VILLAGE OF NORTHPORT
Leelanau County, Michigan

DRAFT REGULAR COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES
November 20, 2025 – 7:00 p.m.

1. CALL TO ORDER / ROLL CALL

President McCann called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

Roll Call: President McCann and Trustees Harper, Cavendish, Cook, Dean, and Ager were present. Trustee Ruble attended via Zoom.

Staff present: were Village Manager/Zoning Administrator Jered Ottenwess, Clerk Joni Scott, Treasurer Elizabeth Rutila, and DPW Superintendent Chris Holton.

2. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

The agenda was approved by consensus of the Council as presented.

3. CONSENT AGENDA

The Council reviewed which items were appropriate for inclusion on the consent agenda. Trustee Cavendish requested additional discussion regarding the Marina DPW and Manager reports, as well as the bill payment sheet. After clarification, the Council agreed to remove the staff reports and bill payment from the consent agenda and place them for separate discussion between Items 5 and 6. The remaining items—including approval of the meeting minutes—were retained on the consent agenda. The amended consent agenda was approved unanimously.

4. PUBLIC COMMENT

Joanne Swanson
Expressed concern about the decision to spend approximately $6,000 for conceptual renderings related to a six-unit cottage court concept on the Seventh Street parcel. She urged the Council to prioritize transparency and careful decision-making over public relations.

Eric Potes
Spoke in support of attainable housing on Seventh Street and stated his view that opposition to the project reflects a minority of community members. He supported the use of renderings to help residents better understand what is being proposed.

5. CORRESPONDENCE

No correspondence was presented.

STAFF REPORTS:

Trustee Cavendish asked several clarifying questions regarding the Marina report, DPW operations, the bill sheet, and items in the Manager's Report. She inquired about water levels at the marina and when dredging decisions would need to be made, the status of wreath orders for the Northport signs, and whether the DPW sidewalk-plowing policy remained the same. She also asked for clarification on a bill-sheet entry labeled "amending soil at Marina," and raised concerns about items referenced in the Manager's Report, including the website update process, scheduling a discussion with the village attorney, and ensuring the Rules of Procedure posted online reflect adopted amendments.

In response, Village Manager Jered Ottenwess explained that staff plan to conduct soundings to assess water levels and that a five-year dredging permit allows for small-scale dredging if needed, though significant dredging is not anticipated for several years. DPW Superintendent Holton confirmed that wreaths had been ordered and that the sidewalk-plowing policy remains

unchanged, with continued snow blowing and sanding operations. Regarding the bill sheet, Holton clarified that "amending soil at Marina" referred to rototilling poor soil, adding compost and topsoil, and reseeding areas used by food vendors. Ottenwess further noted he would review the Rules of Procedure posted online, gather the requested website concerns, and schedule future discussion on legal services and procedural updates.

6. EX-OFFICIO REPORTS

A. Planning Commission Report – Trustee Cavendish:
Reported that the Planning Commission continued its work on zoning updates and ongoing Master Plan review. She noted that discussions have focused on future land-use designations and aligning zoning tools with the Village's attainable housing and preservation goals.

B. Infrastructure Liaison Report – Trustee Cavendish / Manager Ottenwess:
Manager Ottenwess provided updates on infrastructure priorities, with particular focus on the Rose Street culvert replacement project and coordination of water and street projects. He noted that engineering proposals and project phasing are being evaluated as part of capital planning efforts.

C. Marina Liaison Report – Trustee Cook

None

D. NLTUA Liaison Report – President McCann:
No new report was provided beyond the information previously shared at the most recent NLTUA meeting.

7. NEW BUSINESS

A. Site Planning Services Proposal – Influence Design
Trustee Ager moved, supported by Trustee Harper, to approve the proposal from Influence Design to provide conceptual site renderings for the Seventh Street and High Street properties, in an amount not to exceed $5,800.

Discussion:
Trustees discussed the scope of the proposal and whether it included both Village-owned properties. It was clarified that while the Seventh Street site was described in greater detail, the proposal did encompass conceptual design work for both parcels. Council members emphasized the value of professional renderings for improving transparency, helping the public visualize potential development scenarios, and ensuring the Village can clearly articulate its expectations before soliciting developer interest.

Trustee Cavendish raised concerns regarding whether focusing on housing concepts might unintentionally rule out other potential uses, such as preserved natural space or public parkland. She suggested that the Village consider taking a formal vote on the intended use. Council discussion followed regarding the possibility of a public vote on long-term use, with general agreement that any such action should be preceded by adequate public notice and opportunity for community input.

Council members also discussed best practices associated with attainable housing development, price comparisons to other architectural firms, and the importance of ensuring all reasonable site-use options are evaluated fairly.

Roll Call Vote: Yeas (4) President McCann, Trustees Ager, Cook and Harper Nays (2) Trustees Cavendish and Dean. Motion Carried.

B. Engineering Services Proposal for Rose Street Culvert Replacement
Trustee Cook moved, supported by Trustee Harper, to approve the proposal from Machin Engineering in the amount of $22,900 for engineering services related to the Rose Street culvert replacement project.

Discussion:
Trustee Cavendish requested clarification on which services were included in the base proposal and asked whether field surveys and other data-gathering activities would be additional costs. Manager Ottenwess confirmed that the proposal primarily covered design, permitting, and coordination, and that field survey work would be contracted separately if required. Trustee Harper emphasized the importance of construction oversight and coordination to ensure that the completed project meets expectations and protects Village infrastructure.

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

8. PUBLIC COMMENT

Mary Cermak Betzolt
Expressed opposition to housing development on the Seventh Street parcel and asked that the Village also consider renderings depicting a preserved natural habitat or park-like setting. She stated a preference for prioritizing ecological and open-space values on the site.

Eric Potes
Reiterated support for attainable housing on Seventh Street. He stated that homes in the approximate price range of $300,000 to $350,000 would be comparatively affordable given local rental rates and emphasized the need for housing options that allow families and workers to remain in the community.

9. COUNCIL COMMENTS

Trustee Cook
Commented on the relative affordability of $300,000 homes compared to rental prices in the area and noted that ownership opportunities can provide more stability for families than long-term renting.

Trustee Harper
Emphasized the importance of continuing to explore attainable housing opportunities and working cooperatively with Leelanau Township and housing partners. He reiterated that renderings are a tool to support community understanding and informed decision-making rather than a final commitment to any specific project.

Trustee Ager
Spoke about the broader need for attainable housing in the Village and surrounding area and encouraged residents to remain engaged as planning efforts proceed. She noted that larger housing initiatives under consideration at the Township level may interact with Village efforts and should be coordinated.

10. ADJOURNMENT

Motion by President McCann, supported by Trustee Harper, to adjourn the meeting at approximately 8:02 p.m. Motion carried unanimously.

Respectfully Submitted,

Joni L. Scott, Village Clerk