

YANKEE SPRINGS TOWNSHIP
Joint Meeting: Board of Trustees, Planning Commission
and Zoning Board of Appeals

Tuesday, January 20, 2026
6:00 pm
Yankee Springs Township Hall
284 N. Briggs Rd., Middleville, MI 49333

DRAFT MINUTES

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

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

INVOCATION

ROLL CALL

Board of Trustees: Deb Mousseau, Dave VanHouten, Rob Heethuis, Tom Hopkins (All Present)
Absent with notice: Larry Knowles

Planning Commission: Shana Bush, Ryan Craven, John Frigmanski, Frank Fiala, Niki Smith, John Trygier (All Present)
Absent with notice: Larry Knowles

Zoning Board of Appeals: Ron Heilman, Dave VanHouten, John Frigmanski, Mike Boysen, Tom Mawson (All Present)
Absent with notice: Jake Welch

Staff Present: Brad Williams, Dennis Buist, Sandy Marcukaitis, Joe Shea

Visitors: 7

ADDITIONS/CHANGES TO AGENDA:

Motion by Heethuis with support from VanHouten to add a presentation by Jeff Keesler to the agenda following the acknowledgment of visitors. Roll Call Vote: Mousseau: yes; VanHouten: yes; Heethuis: yes; Hopkins: yes.

Yes: 4, No: 0. **MOTION CARRIED**

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF VISITORS:

Jim McManus – Professional Planner
Jeff Keesler – Barry County Planner
Eric Thompson – PCI
Catherine Getty – County Commissioner

Jeff Keesler: The county is working with MSU extension to set up a "Citizen Planner Program" which tries to give people a basic understanding of planning and zoning. It will provide

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PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

INVOCATION

ROLL CALL

**MOTION TO AMEND
AGENDA TO INCLUDE
PRESENTATION BY JEFF
KEESLER**

**ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF
VISITORS**

**PRESENTATION BY JEFF
KEESLER**

valuable information and help citizens plan for the future of the community. It will be a 6-week class starting March 3. Registration closes Feb. 20. The cost of \$250 for training includes materials, etc. The county has completed the first draft of a new zoning ordinance, which will update the current ordinance from 2008. They are hoping to have it adopted by June.

Per Supervisor Heethuis, the township will cover the cost of the training for board and committee members.

PUBLIC COMMENT:

Mike Cunningham (township resident): He spoke about the importance of open discussion and transparency in public meetings.

PURPOSE OF MEETING: Annual review of what each group is doing, what we've accomplished last year, and what our plans are for this next year.

Annual Report – Board of Trustees (Mr. Rob Heethuis)**2025 Accomplishments:**

1. Hired Tom Mawson for:
 - Building Maintenance
 - Service recycling
2. Passed amendment to Article X short term Rentals
3. Passed ordinance to amendment to: Article II Section 2.1 Cargo/shipping containers
4. Passed motion to separate Fire Department from Wayland Fire Department
5. Passed motion to separate from Wayland EMS
6. Passed motion to refurbish restrooms in Hall
7. Passed land division on PSD 25-01-0
8. Passed land division on PSD 25-01-02
9. Passed ordinance for stand-alone Fire Station
10. Accepted agreement with Thornapple EMS
11. Approved \$150,000 for Barry County Road Commission
12. Hired Chief Mark Jordan as interim Fire Chief
13. Fire Station officially became Yankee Springs stand-alone station
14. Cut ties with Wayland EMS
15. Spring cleanup-April 26
16. Adopted moratorium on mining, quarrying, and sand, gravel, and earth removal
17. Purchased radios for Fire Department: both station and trucks
18. Passed new copier agreement with 3-month payback
19. Purchased software to digitize Cemetery history 50% complete)
20. Bill Bryker named as YS rep. to Gun Lake Improvement Board
21. Passed land division for Benji Vista ID: 16-030-003-00
22. Passed resolution on Whispering Pines Condominiums Resort/Recreation to GLRLF (Gun Lake residential Lake Front)
23. Adopted ordinance 04-08-2025 Whispering Pines
24. Hired Travis & Samuel Knowles for summer park maintenance
25. Approved Backstop Grant from Barry County (75% /25% split)
26. Hall restrooms completed
27. Celebrated with community May 25 Memorial Day Celebration
28. Approved water system study
29. Changed insurance policy to better coverage at less cost
30. Approve Pond Ordinance
31. Held formal swearing in of new Fire Department officials (with completed credentials)

