PENINSULA TOWNSHIP

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Township Board Special Meeting
September 8, 2026, 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. **Governmental Updates**:
   Parks Committee: Old Mission Point State Park is owned by the state, but the township manages it in collaboration with the DNR and the Grand Traverse Regional Land Conservancy. The DNR wants to install a gate on the two-track running east to west [off Eagle Rise Road] to prevent people from driving back there. Evidence of people having bonfires at the end of that road, concern about fires, erosion. The fire chief will have a key for emergency access. The conservancy is helping improve the trail system with a more updated trail map and fixing aging map signs on trails. Committee is working towards a new master recreation plan in 2028 to help prepare for increasing use of parks. Noted the increased volume of calls to the parks committee, many concerning dogs off leash and coyotes.
   Fire Chief Gilstorff: Fire Station 1 will have its annual open house September 29 from 4 to 7 p.m.
   Sheriff Depute France: we had 24 traffic stops, two citations, two drunk driving arrests, and one fatal car accident, still an open case. Two criminal arrests and a few identity theft reports. Reports of cars racing up Peninsula Drive should be called into dispatch to be documented versus being reported on social media.
5. **Conflict of Interest:** none
6. **Consent Agenda**
   A. Invoices
   B. Reports
      1. Fire Department
      2. Treasurer
      3. PCL
      4. Grand Traverse County Sheriff's Office Citation, Accident, and Arrest Statistics
      5. Annual Report to Grand Traverse County Detailing How Payment Two of Five Payments of $25,000 Was Used to Advance the Kelley Park Boat Launch Project
   C. Minutes from July 28 and August 11, 2026, Township Board Regular Meetings
   D. Fire Hydrant Winterization Public Service Announcement
   E. Written Position on Prosperity Plan EDC by Marv Radtke, Green Lake Supervisor
   F. Elmwood Charter Township Comprehensive Master Plan Draft Notification
   G. Signage Request for Old Mission Women's Club Annual Cookie Sale

H. Resignation of Jen Bramer from Agricultural Advisory Committee
I. Resignation of Scott Visger from Zoning Board of Appeals
J. Letter to Governor Whitmer from Supervisor Sanders
K. Information on Bioswales
L. Clarification on General Law versus Charter Township Reporting Requirements
M. Correspondence
1. Eric Bergsma
2. John Krieger
3. Leslee Heintz
4. Shane Bullough
5. Lou Santucci
6. Linda Brick
7. Franklin Johnston
8. Jacquie Harding
9. Kathleen Haueisen
10. Brad Niergarth
11. Bob and Kathy, Maura Sanders, and Dan Watkins
12. Brad Niergarth
13. Patricia Thomas
14. Steven Tinskey, DNR, and Christy Summers, Beckett & Raeder
15. Marie-Chantal Dalese
16. Dean Elanges
17. Peggy and Chuck Ellibee

Brad Niergarth, 8718 Peninsula Drive: request to move invoices and the treasurer report, budget to actual meeting. Thanked Katie [Clark, treasurer] for those.

Sanders add business item J: invoices and K: treasurer report.

Sanger moved to approve consent agenda as amended with second by Alexander.

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

7. **Approve Agenda**

Alexander moved to approve agenda as presented with a second by Milliken.

Motion passed by consensus

8. **Brief Citizen Comments (for agenda items only):** none

9. **Business:**

A. Discussion of Cunningham-Limp Initial Report for Future Fire Station #1 (Sanders)

Bobby Peplinski, representative of Cunningham-Limp and Peninsula Township resident: here to give an interim update on the ongoing work associated with the pre-construction proposal. Met with the township in June to discuss options to address two needs in the township, a new fire station 1 and an evaluation of the current township offices. Reviewed the different options to work with on the current township property considering budget, timeline, size of the lot, and long-term effectiveness. Five options were discussed with township considering how to best utilize possible combinations of new and existing structures. After considering cost and effectiveness, two options will be presented at the October regular meeting.

