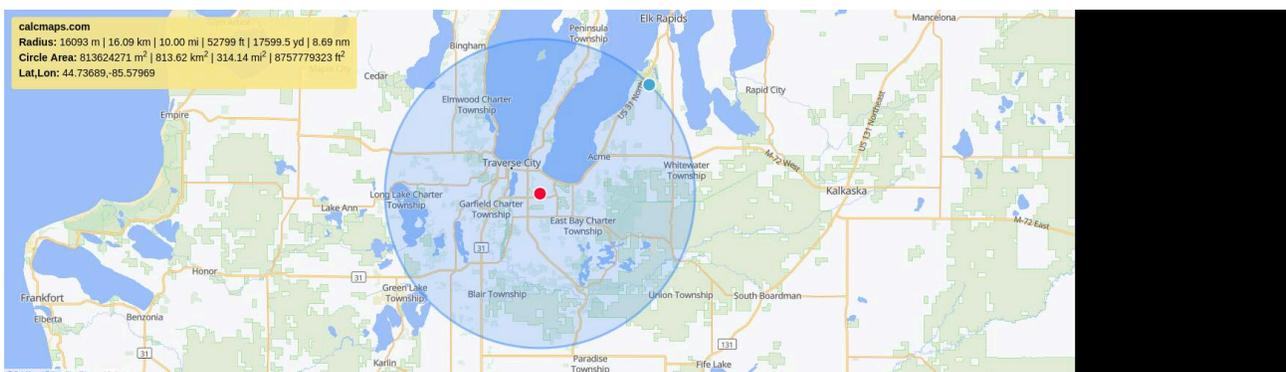
Airport Zoning Overlay Restricts Construction Out to 10 Miles

By Bruce Moore

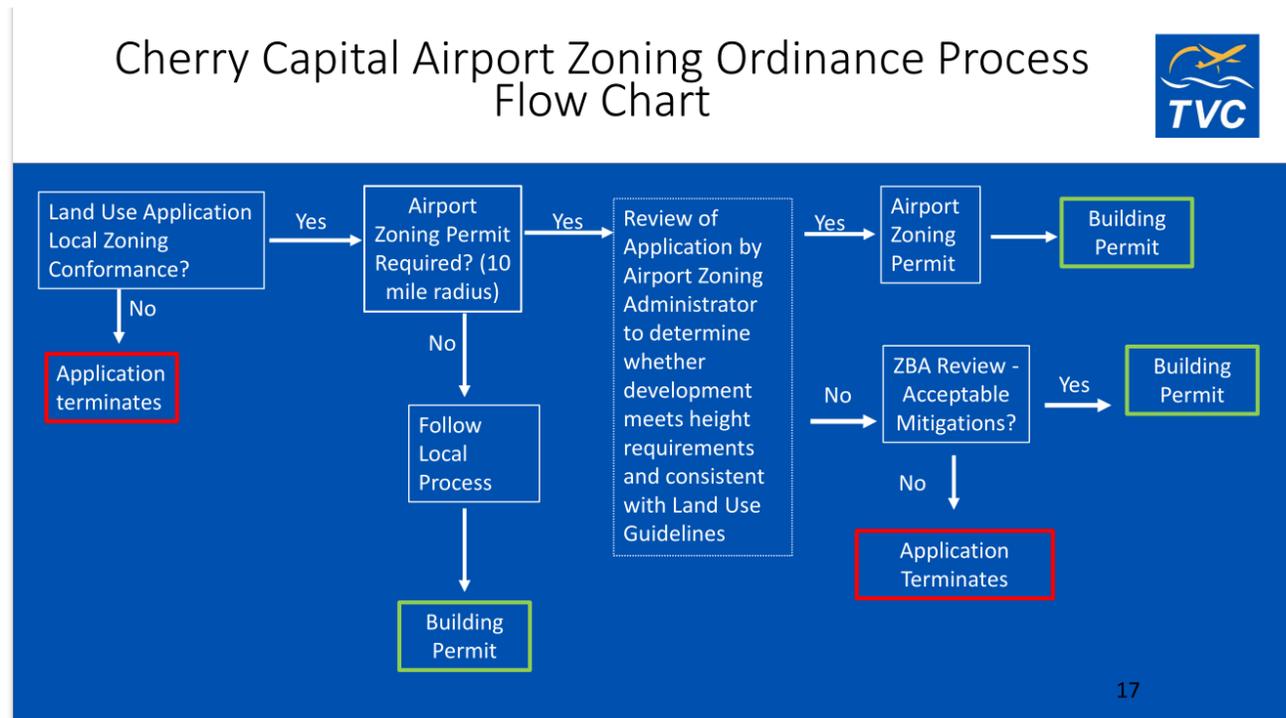
About 75 people attended the airport joint zoning commission informational meeting held at NMC Thursday, February 26. Although the airport staff made an audio recording of the meeting, airport staff indicated that there are no plans to post the audio recording on the airport website. The *Beacon* recorded the meeting; [it is available on YouTube](#). Although the Record-Eagle sent a reporter, no other media outlets appeared to be in attendance.

