



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
October 14, 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:** Annette Crandall, Trustee; Phil Glennie, Trustee; Chuck Rowlee, Trustee; David Deloach, Trustee; Alicia Lorenzo, Trustee; John Gritter, President
- **Absent:** None
- **Also Present:** Ryan Williamson, LPS Superintendent; Jeromy Robertson, Chief Fire Instructor Van Buren Tech; Rich Glista, Cannabis Administrator; Mike Chappell, Van Buren County Commissioner; Amy Cordes, Village Manager; Brian Johnson, DPW Manager; Kim Thompson, Finance Manager; Chief Bianco, Village of Lawrence Police Department

Additions to Agenda:

- None

Conflicts of Interest:

- None

Approval of Prior Council Minutes Month Prior as Amended:

- Police report typo: "gave application to one candidate through 3/6/25" to be amended by the Chief.
- Name correction: "Glennie" was misspelled as "G-L-I-N-N-I-E" in the DDA report.
- Fund naming correction: "trusted agency fund" should be "trust and agency fund" (page five, top).

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

Approval of Special Council Minutes September 24, 2025:

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



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Finance Manager Report-Kim Thompson:

- Finance and audit preparation status:
Prior reconciliations by external parties included "pencil adjustments" without journal entries; Thompson is posting entries to the GL and expects to finish due-to/due-from reconciliations by the end of next week, then send files to the auditor. The auditor (Ben Walker at Seber Tans) is very pleased that the village is handling the due-to/due-from reconciliation, noting their work costs roughly \$180 an hour. Submission is off-season, so scheduling will depend on their availability. Thompson will begin work on the next fiscal year while auditors review the prior year.
- Special permit fund setup and budget reporting:
Financial statements now include a new Special Permit Fund; current-year transfers have been moved from the General Fund into this fund, and prior-year adjustments will also be moved into unaudited years as confirmed with the auditor. The Special Permit Fund will be included in audits since the marijuana activity began. Bank account balances were provided in the packet. Previously discussed budget amendments were incorporated into the report.
- Additional budget amendments and grant handling:
A contracted amount of \$8,000 with the Township needs to be amended into the Special Permit Fund. Major Streets budget contained income/expense lines for a bridge grant project; since the grant administrator retained funds and paid expenses directly, Thompson recommends removing both the federal/state grant income and corresponding expenditures from the village budget. Only the village's matching funds appear on the Village books; no detailed expenditure reports were provided by the grant administrator. Future grants may include a request for administrator reporting to the Village. Municipal streets, traffic services: Streetlights budget was \$12,000 and is just under \$1,000 over; an additional \$1,000 is requested.

Motion to amend the budget as presented by Glennie, 2nd by Lorenzo.

Roll Call:

Aye: Gritter, Crandall, Lorenzo, Glennie, Deloach, Rowlee.

All Aye. Motions Carried.

- License reconciliation and numbering:
State-level license review found discrepancies with Village licenses; some licensees should be billed for their portion. Using the same license number as the State at the Village level is suggested to simplify reconciliation.
- Insurance review and premium allocation:
A thorough insurance policy review identified equipment not previously listed for coverage, necessitating updates. The Village's loss ratio over the past two years is 140%, placing it in a high-risk category; combined with expanded equipment coverage, the insurance premium increased by about 50%. The insurer provided a breakdown of the premium by major funds (DPW, Water, Sewer, Police, Municipal Street), enabling direct allocation by fund. Going forward, insurance will be lumped by fund rather than many GL lines. It was noted that different



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insurers calculate loss ratios differently; obtaining quotes from other companies may be worthwhile in the future.

- Treasurer duties and tax collections:

As of October 10th, 80% of summer tax payments had been received, and 100% of what was collected has been dispersed to applicable funds (though not yet visible on the bank statement timing). Significant prior-year amounts remain in the tax fund; reconciliation is ongoing year by year.

