WHITEWATER TOWNSHIP BOARD
Whitewater Township Hall, 5777 Vinton Road, Williamsburg, MI 49690
231-267-5141 Phone

REGULAR MEETING
APPROVED MINUTES
Monday, February 10, 2025, 6:30 p.m.

CALL TO ORDER:
Clerk Wendy Hoeksema called the meeting to order at 6:30 p.m. The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

ROLL CALL:
Clerk Wendy Hoeksema called Roll.

Present:
Clerk Wendy Hoeksema
Treasurer Jill Koester
Trustee Tim Arends
Trustee Randy Mielnik

A quorum was established.

Absent:
Supervisor Linda Slopsema

ALSO PRESENT:
Zoning Administrator Deb Graber
Recording Secretary Kay Held

Board Action:
Mr. Mielnik made motion for Clerk Wendy Hoeksema to chair the meeting in the absence of Supervisor Linda Slopsema. Ms. Koester seconded the motion.

VOTE: YEAS: All. NAYES: None. Motion carried.

SET/ADJUST AGENDA:

Amendments:
Add Under Correspondence: Memo from Mr. David Boesler

It was noted on the Agenda, the sequence of items listed inadvertently skipped an Item "F."

Correspondence received from: Hymore, Boesler and Bridgeforth.

Board Action:
Ms. Hoeksema made a motion to approve the Agenda as amended. Mr. Arends seconded the motion.

VOTE: YEAS: All. NAYES: None. Motion carried.

DECLARATION OF CONFLICT OF INTEREST:
None.

FIRST PUBLIC COMMENT:

In the Township Hall:

Ms. Michelle Pescatello, 11465 M-72 East, Williamsburg, MI 49690
Ms. Pescatello expressed her concerns to the Planning Commission last week and explained to the Township Board there is a consistently dangerous bus stop heading westbound toward Traverse City where cars routinely ignore stopped and signaled busses. Twice she has seen her children need to jump out of the way of vehicles going around the bus. This happened most recently January 18 of this year, when a car passed five stopped vehicles and the bus at approximately 45 mph.

The location is at the crest of the hill from Kalkaska and end of a curve from Traverse City. She doesn't know if cameras are an option. She has spoken with Grand Traverse County Sheriff's Traffic Department and is asking for assistance from the Township. This has been traumatic to her and her family. The Elk Rapids bus garage has been made aware of this.

Mr. Mielnik noted the Planning Commission has a meeting with Ms. Pescatello tomorrow.

Mr. Roland Oosterhouse, 7450 River Road Park, Nashville, TN 37209 and 7185 Skegemog Point Road, Williamsburg, MI 49690:
Mr. Oosterhouse spoke with the Board last month and today provided the Board with a detailed packet regarding his Lossie Road property where he has owned 30 acres since the 1970's along Skegemog Point Road and the trail which goes diagonally through his property. This is the only access to his walnut crop.

He again provided a brief history of when motorized vehicles were banned. At that time, the Board agreed property owners could have access, but nothing formal was put in place. Former Township Supervisor Popp spent more than a year going through prior minutes and never completed it. He received a permit to build an equipment storage building; however, the Township's attorney informed him he didn't have a right to build, even though had a permit. Former Zoning Administrator Robert Hall and former Clerk Cheryl Goss agreed it was too swampy and there was no other access. The Michigan State Supreme Court stated if it has been used as an access in the last 15 years, it is still an access.

He is appealing to this Board to simply put up a sign that states all property owners may use motorized vehicles; all others are prohibited. He believes this is a simple fix.

Ms. Koester inquired whether the original document was found when the property was transferred to the Township. He stated it has, that it was transferred in 1992, and the property was surveyed.

The Board will research this matter.

Ms. Heidi Vollmuth, 8388 Winnie Lane, Williamsburg, MI 49690:
Ms. Vollmuth attended the Planning Commission meeting last week via Zoom. She sees the Private Road Ordinance is on tonight's Agenda. She doesn't want to see a sub-committee on this and for years has researched and provided Boards with documents about this.

She asked where the 2014 Minutes are located; they are not on the website nor in the archives. She began her own research, starting with the Traffic Enforcement on Private Roads from House Bill #4416. She left documents with the Board. She then pulled the General Ordinance #32; the Private Road Ordinance was effective 10/22/2003, amended #1 effective 9/6/04 (where they only added to Section 3, 3-1.6 "a hammerhead turnaround, a 35' radius for cul de sacs or a 60' hammerhead turnaround.) In the Definitions, "hammerhead turnaround" isn't in it. Ordinance 56 repealed it on 11/21/19.

The Consent Calendar of 8/12/14 states "referring to the PC Minutes of 6/4/14, Popp inquired if the PC needs the Board to do something regarding the Private Road issues." In discussion, "the PC stated it wants to know when the Board wants to work on that." It also states "a town hall meeting may be a good way to do it."

