



**Village of Lawton
VILLAGE COUNCIL
REGULAR MEETING
125 S. MAIN, LAWTON MI 49065 269.624.6407
Tuesday December 10, 2024
MINUTES**

- I. **Call to Order:** President Pro-Tem E. Dudek called the December 10, 2024, meeting of the Lawton Village Council to order at 7:00 p.m.
- II. **Roll Call:** *Present:* E. Dudek, Peterson, Turner, Smith, Tanis, G. Dudek *Absent:* Appleby. *Others Present:* Village Manager Hackenberg, Clerk Rathbun, and two guests.
- III. **Pledge of Allegiance:** The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.
- IV. **Consent Agenda:** The Consent Agenda included the approval of the December 10 Council Agenda, the November 26, 2024 Council Meeting Minutes, and approval of the November 2024 disbursements in the amount of \$1,081,993.60. Peterson made a motion to approve the Consent Agenda as presented. Motion supported by trustee Turner. A unanimous roll call vote approved the motion.
- V. **Communications, Correspondence, and Presentations:**
- VI. **Citizen Comments:**
 - A. Kali Marshall from the Van Buren Conservation District wanted to let the public know that this year the conservation district has a tree sale orders beginning January 21, 2025. These forms will be available both on their website or in their office 1035 E Michigan Avenue in Paw Paw, MI. The Van Buren Conservation District will have their tree sale during April. Hazardous collection waste will be available in June. The Conservation District has new tire recycling locations that will open up in March, that will be announced at a future date. These will join the twice-yearly tire and electronics recycling programs at the Paw Paw Library. More information is available in an insert resident will receive with their taxes, or on their website <https://vanburencd.org/>.
 - B. Paul Harvey from Wightman wanted to present an update on the utility extension with Kalin. He stated they are approximately 80% complete. Harvey stated they are looking at springtime to be ready for connection, and the next few weeks to be finished with the extension.
- VII. **Public Hearings/Appointments/Proclamations:** None.
- VIII. **Old Business:**

VII: New Business:

- A.** President Pro-Tem E. Dudek brought the second council meeting of December on December 24, 2024 to the floor for discussion. Due to December 24, 2024 being a holiday, Trustee Turner made a motion to cancel the second meeting for the month of December, seconded by Trustee Smith. A voice vote was taken with all present in favor, and none opposed. Motion carried.
- B.** President Pro-Tem E. Dudek brought 2025 meeting dates to the floor for discussion. Upon examination, Smith made a motion that was seconded by G. Dudek to accept the 2025 meetings as presented, with Village Council Meetings being the second and fourth Tuesdays of each month at 7PM, DDA being the third Wednesday of each month at 7PM, and Planning Commission being the first Tuesday of each month at 7PM, and Zoning Board of Appeals to meet on an as needed basis. A unanimous voice vote approved the motion.

VIII: Board, Committee, and Staff Reports:

- A.** Village Manager Hackenberg reported that he received a packet from MEC for the right of way permits for fiber optic internet. It is not yet coming into the village; however, they are running it by the school and down 66th, 32nd, and 72nd surrounding the village. Hackenberg stated that will be on the next meeting for council to review. Village Manager Hackenberg reported that the Village Leaf Vac has broken down, it has been looked at, and it is possibly the turbo that has gone bad, but it is still under evaluation to get running. He has been in contact with Paw Paw and Mattawan to rent a leaf vac, without any luck as of yet as they are both still utilizing theirs. Hackenberg is also looking into a new one, but they are running between \$70,000-\$280,000 depending on the type of leaf vac truck. Thus far, in equipment and labor this year, we have spent \$60,000 for the year in leaf pickup. Discussion about different truck options vs. labor costs ensued. Hackenberg stated that the DPW has been trying to balance leaves, snow plowing, and getting ready for the Christmas Parade, on top of their regular duties and are still understaffed currently. Hackenberg stated the Antwerp Township Supervisor and he have an upcoming meeting to discuss sewer topics. Hackenberg provided an update from our attorney on the cemetery property. Hackenberg stated that he has not gotten a response on the road, whether it is public or privately maintained. Hackenberg stated he had a conversation with a gentleman in Holland about workforce housing locations in Lawton. Hackenberg stated members of the DDA met and selected Banners, we will have them by Friday to get up in time for the parade. We paid 22 dollars each for these banners. He stated that DDA is going to get together after the Holiday Season to go over Spring Banners. Hackenberg stated that the Reid's Corner project is wrapping up, and should be done in the next week or two. Hackenberg also stated he did receive the tree vault but the DPW needs a crane to place it in there. Hackenberg stated the M40 extension project is getting close to completion. We are starting to have water meters that are not reading, but as with everything else they are out of date as they were put in in 2010, and need to be upgraded. They are getting toward the end of their life span. Hackenberg stated that they are going to a cellular platform with them, which will eventually mean eventually