- Issues list and audit preparation challenges:

Several items were marked “completed” and removed from the issues list; some estimated completion dates were revised due to greater-than-expected complexity. Thompson emphasized prior errors and duplicated entries by previous clerks and external bookkeepers/auditors, requiring corrections. COVID/ARPA funds arrived in separate payments and while \$97,000 was thought to be available, it was not restricted in a separate account and appears to have been spent on other items. Thompson expects audits to allow allocation back to intended purposes. It is recommended to avoid large expenditures or commitments until audits are completed due to uncertainty in the financial picture.

- Audit progress and financial reporting:

Thompson emphasized that confidence in financial numbers will improve as audits progress, advising against rushing finalization. The longer the audit takes, the more accurate the numbers provided will be. Timeline expectations were stated: Fiscal Year ‘24 should be completed by the end of November, and by the end of December Thompson expects to be into Fiscal Year ‘25. Previously, the hope was to have “everything done” by the end of December, but delays are acknowledged. Bank balances were provided with a caution that inter-fund “due-to/due-from” activity has not been cleared; some funds owe others significant amounts. Members were warned not to treat bank balances as available funds. Questions were invited on budget performance and the revenue/expenditure reports; none were recorded except “Thank you.”

Motion to refrain from large purchases/financial commitments over \$25,000 that are currently not budgeted until audit completed without Village Council approval by Crandall, 2nd by Deloach. All Ayes. Motions Carried.

Approval of Bills with Addition & Review of Bank Balances Month Prior:

- The invoice register was organized by fund and color as previously requested by Council, with paid items struck out; approvals apply to items not struck out.
- An additional bill was introduced for deposits on computer hardware: two quotes were obtained for a laptop and station for remote work (Kim) and to replace an outdated office laptop. \$5,000 was budgeted for Computer Hardware and the quotes come in under budget.
- Deposit amounts were specified: \$499.06 for the desktop and \$845.02 for Kim’s equipment. A check run is scheduled for tomorrow, and the goal is to have Kim’s equipment set up before she



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leaves. Although the purchases are budgeted, bill payment approval is still required for the addition of the deposit on the invoice register.

Motion by Glennie to approve bills with addition of computer hardware deposit, 2nd by Crandall.

Roll Call:

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

All Aye. Motions Carried.

Presentations & Guests:

Van Buren County Commissioner: Mike Chappell

- The Board adopted the County's comprehensive budget for the 2025/2026 fiscal year, totaling over \$32 million in General Funds revenues and expenditures during the September 8, 2025, Board of Commissioners meeting.
- A three-year agreement with OTM Cyber was approved to enhance the County's cybersecurity capabilities. The contract includes 24/7 monitoring, incident response support, and the development of response plans, reflecting proactive investment in IT security infrastructure during the September 8, 2025, Board of Commissioners meeting.
- The 2025-2026 Memorandum of Agreement with Michigan State University Extension was approved, allocating \$213,800 for education and outreach services in Van Buren county during the September 23, 2025, Board of Commissioners meeting.
- A \$25,000 services agreement renewal with the Domestic Violence Coalition was approved to support emergency shelter and advocacy for victims of domestic and sexual violence during the September 23, 2025, Board of Commissioners meeting.
- The Board approved a \$100,000 services agreement renewal with the Van Buren Conservation District to support countywide recycling and hazardous waste programs for FY 2025-2026 during the September 23, 2025, Board of Commissioners meeting.

Cannabis Administrator: Rich Glista

- State tax changes and local fiscal impacts:
There was concern that increasing sales tax to 12% to 15% or changes to income tax could force the State to raise revenue elsewhere; one comment noted small business uncoupling would be devastating to the State. A legislative change was reported: a new budget imposes a 24% tax at the wholesale level (growers to processors/retailers), not at retail. The expected retail impact is estimated at 10-12% passed on to buyers. Michigan currently has the cheapest marijuana nationally; cross-border purchases are common in areas like New Buffalo and Constantine. Price increases could shift demand to Ohio or Illinois, but the 24% wholesale tax may still keep Michigan below other states.
- Cannabis licensing records and invoicing:
State records for Lawrence cannabis licenses were compiled, covering medical and recreational licenses, confirming most were billed and paid except issues in 2024. Action to invoice 2024



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licenses is pending; there may be two older items with potential overpayments to review next month. Glista has not yet met with growers due to travel; plans to engage with them.

