

**MINUTES OF THE REGULAR MEETING OF THE
CHARTER TOWNSHIP OF COMSTOCK TOWNSHIP BOARD
KALAMAZOO COUNTY, MICHIGAN
OCTOBER 19, 2026**

CALL TO ORDER

Attendee Name	Title	Status
Ben Martin	Supervisor	Present
Sandra Bloomfield	Treasurer	Present
Amber Lawrence	Clerk	Present
Jerry Amos	Trustee	Present
Kirk Hart	Trustee	Present
John Paver	Trustee	Present
Joe VanBruggen	Trustee	Present

Meeting was called to order at 6:00 PM by Supervisor Martin with all Board members present. Also, present were Township Attorney Thall, Fire Chief Beauchamp, Township Engineer Mike Presta (Prein & Newhof), and Kalamazoo County Road Commissioner Larry Stehouwer.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE TO THE FLAG OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Supervisor Martin requested that a Consumers Energy easement be added under Fire & Rescue.

Clerk Lawrence made a motion that the agenda be approved as amended. Motion was supported by Treasurer Bloomfield. Motion passed by voice vote.

RESULT: PASSED [UNANIMOUS]
MOVER: Clerk Lawrence
SECONDER: Treasurer Bloomfield
AYES: Unanimous
NAYS: None
ABSTAIN: None
ABSENT: None

PUBLIC COMMENT(S) ON AGENDA ITEMS ONLY

Five members of the public shared comments.

Tammy Keeler, Celery Street, spoke in opposition to a data center located in the Township, citing concerns about water, land, well water, wildlife, and noise in addition to the battery plant. She also spoke in support of Mr. Kerney's plans for a youth facility and asked about the use and zoning of the former Reed's store, which is marked as a daycare.

Kevin Davis, 8365 N. 28th Street, Richland Township, spoke about utility-scale solar and battery energy storage, stating that projected capacity factors are overstated and that lithium-ion battery

storage presents a fire risk. He encouraged residents to continue to seek oversight at other levels of government, including the federal level.

Bethany Scott, 6179 Celery Street, a Vicksburg High School student, stated that she was photographing the meeting for the South County News photography contest, whose theme is “My Hometown,” and that she had emailed the Board in advance.

Tim Kerney requested that the consent agenda items be removed and considered separately. He expressed concerns regarding past and pending litigation involving the Township, a past increase in the Supervisor’s compensation, the attempted dissolution of the DDA, and prior Board appointments, and stated his view that the Board has not acted in the interest of residents.

Bob Snyder, 3953 Prairie Hill Street, stated that the battery energy storage system is poorly located near homes and asked that the facility be confined to the western portion of the golf course nearest the substation, with the remainder preserved as open space or golf for public use. He suggested adding foot golf as a recreational option.

ANNOUNCEMENTS FOR DEPARTMENTS/BOARDS/COMMISSIONS

Larry Stehouwer, liaison commissioner for the Kalamazoo County Road Commission, reported that Comstock Avenue has been completed and that project savings will be used to pave portions of Fairview Heights and East Main Street from 33rd Street to Sprinkle Road. He offered to take any questions back to the Road Commission.

County Commissioner Gisler was unable to attend.

CONSENT AGENDA

In response to the public comment requesting that the consent agenda items be removed, Attorney Thall advised that the Board is not required to remove items at a member of the public’s request and that it is at the Board’s discretion. Clerk Lawrence and Treasurer Bloomfield stated that the minutes and bills payable are standard items and saw no reason to remove them; Treasurer Bloomfield noted that the minutes have improved. Trustee Paver noted that it was unclear what outcome removing the items was intended to achieve. In response to the question, it was confirmed that all current Board members were seated at the October 5, 2026, meeting and may approve those minutes.

Clerk Lawrence made a motion to approve the consent agenda. Supported by Treasurer Bloomfield. Motion passed by voice vote.

