

**THE BENZIE COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS**  
**September 9, 2008**

The Benzie County Board of Commissioners met in a special meeting on Tuesday, September 9, 2008, in the Commissioners Room, Government Center, Beulah, Michigan, 49617.

Present were: Commissioners Damm, Kelley, Pitcher, Roper, Smeltzer, Stobie and Walterhouse  
Absent: None

The invocation was given by Commissioner Kelley following by the pledge of allegiance.

Motion by Smeltzer, seconded by Walterhouse, to approve the agenda as amended, adding Comm Damm's discussion regarding Planning Commission minutes following Public Input. Motion carried.  
Ayes: Damm, Kelley, Pitcher, Roper, Smeltzer, Stobie and Walterhouse Nays: None

9:05 a.m. **PUBLIC INPUT**

Carol Merrill, Union President, provides the board with a copy of the union concerns regarding the building department cuts; time worked on the time sheets is not accurate; this lay off should not be a personal vendetta against someone.

Pat Delonnay, Benzonia Twp, supports Dave Neiger.

Al Brown, with the downsizing of the building department, contractors will be paying their fees to the inspectors, not a secretary as it should be.

Susie Voltz, has been here 68 years and have seen a lot of volunteer groups; Master Plan is being worked on and hope the zoning ordinance follows; thank you for your volunteerism.

Dennis Rodzick, Homestead Twp, you are excluding the public from attending your meetings by not having evening meetings so people can attend.

Kathy Ross, Planning Commission member, supports Dave Neiger's position; we need to safeguard our county it is not realistic to cut Dave's position; we need sound planning.

Craig Seger, historically Benzie County structure has been that one person runs Planning/Zoning/Soil Erosion/Land Division with an assistant to support them and support from the community for volunteer work; Keep one person doing these jobs; he has developed good relations with the communities and with all of Benzie County over the last year. He is ready, willing & able to serve.

Karen Roberts, Planning Commissioner asks to retain the full time planner; it would be a terrible mistake to remove that position; long hours are involved and \$15,000 will not do it; if you choose to eliminate the position, you should eliminate zoning too.

Eric VanDussen, Benzonia, says the idea of night meetings is a good idea; you are still not recording the meetings; The main item in the Wyckoff report was communication and it still not happening; Everyone knows that your full time lay offs are not for budget reasons, perhaps you should eliminate Clarke, Seger and Haugen.

Kathy Ralston, Planning Commissioner hands out her comments and reads them.

Clarence Davis, Platte Twp Supervisor, biggest concern is tourism – our lakes and surroundings; work on the Master Plan and make sure it gets done then Planning follows along.

9:25 a.m. **PUBLIC INPUT CLOSED**

Commissioner Anne Damm states that the Planning Commission met and provided two motions: 1) object to the elimination of the Planner; and 2) no confidence of the Chair and Vice Chair. They will elect a new chair and vice chair at the next meeting.

A letter has been received from Cliff Graves resigning from the Planning Commission.

9:26 a.m. Presentation of 2009 Budget

Comm Smeltzer presented highlights as chairman of the budget committee:

### **General Fund – 101**

#### Revenues:

Projected to be down through property taxes, district court costs; register of deeds fees; interest income and revenue sharing.

#### Expenses:

Sheriff will replace Zero Tolerance Officer/Bailiff with a deputy which reduces the cost to the general fund; two new patrol cars.

We are in the second year of a three-year plan to bring CMH funding level up as required by law. Health Ins – working to change the prescription coverage to a closed formulary.

#### Eliminated:

Planning and the supporting budget.

Full time secretary in the building department.

Assistant Prosecuting Attorney

Reduced the full time secretary in the Register of Deeds to part time.

Reduced two inspectors to part time from full time.

Part time person in the Treasurer's office.

### **Jail Fund – 213**

Growth is up \$41,500 from millage; bed rental has declined and projected to be \$27,000 less than 2008 predictions.

### **EMS – 214**

Millage proceeds are up \$49,398; fees are projected up \$46,600 from 2008 budget; Benzonia station has been eliminated; need to continue to manage schedule to keep overtime under control; \$50,000 budgeted for equipment replacement.

### **Solid Waste/Recycling Fund – 228**

Will ask to increase fee to \$19.00; Number 5 plastic to be added to acceptable items; pay raise in recognition of Dept Head responsibilities for Coordinator to \$35,000 from \$28,420 to be effective January 1, 2008.

### **Animal Control – 247**

Personnel situation stabilizing; continued consideration for training opportunities; second year of setting aside for a replacement truck.

### **Building Dept – 249**

Supported by fees, but projected revenues are down \$35,450; Secretary III position eliminated; Plumbing/Mechanical and Electrical Inspectors reduced from full time to part time; 2-1/2% raises are not applied to Building Dept personnel.

### **Dispatch/9-1-1 – 261**

Surcharge stands at \$2.13 for all devices in accordance with PSC; Legislation is still on the table; revenue projections are based on historical input and factors provided by the State; \$75,000 projected to be needed from the General Fund (fund balance) to balance expenses; Union agreement pending; staff has stabilized in the last year.

#### Commissioner Comments:

Comm Walterhouse asks if the budget committee looked at a possible millage for 911.

Comm Smeltzer says they felt the renewal of the jail millage was more vital.

Chuck Clarke states that you will know amount of money for 911 at the end of October.

Comm Roper says there is the possibility of a millage in the future.

Comm Stobie looks at the line amounts in the budget for the building inspectors – need to consider fringe benefits too.

Comm Roper asks about various departments both revenues and expenditures.

