

Au Train Township Regular Board Meeting Minutes
February 10, 2025 6:00 pm - 7:08 pm

Roll Call:

Board Members Present: Supervisor Tom Balmes, Clerk Mary Johnson, Trustee Jake Miller and Trustee John Carr. Board Member Absent: Treasurer, Kristy Cota. Also Present: Zoning Administrator Donna Shields, Fire Department Chief Perry King, Matt Lang, Scott and Peggy Smith and Duane Newton.

Supervisor Balmes opened our February 10, 2025 meeting at 6:00 p.m. leading us with the pledge.

Approval of the Agenda:

Moved Johnson/seconded Carr to **approve the agenda**. Motion carried.

Approval of Minutes:

Moved Balmes/seconded Johnson to **approve the minutes of the January 13, 2025 Regular Board Meeting**. Motion carried.

Pay Bills:

Moved Johnson/seconded Carr to **pay bills**. Johnson, yes; Carr, yes; Balmes, yes; Miller, yes. Motion carried. (General Fund #17386-17404; Fire Fund #9304-9320; Garbage Fund #2146).

Financial Reports/Budget Amendments:

Clerk Johnson presented the January Reports, which were reviewed. Reports are provided to Board Members prior to the meeting. No Budget Amendments were recommended.

Board Member Reports:

Treasurer Cota emailed her report - Balance as of January 31, 2025. General Fund \$321,469.29; Fire Fund \$357,857.07 + CD \$54,250.94; Garbage Fund \$353,573.64; Road Fund \$92,929.83.

Treasurer Cota noted that collection of Winter Tax Bills continues. There are no upcoming rentals. There were 46 emails, 3 texts and 22 phone calls with questions. Office Hours are scheduled for February 28th from 9:00-5:00 for the receipt of tax payments, which is the last day payable without penalty or interest.

Clerk - Clerk Johnson indicated that since the January Meeting several emails and FOIA requests were responded to. The W2s/1099s and 4th Quarter 940 were completed. Work continues on Budget Docs for the upcoming meeting on February 20th.

The Poverty Exemption Guidelines Resolution was prepared with the recent data being released. In addition the new Yearly Contract amount about for the Assessor was calculated based on COLA of 2.5%.

The GAD (now GFL) Contract was pulled and forwarded to Board Members for review. It will be up for renewal August 6, 2026 (automatically for 5 years unless we give notice otherwise). (They could implement the CPI - which is 2.9% for 2024 - this month).

Sorting and filing continues in the Clerk/Treasurer's Office, using the most recent Records Retention Schedule issued by the State.

Trustee's - Trustee John Carr noted he had zoning questions and garbage collection concerns. He also noted visiting the Christmas and Au Train Fire Halls. Trustee Jacob Miller also noted receiving garage collection concerns phone calls. He contacted GFL direct and spoke with Adam who indicated they were training in a new driver, but not for a route and that they were still actively looking for a route driver.

These comments prompted a brief discussion regarding the GFL Contract.

Supervisor - Supervisor Balmes noted that he attended the Planning Commission and Zoning Board of Appeals Meetings, where the request for updated publications from the MTA was made. Zoning Administrator Shields will be surveying the need of what publications need to be ordered to make sure all members have up to date guidebooks. Supervisor Balmes also provided information on the railroad bridge over the Au Train River (for snowmobiles and ORV's on the trail) and was told that the DNR was in the process of obtaining the engineering work and hoping to start repairs in the Spring, which then prompted discussion about the use of State Highway M28 to bypass the closed bridge and safety concerns. Many out of the area operators are using the shoulder of the highway not only at the bridge section but along M28 in the County.

The conceptual project briefly discussed at the January Meeting for a possible underwater break wall at the Au Train River funded by a grant from the US Fish and Wildlife, is now on hold as grant money is stalled from the Federal Government. The current Project Manager and meeting liaison has left their position.

Also, Supervisor Balmes noted that he was informed that funds have been allocated by the state for the "Orange" Bridge Removal at Woodland Ave. This is funding that has been requested for many years from the Alger County Road Commission. Supervisor Balmes indicated he would like them to reconsider having it removed, but rather seek funding for non-vehicular use as part of a Recreation plan. He will be reaching out to the ACRC to see if this is an option.

Special Presentation: None

Public Comment: Public Comments were received from Duane Newton, via email, which were forwarded to Board Members prior to the meeting.

Boards/Departments:

Zoning Administrator/Panning Commission/Zoning Board of Appeals- ZA Shields was present. Monthly Report received, reviewed and discussed. It is on file. The Master Citizen Planner Designation Class has been completed. The bulletin board outside the Assessor's Office is being used for all things Planning/Zoning related. Upcoming Meetings for the Planning Commission are February 12th for the Seaberg STR CUP Public Hearing and February 13th for a presentation from CUPPAD and review of Master Plan Draft. The Zoning Board of Appeals held their Organizational Meeting in January, and will be scheduling their next meeting to review their current By-laws.

