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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](mailto:Beacon_Editor@gt Dems.org).*

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## **BOC to Discuss TIF, PILOT and Brownfield Ad Hoc Recommendations for Housing**

By Bruce Moore

At the February 4 Regular Meeting, the primary item on the agenda is a discussion of recommendations from the TIF, PILOT, and Brownfield Ad Hoc Committee regarding recommendations for improving housing costs and availability in the county. The *Beacon* refers to this ad hoc as the “Housing Ad Hoc,” since the full name—“Tax Increment Financing, Payment in Lieu of Taxes and Brownfield Ad Hoc”—is unwieldy and unintelligible. Other items on the agenda are a discussion of the County’s laptop and tablet replacement cycle and 2026 committee assignments. The full [98-page packet is available on the County website](#).

### **Housing Ad Hoc Recommendations Include Interim TIF and PILOT Guidelines**

The Housing Ad Hoc will present recommendations and an Interim Guideline Checklist for Rental Housing Projects Involving Tax Increment Financing (TIF) and Payments in Lieu of Taxes (PILOT). The [proposal on page 85 of the packet](#) would tighten existing policy and require (this is not a full list):

- 20% of units rented to renters with incomes less than 100% of area median income (AMI).
- Short-term rentals would be prohibited.
- Must allow adequate review time by County staff.
- Must comply with local zoning.
- Rent calculations must include utility allowance that does not exceed AMI requirements.
- Rent and income restrictions must be in place 10 years or period of TIF and/or PILOT reimbursement, whichever is longer.
- Funding is only available for units occupied by an Income Qualified Household
- Exceptions can be approved if significant other benefits exist or are included. On-site childcare and supportive mental health services are two examples listed.

## **Housing Ad Hoc Recommends RFP for Housing Market Feasibility Analysis**

The Housing Ad Hoc recommends that the County issue a Request for Proposal (RFP) for a Housing Market Feasibility Analysis. The [description of the proposed RFP begins on page 95 of the 98-page packet](#). The RFP deliverables suggest that the study is aimed at determining how current policies and markets are meeting (or failing to meet) housing demand.

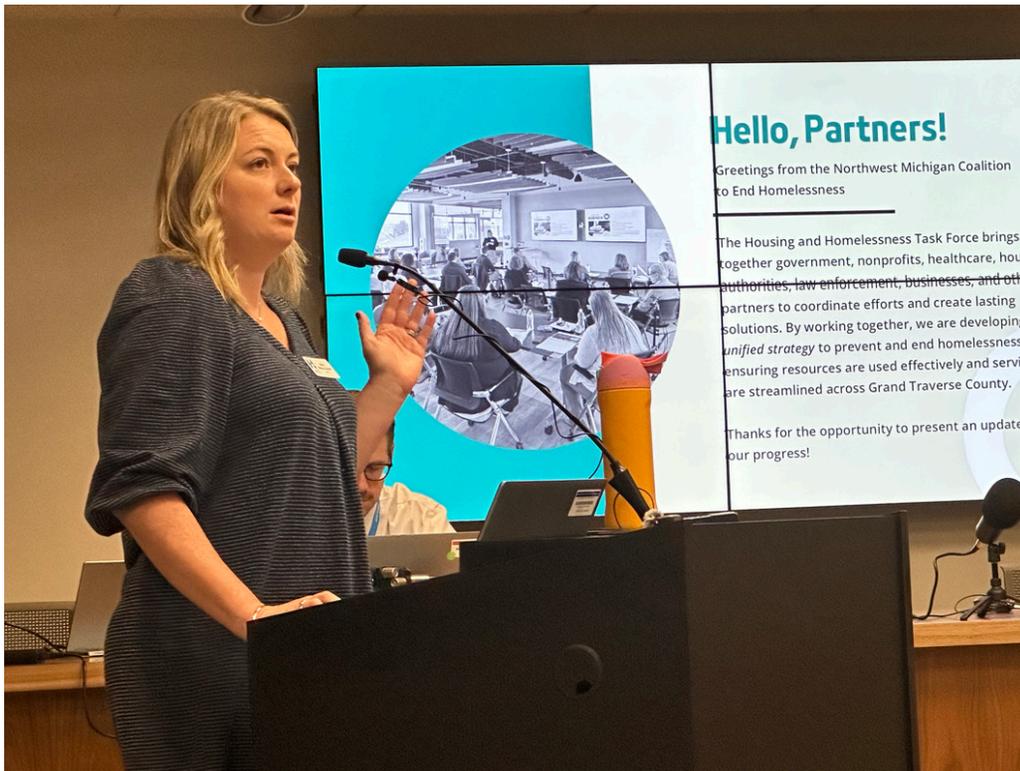
The deliverables appear to be a consolidation of work done by Housing North on necessary supply, zoning barriers as identified in the recently completed Zoning Atlas, and new work to gather information on in-progress development. The RFP is focused on purchase and rental options for households with incomes that are 60-120% of AMI.

