

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

REGULAR MEETING
APPROVED MINUTES
Thursday, March 26, 2026, 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 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: Recording Secretary Kay Held

SET/ADJUST/APPROVE AGENDA:

-Move "Consideration of Setting Deputy Clerk Wage" (Item K(g)) from New Business to after 1st Public Comment section.
-Move "Full-time Firefighter/Parks Manager Job Description" (Item J3) from Unfinished Business to the Fire/Emergency Services Report under "Reports/Presentations/Announcements/Comments" section (G1).

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.**

CONFLICT OF INTEREST:

Mr. Arends stated he will recuse himself from the New Business "Deputy Supervisor Wage Increase" section (Item e).

PUBLIC COMMENT:

Mr. J. Gaskin: Commented that residents were not adequately notified that zoning and enforcement changes would be discussed and such should be at an evening meeting with broader public involvement. Referenced prior meeting where majority were opposed. Expressed concerns about speed limits on Vinton and Church Streets and requested follow up. Raised concerns regarding building security of Township Hall, including voting equipment storage and staff safety.

Mr. R. Steelman: Commented that meeting topics and timing were not appropriate. Expressed concern regarding proposed changes to Township's character. Suggested prioritizing maintenance. Asked for rules to be simplified.

Ms. J. Gaskin: Asked questions regarding how ordinance infractions are determined, when fees applied and how residents notified. She inquired how proposed changes compare to nearby Townships and expressed concerns about potential impacts on residents.

Mr. J. Snider: Requested clarification on the purpose and origin of the Civil Infractions Ordinance, noting lack of prior complaints, wants history of ordinance for public information as it relates to safety. Suggested zoning issues be addressed prior to enforcement changes.

Ms. K. Mangus: Commented positively on recent budget meeting. Expressed concern regarding content and structure of Civil Infraction Ordinance, including enforcement and appeals. Supports continued review. Commented on meeting schedule and accessibility noting concerns regarding remote participation.

Mr. M. Jacobson: Stated his prior understanding was that morning meetings would address general operational business. Referenced prior public input with opposition to Civil Infraction Ordinance. Commented that current feedback is not representative and the importance of public participation opportunities, including remote access.

Mr. Arnie Boyd: Commented that the topic would be better addressed at a different time or setting to allow for broader participation, noting residents unable to attend during day for work obligations. Suggested alternative times and locations.

Consideration of setting Deputy Clerk Wage – Ms. Hoeksema:

Clerk Hoeksema introduced new Deputy Clerk Sara Quigley, who was present. She gave an overview of her background and experience, which was also included in the meeting packet.

Board Action: Ms. Hoeksema made a motion to approve a starting wage of \$24.04 per hour for the Deputy Clerk position, consistent with the Township’s wage scale. Ms. Slopsema seconded the motion.

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

PUBLIC HEARING: None.

REPORTS, PRESENTATIONS, ANNOUNCEMENTS, COMMENTS:

Fire / Emergency Services Report – Chief Morgan: In meeting packet. Chief Morgan also presented details regarding his data reporting practices, NFPT standards, and call response times/call patterns. Noted reorganization of the Fire and MMR Reports.

He reported that the Tribe provided facilities for recent high-rise/mid-rise training which involved multiple departments. Whitewater and Otsego County Fire Department held joint training, including hazardous materials instruction and hands-on forcible entry training.

The new fire engine is estimated for delivery next month.

The FEMO GO system is now operational and the Department will be implementing the Fire Protection Safety Grant. ISO ratings and identifying factors were discussed with the Board with the next evaluation in Summer 2026.

Full-time Firefighter/Parks Manager Job Description – Chief Morgan:

The job description and memo from Chief Morgan were in the meeting packet.

Board Action: Mr. Arends made a motion that the Township Board approve the full-time Firefighter/Park Manager job description as presented. Ms. Hoeksema seconded the motion.

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

The position will be publicly posted and applications accepted.

Planning Commission 2025 Annual Report – Mr. Mielnik: In meeting packet.

Particularly notable is the Planning Commission approved four Zoning Amendments, conducted three Development Reviews and is working on Zoning Ordinance revisions with a professional consultant. The first of several bundles will be presented to the Township Board soon. The Planning Commission has been very busy and productive this past year.

Zoning Report – Ms. Graber: In meeting packet.

CONSENT CALENDAR (Receive and File):

Treasurer’s Report: In meeting packet.

MMR (Ambulance Report): In meeting packet.

Grand Traverse County Sheriff’s Report: In meeting packet.

