

Regular Board Meeting
March 9, 2026, at 5:30 p.m.

1. Meeting was called to order at 5:32 PM by the Supervisor and began with the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag.
2. **ROLL CALL**- Robert, Aspinwall, Tarnaski, Selin, Hegbloom.
3. **PRESENTATION OF THE MINUTES – MOTION** by Selin, support by Aspinwall, to approve the minutes of 2/23/2026 as presented and place on file. Motion carried.
4. **APPROVAL OF AGENDA – MOTION** by Roberts, supported by Hegbloom, to approve the agenda as presented. Ayes: 5 Nays: None. Motion carried.
5. **COMMUNICATIONS:**
 - a. Robin Begalle: Letter stating support of development of a community swimming facility.
 - b. Bessemer Township 4th of July (Heritage Committee) Treasurer report/Lynn Ormes
 - c. Michigan Township Association: Request to sign “Principles of Governance.
 - d. City of Ironwood: Notice of 2025 Comprehensive Plan draft is complete.
 - e. MI DNR Conservation and Stewardship: CC of correspondence to Mr. and Mrs. LaPlant regarding a GAPS review and withdrawal request.
 - f. Erin Bunt, Gogebic County Clerk: Early voting site coordinator for upcoming elections.
 - g. Neena Kleimola: Letter of resignation from PAUD/Powderhorn Area Utility District Board effective March 15, 2026. Discussion was had. Ms. Kleimola thanks the board members and expressed appreciation for her years of service and experience gained. Board expressed appreciation for Ms. Kleimola’s years of service on behalf of the township serving as member at large on the PAUD board. Board discussed process for replacing the members. Motion by Tarnaski, Supported by Selin, to authorize the Supervisor to proceed with posting the vacancy and call for letters of interest to serve as the member at large on the PAUD board. 5 Ayes. Nays: None. Motion carried.
 - h. Representative Bergman: Informal update from the liaison regarding efforts to reopen the Ramsey Post Office.
 - i. Neena Kleimola, PAUD at large board member: Notice of resignation. Supervisor read letter into record.
MOTION by Selin, supported by Roberts, to accept communications as presented and place on file. 5 Ayes. Nays: None. Motion carried.
6. **REPORTS-BOARDS, COMMITTEES, AND OFFICERS.**
 - a. GRWA: No new business
 - b. PAUD: No new business PAUD Member at large vacancy discussion: **MOTION** by Tarnaski, supported by Selin to authorize the supervisor to : *work with IT provider to post notice on the township website requesting letters of interest to fill the vacancy and*place a small advertisement in the local newspaper with a deadline for letters of interest to be set as the Friday before the next regular board meeting. ROLL CALL VOTE AYES: Roberts, Hegbloom, Aspinwall, Tarnaski, Selin. Nays: None. Motion carried. Additional note: Send a thank you note to Neena for many years of service on the PAUD board. This will be extended to other outgoing Heritage Committee members as well. Clerk will pick up a supply of cards/thank you notes.
 - c. GRSWMA: No new business.
 - d. BASA: No new business.
 - e. Michigan’s Western Gateway Trail Authority: No new business
 - f. Section 32 Sewer Authority: No new business.
 - g. Gogebic County Land Bank: No new business.
 - h. Ordinance Enforcement Officer LeRoy Johnson:
 - a. Mr. Johnson reported that with spring approaching, junk and blight issues will become more visible. He plans to re-inspect properties that previously received letters about junk removal and follow up on compliance.
 - Animal ordinances / farm animals on small parcels: Mr. Johnson reported some parcels have horses, goats, pigs on lots too small under township ordinance. Discussion was had. Leroy plans to submit township ordinance to Michigan Department of Agriculture to confirm compliance with state law and determine whether ordinance needs amendment. Obtain state approval so local ordinance can be enforceable on small parcels despite Right-to-Farm claims.

The Treasurer reported the following:

- i. Utility Shut-Offs: Nine delinquent utility accounts totaling approximately \$3,197.74, with one account temporarily held due to personal circumstances. **MOTION** by Tarnaski, supported by Selin, to authorize the Treasurer/utility clerk to proceed with the utility shut-off process per Township procedure for the delinquent accounts. ROLL CALL VOTE AYES: Roberts, Hegbloom, Aspinwall, Tarnaski, Selin. Naves: None. Motion carried. Treasurer to provide updated list to DPW crew for shutoffs.