RESULT:	PASSED [UNANIMOUS]
MOVER:	Clerk Lawrence
SECONDER:	Treasurer Bloomfield
AYES:	Unanimous
NAYS:	None
ABSTAIN:	None
ABSENT:	None

- Meeting Minutes from October 5, 2026
- Bills Payable: October 1 through October 15, 2026

PRESENTATION(S)

Township Engineer – Sanitary Sewer Easement Project

Township Engineer Mike Presta of Prein & Newhof reported on a project to record easements at 12 locations where public sanitary sewer crosses private property without a recorded easement, including areas along Gull Road and in Hunter's Run. Prein & Newhof prepared easement descriptions, exhibits with aerial imagery, and letters, which Township staff have mailed to affected property owners. Residents are asked to sign and return the easements so the Township can record them. Mr. Presta explained that this is a paperwork matter only, with no new construction, for infrastructure that has been in place for 20 to 50 years. The easement prohibits permanent structures and large trees within the easement area but allows driveways, paving, and minor landscaping, which would be restored in kind at no cost to the property owner if repairs were ever needed. Attorney Thall added that the property remains the owner's, that most lines run along road rights-of-way or within setbacks where building is not permitted, and that many of these easements were signed at the time of construction but never recorded. Mr. Presta offered to meet with residents who had questions.

Southwest Michigan First – Industrial Facilities Tax Exemption Overview

Riley Lukomski, Senior Director of Economic Development for Southwest Michigan First, gave an overview of the Industrial Facilities Tax (IFT) exemption under Public Act 198 of 1974 in advance of the public hearing later on in the agenda. For new industrial construction, only the new square footage is eligible for a 50% abatement of eligible millage for up to 12 years; existing taxable value is unaffected, and special assessments and the State Education Tax are not abated. Rehabilitation of obsolete facilities may receive a tax freeze for up to 12 years. Eligible uses include manufacturing and the offices, engineering, and warehouse facilities of Michigan-based manufacturers. The process requires an Industrial Development District established after a public hearing, a formal application, a second local public hearing and decision, and approval by the State Tax Commission.

In response to Board questions, Mr. Lukomski explained that competing states such as Indiana offer larger incentives, and confirmed that special assessments, such as the fire assessment, are not abated. Attorney Thall stated that real property exemptions may be granted for up to 12 years (six years for personal property), that the Township has typically granted the full 12 years, and that the 50% rate is set by statute. He noted that exemptions are tied to job creation or retention, and that the agreement allows the Township to recapture abated taxes if the company does not follow through. Supervisor Martin asked how the Board would monitor compliance; Clerk Lawrence stated that she plans to work with Assessing to inventory the Township's existing IFTs and establish follow-up and noted that the proposed agreement requires an annual project performance report to the Clerk under oath. Attorney Thall confirmed there is no issue with the Clerk overseeing compliance.

Discover Kalamazoo – Tourism and Kalamazoo River Activation

Jane Ghosh, President and CEO of Discover Kalamazoo, the county's convention and visitor's bureau, presented on tourism in Kalamazoo County and Comstock Township. Visitor spending supported more than 7,500 jobs in 2024 (7% of county employment). Location data shows Comstock Township ranks fourth of the county's 24 municipalities for out-of-town visits, driven in part by River Oaks County Park sports tournaments, and Comstock hotels at I-94 and Sprinkle Road outperform the county average in rooms sold,

average daily rate, and revenue per available room. She described upcoming projects, including the downtown Kalamazoo event center and a new indoor sports complex opening in fall 2027, and the bureau's tourism master plan.

Ms. Ghosh reported that the Kalamazoo River Watershed Council, in partnership with Discover Kalamazoo, is applying for a Kalamazoo County community grant (due at the end of October) to install an accessible kayak launch at Merrill Park, similar to the one at Verburg Park, along with river and land wayfinding and marketing. The application has support from Comstock Parks and Recreation staff, Kalamazoo County Parks, the DNR, and City of Kalamazoo Parks and Recreation, and she requested the Board's support. Supervisor Martin asked about data assistance for planning, and Ms. Ghosh offered to provide Comstock-specific data and development suggestions.

BUSINESS

Business items were taken up by department as recorded below.

FIRE & RESCUE

Consumers Energy Utility Easement – New Fire Station 9-3

Fire Chief Beauchamp reported that construction of Station 9-3 is progressing well, with footings expected to be poured this week, and that a public viewing platform will be built, accessible through the Best-One Tire driveway or the construction trailer. Because there will not be another Board meeting for nearly a month due to the election, he requested authorization for Supervisor Martin to sign a standard Consumers Energy utility easement agreement for the site, incorporating any changes recommended by the Township Attorney, to avoid construction delays and the added cost of running gas-powered equipment. Attorney Thall stated that he will request several revisions to the easement language and that the Board must approve easements on Township property, subject to his final approval of the language. It was confirmed that this is a permanent utility easement.

