DRAFT	**MINUTES Thursday, September 24, 2026 at 9 a.m.**
REGULAR MEETING	**Whitewater Township Board** 5777 Vinton Rd. Williamsburg, MI 49690
CALL TO ORDER	Supervisor Slopsema called the meeting to order at 9:00 am. The Pledge of Allegiance was recited. Clerk Hoeksema called Roll.
ROLL CALL **Quorum established**	**Members present**: Supervisor Linda Slopsema, Clerk Wendy Hoeksema, Treasurer Sara Quigley, Trustee Tim Arends, Trustee Randy Mielnik. **Members absent**: None. **Also present**: Kay Held, Recording Secretary
SET/APPROVE AGENDA	-Add "Stipulated Order Discussion" after first "Public Comment" -Add "Summer Property Tax Collection/Interest" after "Planning Commission Report" -Move "STR Next Steps Discussion" after "Planning Commission Report" Motion by Slopsema, seconded by Mielnik to approve the agenda as amended. **VOTE:** YEAS: Al. NAYES: None. ***Motion carried.***
DECLARATION OF CONFLICT OF INTEREST	None.
PUBLIC COMMENT	H. Vollmuth: Referenced the amount of Homestead vs. Non-homestead residents. Survey cost of $20k was high, and there has been miscommunication with the community. There is confusion between the Zoning and General Ordinance, pitting neighbor against neighbor with non-factual information. Board should distribute clarifying information.
PUBLIC HEARING	None.
STIPULATED ORDER DISCUSSION	Motion by Slopsema, seconded by Mielnik, to approve the Amended Stipulated Order presented by the Township Attorney, and endorsed by Denise Heidisch's attorney on September 23, 2026, regarding Case #25-255400-0M. Discussion: The Board considered whether to enter into Closed Session with the Township Attorney or hold public discussion. There is additional information that has come to light regarding Ms. Heidisch that Board Members would like to discuss. After Board discussion, Ms. Slopsema rescinded her motion, and Mr. Mielnik rescinded his second to the motion. Motion by Slopsema, seconded by Hoeksema, to enter into Closed Session pursuant to MCL 15.268(1)(e) to consult with the Township attorney regarding ongoing litigation in the Grand Traverse County District Court, Whitewater Township versus Heidisch, Case #25-255400-0M as doing so in Open Session would have a detrimental financial effect on the litigation or settlement position of the public body.

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STIPULATED ORDER DISCUSSION (cont'd)	**ROLL CALL VOTE:** Arends-Y, Slopsema-Y, Arends-Y, Hoeksema-Y, Quigley-Y. ***Motion carried.*** Note: The Board went into Closed Session at 9:12 a.m. Note: The Board returned to the Open Session of the Public Meeting at 9:44 a.m. Motion by Slopsema, seconded by Mielnik, to approve the Amended Stipulated Order presented by the Township Attorney, and endorsed by Denise Heidisch's attorney on September 23, 2026, regarding Case #25-255400-0M. **ROLL CALL VOTE:** Mielnik-Y, Arends-Y, Quigley-Y, Slopsema-Y, Hoeksema-Y. ***Motion carried.*** Supervisor Slopsema read aloud a prepared statement into the record regarding the stipulated order. Arends asked that it be entered into the Minutes. Hoeksema noted it had to be a majority vote. Motion by Arends, seconded by Mielnik, that the Press Release be attached and entered into the Minutes. **VOTE:** YEAS : All NAYES: None. ***Motion carried.***
PRESS RELEASE	"*Today, the Township Board approved a stipulated dismissal of the criminal charges pending against Ms. Heidisch.* *This agreed upon dismissal comes on the heels of Judge Stepka's order confirming that short term rentals are prohibited under the Whitewater Township Zoning Ordinance and is reflective of both the Board's position that STRS are currently not allowed under Township zoning and the Board's belief that the appropriate penalties for enforcing zoning violations are civil, not criminal, in nature.* *As the Court has validated the prohibition of STRS under current zoning the Board does not find it necessary or productive to pursue further prosecution of this case in the accompanying criminal penalties that could be imposed on Ms. Heidisch. The Township's objectives have been and will remain achieving compliance with its Ordinances rather than the punishment of violators. The Board recognizes that these proceedings were costly and time-consuming for both parties. If the Township had the ability to enforce zoning violations with municipal civil infractions, the parties would have resolved this case in far less time, with far less cost, and with no risk of criminal conviction or incarceration. Without that option, the Township's enforcement options are limited to more invasive and more punitive measures, such as the criminal charges it was required to utilize in this case.* *Although the Board disfavors criminal enforcement of land use regulations, it will continue to take whatever actions are necessary to enforce its Zoning Ordinances including the judicially recognized current prohibition on STR's."*