Aged Accounts Receivable – Utilities: Aged accounts receivable total: **\$29,836.96** Report was given to the Clerk for the record. Tax Collection – Summer and Winter 2024: Total collected: \$1,663,429.74. Delinquent turnover to County total: \$172,214.90. 2024 real property tax roll (except lease land and personal property) turned over to the County Treasurer as of March 2, 2026. Treasurer’s report was accepted by consensus of the Board.

Utilities – Shut-off List: Shut-off letters were mailed and posted at properties. In addition, Treasurer is reported coordination of tax settlement with county; additional info may be requested. Treasurer gave Board an updated financial report as of 2/28/26. Copies were provided for the public. Treasurer obtained online access for Fourth of July / Heritage Committee and BTVFD checking accounts.

This enables:

- Direct download of statements
- Copying for clerk records
- Better oversight and reconciliation.

The Clerk reported the following:

All approved 2026 meeting minutes have been posted to the Bessemer Township website. Election Training & Early Voting: Clerk has begun mandatory State of Michigan Bureau of Elections training. This training must be completed before accessing the Electronic Qualified Voter File (QVF).

Training includes multiple modules with tests and is very in-depth. She is working with County Clerk Erin Bunt to gain proper access credentials for QVF, coordinate early voting for upcoming primary and general elections.

- Early voting structure:

- Courthouse will serve as early voting site.
- Each local clerk must serve as site supervisor for one day which includes Sundays.
- Local clerks must arrange for election inspectors for their assigned day. If candidates are on the ballot, they cannot serve as election workers. Clerk will reach out to prior workers and new volunteers as needed. Election equipment testing/inspection. Waiting for scheduling from Bureau of Elections and County Clerk. Plan is to coordinate an evening session for multiple local clerks for convenience. Township received an IRS penalty letter. This was related to late filing and payment of taxes on a 50/50 raffle winner for the Heritage Committee. Issue stems from a timing gap between paying out the 50/50 raffle and filing/ remitting the required tax forms via the Township’s EIN. The Clerk consulted with CPA. Recommendation is for the Township Treasurer to maintain the checkbook and all financial records for the Heritage Committee account. Heritage Committee can still have its own treasurer for internal tracking. All checks would be processed by Township Treasurer and cosigned as needed. Township will handle filings and deadlines to prevent future penalties. Treasurer can provide regular financial reports to the committee. This will also allow timely reconciliation and proper general ledger accounting.

*Millage Renewal Ballot Language- Discussion regarding was had regarding the millage renewal. Clerk recommends requesting 5-year term for the millage renewal. Rationale:

*Aligns future expiration with a major election cycle (e.g., U.S. House or general election), giving multiple opportunities to place the renewal on the ballot if needed. *Provides up to three chances in different election cycles should the first attempt fail. The ballot language was provided previously by County Clerk Erin Bunt- township only had to insert the correct tax collection information.

Discussion was had. **MOTION** by Roberts, supported by Aspinwall, to approve the ballot language as presented for the 5-year millage renewal and authorize the Clerk to proceed with the Gogebic County Clerk for placement on the ballot. ROLL CALL VOTE AYES: Tarnaski, Selin, Roberts, Hegbloom, Aspinwall. Naves: None. Motion carried. In other business, the clerk reported that CPA now has remote access to the township records and we continue to work on the enterprise funds for reconciliation. There are a few electronic payments that lack clear source determination. The township is now getting its revenue sharing and other state funds deposited electronically to include

SIGMA, and the supporting documentation is not always provided with the deposit, which complicates the accounting. The Treasurer contacted Treasury regarding SIGMA account access. Only one login is allowed per unit, and the clerk may need to log in under existing credentials to retrieve recent deposits. Discussion was had regarding receipt of an invoice in the amount of \$2500.00 for completing the F65 (local fiscal report) CPA indicates such work should have been included in prior services. Clerk is holding payment. Board discussed concern over prior audit/billing practices of prior auditing firm. Township needs to replace a DPW smartphone. Clerk attempted multiple times to resolve with AT&T business encountering long hold times and repeated transfers with no resolution. The leadman attempted to purchase at Walmart but was unsuccessful because they do not sell for business accounts. Discussion was had. The following action plan was directed to the clerk by the board: Have DPW lead man call AT&T Business during business hours with account number and login to order a phone that meets DPW technical needs (data, storage, compatibility with monitoring). The Board previously approved up to \$1,500 for the replacement phone. Clerk will provide account access information.

