

# VILLAGE OF THORNTON

## REGULAR BOARD MEETING MINUTES

Date: January 20, 2026

Time: 6:45 p.m.

Location: Village Hall, Thornton, Illinois

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### 1. CALL TO ORDER

Village President **Maxine Reynolds** called the Regular Board Meeting of the Village of Thornton to order at **6:45 p.m.**

The meeting was recorded by Village Clerk **Nikki Kitakis**. The meeting was not streamed.

The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

A moment of silence was observed in honor of public servants, the military, the sick, and recently departed community members, **especially Janice Abel**.

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### 2. ROLL CALL

#### **Present:**

President Maxine Reynolds

Trustee Cunningham

Trustee Middlebrooks

Trustee Glaser

Trustee Pratscher

Trustee Piszczewski

#### **Absent:**

Trustee Kaye

Public Works Superintendent Roberts

#### **Also Present:**

Park and Recreation Director Dunlop

Police Chief Wesolowski

Fire Chief Schweitzer

A quorum was established.

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### **3. APPROVAL OF COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES – DECEMBER 15, 2025**

A motion was made by **Trustee Cunningham** and seconded by **Trustee Glaser** to approve the Committee Meeting Minutes from December 15, 2025, as written.

**Roll Call Vote:**

AYES – Trustees Cunningham, Glaser, Middlebrooks, Pratscher

ABSTAIN – Trustee Pisarzewski

ABSENT – Trustee Kaye

NAYS – None

Motion carried.

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### **4. APPROVAL OF REGULAR BOARD MEETING MINUTES – DECEMBER 15, 2025**

A motion was made by **Trustee Cunningham** and seconded by **Trustee Glaser** to approve the Regular Board Meeting Minutes from December 15, 2025, as written.

**Roll Call Vote:**

AYES – Trustees Cunningham, Glaser, Middlebrooks, Pratscher

ABSTAIN – Trustee Pisarzewski

ABSENT – Trustee Kaye

NAYS – None

Motion carried.

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### **5. APPROVAL OF VOUCHERS – JANUARY 5, 2026**

A motion was made by **Trustee Pratscher** and seconded by **Trustee Glaser** to approve vouchers from **December 16, 2025 through January 2, 2026**, payable January 5, 2026, totaling **\$304,638.89**, including:

- \$148,409.30 – SOS Grant
- \$9,550.00 – Prepaid checks

**Roll Call Vote:**

AYES – Trustees Cunningham, Glaser, Middlebrooks, Pratscher, Pisarzewski

ABSENT – Trustee Kaye

NAYS – None

Motion carried.

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## **6. APPROVAL OF VOUCHERS – JANUARY 20, 2026**

A motion was made by **Trustee Pratscher** and seconded by **Trustee Middlebrooks** to approve vouchers from **January 6, 2026 through January 16, 2026**, payable January 20, 2026, totaling **\$253,361.73**, including:

- \$162,353.39 – SOS Grant

### **Roll Call Vote:**

AYES – Trustees Cunningham, Glaser, Middlebrooks, Pratscher, Pisarzewski

ABSENT – Trustee Kaye

NAYS – None

Motion carried.

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## **7. APPROVAL OF PURCHASE – RECREATION CENTER HVAC SYSTEM**

A motion was made by **Trustee Middlebrooks** and seconded by **Trustee Pratscher** to approve the purchase of a new rooftop HVAC system for the preschool room at the Recreation Center from **Lansing Heating & Air** in the amount of **\$6,995**.

### **Roll Call Vote:**

AYES – Trustees Cunningham, Glaser, Middlebrooks, Pratscher, Pisarzewski

ABSENT – Trustee Kaye

NAYS – None

Motion carried.

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## **8. RESOLUTION 2026-001R – ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE COMMITTEE APPOINTMENTS**

A motion was made by **Trustee Cunningham** and seconded by **Trustee Glaser** to approve Resolution **2026-001R**, appointing representatives to the South Suburban Mayors and Managers Association Environmental Justice Committee.

