

President Christopher McCann called the meeting to order at 7:00 P.M.

Clerk Scott conducted a ceremonial swearing-in of the newly elected officials.

Council Members Present:

President McCann Trustees: Cavendish, Cook, Ager, Harper and Dean

Absent Members: Trustee Ruble Attended via Zoom

Staff Present: Clerk-Joni Scott, Village Manager/Zoning Administrator- Jim Dyer, Diana Simons-Treasurer

Motion for Opinion from Village Attorney:

Trustee Cavendish **Moved, Supported by** Trustee Harper to direct the Village Manager Jim Dyer to contact the village attorney, Ross Hammersley for an opinion on whether there are any civil remedies available to the village or this council concerning Dean's eligibility and to continue to sit as a Village Trustee.

Roll Call Vote: Yeas (6) Nays (0) Absent (1) Trustee Ruble **Motion Carried.**

Approval of Meeting Minutes:

Trustee Cook **Moved, Supported by** Trustee Cavendish to approve the November 14, 2024, Regular meeting minutes as presented. **Motion Carried.**

Approval of Agenda (amendments/additions):

The Agenda was approved by consensus of the Village Council.

Correspondence:

McMillan- interest in serving on NLTUA Board as At-Large representative

Wittman- Trustee Election

Patty Noftz- Visitor Center request 2025

Public Comment:

Karl Wizinsky requested the ability to speak during the discussion of the consideration of an attorney reimbursement request from Three Rivers Properties, LLC. President McCann agreed to let Mr. Wizinsky speak for 5 minutes during the discussion.

Staff Reports:

The Council received written reports from the Clerk, Treasurer, Harbor Master, and DPW Superintendent.

A. Village Manager/Zoning Administrator -

Village Manager/Zoning Administrator:

Village Manager James Dyer provided a report that included plans to purchase a downward-facing, solar-powered light to properly illuminate the village flagpole, an update on the Buster Dame deed restriction property on 7th Street with input expected from the Leelanau Township Supervisor, and a proposal to eliminate subject matter committees in favor of holding two full council meetings per month—one as a committee of the whole for discussion and one for final decisions. The manager offered to draft revised council rules and procedures to implement the proposed meeting schedule.

1. Committee Reports:

A. Infrastructure Report:

Trustee Cavendish, Infrastructure Chair, reported that the committee recommended reallocating budgeted fire hydrant replacement funds towards water main replacements. They reviewed a village sidewalk map, discussed potential areas for new sidewalks, and explored grant opportunities to fund sidewalk projects. These discussions will continue at the next meeting, and council members were encouraged to review the map in the committee's Dropbox.

2. Ex-Officio Board Reports:

A. Planning Commission:

The Planning Commission reported a continued review of a property survey at Vincer Way and ongoing discussions about a potential hotel remodel and ramp project. They are preparing to review Master Plan introduction revisions at their January 15th meeting, encouraging council members to attend. Additionally, site plan documents for an event space project were received and will be addressed at the next Planning Commission meeting.

3. Discussion Items:

A. Discussion of Committees, Meeting Schedules, and Revisions to Village Council Rules of Procedure:

The council discussed Village Manager James Dyer's proposal to eliminate subject matter committees in favor of holding two full council meetings per month: one as a "committee of the whole" for discussion and one for final decision-making. Dyer argued this approach would be more efficient, as many topics were repeated across meetings. While some members expressed concerns about longer meetings and potential impacts on public attendance, there was general agreement that the current structure was inefficient. Trustee Harper supported the idea of two monthly meetings over multiple committee meetings. The council agreed to have Dyer draft revised rules and procedures for consideration at the February meeting.