7. APPROVE PAYMENT OF BILLS/PAYROLL/MILEAGE:

FUND	CHECK NUMERs	AMOUNT
General Fund	#17969-17982	13991.19
Water Fund	#22690-22692	10424.35
Anvil Sewer		
Ramsay Sewer		
West End Sewer		

***MOTION** by Roberts, supported by Selin, to approve payment of bills and payroll as presented. ROLL CALL VOTE AYES: Roberts, Hegbloom, Aspinwall, Tarnaski, Selin. Nayes: none. Motion carried. Another board member noted concern that attorney fees (Ryan & Lynch) are already running high for the year. Expenses are related to FOIA request review and other.

8. UNFINISHED BUSINESS:

- A. Audit-Engagement Letter- Supervisor reported he contacted the auditor Gus Ahonen again this week. Gus Ahonen-auditor- has contacted Darren Pionk from engineering firm C2AE re: USDA requirements and timeline for audit. Gus committed to sending a three-year engagement letter this week and will start work on 2025 - 2026 audit as soon as possible within tax season constraints. Board previously obtained approval from state regulators to skip one audit year and resume with the 2024 audit. The township decided to conduct annual audits for the next three years to stabilize finances and satisfy financing agencies (USDA, EGLE/DEQ, etc.). After that, the township may consider reverting to biennial audits if appropriate. Sentiment from Clerk is to prefer annual audits given the complexity of the bookkeeping system and requirements.
- B. Sewer & Water Line Project – USDA / Bonding-large Water/Sewer Line Project(approx. **\$6 million requires a clean, current audit before USDA can finalize funding. USDA will need a few weeks after receipt of the clean audit. Bond counsel Steve Frank/Miller Canfield Paddock Stone in Detroit estimates up to three weeks to complete the bonding process.
-Contractor & Schedule: Original bids were opened about two years ago; contractor agreed to hold pricing. Project was to have started late last summer/fall, but delays pushed it back one construction season. Expectation is that work will now start late summer 2026, similar to original phasing (carrying into the next construction season). Upcoming meeting is scheduled this week with Jason Ruotsala/construction rep/ Darren P/C2AE; Jared Secor/C2AE/ Bessemer Township Supervisor and possibly the Clerk. The purpose of the meeting is to seek contractor commitment (renewed) to the project, discuss schedule and any pricing issues from the one-year delay. During discussion the clerk expressed concern regarding the ceiling on the debt limits for the township and the pledge of townships full faith and credit for this and any other projects going forward in the absence of a completed audit.
- C. Lead Line Replacement / ATMF1 Grant: The State mandates that all lead and galvanized service lines be fully identified and replaced by January 1, 2041 (effectively by fall 2040). The Township needs an inventory of: Lead lines, Galvanized lines and Copper/plastic lines. An opportunity for an ATMF1 grant for \$115,000 (effectively 100% grant, no local match at this stage) is available. Uses would include engineering analysis and mapping of lead/galvanized service territories, approximately \$40,000 would be reserved for contractor pot-holing-Open test pits at service lines to verify actual materials. Work stops once \$40,000 is used; township then has a partial verified inventory. Existing knowledge: About 90 services are already known to need replacement in Ramsay location as part of the upcoming project. The Anvil area was mostly

upgraded in 2008–2009 (water and sewer); and is expected to have few or no lead/galvanized services. Confirmation is still needed in Puritan and other older parts of the Bessemer Township system. - DPW staff note that former DPW head Louis Sworab was very diligent about replacing services from main to house when repairs were done, so actual number of lead/galvanized lines may be lower than feared. Regulatory requirement: Once the township knows how many lead lines exist, state may require annual progress (e.g., replacing 5% per year). Current grant offerings for replacement are around 49% grant / 51% local; Township discussion voiced concern of taking on more projects immediately. The hope is that closer to 2040 funding ratios improve (e.g., 60/40, 70/30, 80/20) so Township portion is lower. Water testing consistently shows no lead exceedances; Township receives clean reports annually, but the State is still mandating physical replacement of lead lines regardless of current test results (in response to Flint and other systems). Additional discussion was had. **MOTION** by Aspinwall, supported by Selin, to accept the 115,000 ATMF1 grant for lead/galvanized service line identification with the following conditions:

- No Township matching funds required.
- Funds to be used for:
 - Engineering review and mapping.
 - Public informational meetings.
 - Hiring contractor(s) for potholing up to \$40,000. After that, contractor work stops and board will reassess.