- Proposed cap on retail cannabis licenses:

A proposal under discussion would cap retail licenses by municipal population at one store per 5,000 residents, with possible resort-area exceptions. Existing two licenses in Lawrence may be grandfathered; replacement licenses could be restricted if a store closes. Town and village might each qualify separately as distinct municipalities. Committee meeting on the proposal is scheduled tomorrow; outcome is uncertain.

Lawrence Public Schools Superintendent: Ryan Williamson

- Fall Count: 407 student (393 last year) vs 367 (expected due to trend data)
Increase of 14 from last year and increase of 40 from what was expected. Marketing LPS programming and celebrating students and staff, coupled with flexible learning environments (meeting students where they are) and providing Summer Migrant Program and Summer YDC (Before/After Care) are attributed to the increase.
- Completed the financial budget and projected to finish at 9.7%.
- Superintendent Chats dates listed on school website.
- Held a Village/Township/School meeting. A community member had approached them about the Fennville Athletic Center and led to a partnership of the three entities getting together. Recapped what is happening in Lawrence and took a look at Fennville's approach and could we do that here. Ultimately led to a plan of action. 1) If Township and Village could bring out their surveys that they sent to the community in the past, they could create a joint survey to see what our needs are. 2) LPS, the Township, and the Village to bring an outline of what they do offer and combine into a social media post to advertise that. 3) LPS is looking into options to opening up their doors to the community for activities such as use of the gym, hallways for walking, etc.
- LPS highlighted by Deputy Superintendent, Dr. Chapman, in a report to the Michigan State Board of Education regarding their use of MTSS (Multi-Tiered Student Support).

Van Buren Tech Chief Fire Instructor: Jeromy Robertson

- The program at the Van Buren Tech Center is a sanctioned Fire Academy through the State of Michigan and a Regional Training Center. Cadets must complete 402.5 hours of training with option to certify at the end of the course.
- The Academy typically runs off the truck rather than directly off hydrants; water supply operations are under direct supervision, and new trainees are cautioned when operating hydrants or stems to avoid water hammer and cavitation. Cavitation (sucking water too hard from an engine) is noted as more common than water hammer incidents; equipment failure and over-tightening hydrant stems are acknowledged risks. Concerns included accounting for water usage and protecting the village water system; a suggestion was made to list the Village as an additional insured on the ISD policy to cover accidental damage during training (opening a hydrant too fast, etc.). Contact has been made with insurance and Dave Johnson is coordinating.



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Installing or using portable meters for training was discussed as impractical due to logistics; the water usage from training was characterized as minimal compared to routine flushing.

- Council proposed and discussed a motion to support a water usage exception for the VB Tech Fire Academy under the village's water usage policy, recognizing the training's value.

Motion to approve water usage exception for the Van Buren Tech Fire Academy with the Village as an additionally insured by Deloach, 2nd by Crandall.

All Aye. Motions Carried.

- The Academy offered to "adopt a hydrant" on campus and assist with hydrant shoveling and flushing. Hydrant flushing is scheduled this week and Johnson will reach out to see if coordination will occur to involve morning and afternoon classes to assist. Training class times were stated as "1000 to 1030 and noon to 1430."
- A question of how the Township is billed was raised and it was stated that the fire station has its own meters in the building and can fill trucks through the meter. Most onsite training uses building water systems. For training burns in the Township (e.g., burning a shed), water usage may be billed to the homeowner; for significant fires, water usage and Village hours can be billed (e.g. Hilltop Road used over 100,000 gallons of water and a bill was submitted per the Fire Chief's instructions).
- The Fire Academy highlighted facility assets and programs that can improve ISO scores: a three-story training facility, live burn capability, and an instructor level three (stated as the highest in the state), which together with good documentation can add roughly nine points to a score; a community risk reduction program (e.g., preschool fire prevention) 2.5-3 points totaling over 10 points, which can move a department to another level. ISO rating was described as a 100-point scale with 1 to 10 classes, where 10 is bad and 1 is really good; actual ratings improve after the next ISO review. The Academy offered to periodically provide reports and share expertise, citing over a thousand hours of annual training under NFPA (mentioned as now 1010; previously 1001).