On 11/1/17, those Minutes reflect in the Township Board Liaison's report "the Board discussed Amendment 72 followed with "a comparison they will bring back on the 14th. A Private Road Ordinance is in discussion with the sub-committee. Roads for development will probably be moved into the Sub-division Ordinance."

Ms. Vollmuth referenced other Minutes from 2014 where Ms. Goss stated "they are not asking them to write an Ordinance; it would be a section of the Zoning Ordinance. Is it the Board's desire is to eventually eliminate Ordinance 32 by having a Road Standards in the Zoning Ordinance."

Ms. Vollmuth states there are many problems here. She requested the minutes from 2014. The Board needs to tackle this before going to a sub-committee because of the volume of information.

Ms. Melissa Melton, 5044 Vinton Road, Williamsburg, MI 49690
Ms. Melton stated she is on the Parks Board. In response to Mr. Oosterhouse, there has been much research on Lossie Road. They previously provided the prior Board a recommendation. The west end is so swampy that any vehicle traffic has made it impassable for foot traffic. It's been a safety issue for at least 10 years.

Recommendations to the prior Board included suggestions for car barricades with four options. No decision came out of that, and it remains an open issue. One suggestion was a blockade on the exterior available only to fire/rescue and private land owners. Another barricade was suggested further in, where there are more wetlands and more degradation. If open access is available for private land owners, legal investigation is necessary regarding usage, maintenance, etc.

She stated previous Lossie Road data is in prior Board packets. She stated it was transferred to the Township in 1992. She is uncertain of specific definitions used; however, the matter was not resolved.

Via Zoom:

Note: there were some technical difficulties with the Zoom audio/mute function, and viewers' comments were unable to be played/heard over the Zoom call.

Ms. Connie Hymore (address not provided), via Ms. Vollmuth's speaker phone
Ms. Hymore expressed concern about selling the portable restroom. This $67,986 was never put into service and now the Board is discussing selling it at an $8,986 loss. She implored the Board to withhold any decisions until they investigate how this restroom was going to be a valuable asset to the campgrounds and Hi Pray Park.

She inquired whether Mr. Oosterhouse was using the trail. It appears that is his only access to his property; therefore, it may be his driveway. She would like to know the answer to this.

Ms. Hymore questioned whether the date/time of this evening's meeting was properly noticed and therefore legal, and whether it should have been called a Special Meeting.

NOTE: As an alternative, Zoom viewers were instructed to call Mr. Mielnik's telephone, which was then placed on speaker function.

Mr. Tom McElwee (address not provided)
Mr. McElwee stated the tennis courts are due to be resurfaced. With pickleball's popularity, he suggested two tennis courts be turned into pickleball courts.

Ms. Annie Boeve, 2832 125th Ave., Allegan, MI 49010
Ms. Boeve thanked the new Board for their service to the Township. Her concerns include the portable restroom and its expense. She believes the Township should further investigate options.

Regarding potentially eliminating Seasonal campsites for 2025, most Seasonal reservations are made by Labor Day for the following year. Making such a change this late is not good for business. Lotteries are not typically held until after returning campers have an option to reserve for the next year. She does not believe it is fair to the existing Seasonal campers to remove that option. She encouraged the Board to make better policies and decisions as a business. Transient campers make more work for a campground than Seasonal campers.

Mrs. Barbara Dean (address not provided)
Mrs. Dean stated her family has been in the area dating back to pre-civil war including residing here and operating cherry farms. She inherited two homes on her grandparents' farm. After renovating the homes, she contacted Whitewater Township to make it a vacation rental (never a long-term rental). At the time, she was informed there was nothing she needed to do—no fees or permits. She was shocked last year to learn short-term rentals were not allowed in the Township. Her attorney stated she did not need to shut down her rental as the Township's business was not in order. She understands there are issues with short-term rentals; she has never a problem and only rents when she is onsite. Discussions need to take place to address problems and manage the situations. She offered to become involved to assist the Township in some way.

REPORTS / PRESENTATIONS / ANNOUNCEMENTS / COMMENTS:

County Board of Commissioners – Commissioner Darryl Nelson:
No Report.

Fire Report – Chief Morgan
Chief Morgan's written report is in the meeting packet. He additionally reported:
There were 17 calls for service in month of January. This represents an 88% increase over January, 2024. Much of this increase is attributed to weather incidents. He stated the average turnout time is 2.22 minutes and average response time is 7 minutes.

Chief Morgan has been working on the 2025-2026 Budget for the Fire Fund, Fire Capital Improvement Fund and Ambulance Fund. He continues revision of the Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs). The Probationary Training Manual has also been completed.

Chief Morgan acknowledged Firefighters Tom Bartnicki, Grace Watson, and Kevin Bylsma completed EMT-Basic Certifications. Additionally, Firefighters Watson and Bartnicki have begun the Fire Academy. The Fire Department posts regularly on FaceBook and social media.

