

Au Train Township Regular Board Meeting Minutes
January 12, 2026 6:00PM - 8:10PM

Roll Call:

Board Members Present: Supervisor Tom Balmes, Clerk Mary Johnson, Treasurer Kristy Cota, Trustee Jake Miller and Trustee John Carr. There were approximately 12 persons in the audience.

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

Approval of the Agenda:

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

Approval of Minutes:

Moved Cota/seconded Balmes to approve the minutes of the December 8, 2025 Regular Board Meeting. Motion carried.

Pay Bills:

Moved Johnson/seconded Carr to pay bills. Johnson, yes; Carr, yes; Miller, yes; Balmes, yes; Cota, yes. Motion carried. (General Fund #17649-17686; Fire Fund #9462-9471; Garbage Fund #2161).

Financial Reports:

Clerk Johnson presented the December, 2025 Financial Reports.

Board Member Reports:

Treasurer - Balance as of December 31, 2025: General Fund \$265,029.52; Fire Fund \$409,432.77 + CD \$56,023.52; Garbage Fund \$256,165.28; Road Fund \$57,463.66.

Treasurer Cota also noted in her report there are no upcoming hall rentals. Winter Tax payments are being collected and processed.

Clerk - Since the December Meeting several emails were answered, and responded to FOIA requests. I will begin preparing and filing W2s/1099s and 4th Quarter Reports for the IRS. The Poverty Exemption Guidelines based on the data to be released in January will be presented at the February meeting for approval. The calculation increase for the Assessor Contract is based on COLA of 2.8%, beginning January 1, 2026. 2026 is the final year of the current contract.

The Secretary of State office will be on site next Wednesday, January 21st starting at 10:00 am.

The transfer to TextMyGov from upAhead should be completed by 1/15/26. In meantime we have not been able to send out any alerts.

Clerk Johnson reminded the Board that the GFL Contract will be up for renewal August 6, 2026 (automatically for 5 years unless we give notice otherwise).

Trustee's - Trustee Carr noted that he attended the Planning Commission Work Session on December 18th. He has also been trying to connect with Iron Bay Computer Co., and responding to questions on garbage collection issues. Trustee Miller had many questions about the Forest Lake Dam with the numerous articles. Also provided some information from the DNR regarding the trestle bridge at Forest Lake Road and the replacement status.

Supervisor - Supervisor Balmes indicated that the Au Train River mouth blockage broke through on its own without any flooding issues or intervention. MDOT, Army Corp of Engineers and EGLE were all contacted to check on permit status. A new permit application will need to be submitted to the Army Corp of Engineers, but would be temporarily available for an emergency.

A status update on the Forest Lake Dam was provided. Several phone calls to the state, EGLE and Dam Safety Department were made. The lease for the land the powerhouse sits on was pulled by the current owner. FERC is pulling their permit. Concerns still exist regarding dam safety, recreational opportunities in the area and how it will effect the wildlife and environmental hazards. Supervisor Balmes will continue to monitor the matter and provide updates.

Supervisor Balmes noted he attend the Fire Department Meeting and will continue the water testing as required by the Health Department.

Special Presentation: None

Public Comment: Public Comments were received from Samantha Nimee and Wyatt Seaberg.

Boards/Departments:

Maintenance Department: Ryan provided an update for the Board prior to the meeting, which includes continued snow removal and plow truck repair. Discussion about adding exterior lighting to the Zoning Administrators office entrance was made.

Fire Department: Information was provided on the last months activities. There were several power line disruption calls. The replacement air packs were ordered. It was also noted that equipment costs continue to rise throughout the industry. Brad Steinhoff has started the Fire Fighter I course.

Zoning Administrator/Planning Commission/Zoning Board of Appeals- Zoning Administrator Donna Shields was present and gave her report, which included a 2025 Cumulative report on permits and activities.

A new member will need to be appointed to the Zoning Board of Appeals to replace Kathy Reynolds, who has stepped down from her position. After review and discussion, Moved Balmes/seconded Cota, to appoint alternate Matt Lang to a regular member of the ZBA. This will be a 3 year term. Balmes, yes; Cota, yes; Carr, yes; Johnson, yes; Miller, yes. Motion carried.