PC Minutes: <https://www.whitewatertownshipmi.gov/planning-commission.html>

ZBA Minutes: <https://www.whitewatertownshipmi.gov/zoning-board-of-appeals.html>

Correspondence: Additional correspondence was received and added to the Consent Calendar:

CIO: Brewer, Baker, Bowman, Rohraff, Thewes

Board of Review – Hymore

Closed Session – Thewes, Beam

Minutes for Approval: March 12, 2026, Regular Meeting

<https://www.whitewatertownshipmi.gov/township-board-subcommittee-meeting-minutes.html>

Budget Amendments: In meeting packet.

Budget Transfer: In meeting packet.

Bills for Approval: In meeting packet.

Revenue and Expense Report: In meeting packet.

Board Action: Mr. Mielnik made a motion to approve the Consent Calendar as presented. Ms. Koester seconded the motion.

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

ITEMS REMOVED FROM CONSENT CALENDAR: None.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS:

Ordinance Enforcement / Zoning Ordinance Article 22- Violations:

Ms. Slopsema stated a Code Enforcement Policy and Procedure exists and has been in place since 2012. It is intended for use with any General Ordinance with penalty clauses and the Zoning Ordinance.

The meeting packet included a revision to the Code Enforcement Policy, specifically the addition of a flow chart for Board Members, ZA and members of the public to better understand the process related to complaints and resolutions. It was also reviewed by Township legal counsel.

Board Action: Mr. Arends made a motion to discuss the Ordinance Enforcement Policy as presented. Mr. Mielnik seconded the motion.

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

Discussion:

Mr. Mielnik: Expressed general support for a civil infraction ordinance but noted confusion regarding legal guidance on whether it is required. Requested clarification on prior research and attorney input. Asked whether having such an ordinance places the Township at a disadvantage. Noted misinformation in the community regarding immediate approval today and wanted to clarify that next steps would be required before any board action. Commented on PC workload and requested attorney participation in future discussions.

Ms. Slopsema: Clarified that smaller communities typically use policies similar to Whitewater's current approach, while larger communities may have additional enforcement structures. Reviewed the proposed policy revisions using the flow chart and outlined complaint and resolution processes. Stated the purpose of the discussion was to standardize ordinance language and identify remaining work.

Ms. Hoeksema: Requested clarification of the differences between the existing and proposed policy. Noted the proposed revisions reflect attorney recommendations to clarify staff procedures only. Emphasized that any policy must comply with state and federal law first. Supported having the township attorney present for further discussion.

Mr. Arends: Mentioned the trespass reference and role of the Zoning Administrator in the flow chart process. Thinks more discussion needs to take place about fines, compliance, etc. He believes it would be a benefit to the Board and the public to have the Township attorney present at a meeting regarding this topic.

Ms. Koester: She appreciates efforts to simplify enforcement but noted prior public opposition to the ordinance. Suggested this topic should be discussed at an evening meeting, with more notice to the public. She would like clarification on a CIO as a means to enforcement. More work needs to be done to determine fee structures, an appeals process and public input. If this passes, she would like to know how it affects STRs if there is no STR Ordinance. The Supervisor stated it is currently a misdemeanor under the Zoning Ordinance and needs to go to court.

Board Action: Mr. Mielnik made a motion that the Township table this item to a future meeting in order to have its attorney present with regard to both the policy and proposed amendment. Ms. Koester seconded the motion.

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

Joint PC Meeting Date: There has been discussion about scheduling a Joint Planning Commission/Township Board Meeting. There was consensus among Board Members to review the PC's STR (Short-term Rental) survey questions and methodology prior to its distribution. The PC will be working with a consultant; however, the Board would like to be aware of survey planning.

Discussed expectations with regards to Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) through the ROWG (Resident Outreach Work Group) prior to a joint meeting. This information will be shared with PC via Board Rep.

No prospective joint meeting dates were determined today.

Any Parks & Recreation Items:

Full-time Firefighter/Parks Manager: Moved to Fire/Emergency Services Report above.

NEW BUSINESS:

Resolution #2026-02 Regular Meeting Dates for 2026/2027:

Clerk Hoeksema submitted a memo requesting a Resolution changing the year's Regular Meeting schedule to one meeting per month. The public requests evening meetings. She reiterated a prior discussion about the added work load a second monthly meeting is on the Clerk's time in terms of meeting planning, posting, preparation and follow-up. The Clerk noted that other Board Members are affecting her statutory duties and making them more difficult. The prior Board had only one meeting a month, and this Board has accomplished a great deal over past year. Reduction to one monthly meeting would result in annual savings of \$12,500.

Discussion:

Mr. Arends: Expressed preference for morning meetings and noted they are common in surrounding townships. Commented that meeting length and agenda volume are factors. Acknowledged some topics may be better suited for evening meetings. Supported maintaining two meetings per month at this time.

Mr. Mielnik: Stated that two meetings per month are effective. Emphasized the need for improved agenda management. Supported maintaining two meetings with the flexibility to cancel. He agrees the Board should adhere to its decision of business vs. community focused meetings.