Assessor/Board of Review - No report received from Assessor Fuess.

Maintenance Department: Ryan Walther noted that he continues snow removal and will need to have the banks pushed back. The cost would be \$110 per hour as quoted by Seaberg Enterprise.

Fire Department: Chief Perry King was present and provided his report. There were 7 calls for the month. The Annual DOT Certifications for all vehicles are due and will start the end of February through Swem.

Active 911 Subscription was discussed and adding additional members. There will be an additional cost, but the Township Board Members could also be added to the account for all FD notifications.

Clerk Johnson reminded Chief King that a member of the Department is expected at the Budget Workshop Meeting to present a budget to the Board for review and consideration.

At the last Fire Department Meeting there was no call for elections related to the current Fire Chief. That being said, Moved Miller/seconded Balmes to **appoint Perry King as Fire Chief for 2025**. Miller, yes; Balmes, yes; Johnson, yes; Carr, yes. Motion carried. This Motion would continue the appointment of Assistant Fire Chief Justen Knuttila and Hall Captain Brandon Lewis.

Unfinished Business:

1. Resolution - Guidelines for Poverty Exemption - No. 2025-001. Moved Johnson/seconded Carr to **approve the Guidelines Resolution for Poverty Exemption as presented.** Johnson, yes; Carr, yes; Miller, yes; Balmes, yes. Motion passed. See Attachment A.

New Business:

1. Correspondence - Clerk Johnson noted correspondence requesting funding from UPSET and Alger County Commission on Aging. No Board Action.

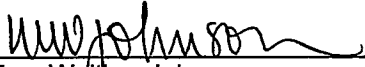
Public Comment: None

Board Member Comments: None

Next Meeting: The Board will hold a Special Budget Workshop Meeting on February 20th at 5:00 pm and the next Regular Board meeting on March 10, 2025 at 6:00 pm.

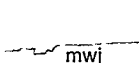
Adjournment: Moved Balmes/seconded Carr to **adjourn at 7:08 pm.**

Submitted by Mary Walther Johnson, Clerk



Mary Walther Johnson

APPROVED DATE: 03-10-2025


mwj

AU TRAIN TOWNSHIP - GUIDELINES RESOLUTION FOR POVERTY EXEMPTION
Resolution No. 2025- 001

WHEREAS, the adoption of guidelines for poverty exemptions is required of the Au Train Township Board; and

WHEREAS, the principal residence of persons, who the Supervisor/Assessor and Board of Review determines by reason of poverty to be unable to contribute to the public charge, is eligible for exemption in whole or in part from taxation under Public Act 390 of 1994 (MCL 211.7u); and

WHEREAS, pursuant to PA 390 of 1994, the Township of Au Train, Alger County adopts the following guidelines for the Board of Review to implement. The guidelines shall include but not be limited to the specific income and asset levels of the claimant and all persons residing in the household filed in the current or immediately preceding year;

To be eligible, a person shall do all the following on an annual basis:

- 1) Be an owner of and occupy as a principal residence the property for which an exemption is requested.
- 2) File a claim with the supervisor/assessor or Board of Review, accompanied by federal and state income tax returns for all persons residing in the principal residence, including any property tax credit returns filed in the immediately preceding year or in the current year or a signed State Tax Commission Form 4988, *Poverty Exemption Affidavit*.
- 3) File a claim reporting that the combined assets of all persons in the household do not exceed the current guidelines. Assets include but are not limited to, real estate other than the principal residence, personal property, motor vehicles, recreational vehicles and equipment, certificates of deposit, savings accounts, checking accounts, stocks, bonds, life insurance, retirement funds, etc. – See Asset Test Requirements, Below.
- 4) Produce a valid driver's license or other form of identification if requested.
- 5) Produce, if requested, a deed, land contract, or other evidence of ownership of the property for which an exemption is requested.
- 6) Meet the federal poverty income guidelines as defined and determined annually by the United States Department of Health and Human Services or alternative guidelines adopted by the governing body providing the alternative guidelines do not provide eligibility requirements less than the federal guidelines.
- 7) The application for an exemption shall be filed after January 1, but one day prior to the last day of the December Board of Review. The filing of this claim constitutes an appearance before the Board of Review for the purpose of preserving the right of appeal to the Michigan Tax Tribunal.

ASSET TEST REQUIREMENTS: Total Assets should not exceed \$50,000 in True Cash Value for eligibility for poverty exemption. This excludes the homestead being claimed, essential household goods (clothing and furniture), and the first \$5,000 of the market value of the claimant's motor vehicle.

