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

SPECIAL JOINT MEETING
APPROVED MINUTES
Thursday, May 29, 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.

Township Board:

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

Absent**:** None.

A quorum was established.

Planning Commission:

Present:
Chair Keith DeYoung
Vice Chair Rene Stratton
Secretary Denise Peltonen
Trustee and Township Board Rep. Randy Mielnik
Member David Boesler
Member Carl Wroubel
Member Sadie Merchant

Absent**:** None.

A quorum was established.

ALSO PRESENT: Recording Secretary Kay Held

SET/ADJUST/APPROVE AGENDA: Add "Set/Adjust/Approve Agenda" to the Agenda.

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

DECLARATION OF CONFLICT OF INTEREST: None.

PUBLIC COMMENT:
Mr. Charles Davis: Regarding AIS' rezoning request, Mr. Davis questioned why the Planning Commission suggested AIS get together with their neighbors and work it out. The neighbors were at the last meeting to express their concerns. This situation affects more than just the neighbors 300-400' from the AIS property. He believes it goes against Zoning to push Industrial further into the community.

Ms. Rachel Steelman: Ms. Steelman submitted a proposed a Short-term Ordinance on behalf of residents supporting responsible STRs and asked that it come to the Board before September. She asked that the ROS represent varied viewpoints and economic backgrounds. The Civil Infraction Ordinance should be easy to understand. She asked that current General Ordinances be posted. She suggested a new Township attorney be sought.

Ms. Jess Wagner: Ms. Wagner is a resident of Leelanau County and sits on the Michigan Short-term Rental Association and Michigan Chapter of Rent Responsibly. She serves in the Advocacy area, helping Townships and residents work together on Ordinances. They have worked locally, state-wide and nationally. They are pro-Ordinance, pro-permitting and support responsible short-term renting. She offered their assistance and provided her contact information.

Ms. Kelly Jo Bowman: Ms. Bowman supports Ms. Rachel Steelman's comments and responsible STRs. With a career in public relations, sales and marketing, she offered to be a part of the STR Committee. The last set of Minutes she viewed on the website was a Draft from April 18. She would like to see the May meeting Minutes online.

Ms. Barbara Dean: Ms. Dean stated she has previously expressed her views on Short-term Rentals and volunteered to work on a committee. She believes they should exist, with supervision/guidelines. There are problems as well as benefits. She is concerned about the AIS comments. AIS is pertinent to the community as is their diesel mechanic training. AIS has assisted her family farm for many years. Her family business includes cherries, hemp and short-term rentals. They follow the rules of the Township and Department of Education. She has been approached to parcel off and sell her property numerous times; it is signed up with the Conservancy.

Ms. Kim Mangus: Ms. Mangus believes the proposed STR Ordinance is a good start to address basic guidelines, have something on the books and see how it works in the community.

The PC meeting last month regarding AIS, Grand Traverse Plastics and STRs was in violation of the fire code as attendance exceeded the maximum allowance. She's in support of the AIS rezoning request, but not of the amount of space proposed. Industrial should not be moved to the point of having residential neighbors.

Correspondence was not included in the electronic meeting packet on the website. There is no reason these 80-pages of Correspondence should not be included for public access. Correspondence should be included in every meeting packet.

Mr. Charles Davis: Mr. Davis is having a problem with the Township web page. He used to be able to search and find an item; now it is there one day and not the next.

CORRESPONDENCE:
Correspondence was received inquiring about Committee formation.

AGENDA ITEMS AS LISTED IN THE SPECIAL MEETING NOTICE:

Campground Park Business Function Decisions:
Mr. Arends noted the Parks and Recreation Manager resigned; current staff is covering in the interim. He is proposing promotion of fourth-year Ranger Tripp Wagner to Lead Ranger who is assuming increased duties and a wage increase for returning Ranger Vickie Emerson. Additionally, Ranger Robbie Doherty had not been included in the prior motion approving the rehire of Rangers.

Park Ranger Pay:

Board Action:

Ms. Hoeksema made a motion that the hourly pay rate for Park Ranger Vickie Emerson be increased to $22.15, effective May 19, 2025. Mr. Arends seconded the motion.
VOTE: YEAS: All. NAYES: None. Motion carried.

Board Action:
Ms. Slopsema made a motion that Mr. Tripp Wagner be promoted to the Lead Ranger position at an hourly rate of $23.78, effective May 19, 2025. Mr. Mielnik seconded the motion.
VOTE: YEAS: All. NAYES: None. Motion carried.

Board Action:
Ms. Hoeksema made a motion that the Board approves the rehire of Mr. Robbie Doherty as a Park Ranger at the rate of $20.26 per hour. Ms. Koester seconded the motion.
VOTE: YEAS: All. NAYES: None. Motion carried.

