



Village of Lawrence
157 N. Paw Paw St.
Lawrence, MI 49064
PH: 269-674-8161 Fax: 269-674-3004
www.lawrencemi.org



Village of Lawrence Regular Common Council Meeting
157 N. Paw Paw St., Lawrence, MI 49064
July 8, 2025

Call to Order: The Regular Common Council Meeting was called to order at 6:00 p.m.

Pledge of Allegiance: Led by President Gritter

Roll Call:

- **Present:** John Gritter, President; Annette Crandall, Trustee; Phil Glennie, Trustee; David Deloach, Trustee
- **Absent:** Chuck Rowlee, Trustee; Alicia Lorenzo, Trustee
- **Also Present:** Chief Steven Richardson, Donna Spenner, Mike Chappell, Kim Thompson, Mark Moore, Anthony Goodrich

Additions to Agenda:

- None

Conflicts of Interest:

- None

Approval of Agenda Month:

No changes; approval not needed

Approval of Prior Council Minutes Month Prior:

Motion by Crandall, 2nd by Deloach
All Aye. Motions Carried.

Finance Manager Report: Kim Thompson

- As interim treasurer, summarized additional duties, including creating the summer tax database and coordinating/verifying with the assessor and county.
- The first property tax payments have been received, and the first distribution will occur on 7/14/25 for the period of 7/1-7/11/25.
- Water Fund reconciliations completed through February 2023; Sewer Fund Reconciliations should be done tomorrow, July 9th.
- Talked again with the auditor, very close to getting the trial balance and all of the reports out to the auditor. A plan was developed to avoid the 8/31/25 issue by creating a copy of the BS&A database for fiscal year-end 2025, allowing normal operations to continue. The FYE2025 database will be used to close the fiscal year once the 2023/24 fiscal year is completed.



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- Budget Amendments to Major Streets Funds +\$136,500; Municipal Streets Funds +\$19,000 Tree Trimming and \$3,200 Insurance & Bonds; Building Inspection Electrical Permit Income +\$5,000, Plumbing Permit Income +\$10,000, and Mechanical Permit Income +\$5,000.
Motion to approve Budget Amendments by Crandall, 2nd by Glennie.
Roll Call:
Aye: Glennie, Deloach, Gritter, Crandall
Nay: None
Absent: Lorenzo, Rowlee
- Announced vacation from 2025-07-21 to 2025-08-04, with remote access available if needed.
- Water Tower Loan Status
- Questions were raised about the status of water tower loans, including a \$100K water tower paint loan, a USDA loan for \$732,000 (water main), and other entries. There was uncertainty about the existence and payoff status of a loan for the water tower loan for the business park water tower and the LDFA repayment. Thompson will review and reconcile all LDFA payments to the Village..
- BS&A Database Issues and Audit Errors
- Discussion on previous issues with BS&A database management, including difficulties with year-end closing, multiple incorrect journal entries, and audit errors that caused delays and extra work. The finance manager escalated to BS&A's lead developer and confirmed a simpler solution.
- A more efficient database management process was identified and will be implemented.
- Auditor Performance and Accountability:
 - Discussion about the \$100,000 paid to an auditor for perceived incompetence, potential grounds for recourse, and the auditor's defense regarding BS&A system date changes and reconciliation issues. Thompson will review once all audits have been submitted. If funds were paid by the Village or State for the incorrect advice, Thompson will talk to the attorney about a refund of funds spent.
- Water Fund Reconciliation:
 - Detailed review of the Water Fund reconciliation process, identifying discrepancies and result of the year-end difference to \$23, which was deemed immaterial.
- Audit Timelines and BS&A System Issues:
 - Discussion on audit completion timelines, noting that BS&A allows only 6 months after FYE for .NET (server) based systems and 12 months for cloud versions. However, many municipalities face issues with the cloud version, leading to lawsuits and likely deadline extensions to convert to the cloud. Thompson will conduct a vendor analysis of the cloud version of BS&A and other software solutions to determine the best system to use in the future.
- Accounting Firm Deliverables and Payment:
 - Review of deliverables from the most recent accounting firm, noting that 10 hours of work and certain materials are still outstanding despite payment. Specific mention of Joe's \$7,500 invoice and instructions not to pay until all materials are delivered.