Au Train Township may consider and require an applicant to list any of the following types of household assets to determine the person's eligibility for a poverty exemption:

- Second home with different Parcel ID#
- Land with different Parcel ID#
- Vehicles (\$5,000 allowed for vehicle of claimant)
- Recreational Vehicles, such as campers, motor homes, boats, ATV's, snowmobiles
- Buildings other than residence with different Parcel ID#
- Jewelry
- Antiques
- Artwork
- Equipment
- Other personal property of value
- Bank accounts over \$1,000.
- Stocks
- Money received from the sale of property
- Withdrawals of bank deposits and borrowed money
- Gifts, loans, lump-sum inheritances and one-time insurance payments
-

The following are the 2023 Federal Poverty Income Guidelines which are updated annually by the United States Department of Health and Human Services, effective January 15, 2025. The annual allowable income includes income for all persons residing in the principal residence.

Federal Poverty Guidelines Used in the Determination of Poverty Exemptions

		2024
Size of "Family Unit"		2023 Federal Poverty Guidelines
Household of:	1	\$15,650
	2	\$21,150
	3	\$26,650
	4	\$32,150
	5	\$37,650
	6	\$43,150
	7	\$48,650
	8	\$54,150
For each additional person, add		\$ 5,500

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT HEREBY RESOLVED that the supervisor/assessor and Board of Review shall follow the above stated policy and federal guidelines in granting or denying an exemption

The foregoing resolution offered by the Au Train Township Board Member Johnson

and supported by the Au Train Township Board Member Carr

Upon roll call vote, the following voted:

"Aye": Johnson, Carr, Miller, Balmes

"Nay": None

The Au Train Township Supervisor declared the resolution adopted.

Dated this 10th of February, 2025.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT HEREBY RESOLVED that the supervisor/assessor and Board of Review shall follow the above stated policy and federal guidelines in granting or denying an exemption.

Mary Walther Johnson Date: February 10, 2025

Mary Walther Johnson, Clerk

Au Train Township Special Board Meeting Minutes
Budget Workshop
February 20, 2025 5:30 pm - 8:18 pm

Supervisor Balmes opened our February 20, 2025 meeting at 5:00 p.m. leading us with the pledge.

Roll Call:

Board Members Present: Supervisor Tom Balmes, Clerk Mary Johnson, Treasurer Kristy Cota, Trustee Jake Miller and Trustee John Carr. Also Present: Fire Chief Perry King, Assistant Fire Chief Justen Knuttila, and Ryan Walther.

Approval of the Agenda:

Moved Balmes/seconded Carr to **approve the agenda.** Motion carried.

Budget Review - Recommendations for FY 2025-2026:

•Fire Fund Budget - A review of the proposed budget presented by the Fire Department was made. They explained the needs of the Department and upcoming expenditures for building improvements and upgrades they would like to see, equipment purchases and maintenance schedule for the existing fleet. Work on the Fire Fund Budget for the 2025-2026 Fiscal Year began and was completed. Review of financial documents and the current voted millage of 2.8782 mills, which was recently renewed and expires 12/31/2029, was made. The Fund account was budgeted with careful consideration on anticipated revenues and expenditures, and the proposed expenditures developed and presented by the Department, with input from the Township Board.

•Garbage Fund Budget - Work on the Garbage Fund Budget for the 2025-2026 Fiscal Year began and was completed. Review of financial documents, contract with GFL and the current voted millage was made. The Fund Account was budgeted with careful consideration of anticipated revenues and expenditures. Discussion regarding increased operational costs from GFL and fuel surcharges was made. Clerk Johnson noted that the Contract is up for a 5 Year Renewal August 2026. It was determined that authorizing 2.0000 of the 3.0000 mills voted supports the account expenditures and maintains a healthy Ending Fund Equity balance.

•Road Fund Budget - Work on the Road Fund Budget for the 2025-2026 Fiscal Year began and was completed. Review of financial documents, contracts for services with the Alger County Road Commission, dust control application and the current voted millage of 2.0000 mills, which will expire 12/31/2026 and be subject to the Headlee Rollback. In addition, review of the costs associated with Road Sign replacement (as needed for missing signs) was discussed and will be reviewed as an authorized expenditure.

•General Fund Budget - Work on the General Fund Budget for the 2025-2026 Fiscal Year began and was completed. Review of financial documents, current allocated millage of 0.6782 and anticipated revenue sources were used in creating an approximate fund balance. The account expenditures were budgeted with careful consideration of the increase in costs and retention of staff and capital improvement projects.

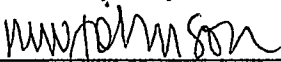
Public Comment: None

Board Member Comments: None

Next Meeting: The next Regular Board meeting is scheduled for March 10, 2025 at 6:00 pm.

Adjournment: Motion Cota/seconded Carr to **adjourn at 8:18 pm.**

Submitted by Mary Walther Johnson, Clerk



Mary Walther Johnson

APPROVED DATE: March 11, 2024