

**MINUTES****I. Call to Order**

The meeting was called to order at 7:00 AM.

**II. Pledge of Allegiance**

The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

**III. Roll Call**

**PRESENT:** Chair Tom Gordon, Township Supervisor Mindy Cole-Crocker, Commissioner Larry Money

**ABSENT:** Mayor Pro Tem Patrick Swem, Brian Murphy

**CITY STAFF:** City Manager Tony McGhee, City Clerk Kalla Langston, Director of Public Services Mike Baker, Water Operator in Charge Craig Miller, Wastewater Operator in Charge Terry Burns, Wastewater Compliance Officer Zoey Martin

**IV. Approve Agenda**

Motion made by Cole-Crocker, supported by Money, to approve the agenda as presented. Voice votes carry unanimously.

**V. Public Comment - Agenda Items Only**

None.

**VI. Approve Minutes**

A. *Consider approving the Regular Meeting Minutes from November 17, 2025.*

Motion made by Cole-Crocker, supported by Money to approve the minutes as presented. Voice votes carry unanimously.

**VII. Unfinished Business****VIII. New Business****A. Bertrand Crossing Extension Update**

An update was provided regarding the crossing extension project. The project has gained momentum over the past two months. Representative Paquette's office requested paperwork for a special funding request, and a request for \$3 million from the State of Michigan was filed. Paquette's office also requested outreach to Senator Lindsey's office for a letter of support. This project was identified as a priority for Paquette's next funding package, with discussions expected to begin in April.

Initial conversations have also occurred with the regional Economic Development Administration representative, Lee, regarding a potential \$2.5 million request. A follow-up call was scheduled to review the request. Staff indicated there is a strong line of sight on approximately \$5.5 million in potential funding, with more clarity expected by the third quarter of the year. If funding is

secured, the project could move into design and permitting in the fall, with construction possible the following year.

The project was discussed as having significant potential economic and utility-system benefits. If Bonnell proceeds with its anticipated expansion, the project could result in approximately 44 million gallons of additional water and sewer sales annually. The additional revenue could support system maintenance and reinvestment. The project was described as supporting hundreds of jobs and tens of millions of dollars in investment.

Staff noted that Bertrand Township has been informed and is supportive of the project. The project has been presented as an approximately \$8 million project, based on a \$7.2 million estimate plus additional contingency.

Discussion followed regarding system capacity, including Well 5, Well 6, iron treatment, and the need to further examine water capacity before the next meeting. Well 5 was discussed as having high iron content due to its depth, which can cause taste and water quality concerns. Staff noted that Well 5 would need to be tied into SCADA to allow better blending and operation. Iron treatment was discussed, with updated pricing estimated at approximately \$10.5 million, which was considered too costly to include in the current request at this time.

Staff will continue reviewing financing, capacity, and related technical questions before the next meeting.

**B. PFAS Mitigation Landfill Update**

An update was provided on PFAS mitigation efforts at the landfill. The landfill has contracted with ECM2, described as a company focused on emerging contaminant treatment technology. The proposed treatment system is intended as a full-scale operational trial rather than a small pilot study.

Alternative technologies, including reverse osmosis and ion exchange, were discussed. Concerns were raised that those systems primarily separate PFAS rather than destroy it and may create costly byproducts or disposal challenges.

The ECM2 process will use an additive called Nanosorb in the activated sludge process. The product is expected to absorb PFOS/PFAS compounds, bind with sludge floc, and separate out with the waste sludge. The resulting solids may then be dewatered and concentrated. It was noted that the process may also reduce other organics, COD, and color.

The system is expected to begin in approximately March or April 2026, with results to be evaluated after the treatment process has time to stabilize. Staff stated that the State is interested in technology and has indicated that as long as the City is actively working toward a solution, the regulatory position remains acceptable.