## **BOC Hears Update on Housing and Homelessness Task Force Progress**

By Bruce Moore

At the January 21 Regular Meeting, the Board discussed the progress report from Ashley Halladay-Schmandt of the Northwest Michigan Coalition to End Homelessness. The Board discussed the status of the Northern Lakes Community Mental Health and the closure of United We Smile. The [full 117-page packet is available on the County website](#). The [42-page minutes packet is also available on the County website](#).

Commissioner Nelson was absent.



Ashley Halladay-Schmandt gave the BOC a progress report on the Housing and Homelessness Task Force. Photo by Harold Lassers

## **Housing and Homelessness Task Force Previews Final Report**

The Housing and Homelessness Task Force has been meeting since the Spring of 2025, with the original goal of presenting final findings at the end of 2025. The Task Force is about three months behind schedule, with community input sessions originally scheduled for October occurring on January 21, 2026. The delay is primarily due to some volunteer-oriented organizations (primarily Safe Harbor) asking for time to preview the recommendations to volunteers so that they did not feel blind-sided by the recommendations.

The most visible recommendation is to consolidate and expand emergency shelter capacity at a new 165-bed facility adjacent to what is now Goodwill Inn on Keystone Road. This shelter is intended for individuals and does not include capacity for single- or two-parent families. If the Keystone Road facility is not feasible, the Task Force recommends adding 30 beds to the existing Safe Harbor facility.

The housing portion of the presentation was focused on availability of “deeply affordable” housing—0-20% of area median income.

Readers are encouraged to review the [BOC presentation](#) and the Task Force website, <https://www.housingandhomelessnesstaskforce.org>.



Attendance at the Housing and Homeless Task Force Community Input sessions was sparse. Most attendees were reporters, City Commissioners or members of various service organizations. Photo by Bruce Moore

### **New Northern Lakes CEO Describes 2025 Cost-cutting Measures**

Linda Zeller, the new CEO for Northern Lakes Community Mental Health introduced herself to the Board and took questions from Commissioners, mostly about 2025 cost-cutting measures. Zeller indicated that NLCMH is overly dependent upon Medicaid funding. The elimination of 17 positions was among the cost-cutting measures required to close the 2025 budget shortfalls. Zeller will be back in March to give a prepared summary of cost-cutting measures and changes in service generally and Grand Traverse County specifically.



Commissioner Andrews questions Linda Zeller, the new NLCMH CEO. Photo by Harold Lassers

## **United We Smile Closure Is Messy**

The Veterans Affairs presentation on the closure of the United We Smile dental service indicated that the events leading up to the closure of United We Smile were organizationally messy. In addition to veterans, United We Smile handled pediatric patients with unusual needs who have difficulty finding a dentist trained and willing to address their specific needs.

The presentation began with this statement from Michael Roof, Director of Grand Traverse County Veterans Affairs (58:11 minutes in Traverse Community Media recording):

...But know that I was contacted by United Way in mid-December and asked if we would continue our \$12,000 a month. I said that we had no contract because the contract that you approved ended December 31st. So currently we're not paying them anything because we don't have a contract. And then two weeks later, they started telling me they were closing down.