One room in the conex box has been built out, and they are working on the second room of this training facility. The completion of this has the potential to positively affect their ISO rating. He will be meeting with the ISO insurance reviewer to review training records, response history, apparatus, equipment, etc. A lower ISO rating results in lower insurance costs.

Planning Commission Report – Randy Mielnik:
Mr. Mielnik's report is in the meeting packet.

He additionally reported the Planning Commission met on 2/5/25 and held a Public Hearing on the Master Plan. One Public Comment was heard, resulting on one change to the Master Plan Draft. The Planning Commission unanimously approved a Resolution to forward the Master Plan to the Township. Authority for final approval will need to be determined yet by the Township Board (this item is on this evening's Agenda).

The PC discussed the request for qualifications in the RFP for Planning Services; issue and response dates will be changed. This will be forwarded to the Township Board.

The Planning Commission reviewed each budget center of the Budget in detail.

Planning Commission Vice Chair Al Keaton has tendered his resignation from the PC. There will be two open seats on the PC as a result of Mr. Keaton and Mr. Jacobson leaving. They have agreed to remain until the vacancies are filled.

Also discussed was a Short-term Rentals study committee and a Private Road Ordinance. These items will be discussed with the Township Board.

The Planning Commission's Annual Report was submitted and will be sent to the Township Board.

Zoning Report – Deb Graber:
Ms. Graber's report was in the meeting packet.

She additionally reported there is a Planning Commission Public Hearing at its March 5 meeting at 7:00 p.m. regarding the Vet Clinic on M-72. They would like to add an event space connected to the Clinic.

There were five permits issued in January. There are two pending Land Divisions. She has received numerous calls regarding short-term rental allowance regarding properties for sale. She has had an inquiry about a 40-acre commercial campground.

The Zoning Board of Appeals held a meeting on 1/23/25 to hear an Appeal requesting side and rear variances on a shed that was built and affixed to a concrete pad without permits. The ZBA denied the Appeal. The resident will need to remove or relocate the shed out of the setback and within the building envelope by July 23, 2025.

The ZBA approved its new budget.

The next regularly scheduled ZBA meeting (2/27/25) will be held if an Appeal is scheduled. There are a few properties in the Township with additions within setbacks that are problematic. As of today, no ZBA Appeals are planned for February.

Mr. Arends inquired whether the ZBA or Township Board approves the ZBA's By-laws. Clerk Hoeksema and Mr. Mielnik stated the Township approves the ZBA's By-laws.

Parks and Recreation Report – Mike Dwyer:
Mr. Dwyer's report was in the meeting packet. He additionally noted the following items:

The removal of the vault toilet structure is complete. The remaining cement slabs are covered and secured. The trail system is being used on a daily basis, and he monitors the trails to ensure they are clear and maintained.

Mr. Dwyer has been researching and working on proposals for 2025 rates and rules. He receives calls daily regarding bookings for the upcoming season, specifically for availability versus price inquiries.

Mr. Dwyer has been investigating the prospect of a camera monitoring system for the park as well as signs.

PRAC Report – Melissa Melton:
Ms. Melton's report was in the meeting packet. She also reported at the last PRAC meeting they reviewed the highest priority projects and their budgets with regard to the five-year recreation plan and Michigan DNR grant funding. A new five-year plan is due April, 2026. PRAC has a survey of their priorities; however, as an Advisory Committee, they would like the Township Board's input as well. The Committee discussed the bleacher project and playground equipment project.

Approval of By-laws and appointment of Chair, Vice Chair and Secretary was postponed to the next meeting.

By-laws had always had a provision for a Recording Secretary; however, the former Township Board removed that option. The Committee needs to either secure a new Recording Secretary or amend its By-laws. Ms. Fran Butler retired from the Committee, and an alternate seat is also open.

Mr. Arends referenced an email about East Bay seeking partnerships for playground surfaces for best pricing. Ms. Melton will follow-up on this.

NOTE: Clerk Hoeksema stated there was an individual who had made attempts to get through on the Zoom link earlier; however, could not get through due to the technical difficulties. She offered this opportunity for him to call in through Mr. Mielnik's phone:

Mr. Mike Gerrits (no address given)
Mr. Gerrits doesn't agree with Mr. Dwyer's report from a business standpoint in eliminating seasonal camping with 100% occupancy in favor of nightly campsite rentals that are often unrented mid-week and have increased campsite upkeep due to turnover. Short-term renters don't take care of a park as well as seasonal renters. Most seasonal campsites are rented by Labor Day of the prior year. He would like to see last year's seasonal campers grandfathered into the 2025 season in order to locate 2026 arrangements. He stated he sent an email to Supervisor Slopsema. He loves the park and would like to return.

CONSENT CALENDAR – Receive and File:
Pull Minutes of: Township Board 1/14/25

Board Action:
Mr. Arends made a motion to approve the Consent Calendar as amended. Ms. Koester seconded the motion.

