

Au Train Township Regular Board Meeting Minutes
December 8, 2025 6:00PM - 7:58PM

Roll Call:

Board Members Present: Supervisor Tom Balmes, Clerk Mary Johnson, Treasurer Kristy Cota, Trustee Jake Miller and Trustee John Carr. There were approximately 8 persons in the audience.

Supervisor Balmes opened our meeting at 6PM leading us with the pledge.

Approval of the Agenda:

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

Approval of Minutes:

Moved Johnson/seconded Cota to approve the minutes of the November 10, 2025 Regular Board Meeting. Motion carried.

Pay Bills:

Moved Cota/seconded Carr to pay bills. Cota, yes; Carr, yes; Miller, yes; Johnson, yes; Balmes, yes. Motion carried. (General Fund #17627-17648); Fire Fund #9427-9461; Garbage Fund #2160). Includes upcoming expenditures for Fire Department, Planning Commission, Zoning Board of Appeals and Board of Review Payroll for the 2025 Year.

Financial Reports:

Clerk Johnson presented the November, 2025 Financial Reports.

Board Member Reports:

Treasurer - Balance as of November 30, 2025: General Fund \$278,372.12; Fire Fund \$398,868.84 + CD \$56,023.52; Garbage Fund \$240,220.59; Road Fund \$41,746.69.

Treasurer Cota also noted in her report an upcoming hall rental. Winter Tax bills were sent December 1st by KCI and payments are coming in. A MML Dividend check in the amount of \$1,852.00 was received, as well as \$3,636.00 from Munising Public School for the Summer Tax Collection.

Clerk - Since the November Meeting several emails were answered, and responded to numerous FOIA requests. Because of the frequency and demands I would like to review our FOIA Policy in its entirety at the January Meeting. Completed 2025 FD Payroll - 398 man hours - \$9,950.00 Gross support wages for our Volunteer Members. Will finalize Planning Commission, ZBA and December Board of Review when December meetings are complete and reported.

The title issue for the 96 Tanker/Pumper was resolved after 3 visits to the Sec of State, a \$100 surety bond, and \$15 fee - the new title is on its way to the Township. Upon receipt it will be sent to the auction company and payment authorized. The NMU Student Community Assessment Report was received and is on file. Renewal of the autraintownship.gov domain - at no cost to the Township was completed. Our UpAhead Text Alert system was purchased by Text My Gov. They are transferring files and honoring our existing contract and fee schedule. We will be working with them on the transition. The report for the Sault Ste Marie Tribe of Chippewa Indians regarding the 2% Funding Distributions still needs to be completed, along with Election Administration Con Ed.

Attended a Zoom Lunchtime Workshop through the MTA regarding Non-Statutory Duties for Board Members and placed this on the Agenda to discuss. The Secretary of State is scheduled for an onsite Mobile Office on January 21, 2026. The Final SLFR Report will be due April 30, 2026.

Trustee's - Trustee Carr noted that he oversaw the new door and window installation project. Will also be contacting someone to assist with our security camera set-up and expansion. He attended the last Planning Commission Meeting. Trustee Miller indicated that questions on zoning, short term rentals and the Au Train Basin/FERC/Forest Lake Dam continue.

Supervisor - Supervisor Balmes indicated that he attended the Fire Department Meeting, replaced the Maple Grove Road sign at 16 Mile Lake Road and will be sending in the Quarterly water sample for testing this month. He will be attending the December Board of Review and continues to answer zoning questions and email inquiries.

Special Presentation: None

Public Comment: Public Comments were received from Matt Lang and Christine Latvala.

Boards/Departments:

Maintenance Department: Ryan provided an update for the Board, which includes continued snow removal and planning for the sound proofing panel installation.

Fire Department: Assistant FC Justen Knuttila presented their report. There was one call for the month. Fire Fighter classes will be offered again starting in January and we have one candidate attending.

Pomasl noted that as of January 1, 2026 Scott Air Pack will no longer be producing our 2216 Air Pack replacements. Because of that information a request to purchase 4 New Air Packs to replace the last 4 on the Au Train Pumper was submitted. The total cost through Pomasl is \$27,816.00, for 4 packs and bottles. Moved Johnson/seconded Cota to authorize the purchase of 4 New Air Packs with bottles from Pomasl at a total cost of \$27,816.00. Johnson, yes; Cota, yes; Miller, yes; Balmes, yes; Carr, yes. Motion carried.

Zoning Administrator/Planning Commission/Zoning Board of Appeals- Zoning Administrator Donna Shields was present and gave her report. Additional information was provided, which includes updates on her continuing education. Alexander Free will be registered for the MSU Citizen Planner Training.

Assessor/Board of Review - The Assessor email report was received and is on file.

Unfinished Business:

1. Board Action Items - Upcoming items for future Board meetings include January - Review FOIA Policy; February - Budget preparation and workshop; March - Budget approval, Township Board General Policy.
2. Decision and Order - Seaberg Properties, LLC vs Au Train Township. Supervisor Balmes summarized the Order and indicated that the Plaintiff filed a Motion for Reconsideration. This not only extends the time period to file an appeal, it is asking the Judge to reconsider his decision, as they believe it was made in error.