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PUBLIC COMMENT**ANNUAL REPORT
BOARD OF TRUSTEES**

32. Completed budget workshop and adoption
33. Approved grant for Recycling Committee for new pad and bin (paid in full \$10,000)
34. Installed new phone system (10-month payback)
35. Insurance for fire fighters (including some life coverage)
36. Started to convert record keeping to virtual (10% complete)
37. Held a successful school election
38. Park improvements:

- Added 4 pickle ball courts
- Resurfaced basketball and tennis courts
- Resurfaced walking path

39. Purchased utility shed at park
40. Approved special assessment for Payne Ridge Road
41. Approved special assessment for Evans Lane Road
42. Completed testing on possible arsenic compliance
43. Refurbished picnic tables in park with grant monies
44. VanderKam property is now in compliance
45. Successful Veteran's Day Celebration
46. Added two new Planning Commissioners
47. Re-appointed Ryan Craven and Frank Fiala to 3-year terms on PC
48. Approved land division at 790 Courtney Drive
49. Welcomed Diane Dykgraaf as Deputy Treasurer
50. Hired Jim McManus as Planner

Zoning Administration (Mr. Joe Shea)

- Much of what they did this year was included in the Board's list of accomplishments.
- For 2026 there will be a total of 41 short-term rental permits, 19 of them in Whispering Pines due to the loophole that they had prior to the rezoning. Two permits were revoked for properties that were sold recently. There were very few complaints about STRs in 2025. Since the amendment to the ordinance passed last year, the complaints have dropped dramatically. Brad Williams has done an outstanding job with the enforcement.
- The junk car lot on M179 has been a collection of vehicles for the last 40 years and now they are gone. This was accomplished through the work of the township attorneys and the work of Brad Williams.
- He mentioned that Sandy Marcukaitis keeps everything organized and she does a great job of putting things together for the meetings. It's a really great team.

Code Enforcement (Mr. Brad Williams)

- Joe (Shea) summed it all up. The zoning department is a team, a good team, and the communication is good with the Planning Commission, the ZBA and the Board. Everything is running well and they are ready for 2026.

PCI (Mr. Eric Thompson):

- Expressed his thanks for the long-term partnership with Yankee Springs Township.
- Gave an overview of construction projects in the township during 2025.
- Communication between PCI and the Zoning Team is good and has helped in issuing permits for the residents with as little friction as possible.
- He also reviewed some of the updates and accomplishments of PCI over the past year and the process improvements they are working on this year.

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ZONING ADMINISTRATION REPORT

CODE ENFORCEMENT REPORT

Annual Report – Zoning Board of Appeals (Mr. Mike Boysen)

- From 2022 to 2025 the ZBA went down from 14 meetings to 4 meetings, due to the efforts of Joe Shea and his department.
- 2025 Accomplishments
 - Joint meeting with the various boards
 - Completed ZBA duties with minimum expense to the township
 - Increased participation of members in learning opportunities
 - Four cases were heard in 2025. One was dismissed, one was approved, and two were denied.
- 2026 Objectives
 1. Encourage attendance at educational and training workshops, including MSU Citizen Planner sessions.
 2. Provide feedback to the Planning Commission on frequent requests for interpretation or variance approval.
 3. Continue to strive for complete application submissions in support of achieving accurate ZBA findings.
 4. Support fair and consistent enforcement of the Zoning Ordinance.
 5. Attend and participate in scheduled joint meetings with the Township Board and Planning Commission.