SUMMER PROPERTY TAX COLLECTON / INTEREST	Treasurer Quigley stated it was brought to her attention a discrepancy was printed on the tax bills distributed in July by the former Treasurer. Per State law, taxes are due on or before 9/14/26. A 1% interest will be added on 9/15/26. Ms. Quigley stated she remained at the Township Hall and processed all payments received on 9/14/26 until midnight. The required 1% interest on payments received on or after 9/15/26 has been applied. She verified the Township does not have the general authority to waive the statutory interest on summer taxes after 9/14/26. An additional 1% fee will be applied on the first of every month thereafter for unpaid tax bills. While she understands the confusion of the erroneously printed information on the tax bills regarding the date the penalty is applied, she is required to administer the tax roll according to Michigan law. She reported nine taxpayers were affected by the 1% penalty. There was Board discussion regarding the verbiage discrepancy and returning the interest charge to affected residents. This amount totals approximately $427. There was Board consensus to issue reimbursements; however, this will be verified through the Township attorney. Motion by Arends, seconded by Quigley that the Treasurer be authorized to reimburse the nine taxpayers impacted by the misprinted summer tax bills of the interest they paid, as required by law. Ms. Quigley withdrew her second to the motion. Ms. Slopsema offered a Friendly Amendment to add "pending agreement from the Township attorney." Ms. Quigley seconded the amended motion. **VOTE:** YEAS: All. NAYES: None. ***Motion carried.***
STR NEXT STEPS DISCUSSION	Mr. Mielnik reported a licensing mechanism will be a focus of research while considering the Zoning and General Ordinances. Clerk Hoeksema referenced the past Joint Board/PC meeting and that next steps in the future were to be a joint discussion. The Board discussed ROWG work and the MSUE workshop. Mr. Mielnik stated the PC would be looking at Elmwood Township's licensing Ordinance, which was recommended by Township attorneys as well as East Bay Township. Effective enforcement for non-compliance was also discussed. There was extensive discussion regarding STRs, density areas, civil infractions, mitigating litigation risk, processes, staffing/costs for overseeing compliance and aspects of the survey results.

	Mr. Mielnik will provide the Board's feedback to the PC and discuss the possibility of a Joint Special Meeting to be held just before the Board's Regular Meeting on Thursday, 11/12/26.
REPORTS **Planning Commission Report (Mielnik)**	Report in meeting packet. The PC met on 9/9/26. There was discussion about the following topics: -Development of an STR Ordinance based on the recent EPIC-MRA survey results. The PC is reviewing Elmwood Township's STR regulations as a resource. Members will provide their input at the next meeting. -Draft Winery-Cidery Ordinance was discussed with planners Giffels Webster. A Public Hearing will be held at the PC's 10/7/26 Regular Meeting. -Amendments to Article 20 were discussed. The ZBA has suggested numerous edits and legal counsel has reviewed. Particular attention was given to idea of Use Variances. -Draft language for Moratoria was discussed. This would need to be implemented by Resolution through the Township Board and will be reviewed at the Board's next meeting. -Section 21.03D was discussed regarding language where the Township Board may only approve or deny a proposed Zoning Amendment rather than make minor modifications. -A Special Meeting was scheduled for Monday, 10/19/26, at 6:00 p.m. to begin Bundle #2 of the Zoning Ordinance review with Giffels Webster.
WEBSITE RECONFIGURATION UPDATE & DISCUSSION OF POSTING ITEMS PROCESS (HOEKSEMA)	Board input was received as requested, and the Clerk has conferred with Jim Sundberg/Brick House Interactive about website redesign. There are considerations regarding format, legal election requirements, ADA accessibility, AI/bot issues, cyber security, archives, integrity of posted documents, improved searchability features, and more. MTA best practices were also discussed.
ASSESSOR WEB PAGE DISCUSSION	Assessor Beach included a detailed memo in the meeting packet indicating features of the existing Township Assessing page, proposed new features and benefits of such to citizens and the Township. Clerk Hoeksema suggested the website developer may be able to integrate Assessor Beach's suggestions into the new website format. The Board discussed security matters regarding links to Assessing information. There was Board consensus for the Clerk to coordinate this.