Board discussed concern about the growing residential population with current zoning allowing for 12,000 residents at full build out. Need to plan for future needs as additional staff is needed. This is an opportunity for a full capital improvement plan for the township hall and offices.

B. Ag Advisory Committee Appointment (Sanders)

Jen Bramer resigned. One application has been submitted by Jeff Kane.

Alexander moved to accept Jeff Kane to the agricultural committee with a second by Chown.

Motioned passed by consensus

C. Continued Discussion of 2026 Tax Rate Request with Action Possible (Clark)

Clark: form due to the county equalization department, they will send to the state. Difference this year is fire millage raised from 2.6 to 3. Everything else calculated using the Headlee factor.

Sanders moved to accept the 2026 tax rate request with a second by Clark.

Alexander: supports setting up the funds to be ready for construction.

Sanders: pre-construction costs are still costs. Have to have the money for that.

Wunsch: if still talking about new fire station during next election cycle, put it to the voters for approval.

Chown: does not like that idea. The community has already overwhelmingly expressed its support for the new station.

Milliken: asked about millage rate being able to be designated to a specific new building fund rather than the general fire fund.

Clark: explained that while it's possible for the township to establish a dedicated fund, committing a difference in taxes from the millage would be difficult to declare as a specific amount. Fire millage is already restricted to the fire department, which has its own fund breakdown that is approved by the board.

Board discussed fire department funds as well as board oversight.

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

D. Discussion of Grand Traverse County Sheriffs' Millage for 2028 (Sanders)

Sanders: asked the board to think about a 2028 millage vote. Excess funds were raised in preparation for a third deputy, which was not staffed, and a surplus has accumulated that will cover the township until 2028. State police have been supplementing coverage, but the local sheriff is already understaffed.

E. Revised Old Mission Peninsula Historical Society MOA with Action Possible (Chown)

Don Eichberger: introduced memorandum as recently updated.

Chown moved to approve the Old Mission Historical Society memorandum of agreement with Peninsula Township with a second by Alexander.

OMPHS Representative David Taylor: the agreement does not include the exhibits, which are descriptions of relative historical properties and a summary of the society's insurance obligations. OMPHS will work with the township to get those exhibits attached to the formal agreement.

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

F. Discussion of Special Assessment Districts for Private Road Maintenance (Sanders)

Sanders: reviewed request from private subdivision requesting partnership with township in getting private roads repaired by the road commission. Would require township to go out for bonds to get cheaper repair costs for the subdivisions.

Board discussed the history of township involvement and concern about the extra burden for staff. Similar previous agreements are still burdensome for the treasurer to collect on. Board agreed that it has no interest in pursuing special assessment districts for private road maintenance.

G. Overhead Light Request for McKinley Road and Center Road (Sanders)

Sanders: community requests a light at this intersection.

Board asked Deputy France if a light would be helpful. France agreed to check on the data for that intersection and report back at the next meeting.

H. Peninsula Township Flag Survey Results and Discussion (Chown)

Chown: flag survey results show a 75.9 percent preference for option C. However, some residents expressed interest in opening up the contest to our residents, which is a great idea.
Board agreed to open up submissions to residents. Would like a flag ready for the parade of flags at the Michigan Townships Association conference in April.

I. Discussion on Organizing to Attend Road Commission Meetings (Sanders)

Chown: asks for community involvement to attend road commission meetings to advocate for roads in the township. Road Commission meetings are the fourth Thursday of the month at 6 p.m.

J. Invoices

Sanger: reviewed invoices and intent to organize for easier comprehension and tracking of the budget. Working with Milliken on generating reports on a quarterly basis or monthly. Currently if looking for expenses from FSBR [Fahey Schultz Burzych Rhodes] legal firm, have to go through 25 separate departments, then break down which fund is being used to pay a specific item.
Sanders: regarding invoices for legal, asked EMC if FSBR could be subcontracted under them to help cover legal costs.