### **Roll Call Vote:**

AYES – Trustees Cunningham, Glaser, Middlebrooks, Pratscher, Pisarzewski

ABSENT – Trustee Kaye

NAYS – None

Motion carried.

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## **9. TRUSTEE COMMITTEE ALTERNATE ASSIGNMENTS**

President Reynolds announced alternate trustee assignments for committee reporting when an assigned trustee is absent. Alternate trustees are as followed.

- **Police Department → Trustee Cunningham**
  - **Finance & Economic Development → Trustee Glaser**
  - **Building Department → Trustee Kaye**
  - **Fire Department → Trustee Middlebrooks**
  - **Recreation Center → Trustee Pisarzewski**
  - **Public Works → Trustee Pratscher**
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## **10. PUBLIC COMMENT (NON-AGENDA ITEMS)**

### **Public Comment Regarding Ordinance 2025-006 – Enforcement Mechanism**

#### **Robert Derksen made a public comment**

On June 16, 2025, the Village adopted Ordinance 2025-006 the same evening it was discussed in committee, without documented public comment on the implementation of the garbage fee prior to adoption.

Section 6-4-5(B) of the Village Code authorizes enforcement of this mandatory garbage fee through the Village’s water shutoff authority. The ordinance contains no opt-out, hardship exemption, vacancy exemption, or self-haul alternative for residential properties.

For the record, I am asking each trustee:

Under Section 6-4-5(B), do you support the use of water shutoff authority to enforce payment of a residential garbage fee?

A yes or no response would be appreciated.

## **Shellie Beno made a public comment,**

Good evening, everyone –

For the record, I am submitting this statement and respectfully request that it be included in the official minutes of this meeting.

In a small town, trust is everything. We know each other, we share spaces, and the decisions made in this room affect our lives in real ways—by our roads, our schools, our water, our taxes, and the future our children will inherit.

That’s why transparency in small-town governance is so important and means more than “meeting legal requirements.” It is something that is part of campaigning platforms. Some of which is being done to some degree but I believe there is benefit to having transparency improvements implemented.

I am seeking means to clear communication, open meetings, and making information easy to understand. In a small town, government isn’t something distant or abstract. It’s personal. When residents know how decisions are made and why, trust grows. When information is unclear or hard to find, even good decisions can create doubt, frustration, and division.

Open governance also invites participation. People should feel welcome to ask questions and be provided answers, share ideas, and voice concerns with returned communication. I don’t see the engagement during these meetings and most constituent interest seems to be met with blank stares.

When elected leaders listen and explain their choices honestly, the community becomes a partner in problem-solving—not just an audience.

The reason I am bringing transparency at the forefront is because I am concerned about not being able to find clear understanding of:

- placing the garbage fees to the residents, a decision evidently made back mid-year 2025, but presented in a board meeting end of 2026,
- the redrawing of the Wolcott one-ways published in a flyer Jan 2026 without clear reasoning given that will affect traffic especially around train stoppages, and
- the IT proposal because at the end of year 2025 board meeting there seemed to be no communication of the status of competing bids, the proprietary nature of the service contract(s) and the fine print, in order to stay within the service agreement, equipment purchases are necessary at the request of the service provider that aren’t included in the monthly fees.

I hope the following recommendations (some that you will recognize as already implemented) can be considered as a pathway to better transparency with the community:

### **1. Make Information Easy to Find**

- Post agendas early (at least 72 hours before meetings).
- Publish clear, plain-language “summaries” of each agenda item.
- Keep meeting packets (staff reports, proposals, budgets) online in one place.
- Create a searchable archive of past meetings, votes, and ordinances.

## **2. Improve Meeting Access**

- Livestream and record meetings, including committee and planning meetings.
- Post recordings with timestamps by agenda item.
- Offer hybrid participation (in-person + online public comment).
- Hold meetings at consistent, accessible times.