9:57 a.m. Break

10:10 a.m. Reconvene

10:10 a.m. Open Public Hearing on 2008-09 Budgets

Pat Mead, Benzonia Twp Clerk, how do you go about eliminating a job, used to be the last one hired was let go; do you have an agenda; why did you hire Craig Seger anyhow; if you gave Dave Neiger the office help he needed, he could do it; how can you eliminate jobs and give solid waste a \$7,000 raise why not a \$2,000 or \$3,000.

Eric VanDussen, regarding the situation with Dave Neiger being eliminated is almost in line with the letters Craig Seger wrote to Chuck Clarke, following it to the “T” with the elimination of Dave Neiger and Craig becoming the guru down there; Why didn’t you just fire him; In reviewing the minutes of the last few budget meetings, with members present and other commissioners in the audience, they should have been in the Public Input only – an open meetings act violation; what will be done with Kathie’s position – there will be musical chairs in the bumping; the last person hired was the maintenance coordinator – could bump there.

Dennis Rodzick, Homestead Twp, he is disappointed that this budget wasn’t ready a week ago for the public to look at; you need evening meetings for the public.

Al Brown says that with Kathie Bruce there are not as many complaints; she did a fine job.

Sally Casey asks that when you were making cuts, did you look at your own health insurance and benefits.

10:17 a.m. Motion by Pitcher, seconded by Smeltzer, to close the Public Hearing. Motion carried.

Ayes: Damm, Kelley, Pitcher, Roper, Smeltzer, Stobie and Walterhouse Nays: None

Motion by Smeltzer, seconded by Walterhouse, to set the solid waste recycling fee at \$19.00 per household effective with the 2008 winter property tax bills for the 2009 budget. Roll call. Motion carried. Ayes: Damm, Kelley, Pitcher, Roper, Smeltzer, Stobie and Walterhouse Nays: None

Comm Pitcher states that they are eliminating four part time and two full time positions; it was really touch decision to make on raises.

Comm Roper says there is one step increase for one employee and 2.5% increase for elected and non-union employees – don't want raises with lay offs, can't go along with it.

Comm Stobie agrees with Comm Roper.

Comm Kelley says he agrees but disagrees; union personnel were already negotiated; failure to give raises would cause the non-union employees to go to a union.

Comm Roper says we are at a point where revenues are dropping and the building dept has already shown this; the revenues aren't there and we have forgiven the rent to that department.

Comm Pitcher says she struggled with the 2.5% -- that doesn't event cover the cost of living.

Comm Smeltzer says it is unfair to other employees to not give raises.

Comm Stobie says someone has to go first here; 2.5% is a hefty raise.

Comm Damm agrees; others aren't getting raises; we need to revisit the Planning & Zoning budgets – something is out of whack here; this will cause us to not do the comprehensive plan and it is required.

Comm Roper says the building and register of deeds will take a hit too.

Comm Damm says to keep in mind the wants of the community; the planning commission says it won't work with \$15,000 consulting fee.

Motion by Walterhouse, seconded by Damm, to budget \$63,240 for the Planning Department for 2008-09 to include the Planner, effective October 1, 2008 with fund to come from fund balance or contingency. Roll call. Motion denied. Ayes: Damm, Stobie and Walterhouse Nays: Kelley, Roper, Pitcher and Smeltzer

Motion by Roper, seconded by Stobie, to eliminate all step increase and the 2.5% raises for all elected and non-union employees.

10:45 a.m. Break

10:59 a.m. Reconvene

Savings would be \$38,400 total – all funds.

Roll call. Motion denied. Ayes: Damm, Roper and Stobie Nays: Kelley, Pitcher, Smeltzer and Walterhouse

Motion by Walterhouse, seconded by Kelley, to set the 2008-09 Budgets for funds 101-569, as presented. Roll call. Motion carried. Ayes: Damm, Kelley, Pitcher, Roper, Smeltzer, Stobie and Walterhouse Nays: None

Comm Pitcher informs the public that they now have a week to review.

Comm Roper suggests possible evening budget meetings next year.

L-4029 – Tom Longanbach

Tom presents the L-4029 millage rates for 2008; this board needs to decide an amount to assess for veterans.

Motion by Walterhouse, seconded by Kelley, to set the veterans millage rate at 0.0500. Roll call. Motion carried. Ayes: Damm, Kelley, Pitcher, Roper, Smeltzer, Stobie and Walterhouse Nays: None

Motion by Walterhouse, seconded by Pitcher, to set the L-4092 as amended, authorizing the Chair and Clerk to sign. Roll call. Motion carried. Ayes: Damm, Kelley, Pitcher, Roper, Smeltzer, Stobie and Walterhouse Nays: None

Any Further Business to Come Before the Board: None

11:20 a.m. PUBLIC INPUT -- None

Motion by Kelley, seconded by Smeltzer, to adjourn until September 16, 2008, or the call of the chair. Motion carried. Ayes: Damm, Kelley, Pitcher, Roper, Smeltzer, Stobie and Walterhouse Nays: None

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Mark E. Roper -- Chairman

Dawn Olney – Benzie County Clerk

### INDEX

1. Approved the agenda as amended.
2. Public Hearing held on proposed 2008-09 budget.
3. Set the solid waste recycling fee at \$19.00 per household effective with the 2008 property tax bills for the 2009 budget.
4. Denied motion to budget \$63,240 for the Planning Department for 2008-09 to include the Planner, effective October 1, 2008 with fund to come from fund balance or contingency.
5. Denied motion to eliminate all step increase and the 2.5% raises for all elected and non-union employees.
6. Set the 2008-09 Budgets for funds 101-569, as presented.
7. Set the veterans millage rate at 0.0500.
8. Set the L-4092 as amended, authorizing the Chair and Clerk to sign.