Trustee Paver made a motion to authorize Supervisor Martin to execute the Consumers Energy easement agreement, with any changes or alterations made by Attorney Thall. Motion supported by Trustee VanBruggen. Motion passed by voice vote.

RESULT:	PASSED [UNANIMOUS]
MOVER:	Trustee Paver
SECONDER:	Trustee VanBruggen
AYES:	Unanimous
NAYS:	None
ABSTAIN:	None
ABSENT:	None

PLANNING & ZONING

Nothing discussed for Planning and Zoning.

CLERKPublic Hearing – Industrial Facilities Tax Exemption Request, R.W. LaPine

Clerk Lawrence made a motion to open the public hearing on the IFT request for R.W. LaPine. Motion supported by Treasurer Bloomfield. Motion passed by voice vote.

RESULT: PASSED [UNANIMOUS]
MOVER: Clerk Lawrence
SECONDER: Treasurer Bloomfield
AYES: Unanimous
NAYS: None
ABSTAIN: None
ABSENT: None

Ken Diggs, Chief Financial Officer, and Ryan LaPine, fourth-generation President, presented on behalf of R.W. LaPine. The company has been in Comstock Township since 1983 and is a full-service union mechanical contractor that has recently expanded into electrical work. It has more than 300 employees, over 90% of whom work at the Comstock headquarters, with skilled trades wages of \$35 to \$53 per hour and higher. The service division expansion is part of a three-year plan to invest more than \$9 million (\$6.5 million in Comstock Township and \$3 million in St. Joseph). This project adds 2,048 square feet of new office space and renovates existing space and is expected to retain 10 existing jobs and create 20 new jobs over three years (11 or more electricians and 9 or more HVAC/plumbing service positions). All positions include health insurance; 18 of the 20 are expected to be union positions with a pension, and starting pay is expected to exceed \$35 per hour.

In response to Board questions, the representatives stated that all 20 jobs for this project would be in Comstock; that renovation has begun; that a separate 41,000-square-foot facility recently purchased by the company will be used for modular pipe fabrication for projects outside the area; that the property is owned by Palmira Properties, with the current lease running through December 31, 2026 and a new three-year lease beginning January 1, 2027; and that the IFT applies only to the 2,048-square-foot new construction, not the renovations. Trustee Amos stated that he worked with R.W. LaPine for many years as a facilities manager and found them reliable, and Clerk Lawrence noted the company's positive culture.

Public hearing comments: Karen Hite asked whether the positions would be truly new jobs or employees moving from other local contractors. Tammy Keeler spoke in support, noting that the jobs. Jeannie Kissinger are new hires and citing the company's work at Borgess hospital. A resident, Tim Kerney, a skilled trades manager for Michigan State University, spoke in support based on the company's work on MSU projects and encouraged apprenticeship opportunities for Comstock residents. Riley Lukomski of Southwest Michigan First noted that the regional median wage is \$22.44 per hour and that the proposed positions pay more than 50% above it.

Treasurer Bloomfield made a motion to close the public hearing. Motion supported by Trustee Paver. Motion passed by voice vote.

RESULT: PASSED [UNANIMOUS]
MOVER: Treasurer Bloomfield
SECONDER: Trustee Paver
AYES: Unanimous
NAYS: None
ABSTAIN: None
ABSENT: None

Resolution to Approve Industrial Facilities Tax Exemption – R.W. LaPine

Attorney Thall explained that the resolution approves an IFT exemption for the expansion in the amount of \$557,743, within an Industrial Development District established in 1992, for a period of 12 years, during which the new facility would be taxed at 50%. The resolution authorizes the Clerk and Supervisor to enter into an agreement ensuring the company creates the jobs indicated, with provisions to recapture abated taxes, through litigation, if necessary, if it does not. If approved, the request will be submitted to the Michigan Department of Treasury for final approval. He advised that a motion to approve the certificate “as requested” would include the 12-year term and bind the company to its application and supporting documents.