VOTE: YEAS: All. NAYES: None. Motion carried.

Mr. Arends noted the following observations:

PRAC Minutes of 1/21/25:

Mr. Hubbell was absent in the Roll Call but that was not indicated and should be corrected. PRAC approved Resolution #25-01; he suggested it be entitled "Resolution PRAC #25-01" (setting meeting dates) to align with the Planning Commission's "Resolution PC #25-01" titling format for both consistency and to reduce any confusion in Resolutions. Clerk Hoeksema stated an Advisory Committee cannot make Resolutions.

ZBA Minutes of 1/23/25:
The ZBA indicated they held their Election of Officers for the 2025/2026 Calendar Year; there is some question whether this should read for the Calendar Year or Fiscal Year given the way the date is presented. He recommends the ZBA review this prior to approving their Minutes. There is a statement regarding the ZBA Resolution will be distributed to the Township Board, and he inquired whether this document is to be in the Township meeting packet.

PC Minutes of 1/8/25:
During the Election of Officers, Mr. Arends noted that nominated individuals recused themselves from voting for themselves; he believes they are allowed to cast a vote.

Fire Report: In meeting packet.

Planning Commission Report: In meeting packet.

Zoning Report: In meeting packet.

Parks and Recreation Report: In meeting packet.

PRAC Report: In meeting packet.

Supervisor Report: In meeting packet.

Clerk's Report: In meeting packet.

Treasurer Report: In meeting packet.

Trustee Reports: In meeting packet.

MMR Reports: In meeting packet.

Sheriff's Report: In meeting packet.

PC Minutes – https://www.whitewatertownship.org/planning-commission/html

ZBA Minutes – https://www.whitewatertownship.org/zoning-board-of-appeals.html

Parks & Recreation Minutes – https://whitewatertownship.org/advisory-committee/html

Historical Society Report: None.

CORRESPONDENCE:
Mr. Roland Oosterhouse - re: Lossie Trail
Grand Traverse Band – re: 2% Grant Application declined (Hi Pray Bleachers and WWFD Kubota)
Mr. David Boesler – re: Short-term Rentals.

MINUTES FOR APPROVAL:

https://www.whitwatertownship.org/township-board-subcommittee-meeting-minutes.html

Whitewater Township Regular Regular Board Meeting Draft Minutes 2025.01.14:

Amendments:
Page 3, under Board Action regarding Amendment #87 – Paragraph #3 beginning with "Page 13-13", delete the comma and the word "and" at the end of that sentence and end it with a period.

Page 9, under the “2025/2026 Budget – Arends” – in the first paragraph, third sentence, it states “a copy of the proposed 2025/2026 budget ..... – Paragraph #3 beginning with “Page 13-13”, delete the comma and the word “and” at the end of that sentence and end it with a period.

Page 9, under the “2025/2026 Budget – Arends” – in the first paragraph, third sentence, it states “a copy of the proposed 2025/2026 budget .....”; it should read a “memo of the proposed 2025/2026 budget....” Change the word “copy” to “memo.”

Board Action:
Mr. Arends made a motion to approve the following Minutes of the Whitewater Township Regular Board Meeting of 1/14/25 as amended. Ms. Hoeksema seconded the motion.

VOTE: YEAS: All. NAYES: None. Motion carried.

BUDGET AMENDMENTS:
None.

REVENUE & EXPENDITURE REPORT:
N/A.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS:

BS&A Contract Status:
Treasurer Koester is still awaiting the final document from BS&A after the Township Attorney made some recommendations to the contract.

Treasurer / Clerk Workflow – Jill Koester and Wendy Hoeksema:
Treasurer Koester provided a brief summary of training with Ms. Cindy Dodge at the MTA Training for New Officials at Crystal Mountain. She also spent two days at the Whitewater Township Hall with the Treasurer and Clerk to review systems and reactivate former software to utilize in the interim prior to the installation and start-up of the BS&A system, which is anticipated to be a 6-9 month process.

2025/2026 Budget: Overview, dates for meetings – Tim Arends:
Mr. Arends reviewed his memo in the meeting packet to set dates and recommended a Public Hearing on the Budget. He reported the proposed budget is prepared. He included two years of history for review, the current and amended budget and projections, taking into account COLA, existing contracts, inflation percentages, etc. He has met with some department heads and will meet with others to discuss budget needs.

Mr. Arends also noted per the auditor’s recommendation, the Recreation Fund will be renamed the Parks and Recreation Fund. Additionally, the Road Fund and Road Repair Fund will be combined into the General Fund.

There is a purchasing policy and a purchase order will be required with certain exceptions. Expenses greater than $1k require the Clerk and Supervisor signatures, with three quotes if possible. Over $5k require three quotes with exceptions and approval of the Board. Over $20k is by sealed bids.

