VILLAGE OF THORNTON
SPECIAL BOARD MEETING MINUTES
July 13, 2026

The Special Board Meeting of the Village of Thornton was called to order by Village President **Maxine Reynolds** on **Monday, July 13, 2026, at 6:15 p.m.** in the Council Chambers of Village Hall. The meeting was recorded by Village Clerk **Nikki L. Kitakis**.

Roll Call

Present

- President Maxine Reynolds
- Trustee Cunningham
- Trustee Middlebrooks
- Trustee Kaye
- Trustee Glaser
- Trustee Pratscher
- Trustee Pisarzewski

Absent

- None

Public Comment

President Reynolds opened the floor for public comment.

Roger Maltrotto, 406 Water Street, addressed the Board regarding employee compensation and the financial impact of recent salary increases approved by the Village.

Mr. Maltrotto stated that he had remained silent regarding employee raises approved during the previous year but felt compelled to speak following the proposed increases currently under consideration. He expressed concern that the Village's average household income is approximately **$59,647** and stated that continued salary increases could place an undue burden on Village taxpayers. He cautioned that the Village should not compare itself to larger neighboring communities such as Homewood, Flossmoor, and South Holland, noting that those municipalities have substantially larger populations, budgets, and tax bases.

Mr. Maltrotto stated that he believes employees should be compensated fairly for the work they perform but expressed concern that the proposed compensation levels were excessive for a community the size of Thornton. He further commented on the Illinois Municipal Retirement Fund (IMRF), stating his belief that increasing employee salaries near retirement could significantly increase pension benefits because pensions are calculated using an employee's highest years of earnings. He compared IMRF pensions to those available through his former union employment and stated that many union retirees receive considerably smaller monthly pensions.

Mr. Maltrotto also referenced a former elected official from another municipality who advised him that a village manager there earns approximately $90,000 annually while managing a community experiencing significant development. He concluded by urging the Board to continue paying employees fairly while exercising fiscal restraint to avoid placing additional financial burdens on Village residents and taxpayers.

There being no additional public comments, President Reynolds closed Public Comment.

Executive Session

Trustee Pratscher moved to enter Executive Session pursuant to 5 ILCS 120/2(c)(1) to discuss the appointment, employment, compensation, discipline, performance, or dismissal of a specific employee of the public body.

Seconded by Trustee Glaser.

Roll Call Vote

Trustee	Vote
Pratscher	Yes
Glaser	Yes
Cunningham	Yes
Middlebrooks	Yes
Kaye	Yes
Pisarzewski	Yes

Motion carried.

The Board recessed into Executive Session. President Reynolds reminded those present that discussion during Executive Session would be limited to the statutory exception cited in the motion.

Reconvene Special Board Meeting

The Special Board Meeting reconvened in Open Session at **7:55 p.m.**

Roll Call

Present

- President Maxine Reynolds
- Trustee Cunningham
- Trustee Middlebrooks
- Trustee Kaye
- Trustee Glaser
- Trustee Pratscher
- Trustee Pisarzewski

Absent

- None

Fiscal Year 2027 Budget Discussion

President Reynolds opened discussion regarding the proposed Fiscal Year 2027 Budget. She requested that each Trustee provide comments individually without interruption to ensure every Board member had an opportunity to review and discuss the proposed budget.

General Budget Overview

Trustees reviewed the proposed Fiscal Year 2027 Budget and discussed the relationship between projected revenues, expenditures, beginning cash balances, and reserve funds. Questions were raised regarding projected operating deficits reflected within the budget and whether reserve funds would be utilized to offset anticipated expenditures.

Administrator Payne explained that the Village maintains approximately six months of operating reserves and noted that the proposed budget reflects the use of beginning cash balances as part of normal budgeting practices. She also advised that several anticipated revenue sources had not yet been incorporated into the proposed budget because they had not been formally confirmed.

Casino Revenue

President Reynolds informed the Board of preliminary discussions regarding anticipated revenue from the Southland Casino. She explained that the Village's estimated share of approximately $163,000 had not yet been included in the proposed budget because official documentation had not been received. She further explained that the revenue is statutorily restricted for capital improvements and IMRF-related expenditures and discussed additional educational partnerships and scholarship opportunities expected to benefit surrounding communities.