In response to Trustee Hart, the company stated that it works with the Career Connect trade program through committee service, student tours, job shadowing, and connections to the Local 357 and Local 7 apprenticeship programs. Clerk Lawrence stated that, based on her conversation with the Assessor, the exemption does not reduce taxes currently collected by the Township; the Township will still see increased tax revenue at 50% of the new development; and approving the request establishes Comstock as a pro-business community. Supervisor Martin noted that he attended the Southwest Michigan First local official’s academy on IFTs and supports the request.

Clerk Lawrence made a motion to approve the resolution authorizing the Industrial Facilities Exemption Certificate as requested for R.W. LaPine. Motion supported by Trustee VanBruggen. Roll call vote was taken.

RESULT: PASSED [UNANIMOUS 7–0]
MOVER: Clerk Lawrence
SECONDER: Trustee VanBruggen
AYES: Martin, Bloomfield, Lawrence, Amos, Hart, Paver, VanBruggen
NAYS: None
ABSTAIN: None
ABSENT: None

Township FOIA Procedures

Clerk Lawrence presented research on the Township’s FOIA procedures, noting that the current document is an unmodified 2015 Michigan Townships Association template with incomplete sections, no adoption or revision date, outdated wage rates, and no named FOIA Coordinator. She requested authorization to update the procedures and guidelines consistent with MCL 15.234, including labor and media charges, with review by Attorney Thall. She also proposed a policy of not charging fees for requests under \$50, which, based on 2026 costs, would cost the Township about \$200 per year, reduce the risk and labor of

fee appeals, and should be adopted as a policy so it applies consistently to all requesters. Supervisor Martin supported the proposal and suggested a searchable library of previously released FOIA records on the Township website; Attorney Thall confirmed that previously released records are public and may be provided or posted. Attorney Thall advised that the Board could tonight designate the FOIA Coordinator, adopt the fee waiver, and authorize the Clerk to update the procedures with his review, with the updated procedures returning to the Board for approval.

Trustee Paver made a motion to (1) adopt a policy waiving FOIA fees of \$50 or less; (2) designate Lisa Cochran as the Township FOIA Coordinator; and (3) direct the Clerk's office to prepare updated FOIA Procedures and Guidelines and Written Public Summary consistent with MCL 15.234, with review by Attorney Thall. Motion supported by Trustee VanBruggen. Motion passed by voice vote.

RESULT: PASSED [UNANIMOUS]
MOVER: Trustee Paver
SECONDER: Trustee VanBruggen
AYES: Unanimous
NAYS: None
ABSTAIN: None
ABSENT: None

TREASURER

Transfer of Sewer Fund Account from Fifth Third Bank to First National Bank

Treasurer Bloomfield reported that the Township's sewer fund account, holding just over \$46,000, is at Fifth Third Bank, which acquired Comerica this spring. Following the merger, communication from the bank has been lacking, and she and Deputy Treasurer Knight recommend moving the account to First National Bank. In response to Clerk Lawrence, she stated that she does not anticipate any disruption to Township business.

Trustee Paver made a motion to direct Treasurer Bloomfield to move the funds from Fifth Third Bank to First National Bank. Motion supported by Trustee VanBruggen. Roll call vote was taken.

RESULT: PASSED [UNANIMOUS 7-0]
MOVER: Trustee Paver
SECONDER: Trustee VanBruggen
AYES: Hart, Amos, Lawrence, Martin, Bloomfield, Paver, VanBruggen
NAYS: None
ABSTAIN: None
ABSENT: None

TRUSTEE

No items were discussed.

SUPERVISOR

Board of Review Appointment

Supervisor Martin reported that Deputy Clerk Murphy has resigned from the Board of Review as she moves into the Deputy Clerk position and other Township functions. With

Board of Review training coming up, he recommended Lori Criteser, who has been interviewed for several Township committees, noting that she would be a neutral decision maker and brings real estate background.

Trustee VanBruggen made a motion to fill the vacancy on the Board of Review with Lori Criteser. Motion supported by Trustee Paver. Motion passed by voice vote.

