

157 N. Paw Paw St. Lawrence, MI 49064

PH: 269-674-8161 Fax: 269-674-3004

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### Village of Lawrence Regular Common Council Meeting 157 N. Paw Paw St., Lawrence, MI 49064 November 11, 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:

- <u>Present:</u> John Gritter, President; David Deloach, Trustee; Phil Glennie, Trustee; Chuck Rowlee, Trustee; Annette Crandall, Trustee
- Absent: Alicia Lorenzo, Trustee
- Also Present: Chief Paul Bianco, Brian Johnson, Amy Cordes, Kim Thompson, Donna Spenner, Mike Chappell, Bill Featherstone, Ryan Williamson

### Additions to Agenda:

None

#### Conflicts of Interest:

None

#### Approval of Agenda Month:

Motion by Crandall, 2<sup>nd</sup> by Deloach All Aye. Motions Carried.

### Approval of Prior Council Minutes Month Prior:

Motion by Crandall, 2<sup>nd</sup> by Glennie All Aye. Motions Carried.

#### Finance Manager Report-Kim Thompson:

- <u>Financial Reconciliation & Audit</u>: Significant progress is being made on financial reconciliations, which are about 75% complete. The primary delay is the need to journalize hundreds of historical "pencil adjustments" into the General Ledger before the files for the fiscal year ending in 2023 can be sent to the auditor, Ben Walker. This internal work is expected to save significant costs. The Department of Treasury is withholding Act 51 funds pending the audit but may release them once the files are submitted. A suggestion was made to ask Treasury for financial assistance to cover the extra hours required that were not initially budgeted for.
- Bank & Asset Management: It was discovered that some Certificates of Deposit (CDs) from 2021
  no longer exist, and interest earnings since then need to be recorded. Relationships with the
  Village's four approved banks have been re-established to ensure records match for the audit.



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- <u>Fiscal Year Outlook</u>: The focus is on finalizing FY2023. However, FY2024 will also require major corrections, as many errors were carried over and dates will need to be adjusted for the 08/31/23 issue.
- Budget Amendments: Multiple line items require budget amendments. General Fund Financial Manger Salaries has a recommended amendment from \$20,000 to \$37,000 to account for additional costs estimated to bring GL current, FICA expense of \$2,600; Computer Hardware expense of \$1,000; Planning Commission Contracted Legal Services from \$2,500 to \$6,000; and Operation & Maintenance from \$0 to \$3,000 for Equipment Rental-Internal not budgeted for. Municipal Streets had amendments for Village Hall Admin Computer Hardware of \$400.00 expenses not budgeted for; Traffic Services Decorative Lighting increase from \$4,000 to \$6,000; Traffic Services Street Lights increase from \$\$13,000 to \$19,000; and Administrative-Insurance from \$3,240 to \$6,400 for additional premium due to prior losses. Moving Building Department \$350 Site Plan Reviews to General Fund Planning Commission. Water Village Hall Admin Computer Hardware from \$0 to \$400 for expenses not budgeted for. Sewer Village Hall Admin Computer Hardware from \$0 to \$400 for expenses not budgeted for.

Motion to amend budget as proposed, excluding Building Department line item.

Motion by Deloach, 2<sup>nd</sup> by Rowlee

Rollcall:

Aye: Glennie, Crandall, Gritter, Deloach, and Rowlee

Nay: None

Absent: Lorenzo

All Aye. Motions Carried.

- Treasurer's Report: Unpaid property tax collection is at 80.4%. The bank balance report is accurate, and a revised format grouping accounts by fund will be presented next month.
- Marijuana License Fees: A reconciliation found that some Village marijuana licenses were not billed in prior years. A discussion followed regarding how far back we should go for the unbilled licenses.

Motion to bill for unbilled license fees for years 2024 and 2025 by Crandall, 2<sup>nd</sup> by Glennie.

Rollcall:

Aye: Deloach, Rowlee, Crandall, Glennie, Gritter

Nay: None

Absent: Lorenzo

All Aye. Motions Carried.

- Glennie requested a list of outstanding notes, such as those on the water tower and the water main/USDA loans. Thompson will work on getting those together for him.
- Thompson will be revising the Bank Balances format for the December meeting to group the Fund accounts together.