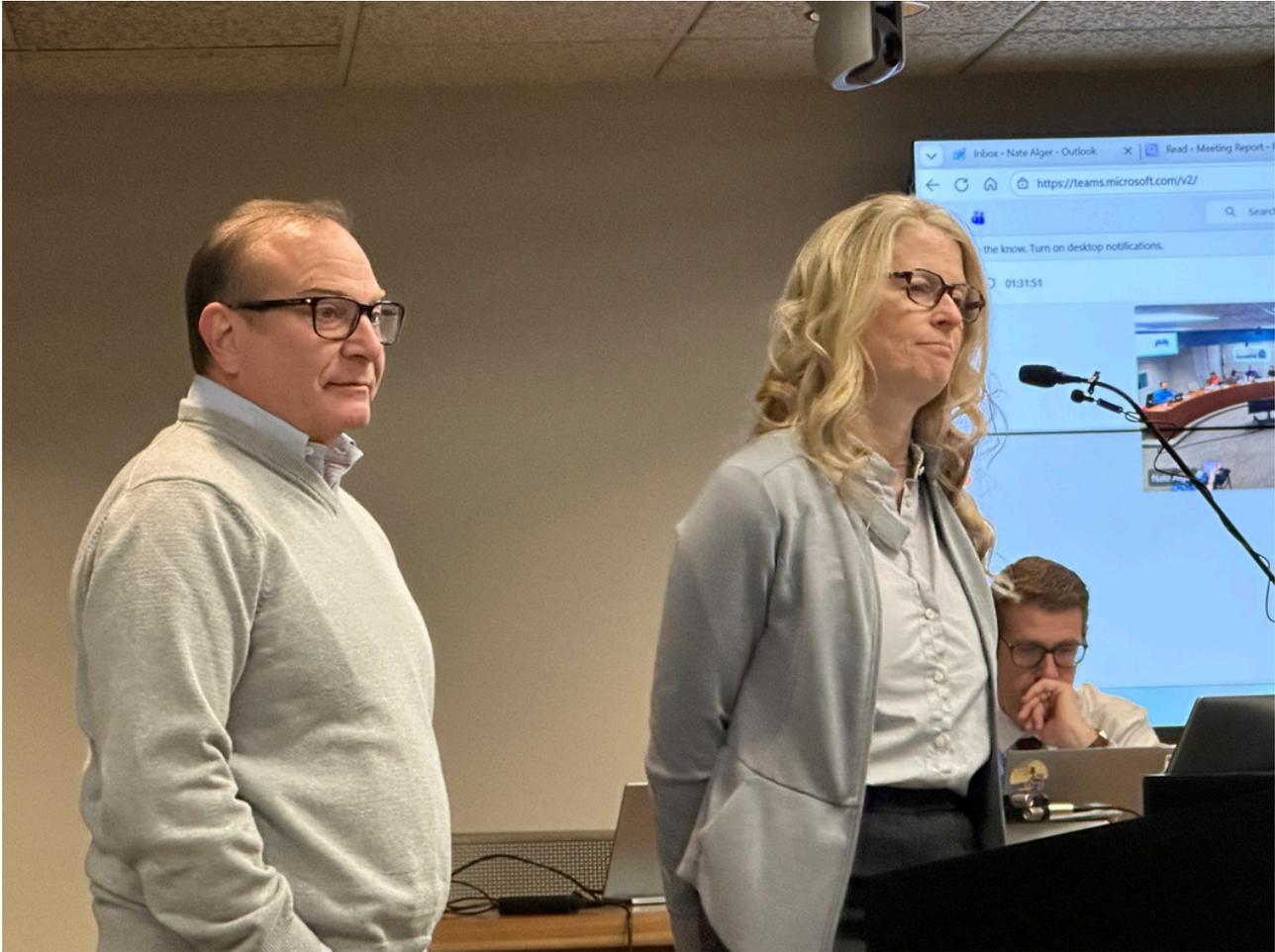
During the presentation, former United We Smile Dental Hygienist Jennifer Kearns raised a variety of financial questions directed at United Way of Northwest Michigan. She and Dr. Carlisle described in detail impacts of the lost services, including patients without other facilities to meet their special needs, patients without access to

dentures that had already been completed, and dental students needing practical training. Grand Traverse County Medical Director Michael Lahey said the closure leaves an “unfilled gap.” The *Beacon* believe this warrants further investigation by the BOC, as county funding was provided to this program.

The Board passed motion to direct the Administrator and Health Department Director to come up with alternative ways to provide the dental services that United We Smile previously provided.

The *Beacon* believe this warrants further investigation by the BOC, as county funding was provided to this program. It is not clear to the *Beacon* whether the closure is due to cascading financial problems at United We Smile, mismanagement at United Way, or simply the failure of the County to renew a contract in a timely manner.

Readers are encouraged to follow developments as [reported in the Record-Eagle](#) and other media outlets.



Former United We Smile Dental Hygienist Jennifer Kearns and Dentist David Carlisle address BOC with concerns regarding closure of the dental clinic. Photo by Harold Lassers

## **Airport Temporarily Omits Air Show from New Minimum Standards**

By Bruce Moore

The Northwest Regional Airport Authority board approved various contracts for legal and other services during its January 20 Annual Meeting. Among the legal contracts approved, the NRAA Board approved a contract for environmental legal services for \$745 per hour.

At the Regular Meeting that followed, the NRAA Board approved new “Minimum Standards” after an eight-minute public hearing. No one spoke in public comment during the public hearing, and no new communications

were received. The proposed air show Minimum Standards were universally criticized; the NRAA Board dropped the air show Minimum Standards while it negotiates with representatives of the National Cherry Festival Air Show.



Swearing in of the Airport Board at the January 27, 2026 Annual Meeting. From left, Rob Donnell (GTC), Dan Jonkhoff (GTC), Rob Hentschel (GTC), Will Bunek (LC), Rick Robbins (LC), Doug DeYoung (GTC), Paul Beachnau (Gaylord), Steve Plamondon (LC), Kevin Klein (CEO), Karrie Zeits (Airport Attorney). Photo by Bruce Moore

## Contacting the Beacon

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## 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](mailto:commissioners@gtcountymi.gov).

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