CORRESPONDENCE RECEIVED (VERBAL-HOEKSEMA)	Floraday-STR, Campbell-Speed Concerns, Schulte-STR. Correspondence is maintained in the Clerk's office for public view.
REVENUE & EXPENDITURE REPORT	Report through 8/31/26. Board Members discussed necessary budget amendments, journal entries, recoding in various categories and cost/revenue centers over/under budget. Upcoming audit information was also discussed.
CONSENT CALENDAR	**Supervisor Report**: None. **Treasurer's Report:** None. **Trustee Report:** In meeting packet **Fire / Emergency Services Report:** In meeting packet. **Zoning Report**: In meeting packet. **Parks Report:** In meeting packet. **MMR (Ambulance) Report:** In meeting packet. **GT 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 . **Bills for Approval:** Removed from Consent Calendar. **Budget Amendments:** None. Motion by Slopsema seconded by Quigley, to approve the Consent calendar as amended. **VOTE:** YEAS: All. NAYES: None. ***Motion carried.*** Clerk Hoeksema noted "Approval of Minutes" is commonly listed immediately after "Conflict of Interest" or "Approval of Agenda" on the Agenda format so that past meeting activity is refreshed for Board Members. Supervisor Slopsema was accepting of this idea. Note: A five-minute break was taken at 11:15 a.m. Note: Trustee Mielnik was excused from the remainder of the meeting at 11:15 a.m. due to another commitment. Note: The meeting resumed at 11:19 a.m.
ITEMS REMOVED FROM CONSENT CALENDAR **BILLS FOR APPROVAL:**	Clerk Hoeksema recommended using BS&A and including General Ledger numbers and payroll departmental information on reports. This is common practice among other Townships. Board Members were in agreement with this suggestion.

BILLS FOR APPROVAL (cont'd)	Mr. Arends noted two invoices from the Road Commission and would like more clarity on detail of the charges. There was Board consensus to withhold payment at this time until further clarified. Supervisor Slopsema addressed the Greener Good invoice previously withheld for payment. Lead Ranger Tom Bartnicki included an update in the Park report. The weed barrier fabric was not installed due to potential future problems. Greener Good compensated for this issue by applying an additional 10 yards of mulch resulting in a 5-6" mulch depth. Mulch will need to be added annually. The Board accepted this practice and agreed to authorize payment of the invoice. Supervisor Slopsema noted the Board agreed to compensate the Assistant Fire Chief's pay retroactive to 4/1/26. Mr. Arends will update this in the budget schedule. Clerk Hoeksema stated one of the Park Rangers was unsure whether his base pay was correct. She will review his payroll history. Motion by Arends, seconded by Quigley, to approve the Bills Payable as amended. **VOTE:** YEAS: All. NAYES: None. ***Motion carried.***
APPROVAL OF MINUTES	https://www.whitewatertownshipmi.gov/township-board-subcommittee-meeting-minutes.html **9/10/26 Regular Meeting Minutes** **9/16/26 Special Meeting Minutes with Closed Session** **9/21/26 Special Meeting Minutes with Closed Session** Clerk Hoeksema distributed the Closed Session Minutes of 9/16/26 and 9/21/26 for confidential Board review and were subsequently collected from Board Members and sealed. Motion by Arends, seconded by Slopsema, to approve the Township Board Minutes of 9/10/26 (Regular), 9/16/26 (Special/Closed) and 9/21/26 (Special/Closed) as presented. **VOTE:** YEAS: All. NAYES: None. ***Motion carried.***
UNFINISHED BUSINESS **ANY PARKS AND RECREATION ITEMS:** **Township Campground Playground Mulch Job:**	The playground mulch was discussed above under "Bills for Approval." Supervisor Slopsema stated the draft Five-Year Recreation Plan was not approved earlier this year. There has been discussion to update the Rec Plan, integrate information on partnering with the Conservancy on the Battle Creek Nature Area and conformance to the Management Plan submitted to the Michigan DNR. Work on this matter needs to continue.

