APPROVED	**MINUTES Thursday, July 09, 2026 at 6:30 PM**
Regular Meeting	**Whitewater Township Board** 5777 Vinton Rd. Williamsburg, MI 49690
CALL TO ORDER	Supervisor Slopsema called meeting to order at 6:30PM. The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.
ROLL CALL Quorum established	**Members present**: Supervisor Linda Slopsema, Clerk Wendy Hoeksema, Treasurer Jill Koester, Trustee Randy Mielnik, Trustee Tim Arends **Members absent**: None **Also present**: Deputy Clerk Sara Quigley (Recording Secretary) Fire Chief/Parks Administrator Joshua Morgan
SET/APPROVE AGENDA	• Trustee Arends requests that Supervisor Slopsema includes the date when she calls each meeting to order so that those watching the YouTube video(s) can quickly hear which meeting they are watching. • Treasurer Koester requests to add a memorandum under New Business. Motion by Slopsema, seconded by Koester, to add memorandum under Board comments. VOTE: AYE: 2 NAY: 3 ***Motion fails*** Motion by Slopsema, seconded by Mielnik to add the memorandum under Announcements. VOTE: AYE: 3 NAY: 2 ***Motion carried*** • Clerk Hoeksema requests to add two letters to Correspondence; Rohraff- land use permit process, Vollmuth- meeting safety concerns • Supervisor Slopsema requests to add to New Business to discuss possible motions from pg. 7 of the zoning presentation after the conclusion of the presentation.

AGENDA APPROVAL (cont'd)	• Trustee Arends requests to add recycling bin concerns to Unfinished Business • Supervisor Slopsema requests to remove the firefighter new hire discussion from consent calendar at the request of Chief Morgan. Motion by Slopsema, seconded by Koester to approve and adjust Agenda as noted. VOTE: YEAS: All NAYES: None ***Motion carried***
PUBLIC COMMENT	**P. Pierce**: Commented on the Battle Creek Natural Area, stating that a private homeowner has placed signage that indicates a ½-acre parcel is not part of the natural area. He requested that the parcel be returned to the Township and that motorized vehicle use on the property be stopped. (he was allowed a longer time for the Board to hear his comments) **M. Jacobson**: Expressed concern about stewardship of the Battle Creek Natural Area, motorized vehicle use, and consistency in applying public comment time limits equally.
REPORTS Planning Commission	The Planning Commission presented the first group of proposed Zoning Ordinance Amendments resulting from the 2025 zoning audit. Chair Stratton stated the amendments are intended to clarify the Ordinance and better protect private property rights. Trustee Mielnik noted the work provides a stronger framework for addressing future zoning issues. Consultant Aamodt from Giffels Webster reviewed three amendment bundles via ZOOM: • **Bundle 1A** addressed condominium and site condominium regulations, including cluster development standards intended to preserve open space, wetlands, and woodlands while allowing flexibility in lot sizes. The Board discussed how these provisions differ from PUDs and whether preserved open space would support the Township's rural character goals. • **Bundle 1B** addressed Planned Unit Development regulations, clarifying eligibility, review procedures, density standards, and administrative processes while maintaining flexibility for innovative developments that provide public or environmental benefits. • **Bundle 1C** proposed updates to site plan review, special land uses, land use permits, and ordinance definitions. Discussion included accessory dwellings, accessory buildings, accessory uses, and consistency in ordinance language.
ADDED AGENDA ITEM	Treasurer Koester read aloud a written memorandum of which she believed to correct the public record concerning payroll practices, recordkeeping, and an

Treasurer's Memo	incomplete prior FOIA request. She requested that her memorandum and supporting documents be included in the Township's official meeting record. The Board discussed whether materials received shortly before the meeting and after the packet deadline should be added to the official record, noting that members had not had adequate time to review the memorandum or supporting materials for accuracy, completeness, or relevance. Clerk Hoeksema stated that the memorandum contributed to an already difficult work environment and did not assist with public confidence in Township operations. She also clarified that the referenced ongoing investigation did not involve only one Board member. The Board discussed the need to review and clarify Township policies and procedures. Supervisor Slopsema noted that including any document in the meeting record would not constitute Board endorsement. Motion by Koester, seconded by Slopsema, to include the memorandum in the Township's official meeting records. Hoeksema asked for Roll Call Vote. ROLL CALL VOTE: Arends: No; Koester: Yes; Mielnik: No; Hoeksema: No; Slopsema: No. ***Motion failed.***
CONSENT CALENDAR	Clerk Hoeksema requests to remove the sale of the Fire Truck, and Bills for Approval. Supervisor Slopsema requests to remove new firefighter's hiring. Motion by Hoeksema, seconded by Mielnik, to approve amended Consent Calendar. VOTE: AYES: All NAY: None ***Motion carried.***
ITEMS REMOVED FROM CONSENT CALENDAR **Firefighter Hire**	Fire Chief Josh Morgan introduced Blake Jaruzel, a recent Fire Academy graduate who is familiar with the department and is currently enrolled in EMT schooling. The Board welcomed Jaruzel and interviewed him about his interest in the fire service and his future goals. Motion by Arends, seconded by Slopsema to authorize Whitewater Township Fire Department to hire Blake Jaruzel as a part time firefighter, pending successful completion of the Township's onboarding process. VOTE: AYES: All NAY: None ***Motion carried.***

