

DRAFT

Lawrence Township Special Board Meeting
Lawrence Township Hall
411 N. Paw Paw St, Lawrence, MI 49064
May 20, 2026

The Special Monthly Board Meeting was called to order at the Lawrence Township Hall by Clerk Rindfield at 6:05 p.m. with the Pledge of Allegiance.

Present from Lawrence Township: Tracie Rindfield, Clerk; Kimberly Kiley, Treasurer; and Mike Carpp, Trustee.

Absent: Donna Spenner, Supervisor and Tom Reynnells, Trustee

Present from Village of Lawrence: John Gritter, President; Amy Cordes, Village Manager, Annette Crandall, Council Member, Alicia Lorenzo, Council Member.

Also Present: Richard Glista, Cannabis Administrator; Mike Hnatiuk Railroad representative, Mike Pavelek, and Jeff Moses.

With the Supervisor absent, discussion was held regarding meeting facilitation. By consensus of those present, Clerk Tracie Rindfield served as moderator for the meeting.

Village General Business

- Village representatives asked for an update regarding the Van Buren District Library contract/addendum.
- Clerk Rindfield reported that attorneys for the Township and Library reviewed the agreement language and that several revisions changed language from “may” to “shall.”
- Discussion followed regarding continued concerns with the contract language, including payment obligations, availability of funds, transparency, if payments are not made, the remaining millage period, and future public education regarding library funding and local control.
- Participants discussed that, although the contract language remains concerning, maintaining library service for residents is also a significant community concern.

Railroad Update

- Railroad representative Mike Hnatiuk provided an update on railroad operations, including current challenges with CSX routing and service impacts affecting traffic moving through the region.
- He explained that recent changes in CSX train routes have increased travel distance and costs for freight movement and may affect customers and local rail traffic if not resolved.
- Discussion included the Surface Transportation Board, state and federal involvement, proposed legislation affecting rail operations, and rail staffing requirements.
- Mr. Hnatiuk reviewed the current railroad improvement phases, including Phase 1 work, crossing improvements, replacement rail, and future work toward Blackman Street and potentially Michigan Street.

- Discussion included the 681-crossing project, Center Street in Hartford, Poplar Street in Lawrence, sidewalk coordination, crossing surface options, and possible coordination with Village projects.
- Mr. Hnatiuk explained that the railroad generally owns approximately fifty feet of right-of-way, with wider areas in certain locations.
- Participants discussed train frequency, expected impacts, crossing safety, and the potential for rail improvements to reduce truck traffic and support economic development.
- Discussion included rail-served industrial opportunities, possible future business recruitment, aggregate/stone movement, cold storage, food production, asphalt plant service, and potential job creation in the Lawrence area.

Village Infrastructure / Railroad Coordination

- Discussion occurred regarding South Poplar Street and other railroad crossing conditions, including whether rails could be paved over or whether crossing surfaces could be improved while future railroad work is pending.
- Village representatives discussed Safe Routes and sidewalk planning, including accessibility issues for pedestrians, children, and individuals using mobility devices at railroad crossings.
- Mr. Hnatiuk indicated that coordination may be possible and that additional tubs or crossing materials could potentially be incorporated if timing and approvals allow.
- Discussion also occurred regarding existing underground utility crossings, past billing disputes, and the need to locate and review prior agreements.

Drainage Concerns

- Jeff Moses raised concerns regarding drainage and water issues near his property and noted that the issue appears to be worsening over time.
- Discussion included prior railroad crossing reconstruction, drainage infrastructure, county drain concerns, and potential impacts to railroad beds and nearby properties.
- Mr. Hnatiuk stated he was willing to review the area and assist where possible.

Joint Parks and Recreation/ Paw Paw River Water Trail

- Discussion occurred regarding the Paw Paw River water trail clearing costs.
- It was reported that the current cost for clearing from 46th Street to 681 is approximately \$7,000, split between the Village and Township at approximately \$3,500 each.
- Participants discussed concerns that the clearing is only wide enough for kayaks/canoes and may not provide adequate emergency access for rescue equipment.
- Discussion included DNR restrictions, approved contractors, whether the cost is sustainable annually, and whether the benefit justifies the expense compared to other recreation needs.

Clerk Report

Clerk Rindfield stated she had nothing additional to report.

Cannabis Administrator Report

- Cannabis Administrator Richard Glista reported that one cannabis business is behind on taxes and licenses but may be merging with a larger statewide retailer, which could allow the business to remain operating.

- Mr. Glista stated he would meet with the business the following morning and provide a written update for the board packet because he would be out of town for the next meeting.
- Mr. Glista also reported that the cannabis industry is seeing consolidation, with some growers shutting down or partnering with larger operations due to market saturation and regulatory changes.
- Pure Options was briefly discussed, and Mr. Glista stated he would be meeting with them as well.

Housing / CDBG Discussion

- Discussion occurred regarding the Community Development Block Grant housing rehabilitation program and application activity.
- The Village reported that it was part of the first round and that the program may allow funds to be adjusted between selected applicants depending on project costs.
- The Township reported that the third-round application had been submitted.
- Participants discussed paper and online applications, expected applicant activity, contractor participation, and the goal of keeping work local where possible.
- Participants expressed support for the program and its potential benefit to Township and Village residents.

Economic Development / Community Updates

- Discussions occurred regarding potential new business activity, including possible reuse of a local building and the importance of bringing jobs and services into the community.
- Participants discussed the role of rail access, I-94 proximity, local contractors, local businesses, and housing in supporting long-term community development.

Public Comment

- Additional public comments and general discussion occurred regarding drainage, library funding, railroad improvements, community development, and local infrastructure concerns.

Adjournment

With no further business to conduct, a **motion** to adjourn the meeting was made by Trustee Carpp and supported by Council member Annette Crandall. All ayes. Meeting adjourned at 7:56 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Tracie Rindfield, Clerk