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

REGULAR MEETING
APPROVED MINUTES
Thursday, September 25, 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

1 **SET/ADJUST/APPROVE AGENDA:**
Add "Fire Department Reports / Receipt of Grant Award" after Item J(4) under New Business
Add "Update on RFQ Status from A/E Services for Capital Improvements Plan" under Unfinished Business

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: None.

REPORTS/PRESENTATIONS/ANNOUNCEMENTS/COMMENTS:

Fire / Emergency Services Report – Chief Morgan: Report in packet. Chief Morgan also reported there has been a consistent call volume and steady response time. The On-Call Program reliability has been full the past month. He reviewed call trends and response times with the Board.

Chief Morgan will be instructing and taking training programs over the next two months. He has been teaching Hazardous Materials and Drivers' Training in the U.P. He will be part of the instruction team to teach in the County's Fire Academy. He is enrolled in the Fire Behavior College and will attend the Oath Keepers Fire Conference. Chief Morgan is participating in these programs at his own expense under his LLC.

Mr. Arends and Chief Morgan discussed the vandalism and removal of stop signs in Grand Traverse and Wexford Counties, resulting in accidents including fatalities.

Planning Commission Report – Mr. Mielnik: Report in packet. Mr. Mielnik also reported two Zoning Amendments will be coming before the Township Board at the 10/9/25 meeting. The AIS Site Plan is expected at the next PC meeting. Information from Grand Traverse Plastics and Hutson/John Deere is forthcoming.

The PC has been in discussion about a Private Road Ordinance. Chief Morgan provided information to the PC regarding Fire Department and Emergency Services requirements. The PC will review a proposal from Gourdie Fraser at the 10/1/25 meeting regarding their assistance with a Private Road Ordinance. Supervisor Slopsema described the process for road naming through the County Equalization Department.

Supervisor Slopsema addressed Public Comments regarding the proposed STR Amendment by Ms. Rachel Steelman. She discussed the process for referendum per the Michigan Zoning Enabling Act (MZEA); this will be further reviewed.

Zoning and ZBA Report – ZA Deb Graber: Report in packet. ZA Graber also reported nine new Permits were issued and two Land Divisions were completed last month. Two Land Divisions are pending and there have been 15 new Permits thus far in September. Last year a total of 84 Permits were issued; YTD 85 have been issued.

An arraignment has been scheduled for the misdemeanor citation issued on 7/3/25. It is Case #25-5400-0M1, scheduled for 10/3/25 at 10:40 a.m. through Traverse City's 86th District Court.

Complaints have slowed considerably, particularly short-term rentals. She is currently investigating camping and lighting complaints.

A Public Hearing is scheduled with the ZBA this evening, 9/25/25 at 7:00 p.m. for a variance request to put a structure in the setback of a property.

Supervisor Slopsema inquired about a Major Home Occupation request; ZA Graber has been in contact with the resident. This would be a Special Use and require a Public Hearing with the Planning Commission.

Hutson is looking to expand. Amendment requests have been made by the public. There is a possible Land Division that will require a new private road. There are additional private roads expected; she has minimal specifications to provide applicants and stated a Private Road Ordinance would be helpful. There is currently a high level of activity in Zoning.

Clerk Hoeksema asked for clarification about the process for issuing new permits and the ZA's ability to manage her increased workload in a 24-hour position.

Parks Report – Mr. Bartnicki: Report in packet. Mr. Arends also commented the Park is busy planning the Halloweekend Spooktacular camping weekend event scheduled October 3-5. The Board needs to consider the possibility of a new Ranger Station for next season; options are included in the packet. RoverPass reviews were included in the packet.

Ms. Slopsema noted the Township was able to preserve the grant from the Tribe for the boat wash station. Equipment research is underway. She spoke with Elk/Skegemog Association; their Environmental Committee has offered to assist.

Mr. Mielnik inquired if the Park's Asset Inventory List is included in the Recreation Plan. Mr. Arends indicated it is in PRAC's Five-year Plan.The asset list is also in the BS&A system in a fixed asset module. Mr. Bartnicki included numerous suggestions for improvements in his Parks Report.