3. Re-Appointment Planning Commission - Current Planning Commission Members Matt Lang and Jesse Cadwell are up for reappointment consideration. Member Matt Lang indicated he was not interested in continuing, and Member Jesse Cadwell submitted his letter noting he will continue. Moved Balmes/seconded Cota to confirm the reappointment of Jesse Cadwell as a Member of the Planning Commission for a 3-Year Term ending 12/31/2028. Balmes, yes; Cota, yes; Johnson, yes; Carr, yes; Miller, yes. Motion carried.

This leaves a vacancy on the Planning Commission, Supervisor Balmes will contact candidate Wayne Cullens to confirm whether he would like to be appointed. This will be placed on the January Board Meeting Agenda. Member Matt Lang was thanked for his service on the Planning Commission.

Discussion regarding the need for an alternate on the Zoning Board of Appeals was made. After discussion, Moved Carr/seconded Balmes, to appoint Matt Lang as the Alternate on the Zoning Board of Appeals for a 3-Year Term, effective 01/01/2026. Carr, yes; Balmes, yes; Johnson, yes; Miller, yes; Cota, yes. Motion carried.

Recording Secretary Planning Commission/Zoning Board of Appeals - After receiving an email from Duane Newton, in which he states that there was no longer a need for a recording Secretary, a position currently held by Zoning Administrator Donna Shields, Clerk Johnson requested this be placed on the Agenda for discussion. Donna was appointed as Recording Secretary to assist the Planning Commission and Zoning Board of Appeals with recording the minutes and meeting planning and efficiency. As the Zoning Administrator she was already in attendance. It was noted that continuing with the Recording Secretary was important to maintain accurate minutes and efficient meetings, and was well worth the expense of \$75.00 per meeting. After discussion, Moved Johnson/seconded Carr, to continue with the appointment of Donna Shields as the Recording Secretary for the Planning Commission and Zoning Board of Appeals, at the rate of \$75.00 per meeting, for one year, or until such time the individual Boards don't feel it is necessary, or Donna Shields steps down. Johnson, yes; Carr, yes; Miller, yes; Balmes, yes; Cota, yes. Motion carried.

New Business:

1. Correspondence - Clerk Johnson presented a request from Friends of Valley Spur to consider a Sponsorship. While the Board cannot legally fund a sponsorship without a contract for services and monies were never appropriated in the Recreation Budget, it could be considered in the future with the appropriate contract and budget inclusion. This will be discussed during the February Budget Workshop.

2. 2026 Township Board Meeting Dates - Discussion regarding 2026 Board Meeting dates and times. A schedule was agreed to for Regular Meetings, Budget Workshop and Budget Public Hearing. Such dates and times will be published in the Beacon and posted on the Township Website Calendar. Moved Johnson/seconded Balmes to agree to the proposed 2026 Township Board Meeting Dates and Times as presented. Motion carried.

3. Zoning Violation Extension Request to Cure - Zoning Administrator Shields provided details regarding the shipping container zoning violation for the property on Spruce Street. The current tenant was expected to vacate and take the shipping container with them, but with the onset of winter, the lease was extended until April 15, 2026. The established policy indicates the Board makes the decision regarding an extension. The Zoning Administrator recommends the Board allow the extension until April 15, 2026. Moved Balmes/seconded Cota to approve the recommendation of the Zoning Administrator and allow the extension of the Glyptis Spruce Street Shipping Container Zoning Violation until April 15, 2026. Motion carried.

4. Board Member Pay Review Additional Duties - Clerk Johnson noted she recently attended a MTA Training Session where pay for non-statutory duties of Board Members was reviewed and provided guidelines. Clerk Johnson noted that she felt that the non-statutory duties that she is providing should receive pay consideration. Those include Webmaster, Cemetery Management and FOIA Coordinator. She also felt that the Treasurer should be compensated for the non-statutory duty of being contracted for collecting Summer Taxes for the school system(s). Currently those costs are billed to and collected from the school system.

Moved Balmes/seconded Carr, to compensate Clerk Mary Johnson at a rate of \$250.00 per month for non-statutory additional duties of webmaster, cemetery management, and FOIA Coordinator, effective January 1, 2026. Balmes, yes; Carr, yes; Johnson, yes; Cota, yes; Miller, yes. Motion carried.

Treasurer Cota agreed with future pay consideration for summer tax collection as a non-statutory duty, and would like to discuss further as part of the Budget Workshop meeting.

5. NMU Community Assessment Presentation - Clerk Johnson noted that the community assessment that was created by students at Northern Michigan University was received and will be forward to the Board for review. It was a well presented project.

Public Comment: Public Comments were received from Duane Newton, and Christine Latvala.

Board Member Comments: Additional Comments were made by Board Members Balmes, Johnson, Carr and Cota.

Next Meeting: The next Regular Board meeting is scheduled for January 12, 2025 at 6:00PM

Adjournment: Moved Balmes/seconded Cota to adjourn at 7:58PM. Motion carried.

Submitted by Mary Walther Johnson, Clerk

Mary Walther Johnson

APPROVED DATE: _____

Prepared: 12/18/2025
mwj