

YANKEE SPRINGS TOWNSHIP
BOARD OF TRUSTEES Regular Meeting

Thursday, July 10, 2025

6:00 pm

Yankee Springs Township Hall
284 N. Briggs Rd., Middleville, MI 49333

MINUTES

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YS Board of Trustees
Regular Meeting
July 10, 2025

Meeting called to order at 6:00 PM by Supervisor Rob Heethuis

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

INVOCATION

Roll Call: Deb Mousseau, Dave VanHouten, Rob Heethuis, Larry Knowles, Tom Hopkins
(All Present)

Staff Present: Dennis Buist, Dan Miller, Sandy Marcukaitis, Doug Katsma, Rich Beukema

Visitors: 10

Motion by VanHouten with support from Heethuis to add under board action items that we have a discussion on the Hall Lake dam and if this board wants to take a position on that. Roll Call Vote: VanHouten: yes; Heethuis: yes; Knowles: yes; Hopkins: yes.
Mousseau: yes.

Yes: 5, No: 0. **MOTION CARRIED**

Motion by Hopkins with support from Knowles to accept the agenda. Roll Call Vote:
Heethuis: yes; Knowles: yes; Hopkins: yes; Mousseau: yes. VanHouten: yes.

Yes: 5, No: 0. **MOTION CARRIED**

Consent Agenda

- Minutes from Board Meetings June 12, 2025, June 18, 2025, and June 25, 2025
- IPA Township Renovation #36: June 1, 2025 Auto Pay \$ (5,689.47)
- AP Checks as of 06/12/2025: Check #918544-918565 \$ (69,785.14)
- AP Checks as of 06/26/2025: Check #918566-918577 \$ (15,574.13)
- Void Check #918538 \$ 155.57
- Payroll Checks #8268-8282 Fire 06/13/2025 \$ (11,737.84)
- Payroll Checks #8283-8306 end of month PR General \$ (18,284.09)
- Mid month Payroll Federal Withholding for Fire 6/12/2025 \$ (2,831.05)
- Federal tax Payroll End of month 2025 WH General Pysl \$ (5,760.68)
- Last month's state WH for Fire May-pd end of May \$ (484.66)
- State monthly WH end of month including Fire \$ (1,613.32)

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

INVOCATION

ROLL CALL

**MOTION TO AMEND
AGENDA**

**MOTION TO ACCEPT
AGENDA**

Total Disbursements \$ (131,604.81) <u>Motion by Heethuis with support from Knowles to approve the consent agenda. Roll Call Vote:</u> Knowles: yes; Hopkins: yes; Mousseau: yes; VanHouten: yes; Heethuis: yes. Yes: 5, No: 0. MOTION CARRIED	MINUTES Page 2 of 8 YS Board of Trustees Regular Meeting July10, 2025 MOTON TO APPROVE CONSENT AGENDA
ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF VISITORS: County Commissioners Catherine Getty and Marcia Bassett Fire Chief Dan Miller and Deputy Chief Doug Katsma GLIB Representative Bill Bryker • Bill Bryker spoke about the recent GLIB meeting. It is his goal to be as transparent as possible and keep the Board informed on what is taking place • Commissioner Getty and Commissioner Bassett shared the activities taking place at the county level. Highlights included the approval of a contract with Motorola to provide body cameras, vehicle cameras, and radios in vehicles for both jail personnel and officers. They have also had groundbreaking ceremonies at the Commission on Aging and the Riverwalk. Budget cuts are happening at the Barry Eaton District Health Department.	ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF VISITORS GLIB REPORT
TREASURER'S REPORT: Prepared by Deb Mousseau, Treasurer • June 2025 Financial Statement and Investment Report. <u>Motion by Heethuis with support from Hopkins to approve the Treasurer's Report as presented. Roll Call Vote:</u> Hopkins: yes; Mousseau: yes; VanHouten: yes; Heethuis: yes; Knowles: yes. Yes: 5, No: 0. MOTION CARRIED	TREASURER'S REPORT MOTION TO APPROVE TREASURER'S REPORT
CLERK'S REPORT <u>Motion by Hopkins with support from Knowles to approve current payables Check #8578-8606 for \$33,284.48. Roll Call Vote:</u> Mousseau: yes; VanHouten: yes; Heethuis: yes; Knowles: yes; Hopkins: yes. Yes: 5, No: 0. MOTION CARRIED	CLERK'S REPORT MOTION TO APPROVE CURRENT PAYABLES
COMMITTEE REPORTS: Planning Commission: • PCI June 2025 report in board member packet. • June 19, 2025 meeting: ○ Approved another SEU for a short-term rental in Whispering Pines.	

