Au Train Township Regular Board Meeting Minutes
February 9, 2026 6:00PM - 8:22PM

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 6:00PM leading us with the pledge.

Approval of the Agenda:
Moved Johnson/seconded Carr to approve the agenda. Motion carried.

Approval of Minutes:
Moved Cota/seconded Johnson to approve the minutes of the January 12, 2026 Regular Board Meeting. Motion carried.

Pay Bills:
Moved Cota/seconded Carr to pay bills. Cota, yes; Carr, yes; Miller, yes; Balmes, yes; Johnson, yes. Motion carried. (General Fund #17687-17707; Fire Fund #9472-9481; Garbage Fund #2162).

Financial Reports:
Clerk Johnson presented the January, 2026 Financial Reports.

Board Member Reports:
Treasurer - Balance as of January 31, 2025: General Fund $279,695.71; Fire Fund $513,379.06 + CD $56,023.52; Garbage Fund $296,054.14; Road Fund $129,140.74.

Treasurer Cota also noted in her report there are no upcoming hall rentals. Office hours will be on March 2, 2026 from 9:00-5:00 for the last day of Winter Tax Collection. After that date taxes will be payable to the Alger County Treasurer and include fees and interest.

Clerk - Since the January Meeting several emails and FOIA requests were responded to. Also website updates including adding the page and widget for Text My Gov. It was noted for the audience that if you text "AU TRAIN" to 91896 you will be subscribed for text message from the Township. Clerk Johnson noted she attended an Alger County Clerks meeting to discuss security concerns and plans for the upcoming 2026 Elections. W2's, 1099's and the 4th Quarter 941 Report were filed. The Poverty Exemption Guidelines Resolution was prepared for Board of Review.

The next week will be final preparation for the upcoming Budget Workshop Special Meeting on February 16th at 5:30 pm.

Trustee's - Trustee Carr noted that he attended the Planning Commission Meeting and had the usual inquiries. He also attended a MTA webinar on January 21st. Trustee Miller provided information on the Forest Lake Damn where the pipe was cut to the power plant and levels did rise. The Basin property owner was contacted as well as the State of Michigan.

Supervisor - Supervisor Balmes also updated the Board on the Forest Lake Dam, noted that EGLE Dam Safety was contacted about who is going to regulate the flow of water with the power plant being shut down and FERC pulled the license from RWE. The State of Michigan is the regulatory authority for flow. They consider safety first and then recreational and environmental concerns second.

A Seaberg Properties, LLC vs Au Train Township update was provided. (Noted on Agenda under unfinished business). Once again, the Court ruled in favor of the Township and their Motion for Reconsideration was denied by Judge Rahilly.

Supervisor Balmes noted he attend the Fire Department Meeting and the January required water testing was completed with 4 consecutive negative results and are back to Quarterly Testing. The re-application process for the river dredging permit has begun. Also, the funding for the Trestle ORV bridge over the Au Train River at the Heritage Trail Center was allocated. The next step will be completion and approval of the design and a relocation plan for endangered mussels.

Special Presentation: Bob Lindbeck, Engineer/Manager of the Alger County Road Commission was present to review and discuss the 5-Year Road Plan for the Township. Any work, beyond what is contracted for 2026, will be contingent on Road Millage 2-mills renewal approval. There was a large contingent of residents on Reindeer Run present. A public comment period was allowed for direct questions to Mr. Lindbeck. Discussion about the plan, as revised, maintenance projects, overlay for existing paved roads and dust control was made. The Board thanked Mr. Lindbeck for attending the and being available to answer questions.

Public Comment: Public Comments were received from Perry King.

Boards/Departments:
Maintenance Department: Ryan provided an update for the Board prior to the meeting, which includes continued snow plowing and contracting with Oberstar for bank push back, and installation of the DropBox on the Clerk/Treasurer office door to avoid issues with snow accumulation. Also requested a cost estimate for the installation of an exterior light at the Assessor entrance.

Fire Department: Chief King was present and provided an update. There were 5 calls.

Three members of the Department will be attending Instructor Training in St Ignace. Moved Johnson/seconded Cota to **approve up to $2,000.00 for total hotel reimbursements and a separate food allowance of $50.00 per day, per member who attends the Instructor Training**. Johnson, yes; Cota, yes; Miller, yes; Balmes, yes; Carr, yes. Motion carried.