It is critical that developers spend time to understand the existing law and implications of the new ordinance. There will be much more red tape for buildings over 35 feet that are within 10 miles of the airport, large solar arrays, lights and other items that could impede aircraft operation. The *Beacon* will continue to publish independent issues on the zoning and other items related to the airport, as they are too long and complex to make for a reasonable length for the normal Tuesday *Beacon* issues.

The presentation is available on the [airport website](#) or the *Beacon* ([the airport does not keep documents available for very long](#)). Similarly, the draft ordinance is available on the [airport website](#), or the [via the Beacon](#).



The proposed airport zoning overlay will constrain construction and land use for a 10-mile radius around the airport. This map shows a 10-mile radius from the terminal building. The actual boundary would be about 1/4 to 1/2 mile larger, as it would be measured from the airport boundary instead of a fixed point on the south side of the airport.



The zoning procedure for structures and landscaping over 35 feet out to 10 miles will become more complicated.

Airport Signs Contract for PFAS Removal

By Bruce Moore

At the February 24 Regular Meeting, the Northwest Regional Airport Authority (TVC Airport) approved a contract with Elmer’s Crane and Dozer to remove PFAS-contaminated soil in the area where the new terminal will be built. The contaminated soil will be transferred to either the Wexford County Landfill (\$100/ton) or Glen’s Landfill in Leelanau County (\$35/ton). The soil will be replaced with uncontaminated soil before construction begins. The project will be funded by an EGLE grant.

The presentation and materials for the PFAS removal item is conspicuously absent from the packet.

The soil is believed to have been contaminated from fire-fighting drills at the end of a NW-SE runway that no longer exists. Soil will be removed to a depth of at least three feet and up to eight to ten feet (the depth of the water table). There was no discussion at the meeting as to whether contamination reached into the water table.

[The discussion of the removal of the PFAS contaminated soil begins at about 14:40 in this YouTube recording of the meeting.](#)

Year-to-date passenger counts are down about 5% from 2025.

BOC Votes to Proceed with 911 Dispatch Construction

By Bruce Moore

At the February 18 Regular Meeting, the BOC voted to proceed with construction of Project Alpha, a replacement of the Emergency Communications Center (911 Dispatch), the Emergency Operations Center, and a shared Combined Operations Building that will be primarily used by the Commission on Aging. The Board also voted to fund replacement of the 911 phone system earlier than planned, and approved a mutual aid agreement between the Sheriff's Office and the Airport Police Department.

The consent agenda contained appropriations for concrete work at the Courthouse, a contract for performance reviews of the Administrator and Health Officer, and RFPs for an operational audit and housing study.



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 [on the County website](https://www.gtcountymi.gov/344/Bay-Area-Transportation-Authority). 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@gtdems.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>.

Recent [airport meetings are available on Youtube](#).

Email all commissioners at: commissioners@gtcountymi.gov.

If you have a comment or do not wish to receive emails like this please email communications@gt Dems.org with COMMENT or UNSUBSCRIBE in the subject. If you wish to end all email communications with GTDems click below.”

Grand Traverse Democrats
309 E Front St
Traverse City, MI 49684
United States

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