Sale of Surplus Fire Air Truck	Fire Chief Josh Morgan updated the Board on offers received for the Township's surplus fire truck, including a $50,000 offer from a South Carolina fire department and a pending offer from an Arizona buyer. Motion by Slopsema, seconded by Arends to authorize the sale of 2006 air truck for no less than $50,000, with final sale authority granted to the Fire Chief and Township Supervisor, contingent on review of any offers received through the date of July 14 and subject to payment in full and completion of all required sale and transfer documentation. ROLL CALL VOTE: Slopsema: Yes, Hoeksema: Yes, Mielnik: Yes, Koester: Yes, Arends: Yes ***Motion carried.***
Bills for Approval	The Board reviewed the bills for approval, including a State of Michigan tax payment that Clerk Hoeksema explained was following guidance from the Township's accountants to correct prior reporting. Clerk Hoeksema also noted that Cherryland Electric invoices had returned to the list after previously disappearing from monthly bills as they had been paid by the Treasurer prior to board approval. This prompted discussion about the timing of bill payments, with differing views expressed regarding payment procedure policy and the use of automatic payments. Supervisor Slopsema encouraged the Clerk and Treasurer to resolve the administrative issues outside of the meeting. Motion by Slopsema, seconded by Mielnik to approve the bills for payment as presented. VOTE: AYES: All NAY: None ***Motion carried.***
APPROVAL OF MINUTES	The Board discussed revisions to the June 25, 2026 meeting minutes, including clarification that Fire Chief Morgan will lead the 5 Year Recreation Plan process, noting the MMR contract expiration in 2029 and adding a note of the tax bill distribution date of June 30. Trustee Arends expressed appreciation for the improved minutes and recommended following Michigan Townships Association guidance by limiting public comment entries to speakers' names, topics, and concise summaries. Motion by Mielnik, seconded by Hoeksema to approve 06/25/2026 minutes as amended. VOTE: AYES: All NAY: None ***Motion carried.***

UNFINISHED BUSINESS **Parks-Campground Playground Mulch**	The Board reviewed a proposal to replace the deteriorated playground mulch after three suppliers were contacted, with only one submitting a quote of approximately $10,000 for approved playground mulch and weed barrier. The Board discussed safety considerations and future improvements to the play area at the Campground. Motion by Slopsema , seconded by Koester to approve the Whitewater Township Park playground surface improvement project with Greener Good Outdoor, LLC in the amount of $10,500 subject to confirmation that the proposed woodchip material is appropriate for playground use. VOTE: AYES: All NAY: None ***Motion carried.***
Post Office Expansion Update	Supervisor Slopsema provided an update on efforts to expand the Post Office, noting that negotiations are underway for USPS to acquire property immediately west of their existing building with a private individual. If those negotiations are unsuccessful, two Township-owned parcels near Hi Pray Park may be considered as potential backup locations.
Lower Chain of Lakes Ad Hoc Committee Update	Supervisor Slopsema reported she is a member of the Lower Chain of Lakes Ad Hoc Committee, which is gathering information related to the proposed Elk Rapids spillway repairs, lake level orders, and the potential creation of a court-ordered Special Assessment District. The committee is advisory only and will provide information and assist with future administration of the Special Assessment District if needed.
Recycle Bins	The Board agreed that the current location of GFL recycling dumpsters presents safety and liability concerns and noted the bins are contracted by Grand Traverse County rather than the Township. Additional discussion addressed traffic flow, battery disposal, and the challenges of finding an alternative location for the recycling dumpsters. The conversation also expanded to long-term recycling options, including the possibility of negotiating curbside recycling services similar to neighboring communities. Supervisor Slopsema shared information about Acme Township's contract for combined curbside trash and recycling collection. There was consensus that public should be notified. Motion by Arends, seconded by Koester that the recycling bins be removed from the Whitewater Township parking lot as soon as possible for safety considerations. VOTE: AYES: All NAY: None ***Motion carried.***