RESULT: PASSED [UNANIMOUS]
MOVER: Trustee VanBruggen
SECONDER: Trustee Paver
AYES: Unanimous
NAYS: None
ABSTAIN: None
ABSENT: None

Kalamazoo County Community Grant Application – Kayak Launch at Merrill Park

Supervisor Martin stated that the Parks Interim Director reported a consensus of the Parks Board to support the grant application presented by Discover Kalamazoo. In response to Clerk Lawrence, he stated that maintenance would be addressed by the Parks Board through its budget. He noted that, on the recommendation of Township Engineer Mike Presta, the Parks Board is also pursuing a parallel DNR grant for shoreline repair that includes a kayak launch, to maximize available funding. In response to Trustee Hart, he stated that it is not yet known whether the grant would cover 100% of installation costs and that the Parks Board would review final details; the Township Board's action is to support the application.

Trustee Paver made a motion that the Township Board support the grant application for the installation of a kayak launch at Merrill Park. Motion supported by Clerk Lawrence. Roll call vote was taken.

RESULT: PASSED [UNANIMOUS 7–0]
MOVER: Trustee Paver
SECONDER: Clerk Lawrence
AYES: Martin, Lawrence, Amos, Hart, VanBruggen, Paver, Bloomfield
NAYS: None
ABSTAIN: None
ABSENT: None

CLOSED SESSION

Attorney-Client Privileged Memorandum

Clerk Lawrence made a motion that the Township Board convene in closed session under Section 8(1)(h) of the Open Meetings Act to consider material exempt from disclosure by state statute, Section 13(1) of the Freedom of Information Act, being a letter from its attorney dated October 19, 2026, for the reason that the letter is exempt from disclosure

under state law due to the attorney-client privilege. Motion supported by Trustee VanBruggen. Roll call vote was taken.

RESULT: PASSED [UNANIMOUS 7–0]
MOVER: Clerk Lawrence
SECONDER: Trustee VanBruggen
AYES: VanBruggen, Hart, Amos, Lawrence, Martin, Bloomfield, Paver
NAYS: None
ABSTAIN: None
ABSENT: None

The Board entered closed session at 7:53 PM and returned to open session at 8:52 PM.

Treasurer Bloomfield made a motion to exit closed session. Motion supported by Clerk Lawrence. Motion passed by voice vote.

RESULT: PASSED [UNANIMOUS]
MOVER: Treasurer Bloomfield
SECONDER: Clerk Lawrence
AYES: Unanimous
NAYS: None
ABSTAIN: None
ABSENT: None

FINANCE

Reports

No discussion was had.

- Cash Summary by Bank Account – July
- Cash Summary by Fund – July
- Cash Summary by Bank Account – August
- Cash Summary by Fund – August

INFORMATIONAL/FUTURE ACTION ITEMS

No discussion was had.

- FOIA Requests

PUBLIC COMMENT(S) ON AGENDA AND NON-AGENDA ITEMS

Two members of the public commented.

Tammy Keeler asked that the Township budget be made available to the public for transparency and thanked the Board for its transparency and its votes.

A resident, Jeannie Kissinger, asked about the former Reed's grocery store, which is marked as a daycare, but whose listed phone number is disconnected, and whether it is receiving state funding. She praised the Board's approval of the R.W. LaPine request as a way to bring jobs to the Township and asked the Township to look into loud late-night noise from equipment at the dam near her home.

MEMBERS COMMENTS

Trustee VanBruggen – No comments.

Trustee Paver – No comments.

Treasurer Bloomfield noted that there will not be another Board meeting before the election and encouraged everyone to vote.

Clerk Lawrence thanked County Clerk Meredith Place for hosting election worker training at Township Hall that day, and thanked the residents and non-residents who have volunteered, noting the Township is close to its target number of election workers. She announced that early voting will be held at Township Hall from Saturday, October 24 through November 1, 10:00 AM to 6:00 PM daily, for voters registered in Comstock Township or the City of Galesburg. She clarified that the Clerk posts agendas and minutes for Township Board meetings, the Zoning office handles those for Planning Commission meetings, and Parks handles its own. She thanked residents for their feedback, reaffirmed the Board's commitment to transparency, and encouraged residents to bring concerns directly to the Board so they can be addressed.

Trustee Amos – No comments.

Trustee Hart – No further comments.

Supervisor Martin reported that employee open enrollment was completed successfully using the Township's new systems, offering multiple plans with real-time calculations, and thanked the Board for its support for staff.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at approximately 9:02 PM.

Ben Martin, Township Supervisor

Amber Lawrence, Township Clerk
Attested