○ Discussion of the master plan. ○ Completed draft of the mining ordinance which has been sent to the attorney for review and has not been returned yet. Zoning department will contact the attorney for the status. ○ A request has been made by the PC to determine if the Board would like them to work on a fire ordinance and a blight ordinance. ▪ Trustee VanHouten stated that he is not interested in an ordinance regarding campfires or backyard fires but would say yes regarding a blight ordinance. ▪ No direction was given from the Board yet. • Next regular meeting (July) cancelled.	MINUTES Page 3 of 8 YS Board of Trustees Regular Meeting July 10, 2025 PC REPORT
Zoning Board of Appeals: • No meeting since the last Board meeting. • Next meeting will be August 12, 2025 if needed.	
Zoning Department: • No report.	ZBA REPORT
Fire/EMS Report: • June 2025 Fire/Emergency Medical responses. ○ Chief Miller reviewed the fire department activity for the month of June. Both fire and medical calls are down very slightly year to date over 2024. ○ 4th of July was a very busy weekend. The pancake breakfast on the 5th was very well attended. ○ Deputy Chief Katsma reviewed a list of items that the department will be purchasing for the new fire truck. This is funded from the money that was approved when the purchase of the truck was made. ○ The old fire truck is empty and the Fire Department will start the process to sell it. ○ Board members VanHouten and Hopkins shared that they have seen and heard very positive feedback from the community on the professionalism and response times of the Fire Department and EMS.	ZONING DEPARTMENT REPORT FIRE/EMS REPORT
Park Committee: • The pickleball court project is not yet complete – may be finished by the 27th of July. • The final coat on the walking path will be done when the other project is completed.	
Recycling Committee: • Grant received for \$4,000 from Barry County Waste Management. This will be discussed further in board action items.	PARK COMMITTEE REPORT
Veterans Committee: • No report.	
Clean Water Committee: • Possibly receiving a small grant and looking at Increasing the rate of arsenic removal. • The plans are underway for a potential development in Wayland Township which includes putting in wells but they would prefer to be able to join the water	RECYCLING COMMITTEE REPORT VETERANS COMMITTEE REPORT

system.

Board Action Items:

- Insurance Policy Renewal:
 - Mr. Hopkins has received three insurance quotes for all the township properties.
 - The first one from Acrisure, our current carrier, came in at \$58,000 which was a 29% increase.
 - The second quote, provided from the Ted Hartleb Agency, is through EMC Insurance. Their price was lower, at \$51,129, and after a thorough evaluation it has increased coverage in many areas over our current policy.
 - For one example, currently there is no coverage for the electric sign or the memorial.
 - The new quote includes \$25,000 for the sign and \$35,000 for the memorial.
 - They have better coverage for attorney fees in the event the township experiences any lawsuits and also offer a rider for additional coverage for the Fire Department personnel.
 - The third quote received was cheaper but provided much less coverage so that one is not being considered.

Motion by Hopkins with support from Heethuis that we move our insurance to the Ted Hartleb agency which is connected with EMC Insurance Company. Discussion: All the fire trucks would be at full replacement value, not what they are worth. This policy covers all township property, including cemeteries. This insurer currently covers 45 townships in the state of Michigan. **Roll Call Vote:** Mousseau: yes; VanHouten: yes; Heethuis: yes; Knowles: yes; Hopkins: yes.

Yes: 5, No: 0. **MOTION CARRIED**

- Set Public Hearing for Special Assessment #51 for Payne Ridge paving.

Motion by Hopkins with support from Mousseau that we set the special assessment hearing for Payne Ridge Paving for August 14th, following the regular BOT meeting. **Roll Call Vote:** VanHouten: yes; Heethuis: yes; Knowles: yes; Hopkins: yes; Mousseau: yes.

Yes: 5, No: 0. **MOTION CARRIED**

- Telephone System
 - The current system is an analog system which is 16 years old. It has two outside call lines and one fax line. This means if two people are on phone calls in the office, there are no lines available for use. The monthly cost for this system is \$200.00.
 - A new digital system would switch the township from Charter to Ocean Systems. It would provide 14 phones and 14 lines at a cost of \$140.00 per month (including two at the fire department). There would be an upfront cost of \$2,600 to purchase the new phones which would take a little over three years to payback through the lower monthly cost.