K. Treasurer's Report

Sanger: in reviewing the treasurer's report, there are 25 departments, such as clerk department and PDR. Will look at each of those such that income equals the outflow come March 31. Will continue to release that report on a quarterly basis.
Clark: rest of funds will come in December through March.

8. Citizen Comments:

Andre France, 2859 Bowers Harbor Road: in reference to county road commission. At the last meeting, the representative brought up the ratings they give each of the roads, and I want to know: is there a way to track when is the last time they've done a survey on all the roads out here? It seems quite a few have fallen to the wayside. I didn't like the statement, once they get to a certain rating, that it's on the residents to then pay for it completely out of pocket. We've already had that issue with Bluff Road. That was a known issue for more than 20 years that constantly got brought up to different road commission leads, and they decided not to do anything with it until the last minute, and their solution was cut the road in half, make it private, and let the residents figure out how they're going to do it. And I don't like that. We pay a lot of money in taxes for the roads to be taken care of. What [does] it take for them to show us what the ratings have been? Have they been doing it on a yearly basis? How often? Some type of documentation?
Us having to go out and do extra to attend these meetings just so they can do their job is really frustrating. And the fact we would have to pay more when they were supposed to be taken care of from the get-go. The last meeting, they talked about Neahtawanta. I know people have brought that road up to the road commission. It's bad. Ladd Road is bad. Parts of Bowers Harbor, parts of East Shore. Over the years, I haven't seen a lot of work done, other than when they redid part of Blue Water. MDOT doesn't count. The south end section of Peninsula Drive. Other than that, a lot of our roads don't get the care they need. A lot of times, what they've said when they've come into this meeting is that they "have other roads in the county that we use that we need to take care of." We are this last thought because we're out here, but I don't think that's right. I hope we can get some type of documentation from them, at least show what these ratings are and how often they actually go over and look at the roads and take time to review them, so it doesn't fall on the residents to pay for everything.
Sanders: I'm glad you just volunteered as part of my committee because I already submitted this FOIA to the road commission. I will get back to you.

Mike Dettmer, 7003 Leorie Drive: announcement about the WOMP [Wineries of Old Mission Peninsula] litigation today. The Sixth Circuit Court of Appeals granted PTP's [Protect the Peninsula] motion to expedite the appeal of the denial of intervention. We're backing the township. A couple observations. On the Center [Road] McKinley lighting, there is a light directly south of that at Mathison and Center. It is helpful to have that overhead light, safety-wise. Last, there is a Traverse City sign on the south end of M-37, on the north side, welcoming you to Traverse City. The back of that sign is vacant. I think it'd be great to have a "Welcome to Peninsula Township" sign.

Brad Niergarth, 8718 Peninsula Drive: thank you, Katie, for the report, all the information for the budget to actual comparisons. The next step I'd like to see you do is to monitor the budgeting, as I've discussed with you before and shared in letters. You did have budget violations last year, and your final financials, I haven't seen the audit. You did some amendments this year that were by line item; the office furniture, the legal fees for a couple of lawsuits were increased. But you adopted your budget based on activity level, and that's kind of a contradiction. The activities are like your departments, and so by adapting an amendment to the line item, it doesn't carry. You have to do it to the activity, the same way that you adopted your budget. I encourage you to look at that going forward.

You've taken care of one of the concerns I had—the parks always had a negative cash balance. It doesn't now. It's got a positive cash balance, but that wasn't in your budget for this year. I think your general fund didn't have a budget to send that money over for $580,000, and the parks didn't have the revenue. Even though it's after the fact, I would still amend that because I'd like to have it at the end of the year show that it was amended and included in there.

Point from last meeting, Julie [Alexander], you asked the question, "Don't we get an audit?" I tried to address that in one of my letters since then. You get a financial audit, not a compliance audit. Would be a great idea [to] have your auditor come. Most townships of your size, with the dollars you have, do a presentation, explain the audit report and the letter of internal control and the material weaknesses they highlight. It's time well spent if you had your auditor give that kind of a presentation to you and the public. As Dave [Sanger] commented, have that be available at the end of the year, may want to look at it more often than quarterly because you want to look at it January 31st, February 28th, so that you can amend anything that's on the verge of going over at that point. It's difficult to know if the bills you're approving are going to put you over budget that time of year without having this report in front of you. Job well done on that, Katie. I appreciate it.