Board Action:

Lead Ranger Credit Card:

Board Action:
Ms. Slopsema made a motion to approve issuance of an Alden State Bank credit card for Mr. Tom Bartnicki with a monthly limit of $5,000. Ms. Hoeksema seconded the motion.
VOTE: YEAS: All. NAYES: None. Motion carried.

Board Action:
Ms. Slopsema made a motion to cancel the Alden State Bank credit card issued to Mr. Mike Dwyer when Mr. Tom Bartnicki's credit card is received and activated. Mr. Arends seconded the motion.
VOTE: YEAS: All. NAYES: None. Motion carried.

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2% Tribal Grant Application – WWTP Electrical Upgrade:
Supervisor Slopsema stated the Tribe is taking applications for the Tribal 2% Grant through the end of the month. She has completed a grant application asking for their assistance in paying for the engineering work on the campground electrical upgrade project.

The Township issued a $21,500 contract with C2AE for drawings, the bidding process and management of project execution. The project itself is out currently out for bid. The Township is asking the Tribe to cover $15k (70%) of the project cost.

There was Board discussion; Mr. Arends asked that final decision makers be involved in the initial application process as well as understand and support the concept in order to be aware of all aspects of the grant including restrictions. Additionally, if awarded, the Board or PC should have to approve receipt of a grant; they should also be involved in final reporting.

Supervisor Slopsema noted the Tribe would like to see awarded grants used right away, reported on and closed out within 12 months. The Township had been operating on a lengthy cycle. The Township is in communication with the Tribe regarding two aging grants; the Boat Launch and Playground Equipment grants. The Board is attempting to have playground funds reassigned for the bleacher project. She agreed with Mr. Arends suggestions.

Mr. Mielnik inquired if a grant agreement is required after it is awarded, believing the terms are outlined in the grant application. A report is required within one year of awarding. The Clerk's office maintains all documents.

There was consensus from the Township Board for the Tribal 2% Grant application to be submitted.

Planning Commission and Resident Outreach Sub-committee (ROS):
Supervisor Slopsema reported Mr. Mielnik prepared an outline regarding the Purpose, Organization and Support of a Resident Outreach Sub-committee (ROS) and is in the meeting packet.

PC Chair DeYoung clarified Short-term Rentals are not being discussed this evening, but rather an ROS with the objective of initially working on a Short-term Rental Ordinance, a Capital Improvement Plan and a Private Road Ordinance. Vice Chair Stratton will be the ROS Chair.

There was extensive discussion among Township Board and Planning Commission regarding the makeup of an ROS and the process for member selection, factors such as higher interest in some topics or expertise among different people, and how that could impact participation. They also discussed how a previous ROS functioned with the Master Plan project. Ms. Stratton indicated she has already received several inquiries from citizens.

Board and PC Members questioned and discussed the following:

- Whether there would be one ROS for all projects rather than multiple ROS', each with a specific focus. The PC would prioritize projects which will be managed by one ROS.

- The selection process will include looking at areas of interest, expertise and experience. Opinions and objectivity are important.

- ROS recruitment, publication outlets and application deadline. Resources will include: Township website, Mill Creek newsletter, Traverse City Record Eagle, Elk Rapids News, Elk Rapids Chamber of Commerce, Whitewater Facebook, Whitewater Fire Department.

4 - Through attrition and other factors, the membership of the ROS may change.

- Setting ROS expectations, prioritizing tasks, setting deadlines and determining methods for disbursement of information. A dedicated effort is necessary to deal with substantial issues. Benefits include collaboration between residents and Township officials as well as expediting projects important to the community.

- ROS is a volunteer position with a small meeting stipend. A high degree of resident participation is desired.

- Process for PC and Township Board to review ROS progress, survey tracking, hosting workshops and reporting methods to impact solid decision making. Utilizing multiple outreach approaches yields greater input.

- Understanding and learning Zoning information will be important.

- Enforcement is as important as the Ordinance.

- Review of other Townships in the County to identify methods that worked and those that didn't to fine tune ROS function.

- The possibility of engaging consulting or support services; however, it may be cost-prohibitive.

There was varied input on a reasonable timeline for completion of the Short-term Rental Ordinance. Six-months would be preferable; however, may not be realistic. Members would like to have an STR Ordinance in place for use next season.

Mr. DeYoung stated the goal is to formalize the ROS process at the next Planning Commission Meeting.

Planning Commission Six-year Capital Improvement Plan:

Mr. Mielnik reported the Planning Enabling Act states a Master Plan should have a Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) within it and is required if a municipality has a water and sewer system. Whitewater does not have water and sewer. Whitewater Township currently has no CIP in place. There are numerous capital projects in the Township to discuss.