Annual Report – Planning Commission (Ms. Shana Bush)

- Fourteen meetings held in 2025 with solid attendance from all members.
- The Yankee Springs Township Planning Commission sincerely thanks Lee Kooistra for his dedicated service and thoughtful contributions. His commitment to responsible land use and the township's rural and lakefront character has been greatly valued. We wish him well as he focuses on his health.
- The Planning Commission wishes to honor the memory of Richard "Rich" Beukema, who passed away this year after many years of dedicated service to our township. Rich was a valued member of the Commission whose steady judgment, thoughtful insights, and deep commitment to public service helped guide our community through countless decisions and periods of change. Rich served with integrity, humility, and a genuine care for the people who call this township home. He approached every project-large or small-with a sense of responsibility and a desire to do what was best for the community's long-term wellbeing. His contributions were marked not only by expertise, but by a kindness and grounded perspective that elevated our discussions and shaped our work in meaningful ways. Rich was also known for his signature flannel shirts, a reflection of his approachable, down-to-earth personality. That simple trademark became a reminder of the warmth and authenticity he brought to every meeting and interaction. His absence has been deeply felt, but his influence will continue to guide the Planning Commission for years to come. We extend our heartfelt sympathy to Rich's family and loved ones, and we express our profound gratitude for his years of public service. The Planning Commission proudly recognizes and honors the legacy of Richard Beukema, whose commitment to this township will not be forgotten.

SYNOPSIS OF MAJOR ACCOMPLISHMENTS

- Worked on many Special Exception Use cases and site plan reviews
- Rezoned Whispering Pines Condos from Resort & Recreation to Gun Lake Residential Lakefront.

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PCI REPORT

ANNUAL REPORT ZONING BOARD OF APPEALS

ANNUAL REPORT PLANNING COMMISSION

- Developed and recommended to Board of Trustees the Zoning Ordinance for Private Residential Ponds and Agricultural or Farm Ponds.
- Worked on a new Planned Mineral Removal Ordinance (in process)
- Continued work on Master Plan review/update. (in process)
- Completed Annual Capital Improvement Plan to recommend to Board of Trustees.
- The number of permits issued in 2025 was the same as in 2024.
- There were fewer rezoning requests in 2025 than in 2024.
- SEU requests: 8 out of 15 were related to short term rentals in Whispering Pines.
- There were 7 subdivision land development splits.
- Cost to the township for McKenna Associates (planning consultation) was down significantly in 2025.
- Legal services increased quite a bit largely due to short term rentals.
- Strong participation in education from planning commission members. All of the master planners met their continuing education requirements for the year. New members John and Niki are already signed up for the Citizen Planner program in Barry County.

STRATEGIES FOR 2026

1. Continue to strongly encourage all Planning Commissioners to attend Michigan Township Association, Michigan State University and Michigan Planning Association training opportunities - especially those needing continuing education credits to maintain Master Citizen Planner Credentials. Encourage Master Citizen Planner Accreditation.
2. Continue execution of the plan to complete a review and update of the Yankee Springs Township Master Plan.
3. Assist the Township Board to undertake a "Strategic Planning" effort that conducts:
 - o Identification of major goals and establishing priorities
 - o Prioritize implementation on those goals
 - o Assign goals to specific township officials for leadership

WORK PLAN 2026 (subject to prioritization from Board of Trustees)

1. Continue with a modification to the existing Planned Mineral Removal ordinance and provide a recommendation to the BOT.
2. Continue work on the review and update of the township Master Plan.
3. Review current ordinance regarding permanent docks and provide a recommendation to the BOT.
4. Explore an ordinance to address blight and make a recommendation to the BOT.
5. Explore an ordinance to address alternative energy on a commercial level.
6. Explore an ordinance to address data centers.
7. Review the Sanitary Landfill Ordinance to ensure the language is consistent with updated PMR ordinance.
8. Explore an ordinance to address fire and burning.
9. Review zoning ordinances to determine if any regulations need updating.
10. Timely preparation of Capital Improvement Plan Review & Update.

CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT PLAN

- Plan has been submitted to the Board of Trustees for review.
- This is a recommendation of capital improvements that we see that need to happen and can be budgeted for and prioritized by the Board.
- This was done with input from several of the trustees and other community members.
- Areas looked at included:
 1. Township Offices and Hall

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- 2. Yankee Springs Water Service
- 3. Sewer Services
- 4. Fire Protection
- 5. Township Park/Non-motorized Trail
- 6. Information Technology
- 7. Veterans Memorial
- 8. Cemetery

- There are additional categories that are not technically township capital assets, but they are critical to our township and they require township funds. For this reason, they are also covered as an important part of this capital improvement plan.
 - 1. Township Roads
 - 2. Ambulance/Emergency Services
- The plan looks at different funding sources
- Water and sewer are mainly paid for by the residents that use the services.
- All of the projects are included in a spreadsheet that has been provided to the BOT. It includes approximate costs as well as a tentative yearly schedule.