During the campaign, there were concerns from the public that prior budgets had been approved with large deficits. The current Board will be approving a balanced budget this year. The proposed Budget will be in the 3/10/25 meeting packet; it will be posted at the Township Hall prior to that. A Public Hearing will be scheduled and posted.

Mr. Arends recommended a Special Meeting and Public Hearing be held on 3/17/25 and suggested Special Meetings/Work Sessions on 3/24/25 and 3/26/25. The Budget needs to be approved by 3/31/25.

Board Action:
Mr. Arends made a motion that a Budget Public Hearing be scheduled for March 17, 2025, at 6:30 p.m. to consider the tax millage rates and fire special assessment for fiscal year 2025-2026, and that the Clerk post notice of the Public Hearing in the Traverse City Record Eagle and Elk Rapids News in conformance with notice requirements for a Public Hearing. Ms. Hoeksema seconded the motion.

VOTE: YEAS: All. NAYES: None. Motion carried.

Master Plan Approval Resolution – Randy Mielnik:
Mr. Mielnik reported the Planning Commission met 2/5/25 and held a Public Hearing on the Master Plan, approving it. He restated the history about the 2008 Resolution approved under the former Planning Act statutes and that the Township Board needs to adopt a Resolution whether or not it wishes to retain authority to adopt the Master Plan or give that authority to the Planning Commission.

Mr. Mielnik has reviewed adjacent communities where the PC or Township Board has this approval authority.

The old 2008 Resolution is enclosed in the meeting packet as well as the new, proposed Resolution. The Township Attorney was consulted on this matter.

There was Board discussion.

Board Action:
Mr. Arends made a motion stating now, therefore, it is resolved that the Whitewater Township Board hereby does not assert final authority to accept or reject the Whitewater Township Master Plan and subsequent amendments. Resolution #08-02 is hereby repealed and replaced with Resolution #25-01. Ms. Koester seconded the motion.

ROLL CALL VOTE:
Mielnik-Y, Koester-Y, Hoeksema-Y, Arends-Y. Motion carried.

NEW BUSINESS:

Emergency Services Overview – Chief Josh Morgan:
Millage Expiration December, 2025:
Chief Morgan provided a Fire Department Overview report in the meeting packet.

Whitewater and Fife Lake Townships operate as the only two remaining volunteer companies in the County. He is a full-time Chief; there are 15 Firefighters, four of whom are currently Probationary Firefighters. Chief Morgan explained the Department operates under the NFPA standards, also stating the difficulty of providing the manpower required and the Response Model it follows. Chief Morgan emphasized a focus and increase in training and recruitment in order to provide qualified personnel. The Fire Department is funded through a Special Assessment District (SAD) which was voted approved in approximately 1974. He emphasized fiscal responsibility.

NFPA requires fire trucks be replaced every 20 years; they are currently purchasing a truck at a cost of $545k. That cost will increase greatly over the next 20 years. Subsequently, he is developing a strong Capital Improvement Plan with the Township Board and planning for future needs.

He provided 2021 millage operating rates of surrounding Townships: Acme (3.4 mils), Blair (2.5 mils), Peninsula (2 mils) and Whitewater (1 mil).

The Ambulance assessment of 1.5 mils expires 12/25 (will be voted on 11/26) and has been reduced to 1.432 mils through the rollback. This also funds MMR (Mobil Medical Response).

There was Board discussion with the Chief regarding response times and assists with other departments when necessary.

He will present much more information to the Board and the public in his Budget Hearing and encouraged citizens to provide feedback. He reiterated his objective in providing transparency to the Board and public.

Cemetery Tree Maintenance – Wendy Hoeksema:
Clerk Hoeksema included a report on the Circle Hill Cemetery Tree Cutting and Trimming by Parshall Tree Service in the meeting packet. She discussed prior emergency tree service performed at the Cedar Rapids Cemetery. She requested a specialized Arborist assess issues at the Circle Tree Cemetery as there are concerns about tree maintenance at that site. Mr. Matthew Haro of Parshall Tree Care has performed work for Whitewater Township in the past; specialized Arborists in the region are limited. There are previously budgeted funds for this type of service. Mr. Arends noted the need for maintenance and prevention/treatment of Oak Wilt is necessary.

Board Action:
Mr. Mielnik made a motion to approve Parshall Tree Care Expert's proposal for $11,200 for Circle Tree Cemetery. Ms. Hoeksema seconded the motion.

VOTE: YEAS: All. NAYES: None. Motion carried.

Municipal Civil Infraction (MCI): History / Discussion – Deb Graber:
Zoning Administrator Graber was asked by Supervisor Slopsema to provide information to the Board regarding Municipal Civil Infractions (MCI). MCIs are not currently utilized by Whitewater Township; however, they did exist in the early 2000's. There is an Enforcement Policy, adopted in 2011 and effective in 1/2012. It remains in place today.