## **3. Show How Decisions Are Made**

- Publish individual councilmember votes on all decisions.
- Explain *why* decisions were made, not just what passed.
- Share decision timelines showing how an issue moves from idea → vote.
- Disclose when items are pre-decided in committees or work sessions.

## **4. Increase Public Participation**

- Allow public comment *before* votes, not only at the end.
- Accept written comments online and include them in the public record.
- Host town halls or listening sessions separate from formal meetings.
- Use surveys or polls on major policy decisions.

## **5. Budget & Finance Transparency**

- Publish a plain-English budget with visuals.
- Show where tax dollars go (department breakdowns, major contracts).
- Disclose contracts, bids, and vendor relationships.
- Post monthly spending reports and check registers.

## **6. Ethics & Accountability**

- Require conflict-of-interest disclosures and publish them.
- Make ethics complaints and outcomes publicly accessible (with privacy safeguards).
- Record and publish lobbyist meetings or major stakeholder communications.
- Track and report council attendance.

## **7. Use Technology Well**

- Create a single transparency portal on the town website.
- Send email/text alerts for agendas, votes, and major issues.
- Use open data dashboards (permits, code enforcement, development projects).
- Allow residents to track requests or complaints online.

## 8. Create Transparency Rules

- Adopt a Transparency Ordinance or Policy requiring:
  - Timely disclosure of documents
  - Clear public notice standards
  - Limits on closed sessions
- Review transparency practices annually with public input.

## 9. Culture Matters

- Encourage councilmembers to:
  - Explain decisions publicly
  - Respond respectfully to criticism
  - Avoid “rubber-stamp” voting

Train staff and officials on open government laws.

Transparency is not just a principle to talk about—it’s a commitment to uphold. A commitment to clear communication, open doors, and mutual respect. A commitment to remembering that public office is a public trust.

If we continue to govern in the open, listen to one another, and share information freely, we ensure that our town remains not just a place where people live—but a community where people belong.

Thank you for allowing me your time and I respectfully request that this statement be entered into the official record/minutes of the meeting.

**Respectfully,  
Shellie Beno**

**No other comments were made.**

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## 11. EXECUTIVE SESSION

A motion was made by **Trustee Cunningham** and seconded by **Trustee Pratscher** to enter Executive Session pursuant to **5 ILCS 120/2(c)(2)** to discuss collective negotiation matters.

### **Roll Call Vote:**

AYES – Trustees Cunningham, Pratscher, Glaser, Middlebrooks, Pisarzewski

ABSENT – Trustee Kaye

NAYS – None

Motion carried.

Executive Session entered at **7:02 p.m.**

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## **12. RETURN TO OPEN SESSION**

The Regular Board Meeting was reconvened at **7:13 p.m.** Roll call was taken and a quorum was present.

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## **13. ORDINANCE 2026-001 – FIRE UNION SIDE LETTER AGREEMENT**

A motion was made by **Trustee Pratscher** and seconded by **Trustee Cunningham** to adopt **Ordinance 2026-001**, authorizing and approving a side letter agreement between the Village of Thornton and the Thornton Professional Firefighters Local 5512 regarding acting officer and captain qualifications.

### **Roll Call Vote:**

AYES – Trustees Cunningham, Pratscher, Middlebrooks, Glaser, Pisarzewski

ABSENT – Trustee Kaye

NAYS – None

Motion carried.

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## **14. OLD BUSINESS**

None.

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## **15. NEW BUSINESS**

None.

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## **16. ADJOURNMENT**

A motion was made by **Trustee Cunningham** and seconded by **Trustee Pratscher** to adjourn.

All Trustees voted **AYE**. Motion carried.

The meeting was adjourned at **7:17 p.m.**

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Maxine Reynolds, Village President

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Nikki Kitakis, Village Clerk