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WATER COMMITTEE REPORT

MOTION TO APPROVE RENEWAL OF INSURANCE POLICY

PUBLIC HEARING FOR SPECIAL ASSESMENT #51

Motion by Hopkins with support from Knowles that we go ahead with the purchase of the new phone system. Roll Call Vote: Knowles: yes; Hopkins: yes; Mousseau: yes; VanHouten: yes; Heethuis: yes.

Yes: 5, No: 0. **MOTION CARRIED**

- Bin and pad for recycling: A \$4,000 grant has been received from the waste management group in Barry County. The bin is being taken care of by Walsh who does the township's recycling.

Motion by Heethuis with support from Hopkins that we begin the bin and pad for recycling project. Roll Call Vote: Hopkins: yes; Mousseau: yes; VanHouten: yes; Heethuis: yes; Knowles: yes.

Yes: 5, No: 0. **MOTION CARRIED**

- Hall Lake Dam Issue
 - Mr. VanHouten brought up that he attended a meeting with the DNR and EGLE where no one really gave an answer as to why the lake has to be drained. The only reason is that the governor says the state needs to reduce potential liability and reduce 50-52 earthen dams and Hall Lake was one of them that was selected. He feels the dam is in pretty good shape. It's a beautiful lake and he feels it is a huge mistake to drain it.
 - At another meeting attended by Mr. Heethuis it was made clear that Yankee Springs wanted to see if it could be saved and that was discussed by the Road Commission and the Drain Commissioner but the DNR didn't want the liability. All of the community groups and representatives of the community that were in attendance really want to prevent this but the DNR just repeated that it is their intent to get rid of this dam.
 - Board members are in agreement that they want to see this dam saved and are encouraging residents to send letters to the governor, DNR and anyone else involved. The township cannot support this with tax dollars.

Motion by Heethuis with support from Knowles that we support keeping the Hall Lake Dam. Discussion: Mr. Hopkins will compose a letter from the board to Governor Whitmer. The DNR says this is the way it needs to be but they should listen to the public opinion as well.

Motion restated as follows:

Motion by Knowles with support from Heethuis that we adopt a resolution in support of the Hall Lake Dam and allow Tom to draft some letters to the governor and the DNR.

Roll Call Vote: VanHouten: yes; Heethuis: yes; Knowles: yes; Hopkins: yes; Mousseau: yes.

Yes: 5, No: 0. **MOTION CARRIED**

- Supervisor Heethuis shared that the revenue sharing with the Tribe will be next Wednesday and he will be attending along with Mr. Hopkins.

PUBLIC COMMENT:

Mike Cunningham (township resident): The Board voted 3 to 2 at the 6/18 budget

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MOTION TO APPROVE NEW TELEPHONE SYSTEM

MOTION TO BEGIN BIN AND PAD PROJECT FOR RECYCLING

MOTION TO ADOPT RESOLUTION IN SUPPORT OF THE HALL LAKE DAM

meeting to continue adding 1% to all tax bills. I do not believe this money is needed by the township. I sent the board a request that they reconsider this at the budget public hearing and the board failed to bring it up even though I provided ample reasons for reconsidering. The supervisor also severely limited the opportunity for public input in the public hearing. In the 6/18 meeting the clerk and treasure stated that the money might be needed in the future and that people do not notice the 1% admin fee as the reasons for continuing to impose the fee. The supervisor did not provide any explanation for his vote in favor of continuing to impose the fee. I disagree with the reasons provided for continuing to impose the fee, especially the statement that people do not notice the fee. I noticed it and I brought it up last year when I was on the board. 3-2 vote this year is a little better than the 4-1 vote last year but it's still not enough. I believe that if people are asked if they would like their tax bills by even 1%, they would overwhelmingly say yes. I have always been concerned by the lack of attendance at most township meetings, especially budget public hearings. I think that a good part of this is because the board is elected to take care of things for the people of the township so that they can focus their attention on their own lives. This is why all five of the people on the board of trustees are trustees. They are elected to notice things like the opportunity and ability to reduce tax bills by 1%. The trustees, that's all five of you, are supposed to notice this for the residents of the township and do it for them. I do not believe they want you to spend it for them. I believe they would rather spend it themselves. The good news is that I believe that the board still has the ability to not impose the admin fee on the next tax billing. I believe that you should find out the proper way to do this, or explain to the public why it cannot be done and pledge to do it at the next legal opportunity. If you choose not to reconsider this issue, I think that the board should tell us what your goal is. How much money is needed in the general fund and why. Too much money in the general fund leads to irresponsible spending. An example of this is the supervisor's addition of \$150,000 to the budget to be used for the water system which is supposed to be funded by the people in the system (TIME EXPIRED).

