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

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

CALL TO ORDER:
Supervisor Linda 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
Trustee Tim Arends
Trustee Randy Mielnik

A quorum was established.

Absent:
Treasurer Jill Koester

ALSO PRESENT:
Zoning Administrator Deb Graber
Recording Secretary Kay Held

SET/ADJUST AGENDA:
Amendments:
-Move Fire Chief's Report and AirPak Purchase ahead of Conflict of Interest Section on Agenda.

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.

Fire Report – Chief Morgan
Chief Morgan's report is in the meeting packet.

He additionally reported the Fire Department had 19 calls for service last month; representing a 94% YTD increase from 2024 to 2025. Several snow storms and M-72 accident closures contributed to this.

The Department is training every Tuesday including with the Conex Box and Rapid Intervention Training. He continues to fine tune the upcoming proposed budget.

Fire Department Air Tank Purchase Authorization – Morgan:
Chief Morgan submitted a request and quote for Scott AirPak SU-5134-310 Replacements. Per NFPA, they have a maximum life span of 15 years and expire in June, 2025. MES Fire is the sole supplier of Scott Air-Paks for the State of Michigan.

Board Action:

Mr. Arends made a motion to authorize the Clerk to issue a purchase order to Municipal Emergency Services (MES) in the amount of $15,000 for the purchase of ten (10) 45-minute TC-3CCM-310 SCBA air cylinders with funds to come from the Fire Capital Improvement Fund. Mr. Mielnik seconded the motion.

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

FIRST PUBLIC COMMENT:

In the Township Hall:
None.

Via Zoom:

Ms. Connie Hymore, 6761 Baggs Road, Williamsburg, MI 49690
Ms. Hymore also commented at the Planning Commission meeting regarding Short-term Rentals. She would like to see a public survey and believes writing an Ordinance first seems out of order.

PUBLIC HEARING:
None.

REPORTS / PRESENTATIONS / ANNOUNCEMENTS / COMMENTS:

2023/2024 Audit Report Presentation – Mr. Joe Verlin, Gabridge & Co.:
Mr. Joe Verlin of Gabridge & Co. joined the meeting via Zoom. Gabridge & Co. performed the 4/1/23-3/31/24 Whitewater Township Audit.

The report is lengthy; however, Mr. Verlin discussed numerous points of the Audit with regard Township financial health, revenue, expenditures, debt, funds and fund balances, chart of accounts, assets, comparative analyses, financial planning and fiscal management. His presentation is supported by the analysis and financial statements included in the Audit.

~~Gabridge & Co. has verified the Township financials with the County, State of Michigan and various financial institutions.~~ The report provides detailed explanation of findings and was discussed with the Township Board Members.

The Township is in a more positive position as of 3/31/24 by approximately $658k as compared to 3/31/23. The Township is operating at a sustainable level.

Mr. Arends inquired about the Audit process for the next fiscal year. Whitewater Township has signed Engagement letter for the upcoming audit year. Mr. Verlin indicated work is expected to begin approximately 5/31/25. The Township will determine if it will be conducted onsite or remotely.

The report also addressed Internal Controls and Separation of Duties; recommendations are outlined in the report.

The Michigan Department of Treasury has published a uniform Chart of Accounts; the Township can work on this as they move into the BS&A application.

There was additional discussion with Mr. Verlin regarding the Miami Beach Sewer Project, its previous transfer to residents and the depreciating nature of its infrastructure. The Board will follow-up on this.

The Audit is available for public review.

Board Action:
Mr. Arends made a motion to accept the April 1, 2023, to March 31, 2024, Audit Report prepared by Gabridge & Co. Ms. Hoeksema seconded the motion.

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

County Board of Commissioners – Commissioner Darryl Nelson:
Commissioner Nelson is on the County Board of Commissioners and Airport Boards. He reported Grand Traverse County has been asked to support a bond regarding the Cherry Capital Airport Terminal Expansion project. The County Board

voted 8-1 in favor. The existing terminal is 20 years old and built to handle 250k passengers per year; 880k passengers were served in 2024. January, 2025, showed a 32% increase over January, 2024.

Nearly 50% of the $70m bond will be funded by Federal and State monies. The bond would be paid off by airport revenues, not local tax dollars. Approximately $18m would be saved over the life of the Bond via debt service of Bond Covenants.