ZA Graber explained the types of Enforcement Policies that can include blight, nuisance properties, trash, unregistered/abandoned/junk vehicles, short-term rentals, setback violations, structures without permits, unauthorized home-based businesses, accumulation of materials, Special Use Permit Conditions to review, and more.

She went on to explain the lengthy process of the Enforcement Policy, the often cost-prohibitive nature, and the methods necessary to build and enforce a case. It is a time-intensive and multi-tiered process, often resulting in non-compliance.

Ms. Graber is asking the Board to consider adopting a Municipal Civil Infraction (MCI) Policy. An MCI Policy could simplify the process, reduce expenses (including legal fees) to the Township and expedite results in a much more effective manner. She has researched and provided information to the Supervisor and has looked at similar communities; i.e., Garfield, Blair, Fife Lake, Milton, and Clearwater Townships. There are frustrations in the community with situations that need to be enforced. Many communities have Ordinance Enforcement Officers.

There was Board discussion. Mr. Mielnik noted the Township Attorney is supportive of an MCI Policy. Draft Ordinances have been prepared in the past.

There was consensus among Board Members who were supportive of the MCI concept, would like to review the Ordinances gathered by the ZA on this subject, and would like the recommendation of the Township Attorney.

Audit Services Contract (new memo and contract):
Mr. Arends provided information in the meeting packet regarding Audit Services as well as a proposal from Gabridge & Company.

Board Action:
Mr. Arends made a motion that the Board authorizes the Supervisor to sign the Audit Engagement Letter with Gabridge & Company for the performance of the fiscal years 2024-25 and 2025-26 financial audits of the Township. Ms. Hoeksema seconded the motion.

VOTE: YEAS: All. NAYES: None. Motion carried.

WWT Camping Policies – Mike Dwyer:
Mr. Dwyer addressed concerns of some public comments. He noted the Traverse City State Park will be closed most of the summer, providing a unique opportunity to bring in new campers vital to the long-term growth and success of the park. By maintaining Seasonal sites, this opportunity will be restricted.

Mr. Dwyer explained the nature of the Seasonal sites, amenities/lack of amenities of the park and rates/reactions to price increases. He also discussed the pros and cons of Seasonal sites with regard to mid-week occupancy as well as "premium" sites. He believes these sites would also sell to non-Seasonal, nightly campers. Based on reactions to the price increase of two years ago, he believes a price increase would not be well-received by Seasonal campers. He suggested implementing a two-year plan eliminating Seasonal camping and evaluating the results. Mr. Dwyer's documentation was detailed in an outline of the types of campsites available.

There was extensive Board discussion regarding State campground rules, Whitewater Township's Seasonal camping history, and the nature of a public campground. There were varied points of view and scenarios of camping practices discussed. There are currently 12-15 locations designated as Seasonal sites.

Mr. Dwyer recommended opening the new season April 1 on a first-come, first-served basis. Rates have yet to be determined. A rate increase is necessary.

To further his point, he reluctantly stated that many long-term Seasonal campers have displayed a sense of entitlement. He also stated a former Board Member kept a private list of campers who would contact the Board Member directly regarding reservations.

Board Action:
Mr. Arends made a motion to approve the discontinuation of the twelve (12) seasonal camping sites at Whitewater Township Park. Ms. Hoeksema seconded the motion.

There was additional Board discussion regarding current reservation timelines.

VOTE: YEAS: 3. NAYES: 1.

A ROLL CALL VOTE WAS CALLED:
Mielnik-Y, Arends-Y, Hoeksema-Y.
Koester-N.
Motion carried.

Board Action:
Mr. Arends made a motion to approve the Whitewater Township Park reservation rule within Roverpass.com by February 28, 2025, as follows: "A camper may not camp for more than 14 consecutive nights. If a camping party is required to leave a campground upon reaching the 14-night limit, the party is not eligible to return until seven (7) nights have elapsed. Ms. Hoeksema seconded the motion.

VOTE: YEAS: 3. NAYES: 1.

A ROLL CALL VOTE WAS CALLED:
Koester-N.
Arends-Y, Mielnik-Y Hoeksema-Y.
Motion carried.

2025 Camping Rates – Mike Dwyer:
Mr. Dwyer provided proposed rate changes for the 2025 season in the meeting packet. This price structure designated pricing for Peak and Off-peak Seasons and Premium/Standard sites.

He and the Board reviewed the list and requested they be stated in the Minutes:

Lakeview Sites are defined as Site Numbers 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, and 11. Site 10 will remain a Standard site due to its size and slope.

Ridgeview Sites are defined as Site Numbers 15, 16, 17, 18, and 19. Sites 13 and 14 will remain Standard Sites due to their size and view.

Premium Sites are defined as Site Numbers 20, 23, 32, 37, 40, 41, 42, 43, 45, 46, 47, 48, 49, 50, 51, 52, 54 and 55. It excludes Site 53 due to its size and maneuverability.