He explained the structure and function of a Capital Improvement Plan as it relates to major capital expenditures; i.e., utilities, buildings, emergency services, parks and capital assets/investments that local governments need to fund in order to maintain facilities. A Capital Improvement Plan is held within a Planning Commission as it is naturally connected with land use, growth and transportation which are typically part of a Master Plan.

He referenced a guide in the meeting packet from the Michigan Economic Development Corporation (MEDC). The previous presentation from the Redevelopment Ready Communities (RRC) is part of the MEDC, and a Capital Improvement Plan required to become certified as a Redevelopment Ready Community. The guide provides information about Capital Improvement Plans, types of projects, funding sources and how to prioritize, layout and execute projects in a schedule.

Mr. Arends referenced the need for a CIP to organize capital projects whereas in the past aspects of some projects seem to have been done out of order. Funding is also a crucial factor for consideration. Clerk Hoeksema noted a CIP should also list assets and their conditions.

Supervisor Slopsema stated it has become evident in the past six months there is not a plan for project prioritization or funding. Priority, risks and benefits must be examined, articulated and documented. It is concerning that some past actions have needed to be rectified; part of which stemmed from poor decision making and monitoring of project status to deliverables and requirements. A CIP should be developed in an objective manner and disciplined process.

PC Vice Chair Stratton noted the Master Plan yielded some good feedback on specific topics. Mr. Mielnik stated a past feasibility study conducted by C2AE was in the meeting packet. There are numerous factors to consider, and projects may need additional engineering and architectural support.

Board Members and Planning Commissioners touched upon the electrical project upgrade, boat launch, ranger station, township hall and fire department as sample capital projects.

Mr. Arends emphasize the importance of having a prioritization plan in place as Board seats change due to term expirations and turnover. Mr. Boesler reiterated a long-term vision is important.

Ms. Peltonen inquired about potential funding sources, various manners and methods of which were discussed. Assets and grant opportunities need to be identified.

With regard to next steps, Mr. Mielnik stated it is six-year CIP and standing assignment of the Planning Commission that is re-evaluated and updated every year. Board and PC Members discussed methods for setting priorities and getting public input. There is also an overlap with PRAC and the Fire Department's plans.

There is a 5-year Recreation Plan that expires 12/25. The Fire Department has a plan as well. These should be incorporated with the CIP. The Parks & Recreation Plan is on the Township website. Chief Morgan will distribute the Fire Plan.

There was additional discussion on the most effective method and sources for the dissemination and sharing of information among both the Township Board and the Planning Commission.

Members of the Township Board and Planning Commission agreed that the Capital Improvement Plan needs to have structure, a long-term vision, clarity and a disciplined process.

Private Road Ordinance Discussion:
There was prior discussion on this subject during the ROS discussion earlier in the meeting. This will be one of the Resident Outreach Sub-committee (ROS) projects.

Board and PC Comments/Discussion: None.

Public Comment:

Ms. Sue Mielnik: Ms. Mielnik asked for clarity whether there would be one ROS committee or three separate, distinct committees working together. She also inquired if the ROS selection process is based on interest or experience. She cautioned there could be a bias one way or the other. These factors should be determined prior to the Committee formation.

The Master Plan survey previously asked one question about Short-term Rentals. It is critically important that it be done professionally, unbiased and in a manner which provides pertinent information.

She agreed with Mr. Arends' comment regarding identifying projects and wish lists for the Capital Improvement Plan and then prioritizing them. It is important to work from one document; when there are multiple documents, residents get confused and rumors start.

Mr. Charlie Davis: After returning home for a portion of this meeting, he still finds problems with the website and couldn't get into Zoning or see Minutes from multiple dates. AIS' training school is not impacted by their rezoning request. It is an Industrial request. AIS is a great company. However, he is curious whether the school may be being used as a way to edge toward the land deal. The Board needs to seriously consider the future ramifications of granting their Industrial rezoning request.

Ms. Kim Mangus: Ms. Mangus stated the packet for the Joint Meeting had two different Agendas, with subjects in different order. In the past, the two Chairs would agree on the Agenda and packet materials, with one being posted for each entity so there is transparency, and the public can be informed and prepared. The PC Agenda had no packet with it.

She inquired about Planning Commission Correspondence and who is reading the emails, who is determining what is relevant and what to include in a packet. Correspondence should be included in the meeting packet each month, not just held in the Clerk's office. People need to know their communication has been read and that it is available.

Adjournment:

Board Action:
Mr. DeYoung made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Mr. Boesler seconded the motion.
VOTE: YEAS: All. NAYES: None. Motion carried.

The meeting adjourned at 8:42 p.m.

Submitted by: Kay Z. Held, Recording Secretary