NEW BUSINESS **Assessor Resignation**	Supervisor Slopsema informed the Board that the Township Assessor submitted a resignation letter dated June 30, 2026 with a two-month notice period as her contract specifies. Slopsema posted an ad on a Michigan Assessor Association website and has since received four inquiries for the position, including two qualified candidates with credentials comparable to the current assessor. Recruitment efforts continue through neighboring counties, with the goal of hiring a replacement by mid-August to allow for a smooth transition and overlap in training.
Administrative Policy and Procedure Manual 2.4(d) Review and Update Public Comment Standards	The Board reviewed proposed revisions to the Township's Public Comment Standards as stated in the policy manual. Discussion focused on clarifying speaker identification requirements, time limits, and meeting decorum. The Board also revised language replacing previous wording with a simpler provision allowing everyone to speak once per comment period. The Board reviewed guidance from the Michigan Townships Association regarding disruptive conduct and agreed that any language adopted should focus on preserving order and decorum while respecting individuals' right to speak. Supervisor Slopsema will prepare revised language incorporating the Board's discussion for future consideration.
Ambulance Millage Renewal Language	The Board discussed language for an upcoming millage renewal and noted that additional guidance was needed because this is the Township's first renewal under the current process. After reviewing questions related to continuation, renewal language, and potential rollback provisions, the Board agreed to table the matter until the next meeting in order to seek legal review to ensure compliance before placing the proposal on the November ballot.
Zoning Ordinance Amendments	Board considered the first package of Planning Commission-recommended zoning ordinance amendments, following the earlier presentation by Giffels Webster. Trustee Mielnik explained that the bundled amendments are interconnected and reflect months of Planning Commission work to clarify and strengthen the Township's zoning ordinance. While several board members noted the volume of material made review challenging, they acknowledged the effort that had gone into developing the amendments and the importance of addressing related sections together rather than individually. Discussion also highlighted the ongoing need to keep Zoning Ordinances current and organized. The Board noted that some ordinance sections, including Planned Unit Development provisions, had not received significant updates in decades. Clerk Hoeksema also thanked the Planning Commission for its work and confirmed that she was responsible for coordination with the Township's planning consultant regarding Ordinance maintenance.

NEW BUSINESS (cont'd) **Zoning Ordinance Amendments**	Motion by Mielnik, seconded by Slopsema to approve Ordinance 2026-65 which represents a repeal and replacement of: Article 7, Planning and Development, for the purpose of master plan alignment, procedural updates, density allowances and other minor changes pertaining to clarity and readability. Amendments to Article 8, Condominium Development Regulations to provide for a residential cluster option to encourage open space preservation, update requirements including those for landscaping, and for other minor changes pertaining to clarity and readability. Amendments to Article 12, Site Plan and Deed, to improve process, clarify approval related details, and for other minor changes pertaining to clarity and readability. Amendments to Article 13, Special Land Uses, to delete redundant language clarify approval related details and for other minor changes pertaining to clarity and readability. Amendments to Article 19, Administration, to provide clarification on the land use permit process and for other minor changes pertaining to clarity and readability. Amendments to Article 2, Definitions to accompany the preceding Amendments above. These Amendments are found to be consistent with the Township Board's own findings of compliance with Section 2105 of the Whitewater Township Zoning Ordinance. ROLL CALL VOTE: Mielnik: Yes Koester: Yes Arends: Yes Hoeksema: Yes Slopsema: Yes ***Motion carried.***
TABLED ITEMS	None
ANNOUNCEMENTS **Meetings** **Board Members**	Next Regular Township Board meeting is on Thursday, July 23 at 9:00 AM Treasurer Koester verbally announced her intention to resign along with passing out a written two weeks' notice letter, citing increasing family and business responsibilities and the challenges of balancing those obligations with her duties as Treasurer. She expressed her commitment to assisting with a smooth transition, including transferring records and remaining available if needed. The Board discussed the legal requirements and timeline for filling the vacancy. Clerk Hoeksema addressed public concerns regarding reports of drones being used for zoning enforcement, clarifying that Whitewater Township does not own or operate drones. The Board noted that recent aerial imagery in the area was collected by outside organizations or aircraft, and residents with concerns about unauthorized drone activity were advised to contact law enforcement.

PUBLIC COMMENT (2nd)	**R. Stratton**: thanked the Planning Commission for its work on the zoning ordinance amendments and asked whether public comment sign-in forms would remain optional and how the proposed changes apply to public hearings. **R. Steelman**: expressed appreciation for Treasurer Koester's service and dedication to the Township and wished her well following her announcement to resign. **M. Jacobson**: also thanked Treasurer Koester for her service and encouraged the Board to address public concerns transparently and supported consistent public comment time limits with advance notice of any reduction.
BOARD DISCUSSION	Data Centers: Board discussed whether data centers should be addressed in the Township's zoning ordinance. Planning Commission representatives noted that data centers are not currently permitted under the existing ordinance, and The Board agreed the issue should be reviewed proactively by the Planning Commission and Township attorney. BCNA Parcel follow-up: Supervisor Slopsema requested follow-up on information presented during public comment regarding a parcel reportedly separated from BCNA property. The Board suggested consulting individuals familiar with the property's history to gather additional information. Treasurer Vacancy Process: Following Treasurer Koester's resignation announcement, the Board discussed beginning the process of filling the upcoming vacancy. The Board discussed advertising the position and inviting qualified residents to apply while ensuring applicants meet the Township's residency requirements.
ADJOURNMENT	Motion by Slopsema, seconded by Mielnik to adjourn the meeting. VOTE: YEAS: All. NAYES: None. ***Motion carried*** Meeting adjourned at 10:10 PM
Minutes submitted by: Sara Quigley, Recording Secretary	 Wendy Hoeksema, Township Clerk Date