

WHITEWATER TOWNSHIP BOARD

**Whitewater Township Hall, 5177 Vinton Road, Williamsburg, MI 49690
231-267-5141 Phone**

REGULAR MEETING
APPROVED AMENDED MINUTES
Thursday, February 12, 2026, 6:30 p.m.

CALL TO ORDER: Clerk Hoeksema called the meeting to order at 6:30 p.m. The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

ROLL CALL: Clerk Hoeksema called Roll.

Present:

Clerk Wendy Hoeksema
Treasurer Jill Koester
Trustee Tim Arends
Trustee Randy Mielnik

A quorum was established.

Absent: Supervisor Linda Slopsema (excused)

ALSO PRESENT: Recording Secretary Kay Held

Board Action: Ms. Hoeksema made a motion to nominate Mr. Tim Arends to chair the meeting in the absence of the Supervisor. Ms. Koester seconded the motion.

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

SET/ADJUST/APPROVE AGENDA: Mr. Arends requested adding Grand Traverse County Commissioner Darryl Nelson to #2 of Item G under "Presentations/Announcements" and remove from New Business Item #1 "Principles of Governance Resolution" and Item #6 "Consideration of Change to Regular Meeting Schedule."

Board Action: Ms. Koester made a motion to approve the Agenda as amended. Mr. Arends seconded the motion.

VOTE: YEAS: 2 (Koester, Arends). NAYES: 2 (Hoeksema, Mielnik). Motion failed.

Board Action: Ms. Hoeksema made a motion to amend the Agenda to add Grand Traverse County Commission Darryl Nelson to Item G, "Presentations/Announcements," pull "Bills Payable" from Consent Calendar, and retain (Item #1) "Principles of Governance Resolution" and (Item #6) "Consideration of Change to Regular Meeting Schedule" under "New Business." Mr. Arends seconded the motion.

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

CONFLICT OF INTEREST: None.

PUBLIC COMMENT:

Mr. R. Oosterhouse: He distributed a Certificate of Survey regarding Lossie Trail/Road and his property. He discussed the way it has historically run through his property and stipulations regarding non-motorized vehicles. He began a walnut tree farm in the 1980's. He reported that an attorney advised him that under Michigan Supreme Court precedent, access used within the past 15 years qualifies as access. He also described challenges related to the wetlands, including an estimated bridge that would cost approximately \$500,000.

Mr. H. Ward: stated he previously served on the committee that established the Lossie Trail and noted that property owners were not asked nor intended to be prevented from accessing their land. He described misuse of the trail by hunters and snowmobilers and suggested improved signage. He also stated that parking along Skegemog Point Road is dangerous.

Mr. M. Jacobson: distributed documents referencing the Battle Creek Nature Trail Management Plan, highlighting sections regarding protection of property owners and allowing access for adjoining landowners. He referenced language in the Township Master Plan and a 1990 County Road Commission letter regarding Lossie Road and property owners' rights. He stated that PRAC previously wrote the Board about property-owner access but received no response.

Ms. M. Melton: stated PRAC has a fully engineered, shovel ready project for Lossie Road Nature Trail which was previously approved for ARPA funding and explained that money was ultimately used for the fire truck to avoid forfeiture. She discussed the condition of Lossie Trail and noted that PRAC had sent a memorandum with options to address property owner access, but the former Board took no action.

Ms. K. Mangus: encouraged the Board to follow up on the Lossie Trail issue and recalled seeing a past vote that appeared to transfer the easement to local property owners. She suggested the Board search for the referenced document.

Ms. H. Vollmuth: submitted a packet of documents for the permanent record addressing matters related to the Treasurer's office functions, including hours of operation, taxpayer payments, training costs, internal controls and conflict of interest concerns. She requested no further transfers occur in the Treasurer's office until the audit is completed. She also suggested a shared trail solution for Lossie Road Nature Trail, noting that the State of Michigan supports this.

PUBLIC HEARING: None.

PRESENTATIONS & ANNOUNCEMENTS:

Elk Rapids Lions Club Check Presentation:

A grant application was submitted by Lead Ranger Vickie Emerson for park amenities through Elk Rapids Lions Club. The ER Lions Club President Shirley Hill presented Whitewater Township with a \$2500 grant check for the purchase of six Adirondack style chairs and two corn hole games for use at the Whitewater Township Campground. A photo was taken with Board Members, Ms. Emerson, and Ms. Hill during the check presentation.