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### Approval of Bills & Review of Bank Balances Month Prior:

Motion by Glennie, 2<sup>nd</sup> by Crandall

Rollcall:

Aye: Crandall, Deloach, Glennie, Rowlee, Gritter

Nay: None

Absent: Lorenzo

All Aye. Motions Carried.

#### **Presentations & Guests:**

### Van Buren County Commissioner: Mike Chappell

- The Board approved the snow removal bid totaling \$63,850.00 for 14 County-owned properties
  during its October 14, 2025, meeting. This represents a modest 1% increase over the previous
  season and ensures essential winter maintenance at County facilities.
- The Board authorized the auction of a 2018 field-tracking drone previously used by the Sheriff's
  Office during its October 14, 2025, meeting. Proceeds will go toward the purchase of two
  modern drones better suited for rapid response. The original drone had become too slow to
  deploy for urgent operations.
- The Board authorized the auction of an outdated golf cart used by the Sheriff's Department for community events during the October 14, 2025, meeting. The unit is no longer cost-effective to maintain, and any revenue from its sales will be returned to the department's budget.
- The Board approved the purchase of four patrol vehicles for the Sheriff's Office during its October 14, 2025, meeting. The purchase, not to exceed \$260,000, will be funded through the General Fund as part of the department's annual fleet replacement cycle.
- The Board authorized the purchase of a ¾-ton replacement truck for the Buildings and Grounds Department at a cost of \$52,952.00 during the October 28, 2025, meeting. This purchase was included in the approved 2025-2026 Capital Improvement Plan.

### **Lawrence Township: Donna Spenner**

- Matt Sanborn is doing great on the CDBG grant process. He will be attending the in-person training in Lansing on November 19<sup>th</sup>.
- Anthony Rotar from Heelstone Renewable Energy (Solar Farm) contacted Alicia Lorenzo regarding the opportunity to donate to the Parks and Rec Playground Project. Lorenzo forwarded the email to Cordes, who contacted and provided the information requested by Heelstone.
- Winter taxes have been sent out, voting is done (Library millage passed), and the new gas station on Red Arrow is now open and will holding a Grand Opening later.
- The Township has hired a new Fire Chief, Bill Featherstone, who started Tuesday, November 11<sup>th</sup>.



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### Lawrence Township Emergency Services: Bill Featherstone

- Chief Featherstone introduced himself and gave some background on his history. He started
  with LTES as paid on call in March and has been in fire service for almost 20 years. Chief
  Featherstone is also employed full-time as Fire Captain in Covert.
- James Fein is the EMS Chief and Chief Featherstone will oversee both Fire and EMS.

### Lawrence Public Schools Superintendent: Ryan Williamson

- Enrollment and Fund Balance: Enrollment is up to 411 from 407 in Fall 25 and 393 in '24-'25. The Fund Balance is up from 1.7% to 9.6%.
- K-12 Principal Adjustments: Surveyed staff on K-12 Principal Adjustments on the following metrics:
  - Maintains School Culture/Encouraging/Student Centered/Behavior Management/Support Staff (9/10 higher)
  - Build Relationships/Ensures MTSS (8.5/10)
  - Communication and Visibility (8/8.5)
  - Working on adjusting to improve areas where scores were lower
- <u>Donations/Appreciation and Recognition</u>: LPS received several donations including uniforms and wrestling mats from the Alumni Association and Terrance O'Rourke for MTSS. They would like to recognize the hard work by Marney Santo for the Craft Fair, and the participation in Grandparents Day and Veterans Day.
- Before/After School Care Update: Met with the Before/After School Care program (Erin Kucharski and Abby Michael). The ISD is the only one eligible for those funds and the school will be working with them to utilize them for the program. The program will be free to the community and anticipated to run from 6:45-7:45 am, 2:45-5:30 pm, and for 32 days during the summer. Based on surveys, they anticipate about half of the 60-70 families that showed interest in participating in the program.
- Athletics: The Hall of Fame game was successful with several inductees inducted into the Hall of Fame. They appreciate the Township for the support during home sporting events and Brian Johnson from the Village for help at the Tiger's Den. They have seen an increase in participation in after-school activities for the second year in a row.

