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

REGULAR MEETING
DRAFT MINUTES
Tuesday, July 24, 2025, 9:00 a.m.

CALL TO ORDER:
Supervisor Slopsema called the meeting to order at 9:00 a.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 Tim Arends
Trustee Randy Mielnik

A quorum was established.

Absent: None.

ALSO PRESENT:
Zoning Administrator Deb Graber
Recording Secretary Kay Held

SET/ADJUST/APPROVE AGENDA:
Add Chief Morgan's "Request to Hire Three Paid-On-Call Firefighters" to the Agenda. This subject will follow his Fire Report.

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

DECLARATION OF CONFLICT OF INTEREST: None.

PUBLIC COMMENT:

Ms. Karin Boyd: Ms. Boyd requested public comments be allowed on Zoom to give remote attendees a voice.

Ms. Connie Hymore: emphasized transparency, asking that correspondence be included in meeting packets, Zoom participants be allowed to speak and that resident comments be added to minutes.

Mr. Ron Popp: criticized the Board for not publishing "complete" agenda packets with public comments, urged open and transparent governance, and requested Zoom links be reactivated. He also noted a lack of PC report and pointed out conflicting information in the Park's report on occupancy rates. He also questioned MMR report.

Ms. Kim Mangus: Ms. Mangus criticized Board leadership for lacking transparency and not listening to residents; urged advocacy for citizens.

Ms. Heidi Vollmuth: Ms. Vollmuth stated the taxpayers funded Zoom but many cannot access it easily; urged figuring out better public access.

REPORTS/PRESENTATIONS/ANNOUNCEMENTS/COMMENTS:

Fire / Emergency Services Report - Chief Morgan:
Chief Morgan stated May and June summaries are in the packet. He addressed Mr. Popp's concerns with the MMR report; he has expressed the same concerns with MMR regarding inaccurate data. They have recently installed a new Operations Manager.

Chief Morgan reported they have had 64 calls for service in the past two months and are on track for 30 in July.

There were two mutual aid responses with Green Lake Township. The average response time in Whitewater Township is nine minutes. He was encouraged to see that in June Whitewater Fire often arrived on-scene prior to MMR. There were two confirmed fire events in June. A storm last night resulted in the Fire Department being on a power line call until 3:00 a.m.

Request to Hire three Paid-On-Call Firefighters:
Chief Morgan requested Township approval to hire three candidates as Paid-on-Call Firefighters. The Department has lost two staff members recently to resignation and retirement. Messrs. Trey Savage, Adam Kackman and Terran Peterson have expressed interest in a fire career and have been observing at training programs. Messrs. Savage and Kackman are new to the field, and Mr. Peterson is a Certified Firefighter I & II and EMT Basic. He is also a part-time Firefighter with Grand Traverse Metro. Mr. Savage was present at the meeting and introduced himself.

Chief Morgan and the Board discussed the cost and process of onboarding new Fire candidates. He explained they would attend Fire School in the fall at a cost of $2,500 each for both, Fire I and Fire II certification. These costs are typically covered through Michigan Works scholarship funding. EMT school is $1,500 per person, which sometimes qualifies through Michigan Works funding. MMR's EMT program is another option, which requires a two-year commitment to MMR.

Discussion included training costs for new employees and possible retention requirements, and comparisons to other area departments practices.

Board Action:
Ms. Slopsema made a motion to hire Messrs. Trey Savage, Adam Kackman and Terran Peterson as Paid-On-Call Firefighters for Whitewater Township Fire Department. Upon approval, all three candidates will begin the onboarding process including background checks, medical evaluations and Department orientation. Ms. Koester seconded the motion.
VOTE: YEAS: All. NAYES: None. Motion carried.

