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

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, DPW Superintendent- Chris Holton, Treasurer- Diana Simons

Approval of Meeting Minutes:

Trustee Cook **Moved, Supported by** Trustee Cavendish, to approve the March 13, 2025, Regular meeting minutes as corrected. **Discussion:** Trustee Ager asked to include Trustee Dean's comment during the approval of the village manager discussion.. **Motion Carried.**

Trustee Cavendish **Moved, Supported by** Trustee Cook, to approve the March 19, 2025, Special meeting minutes as presented. **Motion Carried.**

Approval of Agenda (amendments/additions):

President McCann proposed an amendment to the agenda to add Item C under "Ex Officio Board Members" for an NLTUA (Northport/Leelanau Township Utility Authority) update.

Correspondence:

Kristi Fischer and Brian Hafner provided correspondence concerning the need for housing within the area, particularly for those operating businesses.

Public Comment:

Barb Conley, Leelanau Township Supervisor, thanked the Village Council and Planning Commission for the successful housing community meeting held the previous evening and specifically recognized Trustee Laura Cavendish for providing food. She reaffirmed the township's support for future housing efforts.

Eric Potes, Ransom Street Resident, expressed support for affordable housing in the village. He encouraged the community to explore all other land options before considering Buster Dame Park for development. He also offered to serve on the Planning Commission, citing his passion for Northport and eagerness to contribute and learn.

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:

Jim Dyer gave a verbal report that focused on recent land use activities, including reviewing a permit for a new single-family home on West Third Street (which may involve a flood plain issue), and approving permits for a residential deck at 903 Mill Street (Andy Thomas), an accessory structure and retaining wall at 600 North Mill Street (Matt Galloway), and a land use permit aligned with a previously approved variance. He noted that although he has transitioned to his new role as County Administrator, he is still assisting with village matters and has remained in regular contact with incoming Village Manager Jered Ottenwess, with another meeting planned before Jered officially begins on the 21st. Dyer also suggested the Planning Commission consider delaying its next meeting to ensure Jered's participation in an upcoming rezoning discussion.

1. Committee Reports:

A. Infrastructure Report:

Trustee Cavendish noted that there were no new updates at this time, as the committee is waiting for incoming Village Manager Jered Ottenwess to begin his role before moving forward with several pending projects. She explained that it made more sense to pause rather than initiate discussions with outgoing Manager Jim Dyer, only to potentially shift direction once Jered is on board.

2. Ex-Officio Board Reports:

A. Planning Commission:

The Planning Commission report included two components: Trustee Cavendish briefly noted that their recent meeting primarily featured a presentation from Keith Rhodes, with further details available in the drop box and possibly on YouTube. Trustee Gale then presented the required annual report under the Planning Enabling Act, mentioning her own appointment through April 2028 and a current vacancy that runs through 2027. She noted that Bob Newell is interested in reappointment and encouraged council members to review the report in the drop box and suggest any additional content for future reports.

B. NLTUA Report:

President McCann shared that NLTUA officers were elected, with Chris McCann as Chair, Mike McMillan as Vice Chair, Jim Root as Secretary, and Barb Conley as Treasurer. The board adopted several key policies, including a Capital Asset Policy, Grinder Pump Procurement Policy, and Reconciliation Policy. The primary discussion focused on a proposed $131,000 capacity and growth/capital improvement evaluation, which includes a five-step process involving data gap analysis, capacity review, and system evaluation. The board is exploring options to split the cost across two budget years and is considering potential grant opportunities to support the project. The report underscored the importance of evaluating the sewer system's ability to support future growth.

3. Discussion Items:

A. Power Outage/Business Continuation Solution:

Jim Dyer explained that a pair of recent power outages had exposed the vulnerability of the village's operations during such events. One outage was severe enough to force the temporary closure of the village office due to the cold and the inability to access computer systems. While outages of this nature are not typical for the village, the incidents highlighted the need for a more robust business continuity plan.

To address the issue, Dyer initially explored the option of installing a full gas-powered generator capable of powering the entire building. However, the cost estimate—around $15,000—was significantly higher than anticipated. Dyer recommended considering alternatives such as consulting with Affinity, the village's IT provider, to evaluate the current network infrastructure, improve battery backup systems, and implement measures to prevent data loss or system failures during future outages.

Council members expressed general support for finding a reliable backup power solution. Trustee Cook was especially in favor of obtaining a generator and encouraged the pursuit of additional bids to identify a more affordable option. The consensus among the council was to continue exploring practical and cost-effective solutions that would ensure critical municipal functions can continue during emergencies.

B. Replacement of Overhead Door at DPW Building on 8th Street:

The council briefly discussed the need for a new overhead garage door at the DPW building. Village Manager Jim Dyer recommended accepting a bid for the replacement, and Trustee Cavendish noted that it had been a longstanding high-priority item on the village's asset review list. Following the recommendation,

President McCann **Moved, Supported By** Trustee Cook, to approve the estimate not to exceed $7,100. **Roll Call Vote**: Yeas (6) Nays (0) Motion Carried.

4. New Business:

A. Appointment of Village Council Staff Liaison for Infrastructure, Parks, and Marina:

Liaison Appointments:

President McCann announced the following staff liaison appointments:

- Trustee Laura Cavendish is the liaison for Infrastructure
- Trustee Hugh Cook as the liaison for Parks and Marina

B. Appointment to Village Planning Commission:

President McCann nominated Bob Newell to serve a 3 year term ending in 2028 on the Planning Commission.