### Reports:

#### President's Report:

No Report

### Clerk's Report:

No Report

### Village Manager:



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<u>CDBG Grant</u>: All necessary documents for the CDBG grant have been submitted. It was clarified
that applicant assets WILL count towards eligibility, correcting what was previously stated which
was assets did not count towards eligibility. Part of the grant application process required the
Village to have a Procurement Policy, which we did not previously have. A Procurement Policy
was drafted and presented to Council for approval.

Motion to adopt Procurement Policy for CDBG grant application by Deloach, 2<sup>nd</sup> by Glennie. All Aye, Motions Carried.

MERS DC Plan Update: Cordes and Chief Bianco spoke with the Village's MERS representative, Karima LoJoie, on October 30, 2025, and gained a clearer understanding of how both the DC and the 457 plans work. The concerns the Village brought up were that we had several employees, Cordes included, that did not choose a contribution amount. After 30 days, the default contribution amount is 0%. The next concern was how to match employees who cannot have matches into their 457 plan as the Village currently does not offer a match to the 457 plan. After conversations back and forth, documents were presented that offered several options. The Village can choose to change the default contribution amount from 0% to 3% (or any amount) and this would apply to the employees who defaulted to 0% or the Village could choose to make contributions into the 457 plan participants (applies to full-time employees only) account in lieu of the DC plan match (amount and frequency to be determined by contribution caps) by signing an amendment. It was discussed and determined that the Village does not wish to change the default contribution amount and instead will pursue the option to change the policy on matching 457 contributions. Eligibility for participation was also amended in the MERS plan documents to exclude Fire (the Village does not have Fire employees), and include Full-Time Clerical, FT DPW, FT Police, and the Village Manager.

Motion to amend the division name to include FT Clerical, FT DPW, FT Polic, and the Village Manager and exclude Fire by Crandall, 2<sup>nd</sup> by Deloach.

All Aye. Motions Carried.

Sale and Purchase Agreement for 107 W. St. Joseph: Presented the Sales and Purchase Agreement and Quit Claim Deed for 107 W. St. Joseph. This process was started with previous Village Manager and Previous Village President but stalled out at the drafting and signing of necessary documents. The agreement has been revised and reviewed by legal counsel and ready to present for signing. It was noted, however, that the address was listed incorrectly for R&B Holding, LLC. The remainder of the documents were correct.

Motion by Deloach, 2<sup>nd</sup> by Rowlee to reapprove the Sales and Purchase Agreement and Quit Claim Deed with R&B Holding, LLC pending the completion of the current address correction. Rollcall:

Aye: Glennie, Deloach, Rowlee, Gritter, Crandall



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Nay: None Absent: Lorenzo

All Aye. Motions Carried.

### **Police Department:**

- We wrote 21 LPD incident reports during the period 1 Oct to 31 Oct 2025 which ranged from a
  Damage to Property, Assault, Assist other Dept, Intimidation/Stalking, Ordinance Violation,
  Welfare Check, EMS/Fire incident(s), Suspicious Occurrence, Private Damage Accident (PDA),
  Driving Law Violation and General Assistance.
  - Ran radar and watched for violations all over town to bring speeding down and make streets safer.
  - o Continue to monitor traffic in front of the elementary School before/after school day.
  - Daily vehicle patrol in the business park to keep an on eye on businesses. Stopping in to check w/employees as well.
  - Contact with citizens/kids as opportunities present themselves in the park and around town.
  - Continue to keep an eye out for blight issues and parking Violations. Also, educate citizens on parking ordinances via verbal warnings and tickets to correct violations.
  - Ofc Vande Voren was present in the park and around town for the Trunk or Treat in the park from 5p to 7:30p on Halloween. No issues.
- During the month of October LPD issued 20 written traffic citations, took 3 UD10 traffic crash report(s) and made approximately 25 traffic stops for traffic offenses of which 5 resulted in verbal warnings to citizens.
- During the month of October 2025 LPD responded to 14 calls for service that originated from
  the Van Buren County 911 dispatch Center. 12 police calls, 2 medical and 0 fire/rescue call(s).
  MSP was dispatched to 2 calls (2 -primary & 0 as back-up to Lawrence PD or VBCS) and the
  VBCS was dispatched to 8 calls (5-primary and 3-as back-up to Lawrence PD or MSP). Note: all
  calls that VBCS & MSP were primary are when LPD did not have an officer on
  duty(nights/weekends).
  - Continue to search for potential part-time officer candidates.
  - o Continue to mentor Ofc Vande Voren on various training points.
  - Both Ofc Vande Voren & I completed our Yearly mandatory MCOLES training modules (24hrs worth).
  - Radio Encryption update as of 9 Sep 25 from Tim McGee replaced/upgraded radios
     ...will have a solution by Jan 2026 with a deadline of 1 Oct 2026 to go live.
  - Chief Bianco continues to respond to medical calls both in the Village and Township when on duty to assist Township with the QR team & Fire support/manning.
  - Attended medical training on Wednesday, 22 Oct 2025 and Fire Truck maintenance on Friday, 24 Oct 2025 at the Lawrence FD while I was off duty.