Off-season is defined as May 9 – June 11 and September 2-28
Peak season is June 12 – September 1

The following rate changes were proposed:
Off-Peak Season Standard Sites from $39 to $45/night.
Peak Season Standard Sites from $46 to $49/night.
Off-Peak Season Premium Sites from $39 to $55/night.
Peak Season Premium Sites from $46 to $60/night.

Miscellaneous rates were also outlined in the Rate Proposal; i.e., reservation fee, ice, wood, boat launch, pavilion rental, dump station, garbage, storage, cancel/booking change, shower fee.

Board Action:

Mr. Mielnik made a motion to accept the recommended Whitewater Township Park camping rates for the 2025 season as presented. Mr. Arends seconded the motion.

VOTE: YEAS: All. NAYES: None. Motion carried.

WWT Portable Restroom:
Mr. Arends provided an historical overview regarding the portable restroom. It was purchased by the previous Township Board and delivered; however, it was not installed. He has heard of many issues with the handicap door access, cleaning, dump/fill process, water access. He does not believe it is a good solution for the park and asked Mr. Dwyer for his remarks and opinion.

Mr. Dwyer stated if the Board opts to keep it, they will utilize it. It appears there will be some problems and a good deal of maintenance. Another option is additional porta-johns. He will defer to the Board's decision.

There was Board discussion regarding the original plan for the portable restroom, installation of additional porta-johns, the previous $60k cost and purchase of the portable restroom, other options for use of the portable unit, the depreciation and prospective sale of the unit, and review of the sales proposal. Mr. Dwyer noted the Township does not have a vehicle with which to tow the unit; they were able to put it in its current position with the ATV.

Board Action:
Mr. Arends made a motion that the Board declare the portable restroom trailer as surplus and authorize NRT Sales, LLC, to facilitate the resale of the unit for $63k, with the Township receiving $59k of the sale price. Mr. Mielnik seconded the motion.

There was Board discussion with Ms. Koester suggesting the Township consider selling it themselves and explore the horse show community as a prospective buyer.

Messrs. Arends and Mielnik rescinded their 1st and 2nd to the motion.

Board Action:
Mr. Arends made a motion that the Board declare the portable restroom trailer as surplus and authorize NRT Sales, LLC, to facilitate the resale of the unit for $66,966 with the Township to receive the proceeds net of commission.

There was brief Board discussion to further consider this matter.

Mr. Arends rescinded his motion.

Note: a five-minute break was announced at 9:29 p.m.

The Board returned at 9:34 p.m.

Board Action:
Mr. Arends made a motion to extend the meeting, not to exceed 10:00 p.m., as it has reached the three-hour limit. Ms. Hoeksema seconded the motion.

VOTE: YEAS: All. NAYES: None. Motion carried.

Short-term Rental Study Committee – Randy Mielnik:
Mr. Mielnik's memo provided in the meeting packet suggests the Township address the topic of Short-term Rentals and conduct a study on the matter, including the resources of a Resident Outreach Subcommittee (ROS).

This is a recurring issue. He reported the findings from a 2023 community survey indicated there are strong opinions about Short-term Rentals. This survey only included one question; the document wasn't a survey more directly about short-term rentals and may not reflect an accurate public attitude. Short-term rentals are currently not allowed in the Township.

He suggested the formation of a committee with the goal of having the Township Board and Planning Commission on the same page with regard to information. His memo outlined goals, latitude and constraints of a committee.

There was in-depth Board discussion on ways to move forward on the subject of Short-term Rentals in Whitewater Township including Ordinances and Enforcement mechanisms.

Mr. Arends previously suggested a joint meeting between the PC and Township Board where they could discuss Short-term Rentals, Private Road Ordinance and Municipal Civil Infraction. There was Board consensus for this idea with the suggestion of citizen involvement.

There was no action taken on this subject; it was postponed to a future date.

Private Road Ordinance – Randy Mielnik:
Mr. Mielnik included a memo regarding a Private Road Ordinance in the meeting packet. There is no Ordinance to design a private road.

Board Action:
Mr. Arends made a motion to request the Whitewater Township Planning Commission develop a Private Road Ordinance for consideration by the Township Board. Further, the Planning Commission is encouraged to use consulting services from Gourdie Fraser Associates (GFA) to create a proposed Ordinance with commonly accepted engineering standards and procedures. The Township Board hopes for a Draft Ordinance in the next six months that contains essential elements to protect public health and safety and the interests of residents who ultimately own lots on private roads.

Mr. Mielnik seconded the motion.

VOTE: YEAS: All. NAYES: None. Motion carried.

"Hi" Pray Park Bleacher Project:
Ms. Melissa Melton of PRAC submitted an RFP to Supervisor Slopsema, which is enclosed in the meeting packet. She discussed with the Board that the existing bleachers are very old and unsafe. The dirt surface underneath is overgrown. There were two prior attempts to renovate the bleachers. The cost for this project was in the prior Board's budget in the amount of $45k for the replacement of the bleacher units at Hi Pray Park.

