Village of Northport
Village Council Work Session Meeting Minutes
Thursday, August 6, 2026 | 2:00 P.M. | Hybrid In-Person/Zoom Meeting

1. Call to Order/Roll Call

President McCann called the meeting to order at 4:00 p.m.

Roll Call: President McCann, Trustees Cavendish, Cook, Ager and Ruble were present.

Absent: Trustee Harper and Ager

Staff present: Village Manager/Zoning Administrator Jered Ottenwess, Clerk Joni Scott Treasurer Elizabeth Rutila,

2. Approval of Agenda

Village Manager Ottenwess suggested moving the closed session meeting to the next regular Council meeting due to time constraints and lack of evaluations turned in.

The Council agreed by consensus to the agenda as amended.

3. Public Comment

Vickie Slot- commented on the proposed Mill Pond Dam ballot proposal and urged Council not to increase the proposed millage or proceed with Resolution 2026-16 at this time. She expressed concern that additional analysis, updated cost estimates, and a clearly defined plan should be completed before asking taxpayers to commit to a long-term financial obligation. Slot encouraged Council to continue evaluating alternatives, consider the impacts of recent storm events and runoff management, and engage the community through additional public discussion before moving forward with the ballot proposal.

4. Liaison Reports

A. **Marina Report:**

Village Manager Ottenwess reported on the kickoff meeting with Machin Engineering for the Northport Marina Enhancement and Expansion Study. The meeting established the project timeline, scope of work, and public engagement process. The study will develop conceptual alternatives for Council review before broader public engagement begins.

B. **Infrastructure Report:**
Trustee Cavendish and Village Manager Ottenwess provided updates on ongoing infrastructure projects. Recent chip and fog sealing was completed on Seventh Street as part of the Village's pavement preservation program. Staff is preparing bid documents for the Warren Street water main replacement and roadway improvements, and the Rose Street Culvert Replacement Project remains on schedule with construction anticipated later this year. Staff also continues to evaluate additional electric vehicle charging locations and monitor recent water main issues.

C. **NLTUA Report:**
President McCann reported that the Northport/Leelanau Township Utilities Authority (NLTUA) will hold its regular meeting the following Tuesday. He noted that several items are on the agenda and that he would provide Council with an update following the meeting.

5. Action Items

A. Resolution 2026-16 Mill Pond Dam Millage Ballot Question
Village Manager Ottenwess presented Resolution 2026-16, explaining that the only revision from the previously adopted ballot proposal was an increase in the proposed millage rate to reflect updated project cost estimates and construction cost escalation. He noted that the revised authorization would provide additional flexibility should project costs continue to increase, while allowing the Village to levy less than the authorized amount if full funding is not required.

Trustee Cavendish Moved, Supported by Trustee Harper, to adopt Resolution 2026-16 approving the revised ballot language and directing staff to submit the proposal to the Leelanau County Clerk for placement on the November 3, 2026 General Election ballot.

During discussion, Council members emphasized the importance of providing residents with factual and impartial information regarding the proposed millage. Discussion included the need for additional public education regarding engineering reports, project costs, potential impacts to the Mill Pond and marina, available alternatives, and the limitations associated with completing additional technical studies before the November election. Council also discussed the revised millage amount, noting that the increase was intended to account for inflation and escalating construction costs while providing flexibility for future project funding.

Council members expressed their commitment to ensuring voters have access to accurate information prior to the election and directed staff to prepare informational materials for Council review and public distribution.

A roll call vote was taken:

- Dean – Yes
- Harper – Yes
- Cavendish – No
- Ruble – Yes
- McCann – Yes

Motion carried (4–1). Resolution 2026-16 adopted.

6. Discussion Items

A. Resolution 2026-17 1001 N. Mill Street Class B Nonconforming Status Designation
Village Manager Ottenwess presented a discussion regarding the designation of 1001 N. Mill Street as a Class B Nonconforming Use. He explained that the Planning Commission recently approved a lot split for the property and determined that the remaining parcel would continue to conform to applicable lot requirements. The nonconformity relates to the existing single-family residential use within the Development District, rather than the size or configuration of the parcel.