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- Opioid Settlement funding Paw Paw PD and Decatur PD submitted a request on behalf of most of the departments for AEDs. We were notified by Chief Rottman that the whole proposal was denied by Van Buren County. Chief Rottman is following up on this.
- No citizens police committee meeting was scheduled for this month. Per Council they will only be scheduled as needed going forward.
- As of today's date, we have had 5 candidates submit cover letters and resumes for the Chief of Police opening. 2 – not qualified(notified) and 3 – interviewed (notification pending).
- My last workday will most likely be sometime during the week of 15 to 19 December 2025 so I can have a hand-off with the interim Chief, which will be discussed further during the Personnel portion of the meeting.

### **Community Development:**

- Semi-truck parade is scheduled to come through town during Christmas in the Village on Saturday, December 6<sup>th</sup> around 7-8:30 pm. The concern is that they may get to Lawrence sooner than expected and we need to plan in case that occurs. It was also discussed to possibly have the old Township Fire Truck meet them as they approach Village limits and "pace" them through town as speed is a concern, even though they received approval conditional on maintaining a 25-mph speed through town.
- Christmas in the Village is anticipated to have Breakfast at the Fire Station (tentative), Santa at the Library, Movie at Legion Hall, the parade, Light up the tree in the Park with Santa, and hot chocolate and cookies at the Legion as part of the list of events.

### DDA:

- <u>Treasurer's Report</u>: Monthly revenue/ expenditure report with 46% of revenues collected and 17% of expenditures completed. Arbor balance on September 30th for Farmers Market \$2,205.91 and DDA of \$161,604.76. Reports attached. Motion by Phil supported by John to approve the treasurer report, carried.
- <u>Farmer's Market</u>: Jan would like to contact the vendors of the market to make adjustments to
  the job description at the next meeting of the DDA. Questions of vendor revenue arose, a new
  accounting process for next year will be implemented, speculation was perhaps the musicians
  were paid from the fees. Need to have new Market Manager in place to attend annual training
  in early 2026. Jan stated the idea of moving the FM onto Elizabeth Street would be a welcomed
  move.
- <u>Façade Grant</u>: Mural on Community Care Office has begun and looks great, Dale will follow up
  with Krista Goens, John mentioned the Village is interested in placing mural on the north wall of
  the village office. As a side note John mentioned the artist for the Community Care Building is
  interested in doing a sculpture of an ox for placement in the park, John will obtain a cost
  estimate. Jan will contact a mural artist about future murals.
- Old Business: Kim will follow up with Orla Bontrager to complete work on old pavilion, John asked if this work included the bathroom. It does not, Kim will have contractor to supply a quote



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for 2026 consideration. Dale will follow up with Brian Johnson on sidewalk work and mowing at the retention pond. Steve mentioned he has seen sidewalk repair in Paw Paw which was the same width as the connecting sidewalk, John explained the village had to follow ADA requirements for new and or repairs. Invasive plant eradication in the Industrial park has begun, far worse than first thought.

New Business: Incubator Application received from Courtney Melching for Lake and Light Studio
at 106 W St Joseph. This would be a photography studio and perhaps a small venue for showers,
etc. it was asked if we require the submission of a business plan, no as it is felt that it is beyond
the scope of the committee. No reimbursements for rent are to be made until business is open
to the public. Motion by John supported by Phil to approve the rental reimbursement for Lake
and Light Studio, carried.