Budget Line Item Review

Trustees conducted a page-by-page review of the proposed budget, requesting clarification on numerous departmental expenditures and budget classifications. Discussion included:

- Government Finance Officers Association (GFOA) membership dues.
- Payroll administration services through ADP.
- Newsletter production and mailing costs.
- Notary commission expenses.
- Legal services and the separation of legal expenses into individual categories to improve budget tracking.
- Ongoing litigation expenses and their impact on legal service costs.

Administrator Payne explained that several legal expenses had been reclassified into separate categories to provide greater transparency regarding labor, litigation, traffic, planning, and general legal services. The Board also received a general update regarding pending litigation and associated legal expenses.

Public Works

The Board reviewed Public Works operating expenses, including routine maintenance, fertilization, weed control, and contractual services provided by TruGreen. Trustees discussed whether certain maintenance activities could be performed by Village employees and whether obtaining pesticide application certifications for Public Works staff should be considered in future years. Administrator Payne explained that state certification requirements, equipment needs, and employee workload made the current contractual arrangement appropriate, while acknowledging that future employee training opportunities could be evaluated.

Building Department

Trustees discussed Building Department operating expenses, including code enforcement supplies, emergency board-up services, training, forms, software templates, and contractual services. Questions were raised regarding annual expenditures and the costs associated with emergency property maintenance. Staff explained that these expenditures vary depending on enforcement activity and emergency situations throughout the year.

Finance

The Board reviewed fund transfers recorded during the Village's transition from Fifth Third Bank to Wintrust Bank. Trustees requested additional documentation supporting prior-year transfers totaling approximately **$240,000**. Administrator Payne explained that the transfers represented the movement of Village funds between financial institutions as banking operations transitioned to Wintrust and noted that supporting documentation would be provided.

Recreation Department

Trustees discussed Recreation Department postage, contractual services, background check expenses, and other operating costs. Staff explained that expenditures included mailing program information, promotional materials, community event notices, and annual contractual services. Questions were also raised regarding Recreation Department budget variances from prior fiscal years.

Audit and Professional Services

The Board reviewed anticipated audit expenses for Fiscal Year 2027 and discussed the increase in audit costs experienced during prior fiscal years. Administrator Payne explained that previous audit expenses had been impacted by delayed financial reporting and multiple audit periods requiring completion within the same fiscal year. Trustees discussed expectations that future audit costs would normalize as financial reporting became current.

Water and Sewer Fund

Trustees expressed concern regarding projected deficits within the Water and Sewer Fund and discussed the long-term financial sustainability of utility operations. Administrator Payne and Treasurer Simone Jackson explained that water rates had not been increased for many years and emphasized that water revenues must support not only the purchase of water but also infrastructure maintenance, water main repairs, billing operations, postage, administrative costs, and capital improvements. The Board also discussed the Water Capital Improvement Fund, previous infrastructure projects, and potential future grant reimbursements.

Cell Phone Stipends

The Board reviewed employee cell phone stipends provided in lieu of Village-issued cellular phones. Administrator Payne explained that certain employees use personal cellular devices to conduct Village business and receive a modest annual stipend rather than accepting Village-issued phones, resulting in overall cost savings to the Village. Discussion also included mobile data service utilized for field operations.

Conclusion

Following discussion, Trustees indicated that additional supporting documentation would be beneficial for several budget line items before final adoption of the Fiscal Year 2027 Budget. No formal action was taken regarding the proposed budget during the Special Board Meeting.

Announcements

President Reynolds introduced **Attorney Erin Blake**, partner with **Montana & Welch**, who attended the meeting in place of Attorney **Mary Claire Touhy** during her maternity leave. Attorney Blake introduced herself to the Board and briefly discussed her municipal law experience representing the City of Blue Island and several other municipal clients.

Adjournment

Trustee **Pratscher** moved to adjourn the Special Board Meeting.

Seconded by Trustee **Kaye**.

Roll Call Vote

Trustee	Vote
Pratscher	Yes
Kaye	Yes
Cunningham	Yes
Middlebrooks	Yes
Glaser	Yes
Pisarzewski	Yes

Motion carried.

The Special Board Meeting adjourned at **8:31 p.m.**

Respectfully Submitted,
Nikki L. Kitakis
Village Clerk

Approved: ________________________________