Planning Commission Report - Mr. Mielnik:
Mr. Mielnik stated the next Planning Commission meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, August 6, at 7:00 p.m. at the Township Hall. There will be two Public Hearings on the Agenda. The first is a Zoning Amendment regarding correction of published Zoning Fees. The second Hearing is on a proposed Short-term Rental Ordinance submitted by Ms. Rachel Steelman.

The PC is working on a Winery Ordinance lead by Commissioner Sadie Merchant. A draft is being reviewed. Applicants are being reviewed for the Resident Outreach Sub-committee (ROS); the PC plans for formalize the ROS process at the August meeting.

Planning consultants Giffels-Webster submitted an assessment of the Zoning Ordinance which specified areas in need of work. They created a survey for PC Members to establish task priorities. This will be discussed at the August meeting and a work plan will be developed.

The PC submitted a Letter of Intent for a grant application to the Michigan Office of Rural Prosperity. The request was for $50k to help fund Zoning work. Candidates will be notified after August 11. If accepted, a full grant application will be submitted. Grant awards will be made in November.

Zoning Report – Ms. Graber:
The Zoning Report is in the meeting packet. ZA Graber additionally reported 55 permits have been issued year-to-date. She is currently working on a Land Division request.

The AIS Zoning Amendment will be in effect July 30, 2025. Ms. Graber noted that costs for any Text Amendments on Article 21 are passed through to the applicant. AIS and Grand Traverse Plastics each paid fees. Grand Traverse Plastics dropped off a Site Plan for review; this will be discussed at an August Special Meeting or the September Regular Meeting. She is expecting a Site Plan from AIS soon. Hutson's John Deere may be expanding with another building.

The County has requested a final permit for the High Pointe Golf Club lodge. The clubhouse/restaurant has not been started yet.

Ms. Graber stated the venue for the Short-term Rental Public Hearing is scheduled to be held at the Township Hall. She stated Zoom commentary would be helpful. If building occupancy is exceeded, the Hearing would need to be cancelled and re-noticed. She suggested other venues for consideration; i.e., Woodland School auditorium, Mill Creek School, the Casino conference room.

Parks Report – Mr. Bartnicki: (not present) Report in meeting packet.

PRAC Report – Ms. Koester:
PRAC would like Board approval to remove the old shed at Hi Pray Park and would like a 6x8' replacement shed. The back door frame to the Hi Pray pavilion needs to be repaired or replaced.

They are working on the five-year plan and are holding work sessions. They are still working on bleacher assembly. The park fence line is covered with poison ivy. Clerk Hoeksema stated TruGreen should be spraying it; Supervisor Slopsema will provide Ms. Koester with a contact at TruGreen.

There was discussion regarding the removal of the shed; Supervisor Slopsema asked for information at the next meeting, i.e., cost to remove and dispose old shed, install new shed and what will be stored in the shed.

CONSENT CALENDAR – Receive and File:
Supervisor Slopsema stated there is some duplication in the content of the Agenda as the Board shifts to conducting a second monthly meeting. She clarified the 4th Thursday of the month meeting will be primarily for general business. The Agenda will be adapted accordingly.

Items pulled from Consent Calendar:
-Revenue & Expenditure Report (for discussion)
-Minutes of 7/15/25 Special Meeting (will be on 8/14/25 meeting Agenda)

Supervisor's Report: No report.
Clerk's Report: Report in packet.
Treasurer's Report: Report in packet.
Trustee Reports: No report. Verbal PC report delivered during meeting.
MMR (Ambulance) Report: Report in packet.

GT County Sheriff's Report: Report in packet.
PC Minutes: https://www.whitewatertownshipmi.gov/planning-commission.html
ZBA Minutes: https://www.whitewatertownshipmi.gov/zoning-board-of-appeals.html
Park and Recreation Minutes: https://www.whitewatertownshipmi.gov/advisory-committee.html
Historical Society Report: None.

