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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 [\[email protected\]](mailto:).

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In this issue:

- [BOC to Elect Vice Chair at Organizational Meeting](#)
- [BOC to Vote on Continuing Ad Hoc Committees for Housing and Employee Retention](#)
 - [Housing Affordability Ad Hoc Prepares Recommendations](#)
 - [Employee Retention Ad Hoc Addresses 20% Annual Turnover](#)
 - [Elk Rapids Dam Maintenance at Root of Authority Delegation](#)
- [BOC Approves Budget in Last Meeting of the Year](#)
 - [Treasurer's and Registrar of Deeds Budgets increase 58% and 37% Respectively](#)
 - [Administration Proposes Continuing Outsourced Marketing and Web Support](#)
 - [Antrim County Resolution Included No Upper Bound on Expenditures](#)

BOC to Elect Vice Chair at Organizational Meeting

By Bruce Moore

At Wednesday's Board of Commissioners Organizational meeting—an usually short meeting before the first meeting of the year—the Board will elect the Vice Chair for the coming year. With the 2024 elections, County Commission terms switched from two- to four-year terms. The Board Chair is elected for a two-year term in odd years, and the Vice Chair is elected for a one-year term each year. The Chair will also make committee and liaison appointments at the Organizational Meeting. The [packet for the Organizational Meeting can be found on the County website](#).

BOC to Vote on Continuing Ad Hoc Committees for Housing and Employee Retention

By Bruce Moore

At the end of each year, all ad hoc committees terminate; if the Board wants to continue the work of the ad hoc committee, it must vote to continue the committee in the new year, and the Chair must appoint the members. The Board will vote on whether to extend the Tax Increment Financing (TIF), Payment in Lieu of Taxes (PILOT) and Brownfield Ad Hoc Committee and the the Salary and Retention Ad Hoc Committee. The former is aimed at housing affordability in the county, while the latter is aimed at solving employee retention and recruiting problems identified early last year.

The full [130-page packet is available on the County website](#). The original packet was 143 pages, and included a vote on a resolution to delegate authority for maintaining a court-ordered level for Elk Lake to the Antrim County Drain Commissioner. The Elk Lake item appears to have been removed, but the *Beacon* has kept the Elk Lake item in the report in the *Beacon* isn't sure that it won't be added back. The *Beacon* has attempted to correct all page references to the 130-page version of the packet.

Housing Affordability Ad Hoc Prepares Recommendations

The TIF, PILOT and Brownfield Ad Hoc Committee was focused on housing affordability in the county. Commissioners Sieffert, Andrews and McAllister served on the committee, and prepared several recommendations for future Board action including a checklist for projects seeking TIF and/or PILOT financing. The proposed guidelines require:

- At least 20% of units be rented to people with incomes less than 100% of area median income (AMI).
- Short-term rental use is prohibited.
- Restrictions must stay in place for ten years or the period of TIF/PILOT financing, whichever is longer.

The Committee also prepared a proposal to amend the County policy on PILOT financing to change from 120% of AMI to 100% of AMI and an RFP to study policy issues for housing aimed at renters with incomes of 60-100% AMI.

[The year-end progress report for the committee](#) begins on page 122 of the packet.

Employee Retention Ad Hoc Addresses 20% Annual Turnover

The Salary and Retention Ad Hoc Committee was focused on addressing the 20% annual turnover of County employees and the related problem of filling long-term vacancies. The Committee initiated the addition of the 457(b) retirement plan match, which the Board passed unanimously, and also identified wage and salary misalignments. The Committee also initiated an RFP process for third-party performance reviews of the County Administrator and Health Director.

[The year-end progress report for the committee](#) is on page 130 of the packet.

Elk Rapids Dam Maintenance at Root of Authority Delegation



Maintenance issues for the dam in Elk Rapids are at the root of the Elk Lake level authority delegation that comes before the Board on Wednesday.

Left: Antrim County Drain Commissioner Leslie Meyers

The Board has already discussed this item at two previous meetings; the primary change in the resolution is language requiring that Grand Traverse County expenditures of more than \$10,000 must come before the Board. The previous version authorized essentially unlimited expenditures without a vote by the GT Board.

The current project is to identify all of the property owners with access to Elk Lake, Lake Skegemog and upstream lakes for inclusion in a Special Assessment District (SAD). The SAD will then be responsible for the repairs to the dam. The vast majority of the property owners in the SAD will be in Antrim County, but a few hundred property owners with lake access in Grand Traverse County will be included in the SAD.

