

Cass Lake Village Charter Commission Minutes

November 17, 2025

Charter Commission Present: Bob Redner, Cathy O'Connell, Brik Prado, Chris LaDuke, Jon Kellner. Attorney Jerry Fisher

Residents Present: 12 Residents

Meeting was called to order at 6:00 PM by Chris LaDuke.

Roll Call: All 5 Commissioners were present.

Minutes: - The meeting started with a review of the minutes of the emergency meeting, which Brik Pardo, the secretary, read aloud. The minutes confirmed the call to order, the adoption of Robert's Rules of Order (not to be strictly enforced), and the election of officers, naming Chris LaDuke as President and Brik Pardo as Secretary. The motion to approve the minutes was made by John Kellner, seconded by Cathy O'Connell, and approved by a vote of all in favor.

- **Meeting Procedure and Format** Cass Lake Village Information outlined the structure for the meeting, which begins with cheer and an overview from Jerry on the purpose of the meeting. For each subject, Jerry will offer legal advice, followed by a commission-only discussion. The floor will then open for public comment, with attendees limited to two minutes or less to state their opinion, after which the discussion returns to the commission for a possible vote on the issue
- **Review of Previous Emergency Meeting Minutes** The meeting started with a review of the minutes from the emergency meeting, which Brik Pardo, the secretary, read aloud. The minutes confirmed the call to order, the adoption of Robert's Rules of Order (not to be strictly enforced), and the election of officers, naming Chris LaDuke as President and Brik Pardo as Secretary. The motion to approve the minutes was made by John Kellner, seconded by Cathy O'Connell, and approved by a vote of all in favor.
- **Municipal Attorney's Overview of Charter Purpose** Jerry Fischer, the municipal attorney, introduced himself and offered an overview of the charter, explaining it acts like a local constitution, providing authority and guidelines for the village government. They noted that state laws must be consistent with the charter, which sets the pattern for community governance. Jerry also mentioned the state law requirement for the charter commission to consult with the prosecuting attorney to ensure compliance with the state constitution.
- **Discussion and Decision on the Village Name** The commission discussed potential names for the village, with Jerry Fischer advising against a name that could be confused with another village. The commission considered "Cass Lake

Village," "Cass Lakeside Village," and incorporating "Zox," with Chris LaDuke emphasizing the value and prestige of "Cass Lake," the most valuable lake in Oakland County. Following a period of public comment that included support for "Cass Lake Village" and suggestions to include "Zox" as a historical note, John Kellner made a motion to name it "Cass Lake Village," which Bob Renner seconded. The motion carried with a vote of four to one, making the official name "Cass Lake Village".

- Motion Passed Cass Lake Village
 - Jon Kellner Motion
 - Second Bob Redner
- **Setting Village Boundaries** Jerry Fischer mentioned that the next logical step after naming the village would be defining the boundaries. Chris LaDuke confirmed that the boundaries would be those established and approved during the survey conducted for the state petition.
- **Discussion on Office Term Lengths** Jerry Fischer advised that most villages they have worked with use four-year, staggered terms for elected council members, noting that four years provides necessary time for acclimation and experience. The proposed staggering would involve the top vote-getters serving four years initially, and the rest serving two years, with all subsequent elections being for four-year terms. A public comment questioned the feasibility of a four-year commitment due to its length and suggested a three-year term, but Jerry noted that a three-year term would lead to expensive special elections outside of election years.
- Motion Passed 4 Year Term President and VP. Others 2 year for staggering
 - Jon Kellner Motion
 - Second Brik Pardo
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- **Consideration of Village Council Size** The discussion moved to determining the number of people on the village council, prompted by a question about the current HOA board structure. John Kellner proposed having at least seven people on the council, while Chris LaDuke, the president, suggested nine, arguing that it allows for a more robust conversation and avoids placing power in too small a group. Jerry Fischer clarified that, unlike township boards, it is a rarity for the clerk and treasurer to be on the village council, suggesting they would be non-voting employees of the village administration.
- Motion Passed 7 Members.
 - Jon Kellner Motion
 - Second Brik Pardo

- **Council Size and Term Length** Cass Lake Village Information discussed the appropriate number of council members needed for effective discussion, advocating for seven members over the current nine, as five or six is considered ideal for small group discussion. A motion was made, seconded, and passed unanimously to establish the council size at seven people. The council revisited the term length, with a preliminary suggestion for four-year terms that would be staggered for the first election, though this was later tabled.
- **President and Vice President Selection** The selection process for the president was discussed, with Cass Lake Village Information presenting options: either the council selects the president from its members at the first meeting, or the top vote-getter from the general election automatically becomes president. Jerry advised against the top vote-getter option, as that person may not be skilled at running meetings. Public comment supported the council determining the president and vice president, arguing that receiving the most votes does not guarantee capability or willingness to serve in that role.
- **Motion Passed Council will Assign President and Vice President**
 - **Jon Kellner Motion**
 - **Second Brik Pardo**
 - **Elected President's Role and Vote** Cass Lake Village Information emphasized the importance of the council having a say in choosing their leader for effective teamwork . They also noted that a president typically receives a vote, especially in a small council of seven people, to avoid ties. It was agreed that the president should get a vote on all matters to maintain an odd number for tie-breaking.
 - **Appointing President and Vice President** Concerns were raised about individuals being thrust into the presidential role without interest, as the president carries significant responsibilities beyond running meetings, such as being the default contact person. A motion was made and unanimously passed that the council selects the president . A subsequent motion for the council to select the vice president was also unanimously approved.
- **Term Length for President and Vice President** The term length for the president and vice president was discussed, with a motion ultimately made by Cathy to set the term for both positions at two years, which was unanimously approved. The need for the term to be included in the charter was noted.
- **Motion Passed 2 Year Term President and VP.**
 - **Cathy Oconnell Motion**
 - **Second Jon Kellner**