Correspondence:
-WWTP Campground Electrical 2% Grant $15,000
-Court Case Comments – Hymore
-Support Civil Infraction Ordinance: Gallagher, Schulte, Clark, Chesebro, Kingma, Chadha
-Opposed to Civil Infraction Ordinance: Raddatz, Keaton, R. Steelman, D. Steelman, Cabinaw, Mangus
-Support STR: Chadha, Raddatz
-Zoom Public Comment: Hymore

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

Revenue and Expenditure Report: Ms. Hoeksema
Board Members reviewed and discussed at length this report. It was noted that it was accurate overall but required minor adjustments to certain budget allocations and clarifications for Board members, especially within their departments.
Ms. Hoeksema and Mr. Arends will review the chart of accounts, clarify accuracy of information in various cost centers and revise the document. The revised Revenue & Expenditure Report will be on the 8/28/25 meeting Agenda. The corrected format will make the transfer of data to the new BS&A system more effective.

4 The Clerk also reported she enrolled the Township in an MTA online learning subscription which offers unlimited webinar training. She will send an email to all officials with login registration information.

Board Action:
Mr. Arends made a motion to amend the Agenda to add to New Business "Consider Acceptance of Tribal 2% Grant." Ms. Hoeksema seconded the motion.
VOTE: YEAS: All. NAYES: None. Motion carried.

MINUTES FOR APPROVAL:
https://www.whitewatertownshipmi.gov/township-board--subcommittee-meeting-minutes.html
Pulled from Consent Calendar – will be on 8/14/25 Agenda.

BILLS FOR APPROVAL – Ms. Hoeksema: None.

Budget Amendments: None.

Revenue and Expenditure Report – Ms. Hoeksema:
Discussed earlier after pulled from Consent Calendar.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS:

Skegemog Point Road Improvement – Ms. Slopsema (verbal):
Supervisor Slopsema reported that more than 51% of parcel owners have responded in support of the project. She will follow-up with the Township attorney to discuss proceedings for the required two Public Hearings and the $1,000 deposit to the County Road Commission. The Township is continuing to receive responses.

Road Speed Update – Ms. Hoeksema:
Clerk Hoeksema reported that Mr. Dan Watkins from Grand Traverse County has confirmed the Michigan State Police will conduct speed studies on Church/Vinton Roads and Skegemog Point Road. He will advise when the studies begin.

Supervisor Slopsema also spoke with Mr. Watkins to emphasize the Skegemog Point Road speed study should include the entire road, which is commonly viewed as two distinct portions; one section that is more open and another with higher driveway density. Clerk Hoeksema stated her correspondence noted the blind hills in one area and increased pedestrians in another.

Financial Audit Update – Ms. Hoeksema / Ms. Koester (verbal):
Treasurer Koester has been meeting with a member of the audit firm weekly, who is in the process of corrections in the Sage program, and helping to do final reconciliations. As of 7/23/25, Ms. Koester states she has reconciled all bank accounts.

Clerk Hoeksema reported she is working on an extensive list of items for the Auditor and providing information to them daily. They will also be looking at other documents and internal controls as part of the audit process. She is simultaneously providing data to BS&A for upcoming software upgrade.

Ms. Hoeksema expects a status update from the Auditor very soon and will verify whether they plan to conduct an on-site visit. She will communicate to the Board when they will be at the Township Hall. Supervisor Slopsema indicated it would be beneficial learning opportunity for Board Members to be present during that time.

Any Park and Recreation Items:
Mr. Arends reported Consumers Power met with Isenhart to walk the park project site. Alternate locations were determined for placement of the transformers; Consumers will redesign this. One tree will need to be removed, which is the responsibility of the Township.

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Campground bookings in the first loop were blocked in September; however, 6-8 weeks are needed for ordering materials. The loop may be reopened as the work will likely start after the park is closed. Consumers will keep him advised of the timing.

Ms. Koester complains that one of the committee members on PRAC is fielding inquiries about pavilion, ball fields and batting cage use. This was previously done by the Park Manager or Clerk. The Board discussed. For the short-term, the Clerk or Mr. Arends will manage.