A quote from Pomasl was provided for the purchase of 3 sets of turn out gear for new members. Moved Balmes, seconded Carr, to **authorize the purchase of Turn Out Gear from Pomasl not to exceed $10,000.** Balmes, yes; Carr, yes; Johnson, yes; Miller, yes; Cota, yes. Motion carried.

It was also noted that the Department was approved for the Michigan Mutual Aid program "MABAS" - Mabas is short for Michigan Aid Box Alarm System with a Mission is to coordinate the effective and efficient intrastate and interstate mobilization and deployment of fire, emergency medical services, and special operations mutual aid resources, during natural and man-made emergencies and disasters.

Zoning Administrator/Planning Commission/Zoning Board of Appeals- Zoning Administrator Donna Shields was present and gave her report, which included the 2026 Cumulative report on permits and activities. The Zoning Board of Appeals will meet on February 11th and there is a Planning Commission CUP Hearing on February 12th. In addition information was provided regarding an upcoming Special Presentation to the Planning Commission whereas a property owner will provide information on a possible PUD Project on Perch Lake Road and necessary steps that would be required to amend the Zoning Ordinance to address PUD Developments.

Assessor/Board of Review - Assessor Fuess provided his monthly report via email prior to the meeting. Most of the past month was spent completing everything in preparation of Change Notices being mailed out the end of February. Then prep for March Board of Review will begin as well as answering all the questions that arise from Change Notices being mailed to taxpayers.

Unfinished Business:

1. Board Action Items - None

2. UPDATE - Seaberg Properties, LLC vs Au Train Township. This was addressed under the Supervisor's Report. The Appellant has until February 19, 2026 to file with the Court of Appeals.

New Business:

1. Correspondence - Emails were received from Mr. Newton regarding processes, procedures, complaints and questions related to zoning. These were forwarded to Board members prior to the meeting.

2. May School Election - Clerk Johnson noted that Munising Public Schools has called for a May Election to seek millage approval for their sinking fund. They will be responsible for costs related for the administration of the election.

3. Election Services for Early Voting Agreement and Plan - Clerk Johnson presented the updated Election Services Agreement and Plan with Alger County for the upcoming election cycle. There is not an early voting requirement for the May School Election, as it only applies when it is State and/or Federal Elections. Clerk Johnson noted that the only difference in the agreement from the previous one is the cost of Early Voting (shared with the other Townships and City) will no longer be reimbursed by the State. Moved Balmes/second Cota, to approve the Agreement for Election Services between Au Train, Burt, Grand Island, Limestone, Mathias, Munising, Onota, Rock River Townships, City of Munising and Alger County Clerk's Office in Alger County, as presented. Balmes, yes; Cota, yes; Carr, yes; Johnson, yes; Miller, yes. Motion carried.

4. Board of Review Poverty Exemption Guidelines - Clerk Johnson presented the Guidelines Resolution for Poverty Exemption - Resolution No. 2026-001, for review and approval. (*See attachment No. 1 Resolution No. 2026-001)*

5. Board Member Salary/Township Pay Scale Two Year Review - Clerk Johnson presented the 2024 Salary and Wage Detail Report for review and consideration. It was noted that any updates should be considered for an effective date of April 1, 2026. (*See attachment No. 2 - Resolutions No. 2026-002, 2026-003, 2026-004 and 2026-005*).

Public Comment: Public Comments were received from Kenneth Clapp and Rebecca Wilder.

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

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

Adjournment: Moved Balmes/seconded Cota to **adjourn at 8:22PM.** Motion carried.

Submitted by Mary Walther Johnson, Clerk

_____

Mary Walther Johnson

APPROVED DATE: _____

Prepared: 02/19/2026
mwj

AU TRAIN TOWNSHIP - GUIDELINES RESOLUTION FOR POVERTY EXEMPTION Attachment #1
Resolution No. 2026- 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 2026 Federal Poverty Income Guidelines which are updated annually by the United States Department of Health and Human Services, effective January 16, 2026. The annual allowable income includes income for all persons residing in the principal residence.