PARKS AND RECREATION ITEMS (cont'd)	With the resignation of Fire Chief Morgan, his role as the Park Administrator is vacant. The campground is open through mid-late October. She queried the Board whether a Park Administrator needs to be named through the end of the season. Clerk Hoeksema and Treasurer Quigley believe the Parks can conclude the season without an Administrator; however, the Board will discuss the 2027 season at the November and December meetings.
Any Fire Department Items:	Board Members reviewed the Campground's Halloween Party plans.
Consideration of Revisions to Administrative Policies & Procedures Manual 3.4:	Supervisor Slopsema addressed interim coverage from existing Fire staff. Clarification of designated staff titles/ranks and affiliated training should be reviewed with former/interim Fire Chief Flynn. Supervisor Slopsema referred to this portion of the Manual with recommendations from the labor attorney. There was discussion about clarifying "Additional Compensation" policies. Minor verbiage modification was suggested; Mr. Arends and Ms. Quigley will evaluate and make draft changes for Board approval. Motion made by Arends seconded by Slopsema to extend the meeting beyond the three-hour mark. **VOTE:** YEAS: All. NAYES: None. ***Motion carried.***
NEW BUSINESS **Snow Plow Contract 2027-2029:**	Supervisor Slopsema presented the existing and proposed snow removal contract with Steve's Lawn Care and Snow Removal LLC. Motion by Slopsema, seconded by Hoeksema, to authorize the Supervisor to accept the snowplow service contract for three years per pricing proposal submitted by Steve's Lawn Care and Snow Removal received on 9/22/26. **VOTE:** YEAS: All. NAYES: None. ***Motion carried.***
TABLED ITEMS	None.
ANNOUNCEMENTS **Next Township Board Regular Meeting:**	Thursday, October 8, 2026, 6:30 p.m., Whitewater Township Hall
Board Member Announcements:	The Clerk stated absentee ballots will be mailed today, 9/24/26. Residents may go to the Secretary of State www.mvic.sos.state.mi to request an absentee ballot. She asked that any residents who do not receive their ballot by mail contact her. She stated a new tracking system is being utilized through USPS to monitor mail time.

PUBLIC COMMENT (2nd)	None.
BOARD COMMENTS /DISCUSSION	Supervisor Slopsema read aloud a statement regarding prior allegations against the Clerk regarding Additional Compensation. It stated "the MSP investigation concluded an internal policy interpretation disagreement existed between the Clerk and other Board Members. The report also concluded there was insufficient evidence of criminal intent and the internal policy is subject to review through Township governance processes. The reported was closed as unfounded." Mr. Arends inquired whether a Township newsletter would be prepared. The Supervisor stated yes, particularly with upcoming election information. The Board agreed information should be disseminated to inform residents of Township ballot information. At the Clerk's urging the Supervisor will contact the Township attorney to verify that the Board may distribute a nonbiased, factual newsletter and/or newspaper posting explaining what is on the ballot regarding the ambulance millage renewal and inform the public of official ballot language. Mr. Arends stated the Skegemog Point Road project should be completed soon. The last mile of Skegemog Point Road went over budget by $40k. The Township can increase the Special Assessment District (SAD) by 10% without a vote of residents or execute a budget amendment through the General Fund. Residents would need to be contacted and informed of the SAD change and 10-year amortization schedule. Supervisor Slopsema has spoken with Manager Dan Watkins from the County Road Commission regarding this process.
ADJOURNMENT	Motion by Slopsema, seconded by Quigley, to adjourn the meeting. **VOTE:** YEAS: All. NAYES: None. ***Motion carried.*** The meeting adjourned at 12:17 p.m.
Minutes submitted by: Kay Held, Recording Secretary	Wendy Hoeksema, Township Clerk Date