

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

REGULAR MEETING
APPROVED MINUTES
Thursday, January 22, 2026, 9:00 a.m.

CALL TO ORDER:

Clerk Hoeksema called the meeting to order at 9:00 a.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)

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

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

1 **Board Action:** Mr. Arends nominated Mr. Mielnik to chair the meeting in the absence of Supervisor Slopsema. Mr. Mielnik declined.

Board Action: Mr. Arends nominated Ms. Koester to chair the meeting in the absence of Supervisor Slopsema. Ms. Koester declined.

Board Action: Mr. Arends nominated Ms. Hoeksema to chair the meeting in the absence of Supervisor Slopsema. Mr. Mielnik seconded the motion.

VOTE: YEAS: 3 (Arends, Mielnik, Hoeksema) NAYES: 1 (Koester) Motion carried.

ALSO PRESENT: Recording Secretary Kay Held; Fire Chief Joshua Morgan; Park Lead Ranger Tom Bartnicki

SET/ADJUST/APPROVE AGENDA:

Move Item G(2) "Grand Traverse County Sheriff Department Community Police Officer Presentation" to the first item under Reports/Presentations/Announcements/Comments section.

Add to Correspondence: Bruce-STR

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

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

DECLARATION OF CONFLICT OF INTEREST: None.

FIRST PUBLIC COMMENT: None.

PUBLIC HEARING: None.

REPORTS/PRESENTATIONS/ANNOUNCEMENTS/COMMENTS:

Grand Traverse County Sheriff Department Community Police Officer (CPO) Presentation – Lt. Raska:

Captain Brandon Brinks, speaking in the absence of Lieutenant Raska, presented the Sheriff's Community Police Officer model which outlined services provided and community benefits.

Captain Brinks provided a printed presentation to Board Members, detailed the CPO program and identified current CPO programs in place throughout the County. He explained the services of a Community Police Officer.

There was discussion with Captain Brinks including call volume in Whitewater and the surrounding Townships, seasonal trends, collaboration with the Fire Department, school involvement and benefits to the community that result from a dedicated CPO program.

Estimated projected total CPO annual cost to the County is approximately \$139,500 which includes the deputy, benefits, IT and vehicle.

2024-25 Audit Presentation – Gabridge & Company:

Mr. Richard Neihardt of Gabridge & Co. reviewed the Whitewater Township audit for the year ending March 31, 2025, with the Township Board. A copy of the Whitewater Township Annual Financial Report and the Gabridge audit report were included in the meeting packet. Mr. Neihardt discussed audit findings and numerous portions of the audit including multiple financial reports, migration to BS&A software, fund management, recommendations and the Township's response for improvements.

There was extensive discussion between the Board and Mr. Neihardt. Overall, Whitewater Township's financial solvency is at 131% as relates to the annualized expenditures metric. All funds are at a positive fund balance.

Fire / Emergency Services Report – Chief Morgan: Report in meeting packet. Chief Morgan also verbally reported: Chief Morgan reports good progress on continued staff training and strong response times. He continues to work on updating the Department's SOPs in compliance with the Township's Policy Manual and national best practices. He is actively working on the Fire Capital Improvement Plan and the previously accepted Fire Protection Safety Grant for wildfire prevention.

There are delays with the new fire truck production and the hope is to complete prior to end of fiscal year for ARPA reporting.

Planning Commission Report – Mr. Mielnik: Report in meeting packet. Mr. Mielnik also verbally reported:

The Planning Commission approved a Special Use Permit for home business, and that a text zoning amendment on fence heights was tabled. Gourdie Fraser is helping the PC with a Private Road Ordinance. He reports that the PC reviewed their bylaws and elected new officers with no changes.

The previously scheduled special meeting with planners Giffels Webster of 1/19/26 was rescheduled to the PC's regular meeting date of 2/4/26.

Planning Commission STR ROWG Event Expenses – Ms. Stratton/ Mr. Mielnik: Report in meeting packet from Ms. Stratton; Mr. Mielnik also verbally reported:

The MSU Extension Service facilitated a public workshop on short-term rentals with strong in person and virtual attendance. The workshop was described as well-executed and productive. Continued public input will occur through a community survey and a second workshop. Mr. Mielnik commended Ms. Rene Stratton, PC Chair and ROWG Lead, for her efforts in coordinating the event.