Glen Macpherson, 10103 Council Oak Drive: want to take a moment to express my appreciation to each of you for the time, effort, and care you've devoted to serving this community. Public service is demanding under the best of circumstances and especially difficult when decisions involve issues as consequential and as emotionally charged as land use, agriculture, tourism, and the future character of Old Mission Peninsula. The peninsula's natural beauty, rural landscape, agricultural heritage, and quality of life are not accidental. They are the result of generations of stewardship and the planning choices intended to protect resources that belong to all of us, not only to the most organized, well-funded, or commercially invested voices in the room. You are being asked to make decisions amid a great deal of advocacy, messaging, and economic pressure. That is precisely why thoughtful, evidence-based governance matters. It takes resolve to look beyond immediate commercial interests and consider the long-term consequences for residents, farms, roads, traffic, viewsheds, and the quiet and distinctive sense of place that makes this community worth

preserving. I urge the board to continue applying the law fairly, listening carefully, insisting on accurate information, and protecting the long-term public interest. The people who benefit from prudent stewardship include today's residents, farmers, and businesses as well as future generations who deserve to inherit an Old Mission Peninsula that remains beautiful, livable, agricultural, and recognizably itself. For me, this is not an abstract concern. I have five children: Emma, 23; Alex, 21; Maggie, Zoe, and George, 19. Five voting-age constituents. Your work is determining the kind of peninsula they will inherit. Their future deepens my concern and my gratitude for your work. Thank you for your public service, your diligence, and your willingness to do difficult work on behalf of all of us and on behalf of generations to come. Thank you.

Dave Murphy, 6943 East Shore Road: I will echo what was just said. Thank you for that statement. Two things from me. The road commission will be getting a report from the non-motorized transportation committee. A tentative recommendation is to appoint a committee to work on the subject. This could be a great group to work with the road commission. Two of you have [Chown and Sanders] serve on that committee as well. I don't know what the composition of that committee will end up being, but that would be a great group to get involved. It was a little bit of a frustration with the consultant we worked with, not involving the road commission. I know they were trying to keep it what the residents want, start there, but we know we have to partner with MDOT and the road commission, the next phase of whatever this committee turns into. I hope that group gets a chance to help with working with the road commission.

Other point, last month Dave [Sanger] talked about short-term rentals and software. Your meeting was running long; I didn't want to make a comment then. But having lived next to one for two years and watching the township struggle to shut it down when it was unbelievably disruptive to the neighborhood... It changed our neighborhood. We know what the citizen survey says. I'll advocate for any tool that is reasonable, and that sounded like a reasonable tool. It alarmed me, the number that were flagged. Living in a shoreline area, where there's been such a transition from full-time year-round residents to part year, I'm questioning if why some of the numbers popped up as they did is that people are doing it sporadically. They are renting a few times and spending some time there. I had a friend the other day who got in touch and said, “I'm thinking about moving to Traverse City… the only place I'll consider is Peninsula Township. They don't allow short-term rentals. I don't want to live somewhere that allows them.” That meant a lot to me to hear that. This has been an issue for me for decades. So, thank you, and I hope you consider that software.

9. **Board Comments:**

Sanger requested on agenda for the next meeting a top-down look at current lawsuit updates in township for residents to have an idea of the timeline and current efforts.

Sanders Thursday at 3 p.m. is the Old Mission Peninsula City Heritage Route meeting. Road commission will be starting work this week on Swaney Road to addressing sinkhole and culvert repairs in two different locations.

Alexander expressed appreciation for the work of the treasurer.

10. **Adjournment**

Wunsch moved to adjourn at 8:22 p.m. with a second by Sanger. **Motion passed by consensus**