Parking was expanded two years ago; a parking expansion is being reviewed.

The Grand Traverse County Board awarded $400k to the Safe Harbor Homeless Shelter over two years with no restrictions and no oversight. He did not support this decision. The Community Cares Coalition is pursuing more sustainable solutions to assist the homeless.

Regarding the Grand Traverse County Onsite Wastewater & Sewage Disposal Regulation (septic tank inspection), the State of Michigan is one of the few states that does not inspect systems statewide. If Grand Traverse County were to write its own plan, and the County would be grandfathered in. He detailed specifications. A law is anticipated to take effect January 1, 2026.

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

He additionally reported the Planning Commission met February 5, 2025. The PC presented their Annual Report. The Master Plan was approved on 3/5/25. The Township Board authorized the Planning Commission to be the final authority for approving the Master Plan. It is required to be reviewed every five years, next in 2030.

The Clarified Zoning Ordinance was approved 2/26/25. The deadline for the Planner RFP was 3/4/25; three responses were received. This item is on this evening's Agenda. A Special Use Permit was granted to the Williamsburg Animal Hospital, which approved event space in the facility. The PC also discussed the rezoning request of AIS. The PC will be looking at a new Private Road Ordinance.

Mr. Dan Leonard of the Michigan Economic Development Corporation (MEDC) delivered an introductory presentation regarding Redevelopment Readiness Communities (RRC) and its potential collaboration with Whitewater Township. There is interest from the Planning Commission to enroll in this program.

Prospective dates were discussed among the PC Members regarding a Joint Meeting between the Planning Commission and the Whitewater Township Board. They offered Thursday, April 3, and Thursday, April 10, at 6:30 p.m. for Township consideration. This item is on this evening's Agenda.

Mr. Arends inquired why there was a Special Meeting of the PC scheduled for 3/12/25 regarding an Amendment to the Zoning Ordinance and whether it was due to a time-sensitive reason. Mr. Mielnik indicated it was time-sensitive if a Public Hearing is necessary, allowing for the required publication period.

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

She additionally reported February was a lighter month for Land Use Permits; however, she is receiving daily requests, with 8-10 in process. Four Land Division applications are pending. Code Enforcement activity is increasing. She is attending a "Blight Be Gone" training course this week.

Next week she will attend an Essentials of Zoning class through the American Planning Association-Michigan Chapter. It will be via Zoom at the Township Hall on March 19 and 20 from 6-8 p.m. Ms. Koester and Mr. Wroubel expressed interested in the course. She added that Webinars are typically recorded.

There were no ZBA Appeals last month. She met with an individual today and expects there may be an Appeal in April or May. To date, nothing is planned for a March meeting.

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

The Roverpass has been updated for 2025. Approved changes to dates, rate and rules have been updated, as has contact information. The site will go live on Tuesday, 4/1/25, at 8 a.m. The majority of last season's park employees have confirmed their return for this season. He will need more Rangers in August as some staff will be returning to college.

PRAC Report – Jill Koester:
None. No meeting in February.

CONSENT CALENDAR – Receive and File:
Correspondence from the public is included in the Consent Calendar as well as information on the Memorial Day Parade, which is on this evening's Agenda.

Mr. Arends noted that several items listed on the Consent Calendar were either not in the packet or not applicable to the business of today; therefore, it doesn't make sense to "Receive and File" all items listed in the Consent Calendar.

Board Action:
Mr. Arends made a motion to approve the Consent Calendar as amended minus items #5, 12, 13, 14, 15, 19 and 20 (PRAC Report, PC Minutes, ZBA Minutes, Parks & Rec Minutes, Historical Society Report, Budget Amendments and Revenue & Expenditure Report). Ms. Slopsema seconded the motion.

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

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: None. (REMOVED)

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 (REMOVED)

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

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

Historical Society Report: None. (REMOVED)

CORRESPONDENCE:
See meeting packet for any correspondence submitted.

MINUTES FOR APPROVAL:

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

Whitewater Township Regular Regular Board Meeting Draft Minutes 2/10/25:

Amendments: None.

BUDGET AMENDMENTS: None. (REMOVED)

REVENUE & EXPENDITURE REPORT – Hoeksema: None. (REMOVED)

UNFINISHED BUSINESS:

BS&A Project Status - Hoeksema:
Ms. Hoeksema reported BS&A will remote-access the Township's system on 4/15/25 for data migration and begin the update process. The system is expected to go live 6/3/25. This is Phase I, for Treasurer and Assessor functions. The overall project duration is at least six months.