Reports:

President's Report:

- A village resident's house north of the village is in terrible condition; informal discussions noted potential assistance options for that and other less severe homes. No definitive plan yet; related funding may tie to the CDBG efforts.

Clerk's Report:

- No Report

Village Manager:



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- The initial CDBG application was not awarded in the first round due to minor technical issues (incorrect date, unsigned minutes at the time of submission, and an unacceptable newspaper affidavit format).

Motion to amend the CDBG Public Hearing minutes date to the correct date of August 12, 2025 by Lorenzo, 2nd by Deloach.

All Aye. Motions Carried.

- Action items corrected/in the process of correction and resubmitted within a presumed seven-day modification window per guidance from the contact at Market One. If the seven-day window is deemed invalid, the team is prepared to resubmit the letter of intent and full documentation in the next round opening on November 3rd. The contact completed checklist items from MSHDA, and confidence is high that all materials are now in order.
- Continue to receive interest in parcel 80-44-308-100-00 and the permitted uses for it. The most recent is interested in the property of food processing, with our zoning allowing for food manufacturing as a permitted use. Before the interested party continues investing more time, they wanted to know if food processing would be allowed. After discussion with them, it was found that the intended use is more aligned with food manufacturing (production of pickles), rather than food processing. In the interest of not holding up any other prospective purchasers, there has been a request to modify the language to allow for food processing as well as food manufacturing.

Motion to make a text amendment to allow food processing as a permitted use in light industrial zoning by Deloach, 2nd by Rowlee.

All Aye. Motions Carried.

- The property owner of 108 N. Paw Paw, Krista Goens, was approached by the Department of Corrections about the possibility of renting out her entire building to house those on parole from the area. She was told the idea behind that is to reintroduce these individuals in an area where they would have the most support, ie their hometowns. After reviewing the zoning for the Central Business District in which her property falls, it was determined that zoning does not allow that as permitted use.
- Blight enforcement and compliance update on 220 S. Exchange. The case went to court and defendant found guilty. A thorough Compliance Order was drafted that included a two-year probationary period and allows the Ordinance/Blight officer and law enforcement to inspect for compliance violations. Requirements include removal of the shed, removal of the hot tub that is not in use, and removal of the trailer that held a track car. It was also noted that the tenant should not be parking across the sidewalk and has already been ticketed for that offense.

Police Department:



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- Incidents: 21 incident reports (damage to property, assist fire/EMS, suspicious occurrences, accidents, civil issues, general assistance). Dispatch breakdown noted: 10 police calls, six medical and two fire; state police covered nine calls during off-hours; county handled two calls (one primary, one backup).
- Traffic and patrol: 19 traffic citations issued across 29 stops (10 verbal warnings). Continued enforcement with many offenders. Routine business checks and community engagement continued.
- School traffic/crosswalk: Observations show minimal pedestrian use crossing from the parking lot (some days 3, some days a dozen, often parents). Most use the circle drive and stay on the north side. Chief sees no need for a crosswalk given low usage versus cost.
- True Leaf reported a suspicious pickup truck at 1–2 AM watching a business on Crandall Parkway; poor-quality photo, delayed report (two days), and no plate hindered investigation. Reminder that timely and detailed reporting is essential.
- Participated in Labor Day Parade (September 1) and led the homecoming parade (September 26) without issues.
- Still seeking part-time candidates; Chief position posting is active on the MCOLEs website. Five applications received; two unqualified; two candidates that have been interviewed, and one candidate scheduled to interview on October 27, 2025, at 1 pm. Chief will stay on, however not indefinitely, until a suitable hire is found and emphasized not rushing the decision to avoid future issues.
- Mandatory MCOLEs training ongoing. Radio encryption funding decision anticipated in January. Ongoing response to medical calls; attended medical training on September 24.
- Opioid settlement funding update: Awaiting county response; Chiefs from Paw Paw and Decatur will follow up due to lack of updates after grant acceptance.
- A State LEIN audit is expected within the next 4-6 weeks. Prior audits have required policy rewrites and IT/security upgrades. Typical findings are rewriting policies and procedures, strengthening computer system security, rerouting networks, adding firewalls, and encryption requirements. Chief is cautiously optimistic but expects some items to be out of compliance that will necessitate updates. One concern costs are increasing due to IT requirements.