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- BKC Accounting Issues: Discussion of significant issues with BKC, including repeated entry reversals and poor reconciliation practices, leading to concerns.
- Revised Reconciliation Schedule:
 - Update on progress with reconciliations, aiming to complete the last of them by the end of the week and submit files to the auditor for fiscal year ending February 28, 2023 by July 18, 2025.
- Police Fund Transfers and Reconciliations: Looking into missing \$100,000 in police fund transfers for fiscal year 2023, with \$25,000 quarterly deposits not appearing in bank accounts despite being recorded in the general ledger.
- Consent Items Resolution:
 - Review of a resolution to define which expenditures can be paid prior to council approval, including payroll, contractually mandated billings, police and legal services, utilities, credit card bills (with policy), insurance, and tax/trust fund payments.Motion to approve Resolution for Consent Expenditure Policy.
Motion by Deloach, 2nd by Glennie.
Roll Call:
Aye: Glennie, Deloach, Gritter, Crandall
Nay: None
Absent: Lorenzo, Rowlee
- Expenditure Approval Process: Clarification that all consent items paid early must still be included in the monthly expenditure list for council approval, with plans to improve reporting for clarity.
- Consent items will be included in expenditure reports; reporting improvements are in progress.

Approval of Bills & Review of Bank Balances Month Prior:

Motion by Crandall , 2nd by Deloach

All Aye. Motions Carried.

Presentations & Guests:

Van Buren County Commissioner: Mike Chappell

- Opioid Settlement Funds and RFP Process:
 - Discussion on the status of opioid settlement funds, clarification that \$300,000 remains to be spent over the next two years, and that AEDs are not eligible purchases. Radios are still under consideration with Tim working on it.
- Easement for Power Lines at Fairgrounds:
 - An easement was granted to I&M for installing power lines across county property at the fairgrounds to support additional campsites.
- Meeting Date Change:



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- The meeting originally scheduled for September 9th is rescheduled to September 8th due to conflicts.
- Saddle Lake Bond Approval:
 - Approval of a \$254,000 bond for Saddle Lake improvements to address lake level issues.

Lawrence Township: Donna Spenner

- Upcoming Joint Meeting and Public Hearings:
 - Announcement of a joint meeting on August 19th and two public hearings on July 30th: one at 6:00 PM for the solar farm field and one at 7:00 PM for the Michigan grant.
- Michigan Grant Application and Market One Involvement:
 - Discussion on the Michigan grant application process, collaboration with Market One, and the intended use plan. Grant request was \$472,000 (\$400,000 cap plus \$72,000 admin). Market One may be hired for grant management.
- Cannabis License Management and Budget:
 - Update on cannabis license numbers, management, and budget. Rich is recognized as an expert and manages the budget efficiently. Awaiting response from Rich Glista for further questions.

Lawrence Township Emergency Services: Steven Richardson

- Report of 11 fire calls (3 in the village), 20 EMS calls (11 in the village), and 281 total calls year-to-date. Maintenance updates, new phone lines, and campus safety checks were completed.
- Grant Application for SCBA Cylinders: A grant was submitted for 20 spare SCBA cylinders (~\$25,000). The township bought 25 last year; waiting to see if grant is approved before purchasing more.
- Community Events and Outreach:
 - Participation in Dollar General remodel event, Arlington Baptist Church fireworks, upcoming kids event, fair duty, and health fair. Ongoing distribution of smoke and carbon monoxide alarms.
- Fire Department Centennial Celebration:
 - Announcement of the township fire department's centennial open house on August 9th from 12-6 pm.
- FEMA Drills for Palisades Reopening:
 - Participation in FEMA-mandated drills for Palisades reopening. Drills held on July 8th, next on July 22nd, and a graded drill on July 29th. Multiple agencies involved.

Mark Moore-143 N. Paw Paw:

- Presented drainage issue with the sidewalk; water is draining towards the building causing issues.
- Uncertainty over property line ownership; a survey is required before proceeding.