PRAC Report – Ms. Koester:

The 2025 Parks & Recreation Survey results were included in the packet. PRAC received an offer from resident Randy Steelman and his company to do the cement work under the new bleachers with the donation of all labor. The Township would be responsible for the concrete, estimated at $2k for all four pads. The work could still be done this fall. Treasurer Koester will forward bids from Mr. Steelman. There was Board consensus to move forward with this. Clerk Hoeksema will ensure appropriate liability documentation is in order.

Ms. Koester thanked PRAC Members and volunteers in assembly of the new bleachers. The back fencing still needs to be installed on two of them.

Open seats remain on the PRAC. Chief Morgan will re-run the ad.

CONSENT CALENDAR – Receive and File:

Clerk Report – In meeting packet.
Treasurer Report – In meeting packet.
Trustee Report – In meeting packet.

MMR (Ambulance) Reports – In meeting packet.
Grand Traverse County Sheriff Report – In meeting packet.
PC Minutes: https://www.whitewatertownshipmi.gov/planning-commission.html
ZBA Minutes: https://www.whitewatertownshipmi.gov/zoning-board-of-appeals.html
Park & Recreation Minutes: https://www.whitewatertownshipmi.gov/advisory-committee.htm
Correspondence: Mead - STRs
Minutes for Approval: https://www.whitewatertownshipmi.gov/township-board--subcommittee-meeting-minutes.html
9/9/25 Special Meeting Minutes and 9/11/25 Regular Meeting Minutes. No amendments to either.
Bills for Approval –Clerk Hoeksema: None.
Items pulled from Consent Calendar: None.

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

Mr. Arends requested a call be made to Consumers Energy to suspend lighting at ballpark for the season. Ms. Koester noted a good deal of garbage, toys and sports equipment left at the park and ball field. Chief Morgan has been in touch with families nearby whose children may have left things there. Park employees routinely check the ball park for trash.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS:

Any Parks & Recreation Items:
Mr. Arends stated the electrical upgrade at the Park is on schedule. He has communicated the closing date of the Park to Consumers Energy.

NEW BUSINESS:

Update on RFQ Status from A/E Services for Capital Improvements Plan:
At the last Township Board meeting, an RFQ for architectural & engineering (A/E) support services for the Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) was discussed. Support for the PC is needed for assets throughout the Township. There was Board discussion. Mr. Mielnik specified that design, scope of work and price are important in the RFQ. Mr. Mielnik will research further information and present it to the Board in the future.

Consideration of Amending Personnel Policy #4 (Ms. Hoeksema):
Clerk Hoeksema presented a Personnel Policy update regarding the Michigan Earned Sick Act (ESTA) in the meeting packet.

Board Action:
Ms. Hoeksema made a motion to approve the updated Sick Days section of Whitewater Township Personnel Policy Number #4 as amended, effective February 21, 2025, to ensure compliance with the Michigan Earned Sick Time Act (ESTA). Mr. Arends seconded the motion.

Discussion: There was clarification of the annual accrual cap and discussion about termination payout. It was agreed to remove “annual” from the cap. Clerk Hoeksema and Chief Morgan attended an ESTA webinar.

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

Consideration of Declaring an Air Truck as Surplus and Authorizing its Sale (Chief Morgan):
Chief Morgan requested declaration of a piece of apparatus as surplus as presented in an explanatory memo. He expounded on its use, cost, value and maintenance. He suggested proceeds from the sale be used to purchase an in-house cascade system at some point in the future.

Board Action:
Mr. Arends made a motion to declare the 2006 Kodiak 5500 Air Truck with integrated cascade and compressor system as surplus equipment and authorize its sale. Ms. Slopsema seconded the motion.
VOTE: YEAS: All. NAYES: None. Motion carried.

Consideration of Declaring Various Fire Department Assets Surplus (Chief Morgan):

Chief Morgan requested a surplus declaration of six items no longer required for operational use.

Board Action:
Mr. Arends made a motion to approve surplus declarations for the six identified items as presented and authorize the Fire Chief to dispose of each by sale, auction or other approved methods. Mr. Mielnik seconded the motion.

