

# PENINSULA TOWNSHIP

13235 Center Road, Traverse City  
MI 49686

[www.peninsulatownship.com](http://www.peninsulatownship.com)

**Township Board Regular Meeting  
March 11, 2025, 7:00 p.m.  
Township Hall  
Minutes**

1. **Call to Order** by Sanders at 7:00 p.m.
2. **Pledge**
3. **Roll Call**  
Present: Sanders, Clark, Milliken, Alexander, Wunsch, Sanger, Chown
4. **Government Updates:**  
**Dan Watkins, Grand Traverse County Road Commission:** we have been getting ahead of projects, taking care of the roads. Brine cost has increased from 86 cents to 90 cents a gallon. Frost is causing damage, taking chunks of the road.
5. **Citizen Comments:** none
6. **Approve Agenda**  
**Sanders:** move business item 8 to item 2.  
**Sanger moved to approve the agenda as amended with a second by Alexander.**  
**Roll call vote:** yes- Clark, Milliken, Alexander, Wunsch, Sanger, Chown, Sanders    **Passed unan**
7. **Conflict of Interest:** none
8. **Consent Agenda:**
  - A. Invoices
  - B. Reports
    1. Peninsula Community Library
    2. Treasurer
    3. Fire
    4. GT Sheriff's Citation Report
  - C. Minutes from January 29, 2025, Township Board Special Meeting and February 11, 2025, Township Board Regular Meeting
  - D. Requests
    1. OMPHS Log Cabin Day 2025 Request
    2. St. Joseph Catholic Church Fall Festival 2025 Request
    3. Mari Vineyard Road Name Change Request
  - E. EGLE Violation Notice – Order to Restore
  - F. Township Job Postings
  - G. Correspondence
    1. Kasey Cline, DNR

2. Tom Neirman
3. Lindsay McLaughlin, TCTC and Bayshore Marathon
4. John Wunsch
5. Wes Cowan & Fred Woodruff

**Chown moved to approve the consent agenda as presented with a second by Clark.**

**Roll call vote:** yes – Milliken, Alexander, Wunsch, Sanger, Chown, Sanders, Clark Passed una

**8. Business:**

1. Water/Sewer Update from Kent Nothstine, Grand Traverse Co. Department of Public Works (Clark)

**Northstine:** previous rate study suggested three percent increase should still be enough, but with some large projects coming up for the city wastewater plant, there could be increased costs to the township. Overall, the rates are stable. Water rates are good. There's some increase in summer when people are watering their lawns.

2. Strategic Planning Session (see the Maner Costerisan report on the township website at [www.peninsulatownship.com](http://www.peninsulatownship.com); click on "Documents" in the blue bar, then "Township Board")

**Armen Shanafelt, 7402 East Shore Road:** gave PowerPoint presentation highlighting the Maner Costerisan report. Key notes:

- Governance Structure Evaluation

The study assessed the township's governance model and compared it with similar townships in Michigan. Focused on financial projection, funding strategies, and structural recommendations.

- Financial Challenges

Peninsula Township operates under a general law framework. Reliance on volunteers for parks and services is becoming unsustainable. Cable and Power funds are currently relied upon and are projected to run out in 20 years. The township's millage rate is not enough to maintain operations, as a majority of taxes collected are not kept for township operations.

- Potential Solutions

Becoming a Charter Township. The report recommended transitioning to gain financial stability. Estimated increased cost to residents is \$200 a year, \$3.85 per week. Would provide for a township manager, parks director, and finance director to improve efficiency.

- Urgency and Next Steps

Without action, financial reserves will be depleted, leading to cuts in service or bankruptcy. It is recommended that the township take steps to modernize the government before the next election cycle. Find ways to educate the voters on the critical issues.