we won't need to read meters anymore, it will automatically send the information to the computers. He stated the new police car arrived yesterday and is being outfitted. Hackenberg stated that the DPW pumped the same amount of water as last year, and the leaves have been the main focus. HE stated the sewer line was placed in for the laundromat this week. 1.88 million gallons of waste water was pumped this week.

- B.** Clerk Rathbun reported an update on Zoning Solutions Blight Progress for the 2024 year. There were a handful of court ordered cleanups, and several cases closed for compliance. Zoning solutions is now working on a new batch of blight correspondence in the Village, but progress is definitely being made.
- C.** Chief Cordes reported that calls for service and reports were about the same. The only difference was that there was a homicide in town on Durkee St. Aaron Wheeler was shot and killed. The police department quickly activated the major crime task force for Van Buren County. This included Michigan State Police, Van Buren County Sheriff's Office, drug team, and the fugitive team working together. Cordes stated that on November 15 warrants were signed, and it progressed quickly. Cordes went over details for arrests made and reports going to the prosecutor's office for this case. Cordes stated that this is the first homicide in 22 years in the Village of Lawton. Cordes stated that in the month of November, the Lawton Police Department also spent time at the election hall due to issues with the early election. Cordes also stated that they spent some time at the school, as well as on phone scams, which are very prevalent right now. In regards to the phone scams, Cordes stated that thankfully no one has given up money as of yet. Cordes discussed updates coming to his future reports. Cordes stated officer Hitchcock went to a less lethal force class for four days and is going to become a trainer. He discussed updating tools for mental illness without using lethal force. Cordes stated the police department would like to purchase a new taser, and take the other two the department has and have them rebuilt. Cordes reported that with a homicide there has been a lot of discussion. The reality is these happen in every community. Going 22 years without a homicide is incredible. Cordes stated they can happen anywhere, but hopefully it is another 22 years before Lawton deals with another one.
- D.** Peterson reported that the Planning Commission met and discussed the cell tower ordinance. They found they have to allow for towers within the village, it is just one of those things in state law. Peterson reported that what has been decided by the planning commission to allow them in agricultural area as a special use permit, that way we have a lot of control that way. Todd has been asked to work with Suzanne to update the existing ordinance to get them out of industrial and commercial business districts. Agricultural will put them more on the outskirts of town.
- E.** G. Dudek reported that the DDA met, and they approved a façade grant for Adams Hardware. They are ordering Street Signs.
- F.** E. Dudek reported that the fireboard met, and had nothing new to report.
- G.** B. Rathbun reported that the library board met, and crafts will be available from 5:30-7PM on Friday prior to Christmas in the Village.
- H.** Turner stated the police committee met and spoke with Chief Cordes. Turner stated that he believes it is time to go for a millage increase to support our police department and get us back up to full speed. Last month the homicide showed there is a need for it. Turner stated that they can do the three mills for this public safety millage that can be passed without a vote. This millage can be passed with a public hearing. Council stated for one house in particular this would turn into approximately an additional \$30 per month, however, whoever would like to come in and find out how much their home will

cost with the additional village can do so. If the mill increase goes into effect within the next few months, it should be in effect for the summer taxes or next winter's taxes. The Village does not have the funds to pay for the services we are providing currently. There was a lot of discussion into how to make this happen. The council would like to have a public hearing, followed by a townhall meeting, and then public hearing to pass it by vote. They welcome and encourage residents to attend to find out more about how it will impact them.

IX: Council Comments:

- A.** Trustee Peterson made a motion, seconded by Smith to notify the Little League of intention to take over the property. Council was in discussion about whether to give them a hard date so that they are aware of when they need to find a new field by. After discussion, Turner made a motion to table Peterson's motion until the January meeting, seconded by Smith. A voice vote was taken with all in favor and none opposed. Motion carried.

- X. Adjournment:** E. Dudek moved, with support from Turner to adjourn the Village Council Meeting at 8:35 p.m. Next council meeting to take place on January 14, 2024 at 7:00 PM.

Respectfully Submitted by,

Brittany Rathbun
Village Clerk