There was Board discussion with Ms. Melton regarding the specific bleachers requested, materials, installation of the concrete pads, and safety standards.

PRAC applied for the Tribal 2% grant for funding on this project; however, was not awarded any monies. Mr. Arends inquired about the Tribal 2% grant monies previously awarded for playground equipment and the possibility whether the Tribe would approve its use for the bleachers as it is still within the parks. This does not take playground equipment off the table. He believes the $10k quote for onsite set up of bleachers seems excessive. Ms. Melton noted Mr. Gary Buczkowski sourced the expenses and the layout; he is available to assist in facilitating any aspects of the project from procuring bids to completion of the project.

Mr. Mielnik would like to see the RFPs for design specifications, engineering review, and installation. He also inquired about who would be doing the installation. Ms. Melton stated there are two RFPs; one for the bleachers and one for the concrete site work.

Clerk Hoeksema noted PRAC is only asking for approval to distribute RFPs today. Ms. Koester reiterated the project has been in the budget for over a year. Prior RFPs could not be located.

Mr. Mielnik requested he review the RFPs prior to their distribution for quotes.

Board Action:
Mr. Arends made a motion to approve and proceed with sending out one bid request for the bleacher equipment and one bid request for concrete work to a suggested list a bidders, as an ad in the Traverse City Record Eagle and posted on the Township website. Ms. Koester seconded the motion.

VOTE: YEAS: All. NAYES: None. Motion carried.

TABLED ITEMS:
None.

BOARD COMMENTS/DISCUSSION:
Clerk Hoeksema received a proposal from Chris Copeland of Mr. C's regarding the prospect of selling the Township his restaurant for a proposed Township Hall/Fire Department building. The Township Board will take a walking tour.

ANNOUNCEMENTS:
The next Regular Township Board Meeting will be held on Tuesday, March 10, 2025, at 6:30 p.m. This change has been previously and publicly posted properly.

The Budget Public Hearing is scheduled to be held at the Township Hall on Monday, March 17, 2025, at 6:30 p.m.

PUBLIC COMMENT:

In the Township Hall:

Ms. Heidi Vollmuth, 8388 Winnie Lane, Williamsburg, MI 49690:
Ms. Vollmuth reminded people of the Free Fishing Weekend this weekend.

There is a grant from the Tribe for a Boat Wash; she encouraged the Township not to miss this opportunity. Supervisor Slopsema is aware of it.

Ms. Vollmuth stated everyone in every state has access to premium, deluxe and cheaper campsites. Many places have closed for a period to reopen with yurts, cabins, etc., and raised fees by almost double.

She suggested checking with California as a prospective buyer for the portable restroom as they are in need.

She stated a moratorium needs to be put on Short-term Rentals; there's a reason why the people had to put it on the ballot and the Board couldn't.

Gordon Laramie, Skegemog Point Road, Williamsburg, MI 49690
Mr. Laramie stated he supports ZA Graber. We are a society built on rules and laws and they should be enforced. Prior Boards struggled with code enforcement, and he believes the Township needs a paid Code Enforcement Officer whether paid by fee, fines or taxpayer dollars. Enforcement will equate to higher values and compliance with rules.

Mr. Mickey Dean, 4020 Farrell (illegible/inaudible) Road, Williamsburg, MI 49690:
Mr. Dean thanked new Board Members for stepping up to their role. He is encouraged to hear about joint meetings between the Township Board and the PC. He believes it will be a tough task but will help.

Regarding camping, he encouraged the Board to over-communicate what transpired tonight on this subject and announce the changes and why. Regarding the Municipal Civil Infraction, he was here when that went away. He is a long-time resident and spent 10 years on the Planning Commission. He cautioned against ease of abuse of MCIs. Ordinances do need to be enforced.

On the Private Road Ordinance, he worked on this previously. He lives on a County road that never met any standards they attempted to put in place for a private road. He has a hard time supporting this. He advised the Board to be careful; there are plenty of private roads that do work. Coming off a permissive ordinance is a slippery slope because everything is then legislated.

He inquired whether long-term rentals are permitted in the Township; the Board answered yes. He then inquired about short-term rentals not being permissible because it is omitted in the Ordinance. He cautioned the Board to be careful on this matter as well.

Via Zoom:

Ms. Connie Hymore, 6761 Baggs Road, Williamsburg, MI 49690
Ms. Hymore stated she was pleased to hear the Board consider other options with regard to the sale of the portable restroom. She appreciates that Zoom meetings are offered; however, noted that most Board Members are difficult to hear and asked them to be more mindful of the use of their microphones in relation to where they are seated.

ADJOURNMENT:

Board Action:
Mr. Arends made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Mr. Mielnik seconded the motion.

VOTE: YEAS: All. NAYES: None. Motion carried.

The meeting was adjourned at 10:18 p.m.

Submitted by: Kay Z. Held, Recording Secretary