

**WEST TRAVERSE TOWNSHIP
BOARD MEETING
Tuesday August 12, 2025
6:00 p.m.**

Supervisor Murphy called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m.

Roll Call: Olson, Murphy, Green, Hollingsworth, Baker

Absent: none

Visitors: Kathy & Steve Erber, Garon Gopigian, Ed Taylor, Sarah Mayhew, Sarah Koetje, Heather Byer, Paul White, Lisa Dannenberg

The Pledge of Allegiance was recited by all.

Approve agenda & additional items: Olson asks to amend the agenda to allow Paul White to give his presentation after the approval of Township Board meeting minutes. **Green made the motion to approve the agenda as amended Olson seconded. Five (5) ayes.**

Public comments: Garon Gopigian mentioned that he attended the HS Airport Authority meeting and found it odd that the Airport Authority didn't give an explanation as to why the Township withdrew.

Approve minutes of regular meeting on July 8, 2025. **Green made the motion to approve the minutes of July 8, 2025, as presented. Hollingsworth seconded. Five (5) ayes.**

Review correspondence not included below: Representatives from Little Big, LLC introduced themselves, their program and expressed their interest in possibly using the Township Hall and grounds for their after-school nature club. Following discussion about safety, liability, security and accessibility, the Township Board thanked Little Big, LLC for their service to the community but declines the request to use the Township Hall.

Thorne Swift Manager Report: Hammond gave his report: July was a good month, continuing maintenance on the grounds, pressure washing/water sealing the boardwalks, events are well attended, the children's programs are back and well attended, the Monarch Butterfly release was successful, and the Pavillion roof replacement work is scheduled for the end of August.

Action Items:

- a. Township Hall Evaluation Presentation – Olson introduced Paul White of Craftmark Construction who had been hired to evaluate the Township Hall. White gave an overview of the Township Hall Evaluation detailing the building's condition, ADA Compliance issues, lack of handicapped parking, HVAC & plumbing issues, and the potential costs to renovate the current Township Hall. White stated that the current use is not feasible and that his recommendation is to build a new Township Hall. Baker questioned the feasibility of renovating the Township Hall such as rearranging the space in the lower level, adding an

Proposed: August 12, 2025

Accepted: September 9, 2025

elevator etc. to meet ADA compliance along with correcting all the other issues versus the construction of a new building. White explained the challenges and cost associated with ADA compliance along with the current space limitations. There was discussion on preserving and moving the upper section of the Township Hall to a new location and building an attached office space.

- b. Harbor Springs Fire Department Report – Murphy reported on the recent HS Fire Dept meeting. New Air-Packs have been ordered, no full-time Chief yet, there is still a need for volunteer firefighters and the HS Fire Dept is considering adopting the International Fire Code.
- c. Harbor Springs Airport Authority Report – Green stated the West Traverse Township has officially withdrawn from the Airport Authority. The Townships release was not challenged and the vote to allow the release was unanimous. A copy of the release letter is included in the meeting packet. Baker thanked Green for all that he did while the Township Representative.
- d. L-4029 Tax Rate – Murphy pointed out that the Township Board has the option to raise the tax rate from .4249 to 1 mil as approved by the voters if they wanted noting that it would generate more income if needed. Baker questioned if changing the tax rate and using up to one mill would be considered a new mil. Murphy noted it would not as it was already approved by the voters. **Green made the motion to approve the 2025 L-4029 Tax rate request. Baker seconded. Roll Call vote: Baker – yes, Green – yes, Murphy – yes, Hollingsworth – yes, Olson – yes. Five (5) ayes.**
- e. New Township Hall Update – Olson updated the Board on the recent New Township Hall Committee meeting held an hour prior to the Board meeting. The committee discussed the points covered within the Township Hall Evaluation provided by Paul White and discussed the next steps in the process. The committee decided the next step is to hire an architect to help fine tune the process along with refining the costs. Green asked about the process of hiring an architect. Olson said that the Township would advertise in the newspaper asking for RFQ's (Request for Qualifications) from architects and/or architectural firms. Those received would be narrowed down to the three – five applicants for the Township Board to choose which firm to hire. **Olson made the motion to accept the consultants recommendation and immediately begin to identity, evaluate and engage an architect that will ensure that the Townships design requirements are met. Green seconded. Roll Call vote: Baker – yes, Green – yes, Murphy – yes, Hollingsworth – yes, Olson – yes. Five (5) ayes.**

Reports and Updates:

- a. Clerk – Olson informed the Board that the recent audit was submitted to the State of Michigan Dept of Treasury and that the Township is in good financial standing.
- b. Treasurer – Hollingsworth noted taxes are coming in, there were BOR changes where PRE's will need to be adjusted, and she mentioned the option of a Property Tax Administrative Fee. This was something the Township did in the past and, if implemented again through a Board resolution, the Township can charge up to 1 mil (1% per parcel) and is intended to cover costs associated with tax collecting and assessors fees which currently come out of the Township General Budget. Hollingsworth pointed out that West Traverse Township is one of three Townships in Emmet County that do not use the administrative fees.

- c. Planning Commission – Green updated the Township Board of the continued progress the Planning Commission is making towards completing the Master Plan. Green also mentioned that there is activity on the property on Hughston Rd that was to be the Polo Field.
- d. Zoning Administrator – Included in packet.
- e. Recreation/Thorne Swift Committee – none
- f. Supervisor – none

Approve payables & payroll – **Hollingsworth made the motion to approve the payables & payroll as presented. Green seconded. Five (5) ayes**

Public comments – Heather Byer, 4730 Lake St. commented on a letter received from the Zoning Administrator about the keeping of chickens in West Traverse Township. Heather was not aware that having chickens wasn't in compliance with the Township rules. She had letters, if needed, from neighbors saying that they were not a bother, she only has four chickens, and no complaints have been received about them. As she does not live within an association the Township Board voted to make an exception and allow her to keep the chickens. **Baker made the motion to allow Heather Byer to keep the chickens. Hollingsworth seconded. Roll Call vote: Baker – yes, Green – yes, Murphy – yes, Hollingsworth – yes, Olson – yes. Five (5) ayes.**

Ed Taylor had questions about the money received back from the Airport Authority from the Township withdrawal and what if any benefit the Township had received from being a part of the Airport Authority.

Board comments – Murphy informed the Board that he did follow up on the Golden-Brown Alge issue. TOTM is aware of it, it is not a threat, they are aware of it, universities are studying it, and they will come back to us if they come up with something. Hollingsworth commented on Bakers statement about adjusting our expectations regarding the current Township Hall and how we could do that. Baker stated she just wanted to explore the possibilities of renovating this building versus spending money on a new building.

Next Regular Meeting – **September 9, 2025, at 6:00 p.m.**

Adjourn – **Murphy asked for a motion to adjourn the August 12, 2025, Township Board meeting. Green made the motion to adjourn at 7:12 p.m. Hollingsworth seconded.**

Respectfully Submitted by:

Jay Olson, Clerk

Transcribed by: Amy Peters