4. New Business:

A. Appointment of Planning Commissioner:

President McCann **Moved, Supported by** Trustee Cavendish that the Northport Village Council approves the Village President's nomination of Jane Gale to fill a three-year vacancy on the Northport Planning Commission. **Motion Carried.**

B. Motion for Mutual Consent to Appoint NLTUA Board Member (At-large) :

Trustee Cavendish Moved, Supported by Trustee Harper that the Northport Village Council appoint Mike McMillan as the at-large member of the NLTUA Board, subject to the mutual consent of the Leelanau Township. **Motion Carried.**

C. Motion to Approve the ZBA Chair:

President McCann **Moved, Supported by** Trustee Cook to approve the Village President's nomination of William Harper to chair of the Village of Northport Zoning Board of Appeals. **Motion Carried.**

D. Motion to approve Village Manager Selection Process and Search Process Contract:

Trustee Cavendish **Moved, Supported by** Trustee Ager that the Northport Village Council ratify the Village Manager's acceptance of the service agreement with Michigan Leadership Institute, and the schedule of interviews proposed, as presented. **Discussion:** The council discussed the process for hiring a new village manager, with Chet Janik from the Michigan Leadership Institute presenting the proposed timeline. The job posting was set to go live immediately, with a February 13th application deadline. Resumes would be reviewed during a special closed session, followed by the first round of interviews the week of March 3rd and a second round on March 10th to finalize the decision. The salary range, which includes zoning administrator duties, was set at \$80,000 to \$95,000. The council emphasized the importance of outgoing manager James Dyer's involvement in the transition process and approved the proposed timeline and search process. **Roll Call Vote:** Yeas (6) Nays (0) Absent (1) **Motion Carried**

E. Motion to Consider an Attorney Fee Reimbursement Request from Three Rivers Properties, LLC and Karl Wizinsky :

Village Manager Jim Dyer provided background on Karl Wizinsky's request for reimbursement of attorney fees, stemming from a past plat modification lawsuit. The village had named Wizinsky and his company, Three Rivers Properties, as defendants in an "in rem" lawsuit targeting the property, not the individuals. The village eventually dismissed the lawsuit before mediation, incurring over \$50,000 in legal fees, but Wizinsky and his company received no relief or compensation.

During the discussion of Karl Wizinsky's reimbursement request, he shared his perspective on the previous lawsuit and unresolved property issues. He noted that the lawsuit was not unanimously approved by the prior council, with one member strongly opposing it as inappropriate. Wizinsky explained his decision to hire an attorney with expertise in consent judgments and provided the council with a detailed PowerPoint presentation from an attorney he had consulted to clarify the complex property and plat issues. He expressed frustration with the village's decades-long delay in addressing problems with Park Drive and Second Street and criticized the lack of resolution. Additionally, he highlighted that the village had agreed to deed him 4 feet of property as part of a resolution but had not yet provided the final deed documents. Wizinsky's comments emphasized his dissatisfaction with the village's follow-through on commitments.

The council declined Karl Wizinsky's request for reimbursement of attorney fees, with Trustee Harper asserting that the council was not liable for these costs since no fees were awarded when the lawsuit was dismissed. He also cautioned that approving the request could set a precedent for similar claims. Other council members, including Trustee Ager, agreed that the attorney fee matter was separate from addressing the unresolved deed and property line issues. While the reimbursement request was rejected, the council expressed willingness to work with Wizinsky to resolve the outstanding deed concerns.

Trustee Ager **Moved, Supported by** Trustee Cook that the Northport Village Council approve Karl Wizinsky's reimbursement request in the amount of \$11,234 as presented.

Roll Call Vote: Yeas (0) Nays (6) Absent (1) **Motion Failed.**

Payment of Bills:

Trustee Cavendish **Moved, Supported by** Trustee Ager to pay the bills for November-\$85,520.03, and December-\$50,472.02 when funds become available.

Roll Call Vote: Yeas (6) Nays (0) Absent: (1) **Motion Carried.**

Public Comments:

Jane Gale- expressed gratitude for her recent appointment to the Planning Commission. She mentioned looking forward to working with the council in her new role and noted her appreciation for being on the other side of the Zoom screen that evening.

Council Comments:

Joe Ruble also provided a brief comment, expressing his enthusiasm about working with the council at his first meeting. He mentioned reaching out to Clerk Scott with his initial questions regarding Dropbox links and invited the council to contact him if he could assist in any way. Ruble emphasized his eagerness to collaborate with everyone.

Adjournment:

President McCann **Moved, Supported by** Trustee Cook to adjourn the meeting at 8:24 pm. Motion Carried.

Several Citizens attended via Zoom.

**Joni I. Scott, Village of Northport
Clerk**