Whitewater Township Park Electrical Update C2AE – Arends:
Mr. Arends and Supervisor Slopsema met with C2AE engineers to discuss their estimated cost for upgrading the electrical at the campground. The ~~bid~~ estimate is approximately $300k. Formal bid requests have not been sent out. The Board will determine whether the bids should be in total cost or in broken out in phases. The overload condition was not duplicated to verify the problem.

2025/2026 Budget: Dates for work sessions after public hearing – Arends:
Mr. Arends has been preparing the prospective 2025/2026 Township budget. A Special Meeting with a Public Hearing is set for Monday, 3/17/25, at 6:30 p.m. for Board review. He anticipates two Special Meeting Work Sessions on Monday, 3/24/31, and Monday, 3/31/25, from 10 a.m. to noon. It is possible the 3/31 meeting may not be necessary.

Whitewater Township Toilet Trailer Sale Status – Arends:
Based on feedback at last month's meeting, Mr. Arends followed up with NRT Sales regarding the previously discussed sales arrangement. Parks Manager Mike Dwyer acknowledged this is not a revenue-generating source, there would be installation, maintenance and operating issues, and additional port-a-johns can be placed in lieu of this unit. He would rather see funds from the sale of the unit go back into the Township or Parks.

Board Members noted the former Board purchased it without any utilities in place. Return on this investment would be 20+ years. The Township is not locked into a sales contract with NRT and has to option to sell it themselves.

There was Board consensus to sell it in order to recapture a majority of the initial expense.

Board Action:
Ms. Slopsema made a motion that the Board declares the portable restroom trailer as surplus and authorizes NRT Sales, LLC, to facilitate the resale of the unit with a minimum bid of $65k, with the Township receiving $61k of the sale price, unless otherwise agreed to by the Board. Mr. Mielnik seconded the motion.

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

Hi Pray Park Bleacher Replacement – Bid Status – Hoeksema:
Clerk Hoeksema enrolled with Sourcewell, a government entity that assists municipalities in procuring goods or services through government-approved vendors. She conducted bleacher research, learning area parks do not have cement under their equipment; something that was requested by PRAC. Bleachers known as "tip & rolls" can be moved to be mowed underneath. She has four different proposals. Bleachers with seating capacity of 30-40 are available for $1,300 versus the $45k bleachers in the PRAC bids. Kewadin Milton Township and Clearwater Township Parks use "tip & roll" bleachers.

At the last meeting, the Board approved a motion, in part, for PRAC "to proceed with sending out one bid request for the bleacher equipment and one bid request for concrete work...."

Board Action:
Ms. Slopsema made a motion to redirect the bleacher project back to PRAC to study less expensive bleacher solutions without a concrete component to it. Mr. Arends seconded the motion.

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

NOTE: A 5-Minute break was requested at 8:09 p.m.

NOTE: The Meeting reconvened at 8:14 p.m.

Board Action:
Ms. Slopsema made a motion to amend the Agenda to move PC Resignation and Appointments from New Business to Unfinished Business, above the Hi Pray Park subject. Mr. Mielnik seconded the motion.

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

Board Action:
Ms. Slopsema made a motion to accept correspondence dated 2/3/25 from Mr. Al Keaton resigning from the Planning Commission. Mr. Mielnik seconded the motion.

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

Ms. Sadie Merchant completed an application for appointment to the Planning Commission. This would be for a partial term, replacing Mr. Keaton, for the period of 3/10/25 through 12/31/26. She was asked to introduce herself. Ms. Merchant is a native of Whitewater Township, manages a cherry and apple farm and farm market Myrtle and Maude's. She is a Registered Nurse with a Bachelor's Degree. She believes the agriculture side of the community needs to be represented and feels strongly about the growth of the community and the Master Plan.

Mr. Mielnik noted she was at recent PC meetings and worked on creating a sample Ordinance regarding Cideries and Wineries.

Board Action:
Mr. Arends made a motion to confirm the recommendation of the Supervisor to appoint Ms. Sadie Merchant to the Planning Commission. The term expires 12/31/26. Mr. Mielnik seconded the motion.

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

The Clerk or Deputy Clerk will provide the Oath of Office to Ms. Merchant.

