

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

SPECIAL MEETING
APPROVED MINUTES
Tuesday, January 20 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 Wendy 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: Mr. Arends made a motion to nominate Clerk Hoeksema to chair the meeting in the absence of the Supervisor. Mr. Mielnik seconded the motion.

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

SET/ADJUST/APPROVE AGENDA:

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

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

CONFLICT OF INTEREST: None.

PUBLIC COMMENT: None.

PUBLIC HEARING:

Open Public Hearing:

Board Action: Ms. Hoeksema made a motion to open the Public Hearing. Mr. Mielnik seconded the motion.

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

Note: The Public Hearing was opened at 7:03 p.m.

Request attendees to sign attendance sheet. The Clerk notified guests of the Public Hearing sign-in sheet.

State dates of Public Hearing notice publication and newspaper(s) published in:

-Traverse City Record Eagle, January 10, 2026
-Elk Rapids News, January 1, 2026 and January 15, 2026
-Whitewater Township Hall

State Purpose of Public Hearing: PARKS & RECREATION 5-YEAR PLAN

The Clerk stated reported the purpose of the Public Hearing is related to the Parks & Recreation Five-Year Plan.

Read any written comment received: Clerk Hoeksema received written comments inquiring about the cost of creating the Recreation Plan, water access and clerical edits to the document.

Receive Public Comment – In the Hall:

Ms. M. Melton: Ms. Melton reviewed with the Board the members of the Parks and Recreation Advisory Committee (PRAC), work accomplished over the past year and their expectations for the coming year. In 2025, PRAC secured 90% of funding to install four new bleachers at Hi Park which entailed 220+ volunteer hours. PRAC devoted 170+ hours to update the Five-Year Recreation Plan which, once approved, would allow them to pursue grant funding over the next five years.

Board and public feedback was considered, the Plan was out for public review for 30 days and PRAC is requesting Township Board approval of the Plan. Ms. Melton outlined deadlines for Michigan DNR grant submission and the timeline for project funding, if awarded.

She noted a primary project is to create a paved walking trail around Hi Pray Park. PRAC is also requesting Board approval to hire a consultant to provide support on concept design and project budget.

Mr. M. Jacobson: Mr. Jacobson stated the Battle Creek Nature Area goes through his property, and people park at the end of his driveway. He referenced both the old and proposed Recreation Plans.

The MDNR Trust Fund previously purchased the property, with certain requirements to be met; i.e., a plaque acknowledging the Fund, connection of the Battle Creek and Lossie Road Trails, a viewing platform at the lake and a hidden drive sign. To his knowledge, these commitments have not been met.

He expressed concerns about trespassing on private property, expansion of the trail to the lakefront, safety regarding the pond's access pipe, grate and bench, the condition of the duck blind, a caution sign at the spillway pipe, No Swimming signs, a safety rail, silted inlet and inspection requirements, and incorrect information about the Lossie Road loop and hike system.

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He stated there is inaccurate information on the Plan's map which encourages trespassing through private property, on which he pays taxes. He is also concerned about prior data regarding neighborhood interfaces that allow access for adjoining property owners; this would prevent property owners from accessing their land. The Supreme Court allowed that property owners continue to have access when the old right-of-way was abandoned; this information was removed in the new document.

The new bleachers could have possibly been refurbished, the proposed asphalt walking path is a large expense and 66' for a foot trail is excessive.

Mr. G. Buczkowski: The Grand Traverse Regional Land Conservancy will be meeting with the Township Board in the near future to discuss the Battle Creek Nature Area and Lossie Trail. No definitive metes and bounds survey was presented in the document; it is a general plan and doesn't mean the Trail heads south down the creek.

Ms. D. Peltonen: The new Plan does not reference Park Road but rather only "access to Park." For grant eligibility, this needs to be listed in the document. There are County and private (park) portions of the road; therefore, funds would be from different sources. Some map numbers do not match with sections in the document. Ms. Peltonen noted other errors that should be corrected; i.e., regarding non-motorized transportation and minor typographical errors.

Ms. V. Emerson: Ms. Emerson is a Park Ranger and lives on Park Road. It is in extremely poor condition to the extent it is dangerous for boats trailers, campers and pedestrians. The Recreation Plan should include engineering to repair it.

Receive Public Comment – via Zoom: None.

Board Action: Ms. Arends made a motion to close the Public Hearing. Ms. Koester seconded the motion.
VOTE: YEAS: All. NAYES: None. Motion carried.