Discussion: Mr. Arends asked that removal and addition of assets be updated in the BS&A Fixed Asset System. Chief Morgan will provide information to the Clerk. He also noted that some depreciated assets were not tracked in the transition from Grand Traverse Rural to Whitewater Township Fire. He has been cleaning this up.

Mr. Arends noted the Township/Fire Department should not be storing items; i.e., Whitewater Emergency Auxiliary Services (WESA) property. Chief Morgan has cleaned out the apparatus floor and is beginning clear out the upper level of the firehouse.

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

Consideration of a New Fire Department Employee (Chief Morgan):
Chief Morgan submitted a request to hire Mr. Eric Arbenowske, a Certified Firefighter I&II and EMT-B for the Paid-On-Call program with Whitewater Township Fire Department. His credentials and experience were outlined in the packet memo. No additional investment would be required in his hire, with the possible exception of turnout gear.

Board Action:
Ms. Slopsema made a motion to hire Mr. Eric Arbenowske as a Paid-On-Call Firefighter for Whitewater Township Fire Department. Ms. Hoeksema seconded the motion.

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

Receipt of Fire Grant Award:
Chief Morgan announced the Whitewater Township Fire Department was awarded $58.809.52 from the FEMA Fire Prevention and Safety Grant Program with a local cost share of $2,940.48. This would bring the Firewise USA Program to Whitewater Township, making it one of the first Firewise communities in the state. Sixty percent of calls are for wildfires. It is a two-year, community-driven program with Fire Department involvement focused on:

-Reduction of wildfire risk - Neighborhood risk assessments - Community-wide mitigation
-Homeowner education - Defensible space planning

The FD's current budget allows $500-$1,500 in fire prevention activities.

Board Action:
Ms. Slopsema made a motion to accept the Fire & Safety Protection Grant Award from Firewise USA in the amount of $58.809.52. Ms. Koester seconded the motion.

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

Financial Audit for Fiscal Year 2024-2025 (Clerk Hoeksema/Treasurer Koester):
Clerk Hoeksema stated the financial audit rep notified her completion of the audit would be delayed. Mr. Arends confirmed he received confirmation of a 31-day extension filing. The Township Board previously approved a two-year contract and will be required to go out for bid for auditors next year.

TABLED ITEMS: None.

BOARD COMMENTS / DISCUSSION:
Ms. Hoeksema reported on the attorney search status. No response has been received from letters sent. An ad will be placed in the Record Eagle.

Treasurer Koester and Mr. Arends inquired about the cash receipting module; there is information missing from the BS&A module, specifically regarding Parks revenue. Mr. Arends volunteered to enter data. Clerk Hoeksema stated everything has been transfered into BS&A from the Fund Balance. The General Ledger is not fully set up, because of Tax module

not completed and not reconciling everything yet. Cash receipting from the Park is not being automatically posted. There was extensive procedural discussion.

Treasurer Koester asked for authorization for Mr. Arends to enter cash receipts, but not post to the General Ledger. As BS&A Administrator, the Clerk will grant entry access level to Mr. Arends.

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

Next Township Board Meetings:

- Township Board Special Meeting – Civil Infraction Ordinance Public Hearing:
  Tuesday, 9/30/25, 6:00 p.m., Mill Creek Academy (Old M-72)

- Township Board Regular Meeting, including Public Hearing for Skegemog Point Road Special Assessment Roll (SAD): **Thursday, 10/9/25, 6:30 p.m., Whitewater Township Hall**

Board Announcements:
Supervisor Slopsema stated Board/Commission appointments are made in November. Two Planning Commission Members will be stepping away, and it is a priority to fill their terms. She asked any individuals who may be interested in serving to contact the Township. These openings will be posted on the website, through Committee/Board Members and via recommendations. She noted that 30% of Commissioner terms expire each year. Clerk Hoeksema stated term expirations are on the Township website.

PUBLIC COMMENT:

Ms. Heidi Vollmuth: Spoke about no public comment on Zoom, Treasurer office hours during tax collection, reconciliation of accounts, audit extension, ZBA member voting, safety issues in parking lot, and attorney search.

Note: Mr. Arends objected to accusations made.

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

The meeting adjourned at 11:05 a.m.

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