Supervisor Heethuis accepted the Capital Improvement Plan on behalf of the Board of Trustees. It was also discussed that the Veterans Memorial may legally use township funds but prefers to do as much as possible through donation. Some of the items on this plan are already in process and have been included in the township budgets.

BOARD OF TRUSTEES GOALS FOR 2026

- Pass Mining Ordinance (Planned Mineral Ordinance)
- Parking lots Hall & Fire Station
- Shed for Fire Station
- Signs for Cemeteries and Hall
- Curbs for Hall
- Mulch for Playground
- Refurbish Park Ball Diamond
- Double water capacity/arsenic removal
- New deep well (250-gallon minimum)
- Continue to digitize Township documents
- Conduct mid term primary in August and election in November
- New pickleball courts opening in the spring

Supervisor Heethuis commented that he is very proud of the work that the Planning Commission does. Not all townships even have a planning commission and ours is made up of our citizens which is how it should be. There was concern that the stand-alone fire station would be too costly but for the first time the cost of Fire and EMS fits within our millage.

Training:

- There is a lot of different training that is available.
 - It is okay for members to sign up for classes and the township will reimburse the cost.
 - If preferred, the township can take care of the registration and cost through the clerk.
 - They are working on setting up the hall so that any class available on ZOOM can be taken here if someone doesn't want to take it in person. The goal is to set that up by March.
 - Checking on if a CPR class can be offered by our Fire Department on an annual

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CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT PLAN

BOT GOALS FOR 2026

TRAINING

basis.

PUBLIC COMMENT:

Mike Cunningham: Thanked the Board for putting a moratorium on mining to give the Planning Commission time to work on it, and thanked the PC for all the good discussion. He also appreciated that the PC kept the two public comment sections on their agenda. He suggests that all the boards should include all the parts of the public hearing, etc., on the agenda to help avoid making mistakes in procedure. It also helps to put things on the screen. Hopefully the empty ZBA seat will be filled this year.

Sandy Marcukaitis: She shared how much she enjoys her work and that when she sends out email reminders, she always gets a smile from Dave VanHouten's responses. Therefore, in response to his request, she awarded him and several other committee members with a gold star for perfect attendance.

Catherine Getty: She echoed the supervisor's comments that not everyone sees what happens elsewhere around the County. She brags about Yankee Springs quite a bit on what has been accomplished with meetings like this, the park improvements that make it fully accessible, it's really quite amazing. It's not like that everywhere and she is proud to be part of the team.

BOARD COMMENT:

Mousseau: Thanks to all who were involved in preparing for tonight.

VanHouten: Asks the Park Committee once again to look at making the Veteran's Memorial into the Veterans' Memorial Park. This might make additional funding available. Also they would like to grow the committee so if there are any vets out there, we are looking for more. It could also be someone who is not a vet as long as they can run two miles and do 50 pushups. We've been on this board now for 5 years. When I was running, I went to other meetings and people laughed because the board was so dysfunctional. But now things are running so well, our committees do the research and give us the facts so we can make our decisions, and I think we're doing a really good job.

Hopkins: Thanked the committees, particularly Shana, for being so good about getting everything in for payroll. It makes it so much easier, especially because we now do payroll for the fire department too it's a lot of people. It really helps a ton, because those are the most important checks. And thanks to everyone who put everything together for this meeting tonight.

Heethuis: The team we have here is a strong team. Most townships are envious of what we are doing. This is going to be a big year, starting out with the mining ordinance, so let's do it again.

ADJOURNMENT:

Motion by Heethuis with support from Mousseau to adjourn the meeting at 7:15 PM.

Approved by all. Motion Carried.

Motion by Bush with support from Frigmanski to close the Planning Commission meeting.

Approved by all. Motion Carried.

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PUBLIC COMMENT

BOARD COMMENT

Motion by Boysen with support from Mawson to close the ZBA meeting. Approved by all.

Motion Carried.

Approved by: _____

Tom Hopkins, Township Clerk

Date: _____

Respectfully submitted by:

Betsy Frigmanski, Recording Secretary

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ADJOURNMENT

DRAFT