ROLL CALL VOTE AYES: Roberts, Hegbloom, Aspinwall, Selin. Nays: Tarnaski. Motion carried. Supervisor will inform Darren (C2AE) at Wednesday meeting to begin coordination to start mapping, public outreach, and potholing. Clerk expressed the following reservations: Concern that accepting this grant may create future obligations for replacement that the Township may struggle to finance given existing debt load, skepticism of assurances from the engineering firm that “nothing is attached” and worried about state/federal mandates leveraging the data later. She states preference for reassurance from C2AE that other funding avenues will emerge over time and that Township will have flexibility in project and debt obligation.

9. NEW BUSINESS:

A. Heritage Committee / Fourth of July: Clarification: Historically, it was the Fourth of July Committee. Name changed to Heritage Committee so it could legally cover additional events (e.g., possible Labor Day or other heritage activities) under insurance and legal guidance. Committee Leadership & Membership Present: Chair: Jody Jurakovich Vice Chair / Secretary: Ashley Sorrells Treasurer: Sarah Ozello (absent, ill) Additional committee members: Tabitha Ross, Ava Edmondson, Lisa Johnson and others. Chair Jurakovich submitted a written letter to Board and read said letter aloud describing committee structure, challenges, and plans for the **Fourth of July celebration. Noted recent resignations: Lisa Selin resigned from committee roles. Kathy Longhini resigned, and Lynn Ormes stepped down as treasurer but remains a committee member. Despite turnover, sufficient support has been secured to continue the event at least for this year, with hope of sustaining longer. Chairperson Jurakovich emphasized the need for additional volunteers—even for small tasks such as selling 50/50 tickets, helping the night of the event, or cleanup, etc. Supervisor pre-discussed potential assistance with DPW for the event. Since it is the weekend, and the township board wants the crew to be able to enjoy their holiday with their families but also support, when possible, with the event:

DPW agreed to:

- Deliver and retrieve picnic tables to event site.
- Set up and take down poles / barriers needed for fireworks safety zone in park.
- Place a large dumpster at the site.
- Provide garbage cans and extra trash bags at the park.

DPW declined to do event garbage pickup during/after the event due to overtime and workload.

Committee plans to:

- Hire workers or recruit volunteers (e.g., **National Honor Society students needing volunteer hours) to handle trash collection and cleanup.

Fireworks:

Fireworks are now shot by a licensed and insured professional, not the Fire Department, Limits on height and certain shell types compared to past years but comply with safety regulations. From past years: the fireworks package has been upgraded from small to medium as fundraising allowed. Last year’s total expense spent on fireworks was approximately \$11,000. Some public comments indicated perceived differences in show size versus prior years; explanation given that professional standards and permitted shells account for some perceived difference.

Board expressed appreciation to current committee members for keeping the event alive and outgoing

members (Lisa C., Kathy, Lynn, and others) for many years of service. Clerk offered to: prepare and send thank-you cards from the Board to key outgoing members (Lisa Selin, Kathy Longhini, Lynn Ormes as treasurer, and others per committee's list). The Committee chair provided contact information (including email) to Clerk and Treasurer for ongoing coordination

- B. PAUD Resignation – Follow-up: Resignation effective March 15, 2026, of Nena Kleimola from PAUD Board formally acknowledged here. Board already voted (earlier in meeting) to advertise vacancy via website and local paper and to solicit letters of interest. Board reiterated appreciation for Nena's long service.

10. PUBLIC COMMENT: (3 minutes per person)

Dangerous Dogs – Ramsey (Belmont Avenue) Resident identified as Pamela Udd resident and owner of deceased dogs on Belmont Ave.