Federal Poverty Guidelines Used in the Determination of Poverty Exemptions for 2026 Assessments

	Size of "Family Unit"		2025 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 Cota

Upon roll call vote, the following voted:

"Aye": Johnson, Cota, Miller, Balmes, Carr

"Nay": None

The Au Train Township Supervisor declared the resolution adopted.

Dated this 9th day of February, 2026.

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.

_____ Date: February 9, 2026

Mary Walther Johnson, Clerk

Board Member Salary
RESOLUTION No. 2026-002 Attachment #2
Au Train Township, Alger County, Michigan

WHEREAS, according to MCL 41.95(3), in a township that does not hold an annual meeting, the salary for officers composing the Township Board shall be determined by the Township Board; and

WHEREAS, the Clerk noted that the last pay adjustment for the office of Township Supervisor was April 1, 2024;

WHEREAS, the Township Board deems that an adjustment in the salary of the office of Supervisor is warranted;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, that as of April 1, 2026 the **salary of the office of Supervisor** shall be as follows: $ 1,475.00 monthly.

This resolution offered by board member Johnson

Supported by board member Carr

Upon a roll call vote, the following voted:

Aye: Johnson, Carr, Balmes, Miller, Cota

Nay: None

The Supervisor declared the resolution adopted.

Dated this 9th Day of February, 2026

Mary Walther Johnson, Au Train Township Clerk

Approved 02/09/2026

Board Member Salary
RESOLUTION No. 2026-003
Au Train Township, Alger County, Michigan

WHEREAS, according to MCL 41.95(3), in a township that does not hold an annual meeting, the salary for officers composing the Township Board shall be determined by the Township Board; and

WHEREAS, the Clerk noted that the last pay adjustment for the office of Township Clerk was April 1, 2024;

WHEREAS, the Township Board deems that an adjustment in the salary of the office of Clerk is warranted;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, that as of April 1, 2026 the **salary of the office of Clerk** shall be as follows: $ 1,475.00 monthly.

This resolution offered by board member Balmes

Supported by board member Cota

Upon a roll call vote, the following voted:

Aye: Balmes, Cota, Carr, Johnson, Miller

Nay: None

The Supervisor declared the resolution adopted.

Dated this 9th Day of February, 2026

Mary Walther Johnson, Au Train Township Clerk

Approved 02/09/2026

Board Member Salary
RESOLUTION No. 2026-004
Au Train Township, Alger County, Michigan

WHEREAS, according to MCL 41.95(3), in a township that does not hold an annual meeting, the salary for officers composing the Township Board shall be determined by the Township Board; and

WHEREAS, the Clerk noted that the last pay adjustment for the office of Township Treasurer was April 1, 2024;

WHEREAS, the Township Board deems that an adjustment in the salary of the office of Treasurer is warranted;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, that as of April 1, 2026 the **salary of the office of Treasurer** shall be as follows: $ 1,475.00 monthly.

This resolution offered by board member Johnson

Supported by board member Balmes

Upon a roll call vote, the following voted:

Aye: Johnson, Balmes, Miller, Cota, Carr

Nay: None

The Supervisor declared the resolution adopted.

Dated this 9th Day of February, 2026

_____
Mary Walther Johnson, Au Train Township Clerk

Approved 02/09/2026

Board Member Salary
RESOLUTION No. 2026-005
Au Train Township, Alger County, Michigan

WHEREAS, according to MCL 41.95(3), in a township that does not hold an annual meeting, the salary for officers composing the Township Board shall be determined by the Township Board; and

WHEREAS, the Clerk noted that the last pay adjustment for the office of Township Trustee was April 1, 2024;

WHEREAS, the Township Board deems that an adjustment in the salary of the office of Trustee is warranted;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, that as of April 1, 2026 the **salary of the office of Trustee** shall be as follows: $ 400.00 monthly.

This resolution offered by board member Balmes

Supported by board member Cota

Upon a roll call vote, the following voted:

Aye: Balmes, Cota, Johnson, Carr, Miller

Nay: None

The Supervisor declared the resolution adopted.

Dated this 9th Day of February, 2026

Mary Walther Johnson, Au Train Township Clerk

Approved 02/09/2026