Ms. Slopsema: Considered adjusting timing of meetings to improve review and timing of financial reports. Noted timing challenges related to workload between meetings. Discussed possible options for meeting structure.

Ms. Koester: Requested clarification on projected cost savings. Stated the Board may not be ready to move to one meeting per month. Commented that longer single meetings may not be as productive. Supported maintaining two meetings with each having a distinct purpose.

Additional Discussion:

Discussion focused on balancing workload, efficiency and public accessibility.

Board Action: Ms. Slopsema made a motion to approve the Regular Meetings for the Township Board to the third Thursday of the month at 6:30 p.m. for the 2026-27 fiscal year. Ms. Hoeksema made a friendly amendment, which Ms. Slopsema accepted, to add Special Meetings as necessary. Ms. Hoeksema seconded the motion.

ROLL CALL VOTE: Mielnik-N, Koester-N, Arends-N, Slopsema-Y, Hoeksema-Y. **Motion failed.**

Board Action: Mr. Arends made a motion to have a Regular Meeting the second Thursday of the month at 6:30 p.m. and, as needed, the fourth Thursday of the month at 9:00 a.m. Mr. Mielnik seconded the motion.

Discussion: Treasurer Koester inquired who would make the decision if a second meeting is needed. The Supervisor or Clerk would typically make that decision; however, all Board Members have input depending on their need.

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

There was Board consensus there will only be one meeting scheduled in November and December due to holiday conflicts. The 2026-27 Meeting Dates schedule will be posted at the Township Hall and on the website.

Board Action: Ms. Hoeksema made a motion to adopt the amended Resolution #2026-02 to set the Regular Meeting Dates for 2026/2027. Ms. Slopsema seconded the motion.
ROLL CALL VOTE: Slopsema-Y, Koester-Y, Arends-Y, Mielnik-Y, Hoeksema-Y. **Motion carried.**

Resolution #2026-06 General Appropriations Act:

Board Action: Mr. Arends made a motion to adopt Resolution #2026-06 General Appropriations Act 2026-2027. Ms. Koester seconded the motion.

Discussion: Mr. Arends noted he changed the items discussed at the last budget meeting. There was additional Board discussion clarifying transfers and changes previously determined.

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

Graded Wage Scale 2026/2027: Supervisor Slopsema stated the meeting packet contains the proposed Graded Wage Scale with amendments discussed at the meeting earlier this week.

Board Action: Ms. Slopsema made a motion to adopt the proposed Graded Wage Scale for the 2026-2027 fiscal year as amended. Mr. Arends seconded the motion.
VOTE: YEAS: All. NAYES: None. **Motion carried.**

Salary Schedule 2026/2027:

Board Action: Ms. Slopsema made a motion to adopt the proposed Salary Schedule for the 2026-2027 fiscal year as presented. Mr. Arends seconded the motion.
VOTE: YEAS: All. NAYES: None. **Motion carried.**

Deputy Supervisor Wage Increase – Ms. Slopsema:

Mr. Arends recused himself from the table to avoid any perceived conflict of interest.

Board Action: Ms. Slopsema made a motion to increase Deputy Supervisor Arends' wage from \$25.04 to \$27.50 per hour, effective 4/1/26. Ms. Koester seconded the motion.
VOTE: YEAS: (3). NAYES: (1). **Motion carried.**

Consideration of Deputy Treasurer Wage Increase – Ms. Koester:

Board Action: Ms. Koester made a motion to approve a 5% increase in compensation to \$25.50 per hour for Deputy Treasurer Andy Tezak, effective 4/1/26. Ms. Hoeksema seconded the motion.

Discussion: Supervisor Slopsema noted the Deputy Treasurer received a 6% increase in October, 2025; a 5% increase is proposed in this motion. She discussed his standing in the newly adopted Wage Scale. She would prefer to see this closer to the Grade 5 rate.

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

2026 Cleanup Day: Historical information was in the meeting packet.

Board Action: Mr. Arends made a motion that the Board contract with Bay Area Disposal for the 2026 Township Cleanup Day at the estimated rate of \$15,000 to be held at Mill Creek Academy on Saturday, June 13, 2026, from 8:00 a.m. to Noon. Ms. Slopsema seconded the motion.

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

Zoom Meeting Access Public Comment Policy – Mr. Arends: Memo in meeting packet.

Board Action: Mr. Arends made a motion that the Board resolves to move toward recording Township meetings via YouTube direct streaming service as soon as practicable and retain a Zoom account for presenters of Agenda items only. Ms. Slopsema seconded the motion.

Discussion:

Mr. Arends: Reported he surveyed other townships regarding their meeting practices. He believes live streaming meetings is appropriate and the Township has the necessary equipment. He noted the attorney's recommendation against Zoom public comment. Expressed that traditional methods of participation remain available and should be encouraged.