Jim VanTil (159 Silverstone Dr.): I want to give input on the pond ordinance that is being put in place and basically all of the letters from A to U don't have to be on there. This is way too restrictive for a pond ordinance. E has a 50-foot setback from the water. When I start digging a pond I plan on being 25 to 30 feet from the water. 50 feet is restrictive. F is fine and G is fine and H is good. The rest ... I've been digging ponds throughout Michigan, in Barry County and in Allegan County, all of my life and this is the first time I've ever had a township come down on me for digging a pond that makes a nice setting and I don't understand why a property owner doesn't have the right.... We are all under the rules of the state and the county. This is the first time in my life I've ever had a township try to make me stop. So that's the comment I wanted on the record, I think it's way too restrictive.

Dave Laansma, Precinct Delegate (Payne Lake Road): First of all, I want to thank each of you for taking the time to serve on the board. I think I'll reiterate a little of what Mike mentioned. We elect you and appreciate the service that you provide representing us regarding the business of the township. I commend you for making the motion to submit a resolution regarding the Hall Lake project. Clearly that's got vast township support and it is appropriate that this board speak on our behalf to the governor and the DNR, whoever is necessary, so that it's clear to them where we stand on this. We would like unequivocally to preserve that lake. They should give us an actual reason why they want to drain it. I have not heard a reason, they just say they are going to do it. And then regarding I'd like to advocate also for that first public comment. Going back to the fact that you represent our voice but you need to hear from the public regarding our opinions and views on matters of the township but instead you've restricted that voice by taking

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PUBLIC COMMENT

away that first comment and only allowing us to comment at the end. When it comes to public hearings, the public hearings are different because it is expected that members of the public will come in to make a statement. I would advocate for extending that from three to at least five minutes so that people have adequate time to express their opinions on whatever this public hearing is for. Thank you.

Robin Laansma, Precinct Delegate (Payne Lake Road): I wanted to thank you for all the work on the budget. I hope you will continue to research and then implement a video system. Having the meetings live streamed and then posted on a platform so it can be viewed later would be great. I must speak, again, to the deletion of the first public comment time. It's time that I say this. I don't know what conflict there was in the office when Mike Cunningham was clerk. I do know there was one. It is so evident. The removal of the first comment time began after Mike Cunningham stepped down from his Yankee Springs clerk position. It is evident, by the action of Supervisor Heethuis, that he is trying to suppress Mike's public comment. By doing so he is silencing the voice of the people of Yankee Springs. What a silly game to play! It is a sign of weak leadership. As public servants, you must hear and take the good criticism as well as the constructive criticism. You are obligated by the very position that you hold to respond to both. You also must put all personal preferences aside for any topic that comes before this board. You also should not bring any personal preferences to this board. This includes personal likes or dislikes for any person. The first public comment should not have been removed. It needs to be reinstated. It is your responsibility, as the elected representatives of Yankee Springs Township, to carry out the business of Yankee Springs Township for the people of this township. You must provide the opportunity and be willing to listen to everyone who would like to speak during public comment. Please stop these silly games. Leave all egos and pride out of the business of the township.

BOARD COMMENT:

Mousseau: I want to thank Tom for all his work with the insurance agent. He spent several hours with them and I appreciate it. Very thorough.

VanHouten: I said most of the positive things. But the Road Commission – I'm really excited about Briggs Road and the improvements they are making on that. I can actually walk along the side of the road now without catching a mirror in the head. It's cleaned up and really looking nice. They're doing a good job.

Hopkins: Just a comment that I think we can get the sprinkler system running again now that the pavement is done. We won't have the end of it yet because that's going to have to be fixed but I think we can get the rest of the sprinklers going. I know a couple people have commented that the grass is looking pretty bad so hopefully we can get that back under control.

Knowles: All good stuff tonight.

Heethuis: My compliments to Tom on the hours he spends looking into these items. They are saving us money in the end. Great work, Tom, thank you very much.

ADJOURNMENT:

Motion by Hopkins with support from Mousseau that we adjourn the meeting at 7:18

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BOARD COMMENT

PM. *Approved by all. Motion Carried.*

Approved by:  Date: 9-18-25

Respectfully submitted by:

Betsy Frigmanski, Recording Secretary

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ADJOURNMENT