WHITEWATER TOWNSHIP BOARD
Whitewater Township Hall, 5177 Vinton Road, Williamsburg, MI 49690
231-267-5141 Phone

REGULAR MEETING
APPROVED AMENDED MINUTES
Thursday, August 14, 2025, 6:30 p.m.

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

ROLL CALL:
Clerk Wendy Hoeksema called Roll.

Present:
Supervisor Linda Slopsema
Clerk Wendy Hoeksema
Treasurer Jill Koester
Trustee Randy Mielnik

A quorum was established.

Absent:
Trustee Tim Arends (excused)

ALSO PRESENT:
Recording Secretary Kay Held

1 **SET/ADJUST/APPROVE AGENDA:**
- Move H3 - Civil Infraction time/location to Unfinished Business
- Add G5 - Follow up discussion AC for Town Hall under Unfinished Business
- Add Abandonment of Common Area to New Business
- Add Discussion of Website Design – Board Comments and Design

Board Action:
Ms. Slopsema made a motion to approve the Agenda as amended. Mr. Mielnik seconded the motion.
VOTE: YEAS: All. NAYES: None. Motion carried.

DECLARATION OF CONFLICT OF INTEREST: None.

PUBLIC COMMENT:

Ms. Connie Hymore: Ms. Hymore raised concerns about inconsistence between attorney statements and written opinions related to the Baggs Road lawsuit, requesting access to a letter read aloud at a recent PC meeting. The Clerk responded that the letter is protected under attorney-client privilege and not subject to FOIA.

Ms. Julie Zenas: Ms. Zenas opposed the expansion of short-term rentals (STR's), citing zoning restrictions, recent MI Supreme Court rulings, and negative neighborhood impacts, urging the Board to uphold the Master Plan.

Ms. Kim Mangus: supported STR's but objected to the seemingly growing enforcement of them. She recommended a pause on enforcement or prosecutions until a clear STR ordinance is adopted.

Mr. Randy Steelman: Mr. Steelman distributed written documents to Board Members. These were written and compiled data from his wife, he read aloud. They asked the PC to prioritize STR's over lower priority items and criticized the fairness of the recently formed Resident outreach subcommittee (ROS). They opposed adoption of a Civil Infraction Ordinance before an STR ordinance is in place.

Mr. Mike Jacobson: He expressed concern over reduced public input opportunities, handling of citizen comments, and lack of park maintenance, especially at Battle Creek Natural Area. He encouraged better communication with residents.

CONSENT CALENDAR:

Correspondence:
-Hymore: Court case/legal fees
-Popp: Treasurer
-Krinock, Ferguson, Ford, Blight, McCraven, Steelman: STR (Short-term Rental)

Minutes for Approval:
Whitewater Township Board Special Meeting of 7/8/25:
Amendments: None.

Whitewater Township Board Special Meeting of 7/15/25:
Amendments: None.

Whitewater Township Board Regular Meeting of 7/24/25:
Amendments: None.

Board Action:
Ms. Hoeksema made a motion to approve the minutes of:

Whitewater Township Board Special Meeting of 7/8/25 as presented.
Whitewater Township Board Special Meeting of 7/15/25 as presented.
Whitewater Township Board Regular Meeting of 7/24/25 as presented.

Mr. Mielnik seconded the motion.

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

Bills for Approval – Ms. Hoeksema:
The Municipal Underwriters invoice is for the large liability insurance policy. It was sent by them to the wrong mailing address, causing past due status. Clerk Hoeksema has contacted a representative of the company.

Board Action:
Ms. Slopsema made a motion to accept the Consent Calendar as presented. Ms. Koester seconded the motion.
VOTE: YEAS: All. NAYES: None. Motion carried.

Items Pulled from Consent Calendar: None.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS:

Any Park & Recreation Items:
Supervisor Slopsema reported there will be items at the next meeting associated with a right-of-way approval for Consumers Energy related to the Whitewater Township Park electrical upgrade project.

2026 Road Improvement Resolution:
Supervisor Slopsema noted the Township has been discussing with the Grand Traverse County Road Commission sources of funding for road improvements. A Resolution is in the meeting packet that commits the funds Whitewater Township can offer to fund road projects in the 2026 construction season. There are several documents related to this project in the meeting packet. Ms. Slopsema highlighted several key points.

The financial commitment from the Township is for $400k for improvement of Cook & Skegemog Point Roads. If actual bids come in higher than the Road Commission estimates, the Township can evaluate this decision. Final engineering drawings will start upon approval of the Resolution. A breakdown of the costs is included in the documents in correspondence received from Mr. Dan Watkins of the GTRC.

There will be a Special Assessment on Skegemog Point Road because of the extent of the repairs required. On Cook Road, the Road Commission will repair edges of the road with wedging and then a chip seal process in the middle. The first two miles of Skegemog Point Road will require a similar treatment, with additional work on ditches and drainage on the last mile of the road.

There was discussion on the process, including upcoming public hearings, and it was noted that there already has been significant feedback.

The Road Commission is offering significant funds for this project, acknowledging poor road conditions. The Road Commission suggested repairing both roads at the same time based on their proximity to each other and the likelihood of garnering a better price. The Township has sufficient funds to commit to this road project.