Ms. Slopsema: Clarified the attorney's recommendation presented options including allowing Zoom with public comment, eliminating Zoom entirely in favor of live streaming or discontinuing video all together. Noted ADA accommodations can be addressed through methods other than Zoom.

Mr. Mielnik: Stated he had reviewed participation levels and found limited use of Zoom for public comment during prior meetings and public hearings. Because of this he indicated reduced support for continuing Zoom public comment.

Ms. Koester: She supports the use of Zoom for the very reasons Mr. Mielnik opposes it, noting it provides access for residents who are not physically present. She did not think it would not be overly burdensome in a meeting. Supports public Zoom comments.

Ms. Hoeksema: Stated prior Zoom use resulted in additional cost and low participation. Noted Zoom comments and technology issues have impacted past meeting efficiency. Encouraged alternative methods of public comment including written submissions and is willing to present them. Stated restricting Zoom comments does not limit the public's ability to provide input. Only larger municipalities can afford professional video services.

Ms. Slopsema: If Zoom comments are allowed, she would like a policy in place reducing the amount of time allocated for Public Comment due to meeting efficiency. She agrees with the Clerk's suggestion to better facilitate written comments. It is the Board's job to run the Township efficiently, not be telecasters. Administering technology for Public Comment becomes complex and distracting, even with the equipment improvements and support from LIAA.

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

6

CLOSED SESSION (11:30 a.m.) – Written Legal Opinion re: 6631 Baggs Road:

Board Action: Ms. Slopsema made a motion to enter Closed Session pursuant to MCL 15.268(1)(e) to consult with the Township attorney regarding trial or settlement strategy in connection to Keep Whitewater Township Rural and Vicki Beam vs. Whitewater Township and Baggs Road Partners, LLC, Court of Appeals Case #371421 and 13th Circuit Court Case #23-036775-AS, which discussion in Open Session would have a detrimental financial effect on the litigating or settlement position of the Township. Ms. Hoeksema seconded the motion.

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

Note: The meeting moved into Closed Session at 11:32 a.m.

Note: The meeting returned to Open Session at 1:08 p.m.

Attorney Chris Patterson of Fahey Schultz joined the Open Session of the Public Meeting via Zoom to provide a brief overview of the 6631 Baggs Road land division matter that had been in the State Court of Appeals.

Attorney Patterson noted the matter had been in the Circuit Court and Court of Appeals which issued an order remanding it back to the Whitewater Township Zoning Board of Appeals to provide additional factual findings to the variance they had previously approved.

The Township reviewed it and was preparing for a Public Hearing when the Applicant requested a motion to withdraw further proceedings before the Zoning Board of Appeals, indicating the matter was moot based on prior Board action. That motion was granted by the Zoning Board of Appeals. This process has concluded itself, and that litigation through the Court of Appeals and back is also concluded.

The Township Board reviewed the Applicant's inquiry on providing information on next steps. The Township sees no legal proceeding that remains for the Township Board that obligates or has any jurisdiction requiring any action. Therefore, this matter is concluded, and those actions rest with the Applicant.

Policies & Procedures Manual Section 3.0 Personnel Administration Revisions (time permitting):

Board Action: Mr. Arends made a motion to table this item. Mr. Mielnik seconded the motion.
VOTE: YEAS: All. NAYES: None. Motion carried.

TABLED ITEMS:

Policies & Procedures Manual Section 3.0 Personnel Administration Revisions.
Code Enforcement Policy

BOARD ACTION: Ms. Slopsema made a motion to extend the meeting beyond the three-hour mark. Ms. Koester seconded the motion.
VOTE: YEAS: All. NAYES: None. Motion carried.

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

Next Township Board Meeting:

Thursday, March 31, 2026, 9:00 a.m., Township Hall (if needed Budget meeting) – CANCELLED

Thursday, April 9, 2026, 6:30 p.m., Township Hall

PUBLIC COMMENT:

Mr. J. Snider: Expressed appreciation for the board's discussion and review of the Civil Infraction Ordinance. Commented that additional information is needed before proceeding to the Planning Commission and further legal review.

Ms. K. Mangus: Expressed concern regarding elimination of Zoom participation but noted appreciation for the Board's discussion. Encouraged inclusion of public correspondence in the meeting packets and consideration of reading comments aloud. Supported involvement of the Township attorney and public outreach regarding the civil infraction policy and procedures. Suggested the Township increase efforts to inform and engage the public. Commented on the Board oversight portion of the enforcement process on the presented CIO flow chart.

BOARD COMMENTS / DISCUSSION:

Attorney Communications Protocol – Ms. Slopsema: Email information was received on this law.

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 1:21 p.m.

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