Mr. Arends asked that the Board receive a summarized report of the workshop.

Zoning Report – Ms. Graber: Report in meeting packet.

Parks & Recreation Report – Mr. Bartnicki: Report in meeting packet. Mr. Bartnicki also verbally reported:

Reservation systems are being coordinated for a 02/01/2026 start-up date, along with set up of credit card processing. Electrical upgrades at the campground were completed. The staff hiring process will begin in March for the upcoming season. He suggested passing out survey cards to campers this season to gain feedback for 2027-28 season planning.

He commended Park Ranger Vickie Emerson for leading the application of a \$2,500 grant received from the Elk Rapids Lions Club to purchase Adirondack style lounge chairs along the shoreline.

PRAC Report – Ms. Koester (verbal): Ms. Koester reported PRAC met Tuesday, 1/20/26, after the Township Special Meeting. They reviewed all Board and Public Comments, made the majority of the edit suggestions and sent Township Board Members revised copies of the PRAC Five-year Plan earlier today.

Maner Costerisan Payroll Audit Report – Ms. Hoeksema (verbal): Clerk Hoeksema reported Maner Costerisan conducted a payroll audit. The BS&A conversion was confirmed accurate after reviewing pay rates and payments.

Board Members discussed the report with Clerk Hoeksema. Additional CPA assistance was deemed not necessary and further details of specific findings will be shared with the Board. Much of it was related to the BS&A conversion. The Board discussed internal processes, including 941 tax reconciliation and learning the use of BS&A.

Maner Costerisan Reconciliation Report – Ms. Koester: (verbal)

The Treasurer reported reconciliation is an ongoing process, with journal entries still needing to be entered and meetings with Maner Costerisan expected shortly.

Mr. Arends asked for a corrective action report based on the findings of Maner Costerisan for the next Board meeting; it was confirmed this would encompass both, Clerk and Treasurer, functions.

CONSENT CALENDAR – Receive and File:

Supervisor Report: In meeting packet.

Clerk Report: In meeting packet.

Treasurer Report: In meeting packet.

Trustee Reports: In meeting packet.

MMR (Ambulance) Report: 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 and Recreation Minutes: <https://www.whitewatertownshipmi.gov/advisory-committee.html>

Correspondence: Hymore-Land Division Act; Zenas-ROWG, FOIA; Vollmuth-Multiple; Bruce-STR

Minutes for Approval:

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

Township Board Regular Meeting Minutes of 1/8/26. (No amendments.)

3

Bills for Approval – Clerk Hoeksema: Pull from Consent Calendar

Fire Department SOP Updates: Pull from Consent Calendar.

Revenue and Expenditure Report – Ms. Hoeksema: Report in meeting packet.

Board Action: Mr. Mielnik made a motion to accept the Consent Calendar as amended. Mr. Arends seconded the motion.

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

Items Removed from Consent Calendar:

Bills Payable:

-Clerk Hoeksema stated the Elk Rapids News invoice was previously paid. The invoice in this report should be struck.

-Mr. Arends would like to see detail of Auditors invoices; Ms. Hoeksema stated it can be found in BS&A.

Fire Department SOP Updates: Mr. Arends has spoken with Chief Morgan about the SOPs and will be having further discussions. The SOPS are on the OneDrive.

Board Action: Ms. Hoeksema made a motion to approve the Consent Calendar as amended, pulling Bills for Approval and Fire Department SOP Updates. Mr. Arends seconded the motion.

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

Board Action: Mr. Arends made a motion to approve the Bills Payable, less the Elk Rapids News invoice. Ms. Hoeksema seconded the motion.

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

Board Action: Mr. Arends made a motion to receive and file Fire Department SOP updates. Ms. Hoeksema seconded the motion. VOTE: YEAS: All. NAYES: None. Motion carried.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS:

Any Parks & Recreation Items: None.