3. Public Hearing on Proposed Police Fund Millage Rate for Fiscal Year 2025–2026 (Sanders)

**Millage rate should be put on the 2026 ballot. Currently collecting in excess of spending. Could lower millage rate.**

**Sanders opened public hearing**

**Dave Murphy, 6943 East Shore Road:** the Maner Costerisan [MC] report indicates that both the police and fire can be done by special assessment rather than millage vote. I agree with the effort to cut back on collection, but I'm looking for putting things on the ballot that could go under special assessment. If there is a fund balance, is it three years? Is it just cut? Look at putting this in the realm of fire protection because it can be collected in the same way under the same public act, according to the MC report.

**Shanafelt:** was the reason we didn't spend as much money as we thought because we weren't able to get coverage?

**Sanders:** we budgeted for it, but we didn't ask for additional full time CPO coverage.

**Shanafelt:** are we anticipating this summer to get an additional full time?

**Sanders:** no, it'll be an on call for road control.

**Shanafelt:** have complaints about speeding on Peninsula Drive decreased?

**Sanders:** no, they've gone up.

**Shanafelt:** why don't we ask for additional road help to keep that under control? Rhetorical question.

**Sanders closed public hearing**

**Board discussed increasing coverage options.**

4. Presentation for Community Survey by Epic MRA [www.EpicMRA.com](http://www.EpicMRA.com) (Wunsch)

**Bernie Porn from Epic MRA gave a review of the previous survey and proposed a new survey strategy. Noted high participant results from the previous survey with the most accurate results from telephone participants. Cost would be slightly higher because of higher minimum wage rates. Proposed looking at questions from before and seeing if the same questions are still relevant and how new questions could target issues in the township.**

**Shanafelt:** how long will it take to put this next survey together?

**Porn:** could be fairly quick. Would want to wait until your snowbird residents have returned and can participate.

**Shanafelt:** in the previous survey, you did phone calls over four days and then waited two weeks for the online survey. Reason for that?

**Porn:** help to control for repeat responses.

**Shanafelt:** is 200 still a good sample size?

**Porn:** yes, this sample gives a plus or minus 6.9 error rate.

**Shanafelt:** how do you insure those 200 targeted for the phone survey are reached?

**Porn:** if they don't answer, we keep calling until [we] get them. You do get refusals. Once you decide when you want the survey to be conducted, I'll send the new contract with the prices.

5. First Public Hearing on Proposed Fire Fund Millage Rate for Fiscal Year 2025–2026 (Sanders)

**Sanders opened public hearing**

**No public comment**

**Sanders closed public hearing**

6. Public Hearing on Proposed General Fund and Special Funds Budget for Fiscal Year 2025–2026 (Sanders)

**Sanders opened public hearing**

**None**

**Public hearing closed**

**Board discussed budget appropriations and fund allocations, reliance on the Tower and Cable funds, and future spending projects.**

7. Resolution 2016-10-11, Amendment #1, Payment in Lieu of Health Insurance Policy (Clark)

**Board discussed how the policy is in alignment with the union contract for the firefighters and that the option to opt out is a financial benefit to the township.**

**Wunsch moved that the township board approve Resolution 2016-10-11, Amendment #1 with a second by Alexander.**

**Roll call vote:** yes - Milliken, Alexander, Wunsch, Sanger, Chown, Sanders, Clark **Passed unan**

8. Proposal to Shift Land Division Appeal Authority Back to the Zoning Board of Appeals (Sanders)  
**Sanders moved to table with a second by Wunsch. Passed by consensus**

9. Final Decision on Land Division Application 358 with Action Expected (Sanders)

**Based on the information submitted by the applicant and township staff and for the reasons stated on the record, Chown moved to deny Land Division #358 with a second by Clark.**

**Sanders:** this division specifically regards PDR. We will not be using PDR land to adjoin properties to meet the acreage requirements for any purposes outside of agriculture.

**Roll call vote:** yes- Alexander, Sanger, Chown, Sanders, Clark, Milliken **Motion passed by majority**  
**Wunsch abstained as he was not present at the special meeting to hear the appeal.**

## 9. Citizen Comments

**Sally Erickson, 2228 Kaukauna Court:** represent East Beach Association adjacent to Hidden Ridge. Mother Nature has done some really unique things in our area. We have an island that is our own little micro peninsula. It will be a challenging place to have any kinds of docks.