Community Development:

- Trunk or Treat and Trick or Treat are confirmed for 5 to 7.30 (clarified from conflicting online posts); multiple groups may hold events on different dates. Methodist Church Trunk or Treat noted; one group is doing Wednesday (specific date referenced as the 29th).
- “Christmas in the Village” planning is underway and will be held on Saturday, December 6th; the convoy parade is communicating intentions early, aiding coordination. Additional activities include a dance at the Old Town Hall.
- The next meeting is November 6, 2025 at 6 PM.

DDA:

- Farmers Market:



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Karissa resigned as market manager; Jan Petersen is stepping back in to finish the year (market year largely ended around October 11). Discussion about moving the market to Elizabeth Street, closing it during market hours, leveraging pavilion and electric for vendors; mood favored exploring the move. Jan has two new potential market managers in mind for next year.

- Invasive species management:

Phragmites: DDA approved \$5,500 for eradication; Native Landscapes (contractor) has documented sites (19 identified in Crandall Parkway) using GIS and has begun spraying; treatment to finish soon. Japanese knotweed found in a resident's yard; very difficult to remove (requires stem-by-stem injection with Roundup over three years). The contractor may contact the resident to offer services; an estimated treatment cost of \$300 was mentioned for the Japanese Knotweed. Concerns about Phragmites near Wells 1 and 2 and along roadways; additional sites suspected beyond the 19 identified.

- Sidewalk projects:

DDA approved \$20,400 to replace sidewalks on East St. Joseph Street (south side of the park) and on Baker Street. Exchange Street sidewalks deferred due to expected street re-engineering.

- Banners:

New event banners (e.g., farmer's market, music in the park) were ordered/received but not yet installed.

- Trash cans:

DDA did not favor the initially suggested trash can style; seeking more substantial, aesthetically pleasing cans that allow lifting bags out from the top (to avoid side-door mess). Preference for heavy metal lids to deter bees.

- Facade grants:

Efforts to increase awareness via postcards to DDA-area properties; recent emails indicate movement to complete facade work before cold weather.

- Flagpole:

The flagpole has been delivered and the installation will be coordinated with Glen Thomsen.

- Next meeting is October 22, 2025 at 5:30 PM.

Joint Parks & Recreation:

- The grant was officially submitted on October 1; scores and award decisions are expected by the first week of December. There is still a funding need of \$302,000.
- It was noted someone had asked about making a donation since we don't charge for pavilion reservations. It was suggested that they could make a donation to the Parks and Recreation fund as an option.

LDFA:

- Next meeting October 22, 2025 at 6:30 PM.

Personnel:



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- The Council approved hiring Christopher Leach for the DPW position after discussion of his interview performance and trainability. Starting wage is \$18.00; probationary period is 90 days at which point he will receive a review. The Village requires obtaining a CDL-B within one year of the probationary period. Performance expectations include taking initiative (e.g., following routine tasks like reading meters without prompting) and growth in responsibilities. An offer letter has been drafted and will be finalized after a start date is determined.
- The Personnel Committee and Council discussed enabling conditional approvals to avoid month-long delays, with checks-and-balances to ensure proper hiring processes are followed. Approach favors Personnel Committee recommendations and quicker Council approval when a strong candidate is identified.
- Personnel Policies and Procedures Amendments:
Following a risk assessment by Michigan Par Plan, it was advised to add a few policies to the Personnel Policies and Procedures including a Village Employee Driving Policy (covering eligibility, vehicle use, safety, maintenance, prohibited activities, insurance/liability, and disciplinary action) and a Social Media policy (to prohibit inappropriate use that interferes with work or disparages residents/the village). PTO policy language was revised: full-time employees use a unified PTO bank (including ESTA within PTO), and ESTA is not portable upon separation. Front-loading practices were referenced as problematic and avoided. MERS and retirement contributions require clarification. Confusion exists regarding 457 contributions, defined contribution matching, and prior amendments/documentation. Plan is to restart the discussion from scratch with the MERS representative and covered employees to align with personnel policy and ensure proper documentation.