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Reports:

President's Report:

- Joint Township/Village Meeting Recap:
 - Contact Rich Glista regarding Marijuana Administrator position with the Village; Township will draft a contract for lawyer to review prior to approval.
 - MSHDA CDBG Grant Application Process : Village has submitted application for the \$400,000 grant that would be distributed among 10 houses (\$40,000 each) for repairs like windows, roofing, and HVAC. Eligibility is income-based and owner-occupied. Clarification that rentals are not included.
 - Attended the MarketOne Annual Meeting in South Haven. Event was well attended.
 - Village Manager Ordinance and Job Description:
 - Review of the Village Manager ordinance Section 2-82, job description, and contract. The ordinance is being amended to refer to the job description, allowing future changes without rewriting the ordinance.
- Motion to approve changes to the Village Manager Ordinance.
Motion by Crandall, 2nd by DeLoach
Roll Call:
Aye: Glennie, DeLoach, Gritter, Crandall
Nay: None
Absent: Rowlee, Lorenzo
- Contract for Village Manager can be finalized once publication of Village Manager Ordinance is in print publication; will make retroactive to position start date of June 16th.
 - Personnel Policy Updates:
 - Review of tracked changes in personnel policy, including PTO accrual rates, holiday simplification, and separation of ESTA and non-ESTA PTO policies.
 - Detailed discussion on how holidays are allocated, simplification of language, and ensuring department heads determine specific days off. Correction of terminology from 'vacation' to 'PTO'.
 - Change from one-hour unpaid lunch to 30-minute unpaid meal break, with two 15-minute paid breaks not to be combined with meal period.
- Motion by Crandall, 2nd by DeLoach to approve the revised policy with recommended changes:
- PTO accrual set at 2.76 hours to reach 72 hours, and holidays simplified to two days where applicable.
 - Holidays and PTO language clarified; document to be searched for remaining 'vacation' references to update to 'PTO'.
 - Break policy updated and included in the personnel policy.

All Aye. Motions carried.



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- Discussion on filling one open DPW position and the clerk position, including job description, hours, pay rate, and transition from part-time to full-time.
 - Amy has a candidate for the clerk's position. She will proceed with hiring at \$20/hour for 32–34 hours per week, with potential for full-time after one year.
 - Amy and Brian will coordinate posting for the open DPW position.
- Consideration of extending office hours to better serve the public, including possible evening hours and staggered shifts for clerk and treasurer. All agreed to wait until such time as both a Clerk and Treasurer have been hired.
- Amy noted that she would recommend moving publications back to Courier Leader. Would provide a local print source and quick turnaround time with a Monday 3 pm deadline for Thursday publication. Agreement reached to move forward as such.

Clerk's Report:

- No Report

Village Manager:

- Marijuana Administrator Proposal:
 - Proposal to hire Rich Glista, Lawrence Township Marihuana Administrator, as the village marijuana administrator, with payment from license revenue. Discussion of payment structure (hourly vs. per license), number of licenses (16), and intergovernmental agreement with the township.
- Marijuana License Fund Management:
 - Clarification on how marijuana license revenue is managed, with funds currently in the trust and agency fund, and the need to set up a separate fund as per state requirements.
- Marijuana Ordinance Enforcement:
 - Discussion on enforcement of marijuana ordinance requirements, including odor filtration and alarm systems. Resident complaints about alarms and odors were noted.
- Safe-Built Termination & Transition: Update on the termination of the Safe-Built contract, including the method and date of termination, communication with Safe-Built's president, and the effective end date of the contract.
- Transition to Ben Rousseau/Michigan Code Inspection and Michelich & Associates:
 - Details on the new contract with Ben Rousseau for permitting, and upcoming contract with Michelich & Associates for zoning and ordinance. Clarification that Ben handles permitting only.

Motion to approve contract with Michelich & Associates.