Property owners on Elk Lake and Lake Skegemog should pay attention to this.

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BOC Approves Budget in Last Meeting of the Year



By Bruce Moore

At the December 17 meeting, the Board approved the 2026 budget after Commissioners asked questions about the reasons for unusual growth in several budget items. The Board added an agenda item for the Antrim County Drain Commissioner who showed up unexpectedly, and reviewed proposals for web site development and marketing contracts. The [packet for the December 17, 2025 meeting is available on the County website](#), as are the [minutes for the meeting](#).

No Board members were absent.

Treasurer's and Registrar of Deeds Budgets increase 58% and 37% Respectively

The 2026 budgets for the Treasurer and Registrar of Deeds increased 58% and 37% respectively as shown in Figure 1. In both cases, Dean Bott indicated that software updates were the reason for the extraordinary expenses and that future budgets for these departments will fall to levels similar to past years.

General Fund Top 15 Line Items

Category	Department & Item	FY24 BUDGET	FY24 AUDITED	FY25 BUDGET	FY26 BUDGET	FY 26 - F Actual incr
Public Safety	Sheriff-County Patrol	8,586,502	8,595,695	8,960,102	9,461,405	86
Judicial	Family Court-Juvenile Division	2,095,733	1,848,889	2,201,599	2,565,980	71
Transfers	District Court Fund	3,053,730	3,117,395	3,355,680	3,660,222	54
Public Safety	Sheriff-Corrections	7,469,733	7,201,930	8,543,187	7,741,358	53
Public Safety	Sheriff-County Investigation	1,446,968	1,627,646	1,659,924	2,005,553	37
Government	County Treasurer	513,635	477,516	540,218	854,282	37
Government	Prosecuting Attorney	2,045,145	1,893,263	2,228,406	2,224,500	33
Transfers	County Facilities Fund	1,700,000	2,000,000	1,800,000	2,325,000	32
Transfers	Circuit Court Fund	1,750,954	1,689,072	1,874,884	1,991,463	30
Government	Facilities Management	948,265	923,331	1,018,324	1,187,230	26
other	Insurance & Bonds	950,000	750,000	1,000,000	1,000,000	25
Government	Register of Deeds	487,751	442,085	504,536	691,965	24
Government	Administrator/Controller	807,540	735,791	985,345	978,716	24
Public Safety	Central Records	1,214,511	888,507	1,252,959	1,058,272	16
Government	County Clerk	1,005,094	953,184	1,046,759	1,079,617	12
Top 15 Budget Items		34,075,561	33,144,304	36,971,923	38,825,563	5,68

The Treasurer's and Registrar of Deeds' budgets increased 58% and 37% for 2026. Reprinted from December 16, 2026 *Beacon*.

Administration Proposes Continuing Outsourced Marketing and Web Support

The County outsources its marketing to Grand Bay Promotions, the public relations firm that also handles marketing for the Road Commission and Airport. Web site support is outsourced to Novum Productions. Costs for 2023-2025 were reported as \$144,500 and \$194,008 respectively.

Antrim County Dam Maintenance Resolution Included No Upper Bound on Expenditures

The Board heard a presentation by the Antrim County Drain Commissioner regarding necessary maintenance on the Elk Rapids Dam. This was not on the agenda—the Antrim County group just showed up, and was placed on the agenda with Commissioner Nelson's encouragement. The Board requested revisions that require expenditures over \$10,000 come before for the Board for approval; there was no expenditure ceiling in the document proposed by the Antrim County Drain Commissioner. The Board also requested that the GT County Drain Commissioner, Andy Smits, offer remarks on the proposal at the meeting when the Board will vote on the revised document.

New Beacon Banner

Some readers may notice that the new banner for the *Beacon* sports the Old Mission Light House; Harold Lassers designed the new banner using a photo of the lighthouse. The *Beacon* is experimenting with a variety of process and design changes to improve usability and readability for what is sometimes a long publication. The first was a shift to making the announcement email readable directly on a phone or tablet. The *Beacon* will continue to experiment with different tools, graphic design and potentially fonts that the editor can read on a phone without reading glasses.

If you have design and usability suggestions please send them to [\[email protected\]](mailto:).

Contacting the Beacon

The Beacon Editor can be reached at [\[email protected\]](mailto:).

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: [\[email protected\]](mailto:).

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