**Susie Shipman, 14735 Shipman Road:** worked with Bernie Porn and Epic MRI on the previous survey and recommends working with them again.

**Dave Murphy, 6943 East Shore Road:** thank you for getting the DNR boat launch to the planning commission. Is there going to be a formal application process to work on the survey committee? When we did the master plan, part of that was the survey. Folks on the master plan committee applied, submitted resumes, and [went] through a board approval process. I'm volunteering. I also want to be sensitive to inclusiveness. For the MC report, we had five old white guys in the group. Nothing wrong with that, good people, but I'd like to see some diversity, make sure there is representation of all the demographics. We took several months to build that survey. I'll go along with Susie in complimenting the professionalism of Epic, but I was also dissatisfied with some questions that were asked. What was teased out of the survey in terms of general conclusions about the township were pretty good. I worked hard to get a couple things in about parks. Those questions were completely inadequate; the information we received didn't do us much good. The same thing with the lighthouse. It was one question. "Do you think it's being run the right way?" Yet we have all kinds of feedback about too much traffic coming on the peninsula.

Regarding the non-motorized plan, I am on that committee. I was disappointed, surprised, by how many people came to me afterwards to say, "We didn't say we want a non-motorized plan for getting bike paths; we want them off the road." We need to understand what information we're getting, and we didn't do a deep enough dive. We had some limitations last time with PDR, which was pushed onto the survey, and then it ended up that we did another survey for PDR anyway. This is a blending of two issues. The MC report is done. We don't need to keep pushing issues down the road. This board inherited a mess with the lawsuit, the division in the community. It's going to flare when we get a decision from that judge. This survey is vital for the community. The MC report, it's a series of data points that will inform the survey.

Marge [Achorn, previous township treasurer] emphasized to the parks committee that we had serious budget problems and we needed to look at a millage vote in 2026. Is that no longer the case?

**Sanders:** if you look with a fine-tooth comb, you can see healthy funding of parks. You have an approved capital improvement plan. That doesn't mean all of those projects get funded; they'll be funded as funds are available. I did find money in the wrong place this current year; I shoved it back over to parks. One thing is the lighthouse tours. That's a hundred and twenty-some thousand a year. That money does not have to stay at the lighthouse. The gift shop money does. That money, I plan to cut in half and use half for the parks.

**Murphy:** the reason I'm asking is that your point about doing this right with whatever kind of vote we have is essential. The communication issue and the education issue for our community are so huge, I don't know what comes first. I don't know how we put the sequence together of survey and public communication so that we get good information.

We're not addressing our roads and that is a major problem for non-motorized. Even if we go to charter, we don't address one of our big issues. I'd really like to see this board, I know you have open meeting act issues, but how do we get this group, three new board members, working with a few folks who've been dealing with parks and the MC report together?

I'm troubled by community identification. I run into people in Pelizzari who live nearby who don't know they live in Peninsula Township. How do we work on that communication element to go in conjunction with the city?

#### **10. Board Comments**

**Chown:** we need a sign at the entrance to the peninsula that says you are entering Peninsula Township.

**Sanger:** we need a donation fund for a sign.

**Chown:** I need more in the [parks] budget for signs. \$18,000 isn't enough.

**Wunsch:** I will look for direction from the board on where you want me to take the survey next.

**Sanders:** start soliciting applications; put it on the website.

**Wunsch:** how do you want to handle selection?

**Sanders:** your ad hoc committee.

**Wunsch:** we need a public process for creating the survey. Should appoint the next master plan update committee. Solicit applications on the website.

**Sanders:** and also use [the Gazette] to get the word out to more township people.

I have tasked our planner, Elise, with pulling the most recent zoning ordinance rewrite from McKenna and getting that ready to present to the planning commission.

#### **11. Adjournment**

**Chown moved to adjourn with a second by Alexander.**

**Motion passed by consensus**

**Adjourned at 9:55 p.m.**