President McCann **Moved, Supported by** Trustee Cavendish, to serve a 3-year term on the Planning Commission ending in 2028. Discussion: Trustee Cavendish strongly supported the reappointment, noting that Bob is also the chair of the tree committee and provides a great connection.
Roll Call Vote: Yeas (6) Nays (0) Absent (1) **Motion Carried.**

President McCann nominated Mike McMillan to serve a 2 year term ending in 2027 on the Planning Commission.

President McCann, **Moved, Supported by** Trustee Harper, to appoint Mike McMillan to serve a 2-year term on the Planning Commission ending in 2027. **Discussion:** Trustee Harper supported the nomination, citing McMillan's experience and affordable housing knowledge. Trustees Cook and Cavendish preferred appointing a village resident, noting the commission already has a non-resident member. Manager Dyer clarified that the bylaws allow up to two non-resident members. Trustee Ager supported the appointment, stating that if the council is serious about addressing affordable housing, McMillan's knowledge and commitment make him an ideal candidate.
Roll Call Vote: Yeas (4) Nays (2) Trustees Cook and Cavendish Absent (1) **Motion Carried.**

Payment of Bills:

Trustee Ager **Moved, Supported by** Trustee Cook, to pay the bills for the month of March in the amount of -$18,101.27 when funds become available. **Roll Call Vote:** Yeas (6) Nays (0) Absent: (1) **Motion Carried.**

Public Comments:

Eric Potes- spoke in support of affordable housing in general but urged the council to exhaust all other location options before considering Buster Dame Park. He suggested alternative sites, including land west of the pickleball courts, the recycling center on Warren Street, school property, township properties on West Street, and the Seventh Street DPW station. Potes shared that he lives in one of the last affordable homes in Northport, has three children, and personally understands the need for more affordable housing options. However, he opposed developing Buster Dame Park, believing many Northport families value preserving the park. He encouraged monitoring the park's use before making decisions.

Barb Conley, Leelanau Township Supervisor, commented that Barry Waldron was hired as the new Leelanau Township Assessor, noting he is currently working in the office a few days a week and plans to relocate to the area. She shared that Waldron holds a master's degree in urban planning and comes from Ann Arbor.

Nancy Schuman expressed her support for those who use the dog park and ball field, noting that she personally uses the park twice a day and has done so since before it became a ball field.

Alan Woods raised concerns about short-term rentals, asking if the village had considered a moratorium or cap, and warning that rentals had negatively impacted nearby communities like Suttons Bay and Bingham Township. He also expressed skepticism about government-led development efforts, citing challenges even Habitat for Humanity faces in finding qualified candidates. Woods emphasized the need to address large minimum lot sizes in the township and acknowledged the difficulty new families face when trying to buy and build. He concluded by thanking the council for looking into affordable housing solutions.

Mike McMillan thanked the village council for their confidence in appointing him to the Planning Commission. He emphasized that he is not committed to any specific idea or location and noted that his views have evolved over the past year and a half based on public feedback. McMillan referenced advice from a former colleague about "having two ears and one mouth," stating his intention to listen carefully and work toward the best solution for both the village and township.

Kali Dignan, speaking on behalf of herself and Matthew, expressed strong agreement with Eric Potes's earlier comments. She shared that they live on Vincent Way in the village and frequently use Buster Dame Park with their children, who are now starting to use the baseball diamond more often. While fully supportive of affordable housing efforts, she urged the council to consider other options and emphasized that she would hate to see Buster Dame Park repurposed for housing.

Council Comments:

Trustee Harper:
Thanked Eric Potes for stepping into a community leadership role and acknowledged being surprised by the strong public attachment to Buster Dame Park. He admitted he may have misjudged public sentiment and expressed support for exploring alternative housing locations. Harper also praised Eric's research and active involvement in the discussion.

Trustee Ager:
Expressed appreciation for the increased community engagement on the housing issue. She voiced concern about potentially losing momentum in addressing affordable housing and encouraged Eric to remain involved in the decision-making process.

Trustee Cavendish:
Agreed with the prior comments and thanked the community for their feedback. She shared that her own involvement in village governance was born out of similar frustrations and encouraged Eric to consider running for council in the future.

President McCann:
Thanked Township Supervisor Barb Conley for her efforts in organizing the housing meeting and acknowledged the importance of interpersonal communication in navigating challenging issues. He discussed alternative housing sites and emphasized that flexibility is an essential quality in public service.

Trustee Cook:
Briefly addressed the Zoom audience, reassuring them that the council is sincerely considering alternative sites for affordable housing and is taking public input seriously.

Village Manager, Jim Dyer emphasized the importance of affordable housing in Northport and defended the planning process that led to the consideration of Buster Dame Park as a potential development site. He noted the park's unique advantages, including village ownership, zero initial tax base, full municipal control, existing water and sewer, and flat terrain—factors that make it the most viable option among village-owned properties. Dyer acknowledged community concerns but expressed frustration with the recurring sentiment of support for affordable housing "just not here," urging residents to consider the broader consequences of inaction. He explained that private development is unlikely to solve the housing crisis due to rising land values, citing a recent 1/10-acre sale at $150,000. He warned that without bold steps, Northport risks becoming a seasonal town with limited services. He also reflected on the rising area median income in Leelanau County (over $90,000) and the $800,000 median home sale price, underscoring the growing affordability gap. Dyer concluded by thanking the Village Council and community, expressing deep appreciation for his time in Northport, and encouraging continued leadership and forward-thinking on this issue.

Adjournment:

President McCann **Moved, Supported by** Trustee Harper to adjourn the meeting at 8:22 pm. Motion Carried.

Several Citizens attended via Zoom.

Joni l. Scott, Village of Northport Clerk

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