**C. Water Reliability Study Update**

Staff reported that the City Commission approved a reliability study contract in the amount of \$14,500. This was described as a fair price, with similar studies often costing closer to \$20,000. The study is a recurring legal requirement, and staff confirmed that work will proceed to maintain compliance.

**D. Water & Wastewater Department Reports**

**A. Water Department Report**

Staff reported that Brian passed his S4-D4 exam and may pursue S3-D3 certification in the fall after meeting required hours. Required reporting has been completed, including MORs, PFAS-related sampling, the reliability study requirements, and the SARA Title II report. The SARA Title II report covers chemicals stored on-site and is submitted to the fire department, EGLE, and Berrien County. The Lead and Copper program was discussed. EGLE is requiring additional review of interior plumbing in homes. Staff has sent letters to selected residents and has begun receiving responses. Sampling is expected in June. The City conducts Lead and Copper sampling every three years, and approximately 25–26 homes are included in the representative

sample. Discussion occurred regarding resident cooperation for access and sampling. It was noted that homeowners must take the first-draw samples themselves, which creates challenges due to the technical nature of the test. Staff also noted the need to confirm whether homes have water softeners or other plumbing conditions that could affect sampling. Staff reported ongoing issues with fiber optic utility work and related water system impacts. Cybersecurity training was completed with EGLE and the State Police, and the City's systems appeared to be in good condition. Several hydrants experienced breakaway coupler issues during the first cold snap where they did not drain properly. Staff plans to repair those. The sale of the Ross Sanders building required separation of the Fire Department water service. Previously, the water line ran through the Ross Sanders building. Staff installed a new water line and meter for the Fire Department, separating that service from the Ross Sanders property. Staff also discussed MXU meter transmitters. Many transmitters are approximately 17 years old and are reaching the end of their useful life. The transmitters are beginning to fail intermittently, causing inconsistent readings. Staff is working to replace older transmitters. New transmitters have an expected life of approximately 15 years, while new meters have an expected life of approximately 20 years. Discussion occurred regarding an approximately 8% difference between water pumped and water billed. Staff believes this may be related to estimated reads and corrections after transmitter repairs. January usage was described as stable, generally around 300,000 to 320,000 gallons per day.

## **B. Wastewater Department Report**

Staff reported that wastewater flows have been leveling out now that construction impacts have ended. December flows were somewhat higher due to snow and weather conditions. Higher flows also affected sludge levels, but sludge hauling was completed quickly, leaving adequate capacity available.

Quarterly pretreatment sampling, including mercury, was reported as being under applicable limits. Staff also updated industrial-user paperwork, signs, and standard procedures in December to ensure records are current for the upcoming year.

The UV disinfection system was discussed. Staff has been contacting the vendor regularly and is waiting for a technician to be scheduled. The system is still operating, but it is not consistently providing full power or treating at the expected level. Staff has replaced electrical components, wiper motors, and bulbs that can be replaced locally, but vendor service is still needed.

The UV system has two banks with 24 bulbs each, for a total of 48 bulbs. Staff discussed the need to maintain an adequate spare inventory, noting that bulbs come from abroad and may be affected by shipping delays or tariffs. The plant is currently operating with one ditch and one clarifier, with no reported clarifier issues. Staff reported that flows have been significantly reduced since construction ended, while loading has remained about the same. Mixed liquor concentration was reported in the range of approximately 3,000 to 4,000. Inflow and infiltration concerns were discussed, particularly stormwater entering the system from the north parking lot behind downtown businesses. Staff is reviewing options and potential funding related to the remaining downtown project funds, including WRAP and Walberg funding, to address the issue.

McGhee stated that all items had been covered and reiterated the desire to have Tom attend a future meeting so the board can get to know him and ask operational questions. Suggestion to reschedule the meeting to Wednesday, May 6<sup>th</sup> at 7:00 AM so that Tom can attend.

## **IX. Public Comment - Non-Agenda Items Only**

None.

## **X. Adjournment**

The meeting was adjourned by Chairman Gordon at 7:43 PM.