Mr. David Boesler completed an application for appointment to the Planning Commission to fill the term of Mr. Mike Jacobson, which expires 12/31/27. He was asked to introduce himself. Mr. Boesler has lived in the community since 2013. He is retired from a finance and business management career and is on the Board of Directors of a private hunting club. He believes community planning and achieving a balance between economic and population growth are important.

Board Action:
Mr. Arends made a motion to confirm the recommendation of the Supervisor appointing Mr. David Boesler to the Planning Commission. The term expires 12/31/27. Ms. Slopsema seconded the motion.

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

The Clerk or Deputy Clerk will provide the Oath of Office to Mr. Boesler.

Planning Consultant Applicant Update – Mielnik:
RFQs were previously approved and distributed to firms on the Michigan Association of Planning website. Three responses have been received. This was briefly discussed at the Planning Commission meeting last week. Mr. Mielnik suggested a Committee be established to review candidates. There was Board consensus that Mr. Mielnik from the Township Board, PC Chair Keith DeYoung and Zoning Administrator Deb Graber oversee the selection process. Mr. Arends asked that the Board receive a copy of the three response RFQs.

Joint Township Board / Planning Commission Meeting Date – Mielnik:
The Planning Commission offered meeting date options of Thursday, 4/3/25 or Thursday, 4/10/25, at 7:00 p.m. for a Joint Meeting between the Planning Commission and Whitewater Township Board. The Township agreed that Thursday, April 10, 2025, at 7:00 p.m. will work for the Joint Meeting.

Topics of discussion will include Short-term Rentals, Civil Infractions, the six-year Capital Improvement Plan and Private Road Ordinance. Agenda preparation was discussed as well as the process of each entity's administrative meeting functions.

Zoning Administrator Salary – Slopsema:
Supervisor Slopsema directed the Board to a document in the packet outlining Board Actions taken by the prior Township Administration on May 8, 2024. Ms. Slopsema reported the former Board approved a motion to change the work scope of the Zoning Administrator. However, a motion to increase salary compensation failed. Her job description was updated in August, 2024, as a result of the first motion.

Board Action:
Ms. Slopsema made motion that the Board authorize a 10% pay increase to the base salary of $45,000 to the Zoning Administrator for the additional duties assigned by the Board at its May 8, 2024, meeting. The new base salary will be $49,500. This change takes effect during the next regular pay period. Mr. Mielnik seconded the motion.

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

Mr. Arends inquired about the reference to "Independent Contractor" in #5 of the job description. It was determined the document could be used for contractors or direct employees.

NEW BUSINESS:

Town Hall Printer / Scanner – Hoeksema/Koester:
The printer/scanner lease expires 4/30/25. Ms. Koester and Hoeksema conducted product research, which is included in the meeting packet as well as a purchase versus lease comparison prepared by Mr. Arends.

There was Board consensus for the purchase of HP color laser printer for $800 from Laser Printer Technologies. No motion is required as it is within the Supervisor's spending authority. It is a refurbished unit.

Planning Commission Appointments – Slopsema:
These appointments were covered earlier in the meeting.

Meeting Schedule April 2025 – March 2026 (Tuesdays 6:30 p.m.):
Supervisor Slopsema indicated the proposed Regular Meeting Schedule in the packet would not work due to scheduling conflicts. An alternate schedule was considered.

Board Action:
Mr. Arends made a motion to approve Resolution #25-02, that Whitewater Township's Board Meetings be adopted as: Monday, April 7, 2025, at 6:30 p.m. and the remainder of the meetings on the second Thursday of the month, at 6:30 p.m. from May, 2025, through March, 2026.

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

Note: The April meeting cannot be held on the second Thursday due to the Joint Township/PC meeting already scheduled on April 10. The new regular schedule begins Thursday, May 8, 2025.

Note: During preparation of the Minutes, it was found no Second to the Motion was made. This Resolution will be presented again at the next meeting.

Mr. C's Proposal:
There is information in the packet from Mr. C's regarding the proposed sale of their building to Whitewater Township for the Township Hall and Fire Hall. There was Board discussion regarding the condition and location of the building, financial considerations, and Township needs. The Board also discussed property it owns on Elk Lake Road and a lot available next to the existing Hall. Mr. Mielnik stated the Planning Act calls for a Capital Improvement Plan, which needs some work.