Grand Traverse County Commissioner Darryl Nelson:

Commissioner Nelson stated he is also a representative on the Airport Commission and serves on the Jail Diversion Program. A verbal report was provided regarding several ongoing County initiatives. Information was shared about long-term planning efforts for Project Alpha, which includes a new 911 Center and Records Building, as part of a broader assessment of County properties and plan to consolidate. The County has also committed to constructing a new jail, currently in the early planning stages. An update was provided on the new airport terminal project. The current airport was built to serve 250,000-300,000 passengers annually, is now projected to accommodate one million passengers in 2026. Details were given regarding the layout of the proposed terminal and how it will serve airlines. The project will be self-funded supported by FAA contributions and backed by the County's credit bond rating which is expected to reduce costs by approximately \$16 million. No runway extensions are planned or needed. Expanded temporary parking improvements have already been made. He also noted the County is utilizing three AI modules for use in records and technical security.

Maner Costerisan, CPA's Payroll Audit Update:

Clerk Hoeksema verbally reports a recent payroll audit from CPA found no discrepancies in wages, pay rates or pension payments. Additional documentation will be added to BS&A to strengthen audit readiness and ensure integration. IRS tax payments referenced that were not finalized in BS&A have since been completed, with all W2 and 1099 forms filed. Clarification was given regarding prior requests for corrective action and reconciliation of tax payments. The Clerk's office will be strengthening their internal process to pension and tax payments with each payroll in the future. Discussion also occurred regarding access to BS&A and the availability of reporting functions.

Maner Costerisan, CPA's Bank Account Reconciliation Update:

Treasurer Koester provided updated verbal report from CPA that Township bank accounts are reconciled through June 2025. Corrections identified so far were communicated to and completed by the Clerk. The Treasurer stated Maner Costerisan noted multiple items required adjustment in BS&A, including outstanding checks, and that such issues are common during conversion to BS&A system.

CONSENT CALENDAR (Receive and File):

Correspondence: Van Solkema – Baggs Road ZBA, DeLong – Private Road Ordinance

Minutes for Approval:

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

January 20, 2026, Special Meeting

January 22, 2026, Regular Meeting

Bills for Approval: Pulled from Consent Calendar.

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

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

ITEMS REMOVED FROM CONSENT CALENDAR:

-Bills for Approval

-January 20, 2026, Special Meeting Minutes

-January 22, 2026, Regular Meeting Minutes

Bills for Approval:

-Add invoices from Recording Secretary (#2024-15 and #2024-16).

-Clerk Hoeksema noted a correction in the Spectrum/Charter amount (should be \$530).

- Add EGLE Campground License Renewal fee of \$242.

Board Action:

Ms. Hoeksema made a motion to approve the Bills Payable as amended. Mr. Mielnik seconded the motion.

Discussion: Board members discussed the level of detail included in the Bills for Approval report.

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

January 20, 2026, Special Meeting Minutes: Minor amendments were identified.

Board Action: Mr. Mielnik made a motion to approve the January 20, 2026, Special Meeting Minutes as amended. Ms. Koester seconded the motion.

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

January 22, 2026, Regular Meeting Minutes: Minor amendments were identified.

Board Action: Mr. Mielnik made a motion to approve the January 22, 2026, Regular Meeting Minutes as amended. Ms. Koester seconded the motion.

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

UNFINISHED BUSINESS:

Any Park & Recreation Items (Report is in meeting packet):

RoverPass Reservation Status: Reservations opened February 1, 2026, for the upcoming season.

NEW BUSINESS:

Principles of Governance Resolution:

Board Action: Ms. Hoeksema made a motion to discuss the Whitewater Township memorandum “Adoption of the MTA Principles of Governance Resolution.” Mr. Mielnik seconded the motion.

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

Discussion: Clerk Hoeksema explained that the Michigan Townships Association provided an optional certificate to sign and display, representing moral and ethical principles of governance. Board members discussed whether the principles duplicated the Township’s existing policy and questioned need. The Clerk explained, as it was expressed by an MTA

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representative, that it was intended as a starting point for teamwork, a public-facing frameable certificate, and official record of this.

Parks & Recreation Advisory Committee Status:

Board Action: Mr. Arends made a motion that the Township Board places PRAC on inactive status until further notice pending Board review and clarification of PRAC's roll and structure. Ms. Koester seconded the motion.

Discussion: Board Members discussed longstanding communication issues between PRAC of both previous and current Boards. Concerns were raised about unclear expectations, inconsistent direction and misunderstanding about PRAC's role and authority. Members noted PRAC's volunteer dedication and expressed the need to clarify structure, goals and the grant application process. Suggestions included holding future joint meetings and involving current members in restructuring decisions.

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

Consideration of Approving Firefighter/Park Manager Job Description:

Board Action: Mr. Arends made a motion that the Board approves the full-time Firefighter/Park Manager position as presented. Ms. Koester seconded the motion.