Options for Large Meetings – Mr. Arends:
The Township Hall is the currently scheduled location for the upcoming Planning Commission meeting for Short-term Rentals Public Hearing. PC Secretary Denise Peltonen contacted Mr. Arends regarding potential locations. Consideration for Zoom and audio service is also a factor. Township Board Members discussed other options for large meetings such as the Methodist Church, New Hope Community Center, Williamsburg Dinner Theater, Acme Township's boardroom, East Bay Township's facility, Elk Rapids High School auditorium, the Village of Elk Rapids and Samels Farm.

Mr. Arends will work with Ms. Koester to provide a recommendation to the Supervisor for the Civil Infraction Ordinance Public Hearing, which will also need a larger venue.

NEW BUSINESS:

Public Comment Guidelines / Time Limits / Format – Ms. Slopsema:
There was discussion about Public Comments during meetings via Zoom. Mr. Arends reiterated his findings after surveying numerous municipalities, all of which no longer allow Public Comment over Zoom, post-Covid. Some municipalities offer live streaming or video recordings of meetings.

Clerk Hoeksema noted the law states people cannot be restricted from speaking during a Public Hearing, but does not require Zoom access.

Several members voiced support for Zoom public comments at least during public hearings. Allowing comments would increase access to the public and possibly alleviate space concerns in the meeting room.
Board Members discussed how comments should be handled in general.

Board Action:
Mr. Mielnik made a motion that the Township allows Public Comments via Zoom during Public Hearings and continues to consider allowing Public Comments via Zoom at the beginning and end of Township Board meetings. Mr. Arends seconded the motion.
VOTE: YEAS: All. NAYES: None. Motion carried.

Website:
Ms. Slopsema recognized prior public feedback indicating difficulties finding information on the Township website. There was Board discussion that the search function needs to work more effectively.

Board Members were in agreement the Township needs an updated website to be more effective, user-friendly and manage information. Mr. Mielnik stated the Board needs to know what information to give to a provider in order to conduct an effective assessment. Clerk Hoeksema also notes upcoming ADA compliance needs.

Supervisor Slopsema asked the Board to consider this for discussion at the next meeting in terms of website content, organization and accessibility. Mr. Mielnik and Ms. Hoeksema will work on this together.

Board Meeting Packets:
Supervisor Slopsema stated the Consent Calendar and general business will be part of the 4th Thursday morning meetings, with more specific, special topics relevant to the community being part of the 2nd Thursday evening meetings. Agenda structure and content will be modified to reflect these structure changes.

Consider Acceptance of Tribal Grant:
Whitewater Township was awarded the Grand Traverse Band of Ottawa and Chippewa Indians 2% Grant in the amount of $15,000 for the engineering and design phase of the electrical upgrade at Whitewater Township Park and Campground.

Board Action:
Ms. Slopsema made a motion to accept the Grand Traverse Band of Ottawa and Chippewa Indians 2% Grant in the amount of $15,000 for Whitewater Township Park and Campground for the electrical upgrade project design. Mr. Arends seconded the motion.
VOTE: YEAS: All. NAYES: None. Motion carried.

TABLED ITEMS: None.

BOARD COMMENTS / DISCUSSION:
Supervisor Slopsema will be attending the July 28 ceremony to receive the $15,000, 2% Tribal grant funds.

Mr. Mielnik noted all of the General Ordinances are not on the Township website. Clerk Hoeksema is in the process of posting these and researching if any amendments were made to ensure the most current version is posted.

Supervisor Slopsema addressed issues the Township has been having with the Zoom system. It was noted that during the 7/15/25 meeting, Zoom service was down throughout much of the country. The old system had failed when lightening possibly struck nearby and damaged it. There have been issues as well with the electrical

system capacity in the building. A new uninterruptible power supply with backup battery was installed to prevent this in the future.
An electrician also evaluated electrical problems of the building. Power capacities have been overloaded with the window air conditioning unit(s) also causing issues. The electrician suggested installation of a mini split cooling system. Board Members discussed the mini split system installed in the Treasurer's office last year and the need for one to service the remainder of the Township Hall.