There was agreement by Board Members and Chief Morgan to tour the building; however, there was caution about violating the Open Meetings Act without notification of a quorum being together outside of a meeting. The Supervisor will follow-up with Mr. Copeland.

Youth Baseball Banners:
Ms. Amber Voice approached the Township for its continued annual support in advertising banners on Township property for youth baseball. She provided photos, noted significant increase in youth participation, and explained costs and what is provided to youth.

Board Action:
Mr. Arends made a motion to approve the request of the Elk Rapids Youth Baseball Association to install no more than twenty (20) 5'x3' advertising/sponsor banners at Hi Pray Park on the baseball field fence for the 2025 baseball season at no expense to the Township and that a $50 per banner sale donation be made to Whitewater Township to help offset costs of maintenance. Ms. Hoeksema seconded the motion.

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

VAUGHN HARSHFIELD LETTER:
Mr. Vaughn Harshfield submitted an email with the announcement of the Williamsburg Memorial Day Parade notification. The American Legion Post 289 requested this information be published in the Township Newsletter.

There was discussion about newsletter publication and other methods to announce the event. The Fire Department routinely assists and coordinates with the police department during the parade. Because this is not a Township-sponsored function, there was Board consensus the Township would not be promoting it. The Supervisor will follow-up with Mr. Harshfield.

TABLED ITEMS:
None.

BOARD COMMENTS/DISCUSSION:
Ms. Slopsema stated Ms. Koester located an Excel document with an approximate 1,100-person distribution list for newsletters, which may be useful for email Township announcements.

Mr. Arends mentioned Community Cleanup Day, anticipating it to be in June. The Board discussed the expense of mailers. Last year's cost of the event was $12k with Bay Area Disposal. He will contact GFL. He will also check the cost of sending postcards, stating this is a budgeted expense.

Mr. Mielnik noted his Board Report referenced a preliminary Passenger Rail Study and the feasibility of transport from Ann Arbor to Traverse City. A $1.2m study is being headed by The Groundworks Center for Resilient Communities in Traverse City. Whitewater Township could be impacted if the rail behind the casino is utilized.

ANNOUNCEMENTS:
A Special Meeting with a Budget Public Hearing is scheduled on Monday, March 17, 2025, at 6:30 p.m. at the Whitewater Township Hall.

Special Meetings with Budget Work Sessions are scheduled for Monday 3/24/25 at 10:00 a.m. and (if necessary), Monday, 3/31/25, at 10 a.m. at the Whitewater Township Hall.

The next Regular Township Board Meeting will be held on Monday, April 7, 2025, at 6:30 p.m. at the Whitewater Township Hall.

PUBLIC COMMENT:

In the Township Hall:

Mr. John Nolan, 9933 Miami Beach Road, Williamsburg, MI 49690:
Mr. Nolan appreciates the publication of the Township Audit as he previously had difficulty gaining access. He agrees with Mr. Verlin's discussion about disposal of assets and the Miami Beach sewer depreciation discussion. He expressed concern about the possibility of misstated assets due to the prior Administration's internal controls.

He disagrees with Mr. Verlin's opinion that the Township's financials present fairly. He hopes the new Board implements new action plans and internal controls.

Ms. Denise Peltonen (no address provided):
Ms. Peltonen stated not everyone in the Township has internet access, which is partially why there was a newsletter. She appreciates a Township newsletter with its local topics and informational value.

Zoning Administrator Deb Graber:
MSU has a portable boat washing station. They will schedule and perform boat washing onsite. She noted there are options with VistaPrint online to design, print and send post cards.

Via Zoom:

Ms. Connie Hymore, 6761 Baggs Road, Williamsburg, MI 49690
Regarding the portable restroom, she suggested rental businesses might be interested in purchasing it. Businesses may be able to contribute to the purchase of the bleachers in exchange for promotion.

She believes the boat wash is an important project. She would like to see a Project Manager on each of the projects discussed to avoid going over budget as was the case with the boat ramp.

Regarding Mr. Harshfield's communication, she suggested creating a community page on the Township website to announce events and drive more traffic to the Township's site. Regarding Zoom, the camera is flickering tonight and some of the microphones are muffled while others sound ok.

ADJOURNMENT:

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

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

The meeting was adjourned at 9:44 p.m.

Submitted by: Kay Z. Held, Recording Secretary