Motion by Crandall, 2nd by Deloach

Roll Call:

Aye: Glennie, Deloach, Gritter, Crandall

Nay:

Absent: Rowlee, Lorenzo



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- Review of open permits with Safe-Built:
 - 106 total as of July 2, 2025, including 48 for 400 South Paw Paw/Brush Creek; 12 ordinance; 5 building without permit; others include mechanical and electrical permits. Discussion on the 90-day period for Safe-Built to complete in-progress items, and the process for Ben Rousseau to take over new or expired permits.
- Residents expressed frustration with lack of communication and delays in permit processing under Safe-Built.
- Specific Properties in Code Violation or Needing Action:
 - Discussion of properties with ongoing issues: dilapidated house at the corner of Blackburn and James and Coastal Line Homes at 214 East St. Joe.
- Legal Process for Property Code Violations:
 - Discussion on the process for court orders, village authority to enter properties, and responsibility for legal action between the village, Safe-Built, and attorneys. Uncertainty about the existence and details of court orders for certain properties; need to verify documentation and clarify next actions.

Police Department:

- Park Playground Safety Issue:
 - Addressing ongoing complaints and safety concerns regarding the park slide and the northeast section of the playground equipment. The slide has been removed, and the area is boarded up, but people continue to bypass safety measures by kicking off boards and jumping out the sides. The area has been further secured with screws and nails, but there's concern someone will get hurt. A decision is needed on whether to repair or tear down that portion of the playground. A quote of approximately \$11,000 from Glenn Thomsen for repairs is pending submission to the insurance company.
- Police Citations and Speeding Enforcement:
 - The police department issued 22 written citations out of 45 traffic stops this month. 22 individuals received tickets, and 23 received verbal warnings. There is an ongoing issue with speeding, including a driver caught doing 53 mph through downtown.
- Radio Upgrade and Replacement Plan:
 - Discussions were held with the VBC Sheriff Dept regarding radio upgrades and replacements. He plans a meeting with Tim McGee (Director of 911) between now and January. A solution for all departments is expected by January 2026, with the Sheriff's Department enforcing upgrades and going live in October 2026. The Sheriff's Department is considering paying for or loaning the radios.
- Opioid Settlement Funding for Equipment:
 - Pawpaw PD and Decatur plan to request opioid settlement funds from the county for heart starts (AEDs) for all police departments, including Lawrence. The county claims equipment requests are not allowed, but other state departments have received such grants. The money is not depleted; some was used for Narcan kits for schools, and \$300,000 will be available for RFPs, though AEDs are not on the county's approved list.



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- Personnel Training and Certifications:
 - Justin has not yet passed his MFR test but is scheduled to take it this month. The speaker needs to submit their first responder license renewal this month but is awaiting training completion from two months prior. The department is working through mandated state training (26 hours, mostly online) to maintain state certification, noting that more requirements are added with fewer resources.
- Meeting Schedules and Event Manpower Strategy:
 - The next citizen police committee meeting is scheduled for August 19th (Tuesday), and the joint meeting is on August 18th. The department will no longer use the Sheriff's Department for reserves due to high and inconsistent costs, and long billing times (up to 7 months). Instead, local departments will supplement each other through reciprocal officer exchanges for events. Advance notice is crucial for special events to ensure adequate manpower, as last-minute requests are difficult to fulfill, and lack of police protection can lead to event cancellations, as seen in Schoolcraft. Additionally, dispatch statistics were not available this month as they won't be ready until the 10th of the month.
- Gravel Truck Speeding and Traffic Control:
 - There is an ongoing issue with gravel trucks speeding through town, with one truck caught doing 55 mph in downtown. Justin has been instructed to stop them. The trucks are often on a time crunch, making multiple trips daily. Concerns were raised about speeding on Corwin Road, which is dangerous for children, and that school buses can be just as bad as the trucks. The department will continue to monitor and address this issue, aiming to establish a reputation that speeding is not tolerated in Lawrence.

Community Development:

- No Meeting ; Meeting for August 7th canceled
- Re-establishing Lawrence Area Business Association (LABA):
 - A proposal was made to revert the Community Development Committee back to the Lawrence Area Business Association (LABA), as it was in 2008, to focus on attracting and retaining businesses and supporting schools. The current Community Development Committee is perceived as unproductive and too focused on events, which should be handled by the DDA, as the DDA has the budget and capacity. The LABA aims to be a more commerce-oriented group, like a local chamber of commerce. The committee has historically struggled with attendance and productivity. The goal is to attract productive members, with Matt Sanborn and the school superintendent identified as potential interests. A clear mission statement and definition for LABA are needed for approval, which Phil will draft and bring to the next meeting

DDA:

- Next meeting Wednesday, July 23rd at 5:30 PM.
- DDA minutes:



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- Discussed moving the gorilla tamale vendor and the development of response to postcards to send to the DDA area about facade grants.
- The grand opening of Community Care offers various services, including veterans benefits, sports physicals for students, and services for seniors.
- The clock in the park project is ongoing.
- For Fruit Street's incubator reimbursement, they will not be reimbursed for months they were closed, and those months will be added to the end of their 18-month term. The reimbursement structure is \$300 for the first three months, then \$150, then \$100. The definition of "open" for reimbursement is a point of contention, as the policy does not specify hours, but Fruit Street was "blatantly closed." The DDA revised its policy to require businesses to submit monthly forms for reimbursement; otherwise, they will only be reimbursed for the current month, not for past months of non-submission.
- Discussion about the sign for the new pavilion and its dedication, honoring Jim Crandall, being worked on by Sporting Image.
- Discussion about contacting the Amish for installing benches and a hitching post. Concerns include the public parking lot, the small grassy area near the doctor's office (which might not accommodate buggies without obstructing traffic), and potential animal safety issues. Brian or the Chief need to be involved in the final placement decision. Gary Barton's gravel lot across the street is being explored as a potentially ideal location, as it would keep buggies out of traffic flow. A quote for the pavilion and benches is expected this weekend.

Joint Parks & Recreation:

- Next meeting August 10th at 6 PM.

LDFA:

- The LDFA meeting, originally scheduled for the 23rd, needs to be rescheduled. August 6th is proposed, pending confirmation. There was also a discussion about the start time for the August 6th PSC meeting, with 6:30 PM or 6 PM being considered.

Personnel:

- No Report

Planning Commission:

- No Meeting; Next Meeting July 28th at 6 PM.

Public Services/DPW:

- \$17,200 for Dixon Engineering quote for both water tower inspections and cleanings. This will come out of the Water Fund Maintenance & Repair budget. This will eat up a majority of the budget and will likely require a budget amendment later in the year.



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- Motion to approve quote pending attorney review.
 - Motion by Glennie, 2nd by DeloachRoll call:
Aye: Gritter, Crandall, Deloach, Glennie
Nay:
Absent: Lorenzo, Rowlee
- Verizon requests approval to install a diesel generator in the leased area (north side of the fence). An environmental assessment classified it as diesel sensitive but not restricted. The generator will have a diesel enhanced enclosure with safety features (triple-walled stainless steel, braided fuel lines, overflow box, leak detection alarm) to prevent storm system contamination. This was not part of the original lease scope, and approval is needed to add it. Verizon currently pays approximately \$1650.00 monthly for the lease, and the generator is intended as a backup power source.
- Motion to approve Verizon Generator Installation
 - Motion by Deloach, 2nd by CrandallAll Aye. Motions Carried.
- A sewer problem at 232 Blackman Street, 12 feet deep and 5 feet off the road edge, requires immediate attention as Roto-Rooter cannot proceed. The city is responsible for the line from the roadway due to past issues with road tears and inability to mark laterals. A contractor, Kalamazoo Excavated (chosen due to recent dissatisfaction with Compton's), is providing a price. Due to proximity to the creek, dewatering is expected to cost \$7,000-\$10,000. This is an emergency, bypassing immediate council approval.
-

Citizen Police Committee:

- Next meeting is Tuesday, August 19 at 6:30 PM.

ZBA:

- No Meeting Held.

New Business:

- None

Old Business:

- None

Public Comment:

- Antony Goodrich-Ox Roast:
 - Requesting assistance getting banner hung across Red Arrow around August 1st. DPW will contact Glenn Thomsen for help getting hung up.



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- Requesting option for open beverage during live music at the park during Ox Roast on Saturday and Sunday. Phil will look into adding alcohol to certificate of liability held by DDA. Concluded there is more that needs to be looked into before approving, such as State license responsibility. Village will reach out if more information needed and Anthony will look into what they would need to do.

Council Comment:

- None

Motion to Adjourn:

Motion by Deloach, 2nd by Crandall
All Aye, Motion Carried.
Meeting Adjourned at 9:03 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted:



Amy Cordes, Village Manager



John Gritter, Village President