The DDA received notification of a tax foreclosure hearing on January 12, 2026, at 10am by the County Treasurer for unpaid taxes for 2023 by Fruit Street Kitchen. We received notification because the HVCA unit the DDA paid for and filing our lien on the building. Dale will attend and report back.

Dale mentioned that it appears the parks and recreation committee grant application to replace the Kids Palace is moving forward, reminded the committee that we need to include construction cost of two pickle ball courts in next year budget.

Michigan Downtown Conference in Rochester is November 6,7,8. Any member that would like to attend can go, DDA has always had funds in budget for members to attend trainings. Information will be in the DDA file.

Next meeting Wednesday, December 10<sup>th</sup> at 5:30 PM

### Joint Parks & Recreation:

- <u>Playground Fundraising Electronic Donations</u>: The committee discussed the ongoing need to
  establish a way for community members to make electronic donations toward the Village Park
  playground fundraising efforts. The current account for playground funds is held at Arbor Credit
  Union. Committee Member D. Gribler inquired whether donations could be made directly at
  Arbor Credit Union into the committee's account, or if all donations still need to be processed
  through the Village of Lawrence. The committee agreed to confirm this process with the Village
  to ensure all funds are handled appropriately.
- <u>Pavilion Use Non-Resident Fee Proposal:</u> The committee discussed creating a fundraising opportunity related to pavilion use. Under the proposal, non-residents who wish to reserve or use the park pavilions would either pay a usage fee or make a donation to the Lawrence Joint Parks and Recreation Committee. Residents would continue to use the pavilions at no cost.
- <u>Solar Farm Potential Donation</u>: Members noted that the solar farm may make a financial contribution to support park improvements. The committee expressed appreciation and optimism about this potential partnership.



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 Grant Application Update: The committee is awaiting notification from the State of Michigan regarding the playground grant application. A decision is expected by the first week of December.

### LDFA:

Next meeting Wednesday, December 10<sup>th</sup> at 6:30 PM

### Personnel:

• The search for a new Chief is ongoing. Greg Cordes has agreed to come as interim Chief at a rate of \$30/hour with a start date of December 15, 2025.

Motion to hire Greg Cordes as interim Chief at a rate of \$30/hour with a start date of December 15, 2025 by Crandall, 2<sup>nd</sup> by Deloach.

Rollcall:

Aye: Glennie, Rowlee, Crandall, Gritter, Deloach

Nay: None Absent: Lorenzo

#### Planning Commission:

- Zoning Report-Amy Cordes: Nothing of note to report. The Village continues to receive inquiries regarding parcel number 80-44-308-100-00 and the permitted uses for it.
- · Master Plan Final Review:
  - O The Planning Commission is beginning the review of the Master Plan draft. This led to the discovery of several historical plans, including one from 1977, an update from 2000-2020, and a more recent draft from 2020 prepared by the Smith Group. It was determined that the last officially adopted Master Plan was from 2002. The more recent 2020-2021 effort was stalled, likely due to the COVID-19 pandemic and the need to address new marijuana legislation. The process never reached the required 63-day public review period or final adoption by the Planning Commission or Council. Planning has agreed to move forward by revising the stalled 2020 draft rather than starting from scratch. The plan will be updated and retitled, possibly as the "2025 Master Plan" or "2026 Master Plan." Amy Cordes will take the lead on editing the document. A detailed review identified several areas for updates:
    - Data and Content: Census data must be updated from 2010 to 2020 (population 996). The list of village officials will be updated. Completed, irrelevant, or redundant tasks will be removed.
    - Rail Corridor: A section describing an abandoned rail corridor needs correction, as the property is privately owned and not available for a trail.
    - Resident Survey: The 2018 resident survey is likely too old. The group discussed redoing it, possibly using a digital format like Google Forms and collaborating with the township.



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Strategy Rephrasing: A strategy to "host home repair workshops" will be rephrased

to "connect residents with home repair opportunities."