Board Action:
Ms. Slopsema made a motion to authorize the Clerk and the Supervisor to execute purchase orders not to exceed $8,500 for the installation of a mini split system for the main room in the Township Hall, to provide heating and cooling. Mr. Mielnik seconded the motion.
VOTE: YEAS: All. NAYES: None. Motion carried.

Ms. Koester is aware of an insulated portable storage unit/container office with restroom facilities, electric and plumbing. This may be a solution for office space problems in the Township Hall. Offices are shared by multiple staff, and there are numerous interruptions with meetings, serving members of the public, etc. There was Board consensus for Treasurer Koester to explore products, amenities, placement, function, costs and uses of portable container office systems.

Clerk Hoeksema reported former employee Mr. Mike Dwyer was denied unemployment benefits by Michigan Unemployment (UIA). He is appealing their decision and will be attending a hearing on Monday. There was an unannounced Worker's Compensation audit yesterday at the Township office to review payroll and ensure Worker's Compensation is being paid. Payroll is up by 50% which is attributed to wage increases and four elections held in the last year. Clerk Hoeksema also reported the Township received the entire amount requested from Elk Rapids Schools for election reimbursement.

Clerk Hoeksema provided an Ethics and Code of Conduct Policy draft to the Supervisor and asked that this be added to the Agenda in the near future.

Supervisor Slopsema requested that Board Members drop Agenda items into the OneDrive for more ease in assembling the meeting packets. There was discussion to set up a OneDrive training session with Noah Creamer of Social Explorations. Supervisor Slopsema will find out if he is available at 8:00 a.m. on Thursday, 8/28/25, just prior to the 9:00 a.m. meeting.

ANNOUNCEMENTS:
Next Township Regular Board Meeting: **Thursday, August 14, 2025, 6:30 p.m.**

PUBLIC COMMENT:

Ms. Deb Graber:
As Whitewater Township Zoning Administrator, Ms. Graber stated she is willing to change her office day again but needs to know what will work best. She asked for improved communication. Ms. Graber suggested considering holding both the Short-term Rental and Civil Infraction Ordinance Public Hearings together at a larger facility, if the upcoming PC meeting is over capacity.

Mr. Frank Hymore: He appreciates the Board looking at continuing Zoom Public Comments. There are many outstanding websites that offer ease in searches and utilizing a site. He suggested the Board look at other websites for insight before contracting with a service.

Ms. Connie Hymore: Ms. Hymore thanked the Board for allowing Zoom Public Comment for Public Hearings and asked them to reconsider restoring Zoom Public Comments for all meetings.

Ms. Kim Mangus: Ms. Mangus thanked the Board for Zoom use, requested updates on website be clear and asked for legal review of changing the agenda mid-meeting. She asked for public correspondence be included in packets.

Mr. Randy Steelman: Mr. Steelman agrees that Zoom comments are important and asked they be allowed for other meetings, not just Public Hearings. He suggested the Board consider the Masonic Lodge in East Bay Township for larger meetings.

Ms. Heidi Vollmuth: Ms. Vollmuth stated the Township Board works for the public. Muting the public is not a good idea; solutions may come from them. The General Ordinance book has an entire list of Ordinances including those that have been appealed. The Masonic organization may offer their space free of charge with donation.

Frank Hymore: (asked for second comment and was granted) He mentions that he heard the Tribe offered to pay for a Township Hall/Fire Hall and public water, but it was declined long ago. He is wondering why and suggested the Township speak with them. Supervisor Slopsema stated she is pursuing a conversation with the Tribe.

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

The meeting adjourned at 11:56 a.m.

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

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