The first Public Hearing will focus on the general scope of the project and is geared toward hearing objections. The second Public Hearing is focused on the particulars of payments.

Board Action:
Ms. Slopsema made a motion to approve Resolution #2025-12, Authorizing Commitment of Township Funds for Road Improvements in 2026. Ms. Koester seconded the motion.

Supervisor Slopsema read aloud the entire Resolution.

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

Special Assessment District (SAD) Resolution – Skegemog Point Road:
Supervisor Slopsema reported on the results of the Skegemog Point Road SAD Citizen Petition results. The number of parcels totals 166, including Fairview and Drake Lane.

102 parcels (61%) In Support
18 parcels (11%) Reject/Not In Support

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Some residents own multiple parcels. Not all Petitions were returned. In order to move forward with a Public Hearing, 51% of the total parcels must be in support of the SAD, not 51% of the total Petitions returned. These results were reviewed and verified by the Township Supervisor and Clerk. A required map of the SAD was included in the packet. The largest parcel in the District, the Battle Creek Nature Area, is owned by Whitewater Township. Requirements have been met to move forward to public hearings.

The Skegemog Point Road SAD is estimated to be $248k, to be divided among parcel owners. The construction estimates are $238+ and $10k for administrative costs (legal fees, postage and collection of the SAD fees). There will be an option for property owners to spread the cost over a period of 10 years.

It was clarified that a Special Assessment is a separate bill and is only added to tax bills when there is a failure to pay.

Board Action:
Ms. Slopsema made a motion to approve Resolution #2025-13 authorizing the Skegemog Point Special Assessment District (SAD). Ms. Hoeksema seconded the motion.

Clerk Hoeksema read aloud the entire Resolution.

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

Public Hearing Civil Infraction General Ordinance – Time/Location:
Supervisor Slopsema stated adequate facilities with audio and zoom technology have been investigated. Several venues have been considered. LIAA (Land Information Access Association) is a non-profit, government related entity specializing in making governmental activity available to the public. The Township has been in discussion with LIAA; they manage web access for eight townships in the area, the City of Traverse City and Grand Traverse County.

The Board discussed various venues and logistics. There were concerns about the timing of venues and of combining both upcoming hearings for the Special Assessment District and the Civil Infraction Ordinance.

Board Action:
Ms. Koester made a motion to schedule the Skegemog Point Road SAD Special Meeting on Tuesday, September 9, 2025, at 6:30 p.m., at East Bay Township Town Hall. Mr. Mielnik seconded the motion.
ROLL CALL VOTE: Mielnik-Y, Slopsema-Y, Hoeksema-Y, Koester-Y. Motion carried.

The Board will discuss at the 8/28/25 meeting the scheduling of the Civil Infraction Ordinance Public Hearing.

Follow-up Discussion Regarding Air Conditioning for Town Hall:
Supervisor Slopsema reported two HVAC companies and an electrical company have been contacted. HVAC bids were provided from K&K Heating and Cooling as well as Comfort Heating and Cooling. The lower bid was from Comfort Heating and Cooling. The mini-split system being considered offers both heating and cooling.

One unit is $7,250 and $2k for electrical. The existing window unit is undersized and cannot keep up with the needs. Both companies stated one mini-split unit cannot properly service the space. They each provided an alternate quote for two units. Comfort Heating's second quote was $11,750 plus electrical (estimated $4k).

Clerk Hoeksema reiterated the problems regarding the climate control in the building. Additionally, noise is also a problem. Heating expenses should be reduced significantly. There may be a potential rebate with Consumers Energy.

Clerk Hoeksema verified the Township Hall has $30k budgeted for improvements.

At the last Township meeting, the Board approved $8,500 to address the problem; however, the entire issues were not known. She asked the Board to consider changing the "not to exceed $8,500" amount to $15,750.

Board Action:
Mr. Mielnik made a motion to change the previously approved amount for heating/air conditioning units for the Township Hall main room "not exceed $15,750." Ms. Slopsema seconded the motion.

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

NEW BUSINESS:

PRAC Five-year Plan Graphics PO:
Ms. Koester reported for Michigan townships to be eligible for DNR funding, a five-year Parks & Recreation Plan is required, deadline for submission is 2/1/26. An amount of $15k was budgeted in the 2025/2026 Budget to assist in the Plan's creation and distribution which includes graphic design work. PRAC conducted as much work as possible in-house, and they are currently under budget.

Included in the packet were the received proposals to PRAC from Mr. James Dake in the amount of $3k and Ms. Nicole Steffen in the amount of $4,400 for design work related to the Recreation Plan.

There was Board discussion about the need for graphic design support. Ms. Koester explained the DNR's format requirements have changed. There are many graphics and photos that need to be updated, as well as design work to make it look professional.

Board:
Ms. Koester made a motion to approve Mr. James Dake, Graphic Designer, to produce Whitewater Township's new five-year Parks & Recreation Plan, not to exceed $3,000. Mr. Mielnik seconded the motion.

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

Supervisor Slopsema suggested PRAC check in with the Township Board to monitor progress of the draft document.