Consideration of Approving the Parks & Recreation 5-Year Plan – Ms. Koester:

Ms. Koester thanked the Board for going through the document and feedback received at the public hearing two days ago. She reiterates that the deadline for submission is 2/1/26 and PRAC the Township would have the opportunity to apply for grants by 4/1/26 and through September to make modifications. Funding would not be until Spring 2027. Positive feedback from the DNR was noted.

The Board discussed the Parks & Recreation 5-Year Plan extensively, which included feedback received, timing of approval and implications for grant funding and project schedules. Board members reviewed concerns regarding clarity of content, incorporation of public input, prioritization of projects and overall competitiveness of grant funding. The Board acknowledged the work completed by PRAC and discussed whether additional refinement and grant administrators would help improve the plan. The Board also recognized the ability to edit this document even after approval.

There was additional discussion among Board Members including the obligation to residents of the Township and concerns over fast approaching deadlines and content transparency. Several Board members agreed with concerns of overcommitting funds to new projects when there are maintenance concerns regarding existing assets.

The potential need for a special meeting after refinement was also discussed.

Board Action: Ms. Koester made a motion to adopt the Park and Recreation 5-Year Plan as presented (or with amendments) for adoption under Resolution #2026-05.

There was no second to the motion.
The motion failed.

NEW BUSINESS:

4

2026 Poverty Exemption – Ms. Slopsema: Board Members discussed the Board of Review Poverty Exemptions Memo details, which must be reviewed and updated annually.

Board Action: Mr. Arends made a motion to adopt Resolution #2026-04 Whitewater Township Poverty Exemption Guidelines as amended. Ms. Hoeksema seconded the motion.
ROLL CALL VOTE: Hoeksema-Y, Koester-Y, Arends-Y, Mielnik-Y. Motion carried.

P&P Manual Section 4.0 – Financial Administration Changes – Mr. Arends: There was Board discussion regarding the suggested redline amendments and other portions of the document. Board Members were asked to review the document and proposed edits, and to note any additional corrections or additions.

There was Board consensus to table this until the next Board meeting.

Summer Tax Collection Approval – Ms. Koester: Treasurer Koester stated the Township negotiates rates with the Traverse City and Elk Rapids school systems to collect the summer school tax levy. Last year a two-year agreement was put in place with Traverse City Area Public Schools (TCAPS). Ms. Koester reviewed the proposed rate for the Elk Rapids 2026 tax year, to which they have agreed.

Board Action: Mr. Arends made a motion to approve Resolution #2026-03 authorizing Whitewater Township to collect summer taxes for Elk Rapids Public Schools and Northwest Education Services for the 2026 tax year.

Clerk Hoeksema made a Friendly Amendment to include “and for the Supervisor and Treasurer to sign the contract with Elk Rapids Schools,” which Mr. Arends accepted. Ms. Koester seconded the motion.
ROLL CALL VOTE: Hoeksema-Y, Koester-Y, Arends-Y, Mielnik-Y. Motion carried.

Board Action: Ms. Koester made a motion for Board Consensus for the Supervisor/Deputy Supervisor, Clerk and Treasurer to sign the agreement for collection of summer property taxes for Northwest Education Services for both Traverse City Area Public Schools and Elk Rapids Public Schools for the 2025/2026 tax seasons. Mr. Mielnik seconded the motion.
VOTE: YEAS: All. NAYES: None. Motion carried.

Planning Commission Appointment – Ms. Slopsema: Clerk Hoeksema reported in the Supervisor’s absence, recommending appointment of Mr. Michael Sherman to the Planning Commission, filling the seat of Mr. David Boesler. Mr. Sherman was present at the meeting and introduced himself to the Board.

Board Action: Ms. Hoeksema made a motion to accept the resignation of Mr. David Boesler from the Planning Commission effective 1/22/26. Mr. Arends seconded the motion.
VOTE: YEAS: All. NAYES: None. Motion carried.

Board Action: Ms. Hoeksema made a motion to confirm the recommendation of the Supervisor appointing Mr. Michael Sherman to the Whitewater Township Planning Commission effective 1/22/26. The term shall end on December 31, 2027. Mr. Mielnik seconded the motion.
ROLL CALL VOTE: Koester-Y, Arends-Y, Mielnik-Y, Hoeksema-Y. Motion carried.