Planning Commission Member appointment was also discussed. Supervisor Balmes noted there were 4 previous applicants and Alexandra Free was appointed. Wayne Cullens and new applicant Wyatt Seaberg were present to answer any questions. After further discussion, Moved Balmes, without support, to recommend the appointment of Wayne Cullens.

After continued discussion, Moved Balmes/seconded Cota, to support the Supervisors appointment of Wyatt Seaberg to the Planning Commission, effective immediately. Balmes, yes; Cota, yes; Johnson, yes; Carr, no; Miller, yes. Motion carried.

As Alternate Matt Lang was appointed as a regular member of the Zoning Board of Appeals, Moved Balmes/seconded Johnson, to appoint Wayne Cullens as an alternate member of the Zoning Board of Appeals. Balmes, yes; Johnson, yes; Carr, yes; Cota, yes; Miller, yes. Motion carried.

Assessor/Board of Review - Assessor Fuess was present and provided the Board with an update. Discussion regarding current activities and scheduling the March Board of Review was made.

Board of Review Member Emily Molnar is not available for the March meetings. An alternate will need to be appointed. Clerk Johnson noted that former Supervisor Michelle Doucette indicated she would welcome the appointment to the Board of Review in any capacity needed. Moved Balmes/second Cota, to appoint Michelle Doucette as an alternate on the Board of Review, effective immediately. Balmes, yes; Cota, yes; Miller, yes; Carr, yes; Johnson, yes. Motion carried.

Clerk Johnson noted that the current Assessor contract is in it's final year, and is due for the annual pay adjustment based on COLA. Current COLA is 2.8%, which would be a monthly increase of \$68.00.

Assessor Fuess provided the Board with information regarding former Township Assessor Mark Maki and his request to have a Qualified AG property removed from that status. This Qualified AG (the property owner has a history with Mark Maki) was issued in 2021. Assessor Fuess has no plans to proceed.

Unfinished Business:

1. Board Action Items - FOIA Policy Review. Clerk Johnson noted that the current FOIA documents were forward to the Board for review, however, they were originally prepared based on approved legislation and there isn't much waiver allowed. The Michigan Townships Association indicated there may be some legislative changes forthcoming.
2. Decision and Order - Seaberg Properties, LLC vs Au Train Township. Supervisor Balmes noted that the Motion for Reconsideration, and now court requested response from the Township, have been filed. There is no hearing, just a review and reconsideration by the Court. A decision will be forthcoming.
3. Trail Trestle Bridge Update - Clerk Johnson provided a status update on the Trail Trestle Bridge. After being contacted by the Munising Beacon, an email was shared from Robert Katona of the MI DNR. Mr. Katona indicated that a single span bridge was the least expensive option. The completed design is expected late winter/early spring. The estimated project cost is \$900,000. Funding has yet to be secured but it has been requested for the upcoming grants cycle. Construction, once funding is secured, would also be contingent on the relocation of endangered mussels that were identified onsite. They could be looking at a contract for construction for the 2026-2027 season.

New Business:

1. Correspondence - Several emails were received from Mr. Newton regarding processes, procedures, complaints and questions related to zoning.
2. ACRC 5-Year Road Plan Review - The Board reviewed the proposed 5-Year Road Plan from the Alger County Road Commission. With additional questions and priorities discussed, Supervisor Balmes will invite ACRC Engineer/Manager Bob Lindbeck to the February or March meeting, as available. Any additional commitments from the Township would be contingent on a millage proposed and passage.

3. Website Accessibility Update Requirements - Clerk Johnson noted new legislation is requiring that all public websites become ADA Compliant by the end of 2026. Our website designer will be consulted on the process.

Public Comment: Public Comments were received from Anthony Atore, Wyatt Seaberg, Kathleen Nimee, and Samantha Nimee.

Board Member Comments: No additional comments were made by Board Members.

Next Meeting: The next Regular Board meeting is scheduled for February 9, 2026 at 6:00PM.

Adjournment: Moved Balmes/seconded Cota to adjourn at 8:10PM. Motion carried.

Submitted by Mary Walther Johnson, Clerk

Mary Walther Johnson

APPROVED DATE: _____

Prepared: 01/20/2026
mwj