Council discussed the Planning Commission's recommendation and the purpose of establishing Class B Nonconforming status. It was noted that a use variance is not available for this type of situation and that the designation would allow the existing residential use to continue in accordance with the Zoning Ordinance.

Village Manager Ottenwess advised that the Planning Commission has recommended approval and that the matter will return to the Council as an action item at a future meeting.

B. Ordinance Updates/Revisions

Village Manager Ottenwess led a discussion regarding priorities for updating several outdated Village ordinances. Council discussed revisions to the Marina Ordinance, Sidewalk Ordinance, Sign Ordinance, and the Village Manager's purchasing authority. Trustee Cavendish emphasized the need to prioritize updates to the Marina and Sidewalk Ordinances, noting the Sidewalk Ordinance has been identified as a priority for several years.

Council also discussed increasing the Village Manager's purchasing authority to reduce the need for Council approval of routine, budgeted expenditures. Members generally agreed that the current limit creates unnecessary administrative delays for routine operational purchases.

Council directed staff to prioritize updates to the Marina and Sidewalk Ordinances, followed by review of the Sign Ordinance, and to prepare a resolution for consideration at a future meeting increasing the Village Manager's purchasing authority

C. Public Participation Plan

Trustee Cavendish provided an update on the proposed Public Participation Plan, explaining that the document is intended to serve as a practical guide to help residents better understand Village processes, timelines, opportunities for public input, and methods of communication. She noted that the Planning Commission views the plan as a living document that will be reviewed and updated as needed to improve public engagement and transparency.

Village Manager Ottenwess reported that the updated Public Participation Plan is nearing completion and will be brought before Council for formal approval following final editing and formatting. Council also discussed the ongoing ordinance codification project, which will provide a searchable online code to improve public access to Village ordinances and related information.

7. PUBLIC COMMENT

Vickie Slot thanked Council for the additional discussion regarding the Mill Pond dam and millage proposal and expressed appreciation for Council's commitment to providing public education and factual information.

Allan Dalzell commented on the future of the Mill Pond, encouraging Council to consider long-term costs, pursue available grant opportunities, and evaluate alternatives to dam replacement.

8. COUNCIL COMMENTS

Trustee Rubel encouraged residents with an interest in the Mill Pond issue to work with Village staff in providing factual, non-inflammatory information to assist with public education efforts. Trustee Cook thanked those involved in the discussion and emphasized the importance of providing residents with accurate information regarding the proposed millage.

Trustee Dean sought clarification regarding Council's ability to discuss the millage proposal publicly and asked about the deadline for rescinding the ballot question, if necessary. The Village Attorney clarified that the Michigan Campaign Finance Act permits the Village to provide factual, educational information but prohibits the use of public resources to advocate for or against a ballot proposal. Staff confirmed the deadline for rescinding the ballot proposal.

Trustee Cavendish explained that her vote against placing the millage on the ballot was based on her belief that additional public education and discussion should occur before voters are asked to consider the proposal. Council generally agreed on the importance of providing factual information to assist residents in making informed decisions prior to the election.

9. CLOSED SESSION

President McCann announced that Council would enter Closed Session pursuant to **MCL 15.268(1)(h)** to consider material exempt from discussion or disclosure by state or federal statute.

President McCann moved, supported by Trustee Cavendish, to enter Closed Session pursuant to **MCL 15.268(1)(h)** to consider material exempt from discussion or disclosure by state or federal statute.

A roll call vote was taken:

- Dean – Yes
- Cook – Yes
- Cavendish – Yes
- Rubel – Yes
- McCann – Yes

Motion carried unanimously (5-0). Council entered Closed Session at **5:55 pm**

Return to Open Session

Council returned to Open Session at **6:22 p.m.**

10. Adjournment

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at **6:22 p.m**

Respectfully Submitted,

Joni L. Scott, Village Clerk