Discussion: Chief Morgan described the combined full-time role, with an allocation of 60% Fire Department duties and 40% Park responsibilities. Board discussion included concerns about including wage and benefit information within the actual job description, operational coverage during busy summer Park months, applicability of the job description to all potential candidates and whether a legal review had been obtained. The Chief indicated he had not yet been directed to pursue legal review; it would be sent after approval.

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

4 **Consideration of the Hiring of New Fire Fighters:**

Board Action: Ms. Hoeksema made a motion to approve the consideration of hiring of the new Fire Fighters Chief Morgan has presented. Ms. Koester seconded the motion.

Discussion: Chief Morgan reviewed five candidates seeking to join the fire department and explained their qualifications. Board members discussed the department's roster size, impact of training hours on ISO ratings, and onboarding expenses such as turnout gear/uniforms and training. It was explained that radios were provided from the County, and training costs for Fire Academy are usually supported by MiWorks!. The Chief confirmed his budget could support the proposal.

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

Introduction of a Draft Private Road Ordinance:

Board Action: Mr. Arends made a motion for the Board to discuss the Private Road Ordinance as presented by the Planning Commission. Ms. Hoeksema seconded the motion.

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

Discussion: Mr. Mielnik, Board Representative of the Planning Commission, stated that the Board had asked the Commission to draft a Private Road Ordinance and in working with Gourdie Frasier has now accomplished this. Board members discussed the need to reestablish a Private Road Ordinance, noting the prior ordinance was repealed in 2019 and subsequent drafts not adopted. Discussion centered on next steps: legal review, determining whether the Public Hearing to be held by PC or Township Board, acknowledging problems caused by having no current road construction standards. The Clerk emphasized importance of public input and recommended the Public Hearing occur at Township Board level because it is a General Ordinance. The Draft was acknowledged, will be sent for legal review, and Public Hearing to follow at future meeting.

Consideration of Change of Regular Meeting Schedule and Adopting Resolution #2026-02 Setting of Regular Meeting Dates for Fiscal Year 2026-27:

Board Action: Ms. Hoeksema made a motion to discuss Resolution #2026-02 Setting of Regular Meeting Dates for Fiscal Year 2026-27. Mr. Arends seconded the motion.

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

Discussion: The Clerk explained her recommendation to return to one regular meeting per month due to the significant additional workload, especially to the Clerk's office, created by two monthly meetings. She recommended returning to one regular meeting per month and holding special or work session meetings as necessary. Board Members discussed the original intent behind adding a second monthly meeting, noting it had been implemented to reduce the length of regular meetings. Alternative scheduling options were reviewed, including shifting the meeting to better align with Treasurer and Clerk deadlines and avoiding conflicts with other meetings. It was agreed that the matter would be placed on a March agenda for further consideration when all Board members are present since the new schedule does not need to be displayed until April.

TABLED ITEMS: None.

BOARD COMMENTS / DISCUSSION:

Clerk Hoeksema stated the Board has been involved in hiring every person in the Township, Parks and Fire Department. She suggested department heads should have autonomy in hiring staff in their departments. Other Board Members stated they should be involved in the process.

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

Township Board Regular Meeting: **Thursday, February 26, 2026, 9:00 a.m.**

Board Member Announcements: None.

PUBLIC COMMENT:

Ms. H. Vollmuth: urged the Board to review recent private roads made and noted that state classifications may impact rural funding. She requested immediate service to a noisy heating unit. She also stated that having an attorney present at meeting would improve Board efficiency and reduce the number of items needing legal review later. She requested the Board look at comparative costs of having them present vs. not.

Mr. M. Jacobson: stated he preferred one evening meeting per month and asking for continued transparency in accounting reports.

Ms. M. Melton: expressed disappointment with the PRAC decision, noting the Five-Year Recreation Plan is nearly complete and has historically helped secure significant funding. She cautioned that disbanding PRAC would result in loss of expertise.

Ms. K. Mangus: encouraged development of a new PRAC plan and vision in a timely manner. She supported the Private Road Ordinance but noted that the current proposal lacks public road building standards and does not address future access improvements for emergency or utility vehicles on existing private roads. **She would like the standards to be made available.**

Ms. V. Emerson: expressed concerns about limited collaboration between Township Board, Parks Recreation Advisory Committee and the [Campground] Park, noting PRAC's focus seemed to have been primarily on Hi Pray Park rather than other needs.

ADJOURNMENT: Mr. Mielnik made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Mr. Arends seconded the motion.

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

The meeting adjourned at 8:56 p.m.

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