RFQ for Engineering Services for the Capital Improvement Plan (CIP):
Mr. Mielnik stated the Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) will require some architecture and engineering service support. There are several long-term CIP projects to consider. He is suggesting the Township request RFPs to gather preliminary information. He explained the difference between an RFP and an RFQ. The RFP is specific to the proposal, scope of work, schedule, qualifications and cost, whereas an RFQ is a quote.

Supervisor Slopsema believes the Township needs to utilize a disciplined project prioritization process, as recommended by the Zoning Consultant from Giffels Webster. There is a specific process to utilize to make these determinations as well as in Capital Planning.

There was Board consensus that Mr. Mielnik will draft information to present for an RFP. ~~and the Board will revisit this subject in one month.~~ The Board will revisit this in the future

Abandonment of Common Area:
Clerk Hoeksema reported private citizen, Mr. Jim Gaskin, has commented there is a strip of land in the Plat of Williamsburg adjacent to his and his son's property. He was told it is owned by the Township. However it is on his tax description, inside his fence line and he has been paying tax on the property. He would like it officially abandoned by the Township. Prior owners reportedly, had their half abandoned on the other side of alleyway.

Clerk Hoeksema researched this information, which was verified by the Assessor. She also provided a report in the meeting packet. Four property owners are affected. A Public Hearing Is required to abandon platted streets or public grounds.

Treasurer Koester requested evidence of boundaries and tax payments on the property in question. Supervisor Slopsema would like the Township attorney's input as well.

There was Board consensus to confer with the Township attorney and title company on this matter. It will be revisited in the future.

TABLED ITEMS: Civil Infraction Ordinance Discussion.

BOARD COMMENTS / DISCUSSION:
There was Board discussion about Website design. Clerk Hoeksema stated there has been much public input regarding user experience, and some entities have reached out to her. Ms. Patricia Webb from Digital Webrechauns and Munibit were two such individuals. Ms. Steffen, from earlier PRAC discussion, may be another contact to consider.

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Ms. Koester referenced a past Public Comment and memo regarding individuals who received letters from the attorney regarding STRs. She asked who makes the determination which residents receive this correspondence and that she heard comments there may be up to seven lawsuits. Mr. Mielnik and Ms. Slopsema responded the Zoning Administrator confirmed there are not seven lawsuits. The Zoning Administrator receives complaints. She investigates the complaints and works toward resident compliance through personal contact and correspondence. If the property remains non-conforming, she provides evidence to the attorney. This is outlined through the Enforcement Policy.

Ms. Koester asked if the Board or the public will receive an explanation detailing the selection of individuals appointed to the ROS at the Planning Commission meeting today. Mr. Mielnik responded that each PC Member indicated their candidate selections, and the sum total was part of the decision process. There are five ROS Members and two Alternates. From the Planning Commission, a Chair and ROS Member were also appointed for this work group.

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

-Next Township Regular Board Meeting:
Thursday, August 28, 2025, 9:00 a.m., Whitewater Township Hall

-Skegemog Point Road SAD Public Hearing:
Tuesday, September 9, 2025, 6:30 p.m., East Bay Township Town Hall

Supervisor Slopsema restated the anticipated differences between the two monthly meetings of the Township Board.

PUBLIC COMMENT:

Mr. Mark Taylor: He expressed concerns about not using Samel's Farm, that the meeting being held at East Bay Township Hall is too far away and the doing so after Labor Day when possibly not as many residents around.

Ms. Connie Hymore: Ms. Hymore criticized the removal of Zoom comments and requests them to be restored. At today's Planning Commission meeting, people had issues with using Zoom. She reminded the Board to be aware of using their microphones properly.

Mr. Randy Steelman: Mr. Steelman is unhappy with the Township's attorney and would like the Township to work with someone more local who understands the rural area. He appreciates Zoom service and requested restoring Zoom comments.

Ms. Kim Mangus: Ms. Mangus clarified her prior comment regarding the moratorium she referenced. She states the Township is vulnerable to lawsuits if not pursued. She noted that the ZA report listed seven cases, and she knows that it needs to follow a process.

Mr. Mike Jacobson: Mr. Jacobson supported concerns about the Township attorney and thinks a new one should include constitutional law in their platform of services. He also agrees Public Hearings should be held within the Township. He does not like the three-minute limit on Public Comment. He appreciates the work of the Board but doesn't agree with the way everything is happening.

Regarding Public Comment:
Supervisor Slopsema stated a decision has been made to hold the meeting on 9/9/25 and could not be changed at last minute. She is concerned the Township Hall is not large enough, and there are additional concerns about acoustics, air conditioning and guaranteed internet service at venues. However, the Board would consider other venues for the second Public Hearing if accommodation meets the needs.
Public Comment is five minutes unless deemed necessary by Supervisor for time consideration of amount of participation.

ADJOURNMENT:
Ms. Slopsema made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Ms. Hoeksema seconded the motion.
VOTE: YEAS: All. NAYES: None. Motion carried.

The meeting adjourned at 9:13 p.m.

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Submitted by Kay Z. Held, Recording Secretary
Wendy Hoeksema, Clerk