Audio Equipment System Purchase – Mr. Arends:

Mr. Arends provided an explanation comparing the prior Township audio equipment against the audio equipment owned by LIAA that the Township has been using. Mr. Matt Kern of LIAA was present to discuss the microphone system quotes submitted by LIAA. This proposal is for audio equipment, not video equipment. The Board discussed the technology with Mr. Kern.

Board Action: Mr. Arends made a motion to authorize the Clerk to issue a purchase order to Sweetwater for the amount of \$5,881.60 for audio equipment in the Township Hall to facilitate Board and Committee meetings. Mr. Mielnik seconded the motion.

Mr. Mielnik questioned the different amounts listed in the quote. There is more than one vendor involved.

Mr. Arends withdrew his motion.
Mr. Mielnik withdrew his second.

5

Board Action: Mr. Arends made a motion to authorize a purchase order to LIAA in the amount of \$5,881.60 for audio equipment in the Township Hall to facilitate Board and Committee meetings. Mr. Mielnik seconded the motion.
ROLL CALL VOTE: Koester-Y, Arends-Y, Mielnik-Y, Hoeksema-Y. Motion carried.

2026/2027 Budget Schedule – Mr. Arends: Mr. Arends outlined a proposed schedule for 2026-27 budget planning.

Board Action: Ms. Hoeksema made a motion that a Budget Public Hearing be scheduled for Thursday, March 19, 2026, at 6:30 p.m. to consider the tax millage rates and Fire Special Assessment for the fiscal year 2026-27 and that the Clerk’s office post notice of the Public Hearing in the Traverse City Record Eagle and the Elk Rapids News in conformance with notice requirements for a Public Hearing. Mr. Mielnik seconded the motion.
VOTE: YEAS: All. NAYES: None. Motion carried.

Budget Transfers – Mr. Arends: Mr. Arends explained three budget transfers presented for approval.

Board Action: Ms. Koester made a motion to approve a budgeted transfer from the Fire Fund to the Fire Capital Improvement Fund in the amount of \$154,079. Mr. Arends seconded the motion.
VOTE: YEAS: All. NAYES: Motion carried.

Board Action: Ms. Koester made a motion to approve a budgeted transfer from the Fire Capital Improvement Fund to the General Fund in the amount of \$100,000. Mr. Mielnik seconded the motion.
VOTE: YEAS: All. NAYES: Motion carried.

Board Action: Ms. Koester made a motion to approve a budgeted transfer from the General Fund to the Parks & Recreation Fund in the amount of \$100,000. Mr. Mielnik seconded the motion.
VOTE: YEAS: All. NAYES: Motion carried.

Zoning Board of Appeals Appointment – Mr. Mielnik: Mr. Mielnik stated the ZBA includes a Member of the Planning Commission. The ~~Supervisor has made the recommendation of Mr. Scott Trumbull~~ Planning Commission recommended Mr. Scott Trumbull to serve on the ZBA.

Board Action:

Mr. Mielnik made a motion to confirm the Supervisor's appointment of Mr. Scott Trumbull as the Planning Commission representative on the Zoning Board of Appeals. Ms. Hoeksema seconded the motion.

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

TABLED ITEMS: None.

BOARD COMMENTS / DISCUSSION:

- Treasurer Koester provided an announcement from the USPS beginning in 2026, updating its definition of a postmark. It reflects the date mail is first processed by an automated machine at a processing facility, not the initial collection date. This is important, particularly when mailing time-sensitive materials.
- Treasurer Koester announced there are two extra copies of the audit available to the public for review. The Clerk has also provided a copy on display at the Township Hall.
- Mr. Arends expressed to the Board and the public when serving at a meeting, he is there as an elected Trustee, not as Deputy Supervisor. It is not improper for him to conduct a meeting as Trustee. He believes it is beneficial experience for all Board Members to chair a meeting in the absence of the Supervisor. Mr. Arends commended Clerk Hoeksema for her work chairing the meeting, particularly considering the extensive Agenda.

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

Next Township Board Meeting:

Township Board Regular Meeting, **Thursday, February 12, 2026, 6:30 p.m., Whitewater Township Hall**

SECOND PUBLIC COMMENT: None.

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

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

The meeting adjourned at 12:02 p.m.

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