Summary: Ms. Udd reported a neighbor on a small lot has an 8-foot chicken wire fence, deck, and three large, aggressive bear dogs. The dogs are unlicensed and unvaccinated by rabies according to resident and animal control contacts.

- Repeated problems:

Dogs bark incessantly for long periods.

Dogs entered speaker's yard and even entered speaker's home when patio door was open.

Dogs run at large and have been used to run coyotes, with coyote carcasses allegedly thrown into the yard for dogs to attack (DNR initially said this was legal but follow-up with another DNR office contradicted that.

February 14 (Valentine's Day) – First Attack: Speaker outside shoveling with two small dogs: 8-lb Maltipoo and her puppy. Neighbor opened patio door; all three large dogs rushed out. Due to snow accumulation, fence height effectively reduced to **about 3 feet**, allowing dogs to jump the fence. Dogs grabbed the Maltipoo, stretched and tore its neck, causing severe injuries. Dog was rushed to Ashland for emergency surgery but died three days later. Second Attack (10 days later): Speaker's puppy, leashed and on deck near door, was attacked by the same three dogs. Dogs had the puppy by the hindquarters; speaker intervened to separate them. Puppy had no major puncture wounds, but trauma was significant. Neighbor stood on her deck stating she was "shocking them on the highest setting" on their collars but did not physically intervene initially.

Resident has:

- Called **animal control and Sheriff's Department many times**.

- Filed complaints; neighbor has been cited for:

- 3 counts of dogs at large (~\$70 each)

- 3 dog-bite violations (~\$585 each)

A criminal case is scheduled in court April 1, 2026, at 11:00 AM regarding dangerous animals and restitution. Speaker has received forms from Prosecutor (Deputy McRae) to pursue restitution for vet bills and losses.

-Animal Control / Sheriff Response Reported by Resident:

Dogs were reportedly picked up Monday (short-term) but: Animal Control allegedly indicated dogs would not be euthanized and might be returned to owner.

Dogs were supposed to be removed again today, but no one showed up.

Sheriff Cruz previously told resident he would arrange a meeting at the house with Deputy Josh Elias, but: No one came at agreed time. After further calls, Elias arrived later and appeared frustrated by repeated calls, according to resident.

-Ordinance / Legal Discussion: Ordinance Enforcement Officer Leroy Johnson confirmed he obtained Gogebic County ordinance on dangerous/vicious dogs. Under that ordinance: Dogs that have killed another dog and/or bitten may legally be seized and held for 15–20 days. They are subject to licensing and vaccination requirements, and euthanasia if deemed dangerous. He gave a copy of the ordinance to the Supervisor, and it is of the opinion that the dogs should have been picked up and held based on the incident. The Clerk explained that the Gogebic County ordinance supersedes the older Bessemer Township ordinance on vicious dogs. She recalled a previous tragic case where failure to act after an initial bite led to a child's death, which drove creation of the ordinance, and emphasized a strong personal as well as represented interest to ensure that a similar situation is not repeated.

- Neighboring resident comments:

- Notes four large dogs on a small lot are inappropriate and dangerous.

- Expressed concern for small children and other pets in the area.
- Stated the issue is affecting the sale of speaker's home, because the dangerous dogs must be disclosed to buyers. After discussion, the Board took the following action: **MOTION** by Selin, supported by Roberts to direct the supervisor to contact Sheriff Cruz regarding the dangerous dog situation on Belmont Avenue in Ramsey; Request enforcement of the Gogebic County dangerous/vicious dog ordinance, including seizure/holding of the dogs and enforcement of licensing and vaccination requirements; and to direct the Ordinance Enforcement Officer to visit the property, review compliance, and report back to the Board prior to the April 1 court hearing. Ayes: 5. Nays: None Motion carried. Supervisor will attempt to have a conversation with Sheriff Cruz by Wednesday at the latest and provide the resident with follow-up. Resident apologized for exceeding three minutes, but board allowed extended comment due to seriousness of issue.

11. **ADJOURNMENT:** With no further public comment or board business, Supervisor called for adjournment. **MOTION** by Aspinwall, supported by Selin, to adjourn the meeting at 7:07 PM. 5 Ayes. Nays: None. Motion carried.