Note: The Public Hearing was closed at 7:43 p.m.

Board Discussion:

Mr. Mielnik expressed numerous concerns about the PRAC Five-Year Plan. He distributed and expounded upon his comments to the Board and PRAC. In summary they include:

Actions Plans to provide lake access, improve existing facilities and maintenance, expand access to trails and improve/expand recreation access to the community. He provided suggestions for changes in the content. He also outlined several comparisons to the prior Plan and several projects that were not included in the new Plan. Additional comments included property acquisition ~~and development~~ with the Grand Traverse Regional Land Conservancy, survey statistics and use of the data, and long-term development plans for Whitewater Township Park. He also detailed several minor corrections and edits to verbiage in the Plan.

Mr. Mielnik noted the competitiveness of DNR grants, specifically the Recreation Passport Program, which is tied to the Park and Recreation Plan. In 2025, only 15 applications were funded out of 57 submissions.

Mr. Arends and Supervisor Slopsema have been in conversations with the Grand Traverse Regional Land Conservancy. The Supervisor's Report in the upcoming 1/22/26 Township Board meeting outlines those discussions. There is a photograph of a dedication sign within the current draft of the Rec Plan; this may be the plaque to which Mr. Jacobson is referring. Mr. Arends agrees with many of the comments and edits discussed tonight.

The Recreation and Parks Funds have been combined; he suggested the majority of the notes related to this be eliminated from the draft as it is not necessary. Photos in the Plan are very telling as to the need for grant funding to improve Whitewater Township Park. He was impressed by the work done at Hi Pray Park's playground and appreciates the volunteers there; Whitewater Township Park needs this same type of attention. He agrees with Mr. Mielnik that a camper survey would be beneficial.

Ms. Koester noted that Mr. Jacobson was referring to the Battle Creek Management Plan which is still an active document in the Township and is referenced in the PRAC Plan. The PRAC Five-Year Plan does not replace it. Board Members suggested listing it in the appendix.

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Ms. Hoeksema agrees with many of the comments this evening. In order to be more competitive, edits should be made to the content and more effective verbiage utilized, the Appendix should not be hand written and there are minor typographical errors to correct.

PRESENTATIONS & ANNOUNCEMENTS: None.

CONSENT CALENDAR:

Correspondence: None.

Minutes for Approval: None.

Bills for Approval: None.

There is no motion for approval as there are no materials in the Consent Calendar.

ITEMS REMOVED FROM CONSENT CALENDAR: None / N.A.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS: None.

NEW BUSINESS: None.

TABLED ITEMS: None.

BOARD COMMENTS / DISCUSSION: No additional comments / discussion.

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

Township Board Regular Meeting: **Thursday, January 22, 2026, 9:00 a.m.**

Board Member Announcements: None.

PUBLIC COMMENT:

Mr. M. Jacobson: Requested a copy of the agreement the Township has with the DNR on the purchase of the Battle Creek Nature Area. He asked that acknowledgements; i.e., the plaque regarding funds and a large rock at Cook Road be reviewed to ensure there are no conflicts regarding acknowledgements or naming things.

Ms. M. Melton: Appreciates attendance and public feedback. In speaking with the State of Michigan Grant Coordinator, the Coordinator was very complimentary of the Parks & Rec Plan and surprised it was not prepared by an engineering

firm. A graphic designer was utilized. The Grant Coordinator stated many believe a fully engineered product is necessary in order to move forward; however, that is not the case. A strong concept and budget are needed. Ms. Melton stated the success rate of Trust Fund Grant awards is 65%. The Hi Pray Park walking path budget is projected at \$300k, with a 25% match from the Township. She agreed there are many needs in the Township. There has been a conceptual idea for a walking path since 2013; however, it has not moved forward by any Boards. PRAC is focused on making this community project a reality and hopes the Board will support it. They encourage Board feedback and communication.

Mr. Arends responded the Recreation and Park Funds were combined with the objective of being self-sustaining. He is uncertain if Whitewater Township is able to make the 25% commitment to the project prior to its budget process.

Mr. Mielnik added the Township Board was not involved in the timing of the application, which is a challenge at this date. While complete engineering drawings are not required at this time, a solid concept and design are necessary for engineers to estimate project costs.

ADJOURNMENT: Ms. Hoeksema made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Mr. Arends seconded the motion.
VOTE: YEAS: All. NAYES: None. Motion carried.

The meeting adjourned at 8:08 p.m.

Submitted by Kay Z. Held, Recording Secretary