Planning Commission:

- Planning is between tasks but needs to finish the Master Plan. The goal is to align the Village Master Plan with the Township's to demonstrate coordinated planning while acknowledging differences in contexts.
- Next meeting is October 27, 2025 at 6 PM

Public Services/DPW:

- West Pavilion redo has started; expected completion in late October and November, matching the new pavilion (residing). A flagpole was delivered and will be installed with Glen.
- Boom mowing around the pond is underway, with additional sidewalk work planned. Garbage can procurement remains on hold.
- Tree trimming quotes are pending; prior vendor declined without notice. Additional tree removal still needs to be done and will exceed what is currently budgeted.

Motion to approve tree removal not to exceed \$20,000 and amend Municipal Street budget accordingly by Crandall, 2nd by Deloach.

Roll Call:



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

All Aye. Motions Carried.

- September was a busy month for water testing All 3 wells had to be tested per our Monitoring schedule from EGLE. Testing of PFAS, nitrate, complete metals, cyanide, carbamates, herbicides, pesticides, uranium, and volatile organic compounds.
- DPW assisted the fire department at a local house fire, marking the first time (since the current staff's tenure) a village hydrant was used to pump for firefighting; noted as useful training. It was mentioned that the Village will hold insurance funds in escrow until the building inspector confirms required remediations are completed. Our ordinance allows holding escrow to ensure remediation of a dangerous structure (e.g., securing windows/doors, debris cleanup). If owners do not remediate, escrow can fund remediation; otherwise, funds are released back, typically to the insurance company or, in some cases, directly to the property owner. Escrow amounts are typically between \$10,000 and \$15,000, held in the Trust and Agency fund.
- Hydrant Flushing is taking place this week. There are 106 hydrants in the Village.
- Met with our insurance agent on coverage. Had a very thorough, line by line review of our policy and determined there were a number of items not listed as covered (backhoe, tractor, zero turn mower, snowblower/sweeper, tow behind generator, two new sections of streetlights and panels, bypass pump, jetter, and all four sheds and their contents. Our agent added these items to our policy and was able to provide a per fund breakdown and allocation of premiums.

Citizen Police Committee:

- Meetings scheduled upon request.

ZBA:

- No Meeting Held.

New Business:

- Red Arrow Convoy is requesting a Resolution to allow them to travel through Lawrence during the Lighted Truck Parade on Saturday, December 6, 2025. The event submitted applications to the County Road Commission, including route maps and intersections; the Village needed to pass a supporting resolution. Concerns discussed included liability if incidents occur in the Village, speed of the trucks through town, available barricades, and safety at side streets. Coordination was affirmed between the police department and fire department to assist with intersection control and safety. Timeline provided by organizers included anticipated passage times: starting around 6, Mattawan at 6:20, Paw Paw at 6:40, Lawrence at 7:00, and Hartford at 7:20.

Motion to approve the resolution to support the Red Arrow Convoy Lighted Truck Parade with the provision that the speed does not exceed 25 mph by Deloach, 2nd by Rowlee.

All Aye. Motions Carried.



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Old Business:

- None

Public Comment:

- None

Council Comment:

- None

Motion to Adjourn:

Motion by Deloach, 2nd by Crandall
All Aye, Motions Carried.
Meeting Adjourned at 8:40 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted:



Amy Cordes, Village Manager



John Gritter, Village President