- Formatting: The Word document has significant formatting issues, possibly from being created in an old version of Publisher, which need to be fixed.
- The next meeting will proceed as scheduled on November 24th. However, the December 22nd meeting will be canceled for the holidays. Meetings will resume in January 2026.

### Public Services/DPW:

- UPDATE: Still working with attorney and Dixon on quote/contract for the Water Tower. Attorneys will be talking directly now and then Rich will get back with us. I was in contact with our attorney who is handling this. She had several questions. The conversation ended with this will make things easier and she would have documents to Amy soon. Revised documents have been received. In Amy discussing with attorney further, it was determined to go back to original drafted agreement and see if they can't boil it down to the basics of the scope of work we are requesting.
- UPDATE: DDA projects: West Pavilion (Not complete yet. Flagpole (Working with Glen on).
   Garbage cans (Still being talked about in DDA meetings). Sidewalks (Baker St has been started and then they will move to E St Joe). Boom mowing (Not started yet. County had a few brake downs).
- Sampling from September: To my knowledge as of right now all samples are in EPA and EGLE range. We will be getting a violation notice on one of our samples. One of our PFAS samples did not get sampled. When the lab noticed this, the sampled was out of its hold time. I resampled this right away, but it was outside of the date range the sample was supposed to be taken. The notice we will provide will be allowed to state that the violation is not due to neglect or inaction by the Village, rather the company used for testing the samples.
- Chris Leach has started work with us. He seems to like everything so far and is doing a good job with what we have had so far.
- Hot mixing on North Paw Paw has turned out all right. Hard to go around the manholes and still
  have it smooth. We are going to try and do a little on the South bound lane coming into town
  also. We still have some hand work to do on that road as well.
- Back parking lot, Exchange St and the East Ally of the DPW building are being patched.
- Hydrant Flushing was completed in October.
- 1000 Crandall Parkway has complained about massive amounts of silt and partially dissolved material coming from our water system and this is causing major problems with equipment and is also damaging plants. Myndset has been taking water test, but they have not summited any results to me as of 11/5/2025. Their test that they do themselves has come back that the ECs (Electrical Conductance) are outside the acceptable range for safety. After some digging I found out we call that test SCs (Specific Conductance) and we test for that every 2 weeks with our Water Quality Parameter Sampling at all Well's and we test for that quarterly at in the HPZ Water Tower and then also in the LPZ Water Tower system. There are no EGLE or EPA MCL regulations on this test, so I am still confused on his outside the acceptable range for safety. I



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found online that the EPA has a recommendation level for this, but I do not know what this means at this time if water supplies are over that range. Pure Options (the old 305 Farms) had a similar problem, but they took samples to the lab and changed the salt they use and adjusted the water softener. They are no longer having problems. I have been in contact with our lab, engineers and EGLE about this. One thing that they all have said so far is that the line needs to be flushed. They have a 6-inch water line that runs 551 feet with no way to flush it. You will get build up and scaling in the pipe and once that starts to break free it is going to go into the building. I will update when I get any more information or guidance from EGLE.

### Citizen Police Committee:

No Meeting. Meetings scheduled upon request.

### ZBA:

No Meeting Held.

### **New Business:**

Deloach stated that Joe Potter, a processor outside of the Village, was inquiring about the DDA
Highway signs. Cordes commented that they were all currently full, but it was reminded that the
Fruit Street Kitchen space is available. Cordes directed Deloach to the Village website where the
Highway Sign applications can be found that contain information on pricing and sign
requirements.

### **Old Business:**

None

### **Public Comment:**

 Spenner asked when next Joint Township/Village meeting was. Confirmed it will be Tuesday, January 20<sup>th</sup>, 2026, at 6 pm at the Township Hall.

### **Council Comment:**

- Crandall announced the Methodist Church is hosting a First Responder Appreciation Sunday on November 23<sup>rd</sup>, with a luncheon to follow the service.
- Question raised about what was going in near Bonamego Farms and it was stated that a substation would be going in in that area.

### Motion to Adjourn:

Motion by Deloach, 2<sup>nd</sup> by Crandall All Aye, Motions Carried. Meeting Adjourned at 8:06 p.m.



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Respectfully Submitted:

Amy Cordes, Village Manager

John Gritter, Village President