- **Strong Council vs. Strong President** The commission discussed the concept of a strong president versus a strong council, noting examples such as who initiates the removal of a council member or who appoints department heads. Jerry cautioned against giving the president too much authority in a small community, particularly regarding appointments, to prevent issues like nepotism. Cass Lake Village Information favored a strong council ethos, believing it promotes engagement and shared responsibility.
- **Motion Passed Strong Council.**
 - Jon Kellner Motion
 - Second Brik Pardo
- **Process for Removal of Council Member** The commission addressed the process for removing a council member, noting that state law already provides a process for removing elected officials via recall. Given that council members are elected by the public, removal by the council should be limited and based on defined criteria, such as missing consecutive meetings or committing a felony. A motion was made and seconded that removal can be initiated by any council member, but requires a supermajority vote (two-thirds or five out of seven) of the council for purposes to be identified later.
- **Motion Passed 2/3 Vote for Removal.**
 - Chris Laduke Motion
 - Second Bob Redner
- **Clerk and Treasurer Selection** Jerry strongly advised that the clerk should be an appointed position, not elected, due to the need for special credentials and knowledge to run elections. State law allows salaried employees, including appointed clerks and treasurers, to reside outside the community. A motion was unanimously approved that the council appoint the clerk. The same process was recommended for the treasurer.
- **Motion Passed Council Appointed**
 - Chris LaDuke Motion
 - Second Brik Pardo
- **Time Frame for Hiring Clerk and Treasurer** A public comment suggested establishing a time frame in the charter for the council to acquire the services of a treasurer. Jerry suggested the charter should state the hiring must happen "without delay" rather than prescribing a fixed term. Motions were passed for the council to select both the treasurer and the clerk "without delay".
- **Motion Passed Treasurer and Clerk without Delay**
 - Jon Kellner Motion
 - Second Brik Pardo

- **Elected Officials Working for the Village** The legality of elected officials also working for the village was confirmed, provided it complies with state statute regarding contracting with public servants and the population threshold. A motion was passed that an elected official can work for the village.
- **Motion Passed Elected official can work for Village**
 - **Bob Redner Motion**
 - **Second Jon Kellner**
- **Appointment of Department Heads** It was agreed that the council should have the authority to appoint department heads to encourage greater engagement among council members. A motion was passed that council members can make a motion to appoint department heads, to be voted on by the full council.
- **Motion Passed Appoint Department Heads**
 - **Chris LaDuke Motion**
 - **Second Cathy OConnell**
- **Council Members as Department Heads and Compensation** A motion was approved allowing council members to be heads of departments, but requiring them to abstain from voting on their own appointment. For reimbursement or compensation to council heads, it was agreed that the amount should be determined by a supermajority (two-thirds) vote of the council, with the compensated person abstaining from the vote, to avoid accusations of back-dealing.
- **Motion Passed Department Head Voting**
 - **Chris Laduke Motion**
 - **Second Brik Pardo**
- **Eligibility to Run for Election** The eligibility criteria for running for council were discussed, with one year of residency being recommended to ensure candidates have working knowledge of the neighborhood and are likely to stay for their full term . It was confirmed that renters cannot be legally restricted from running for office, as this would violate equal protection based on wealth. A motion was approved that candidates must be a resident for at least one year .
- **Motion Passed 1 Year residency to run for office**
 - **Jon Kellner Motion**
 - **Second Brik Pardo**
- **Compensation Changes for Elected Officials** The commission discussed that state law requires any raise for an elected official to be for a future term, not immediate. A public comment noted the need for clarity since terms are staggered, meaning some members would be at one pay rate and others at

another. It was agreed that compensation changes for elected officials would not go into effect until the next term. The need to determine whether a nominating petition or a payment of \$100 is required for candidates was tabled, pending verification of state law.

- **Motion Passed Compensation would update next term**
 - Jon Kellner Motion
 - Second Chris Laduke
- **Compensation and Salary Discussions** Cass Lake Village Information discussed the complexities of compensation for elected officials, particularly regarding if pay for attending meetings is considered a salary, and the need to address this in the charter. They suggested that the first four years might have no compensation and also raised the issue of reimbursing council members for extra time, work, or training, such as attending the Michigan Municipal League's training for newly elected officials. The term "compensation" was ultimately retained over "salary".
- **Tabling and Deferring Agenda Items** Cass Lake Village Information made a motion to table item number 20, related to compensation, to allow for more discussion and to look at what other places like Metamora do, which was seconded and approved. They also suggested leaving item 22, defining which rules require an ordinance versus a resolution, to state law, and a motion was passed to be consistent with state law on this matter. Item 23, concerning revenue, was also moved to be tabled for a more robust conversation later.
- **Ordinance Violation Ramifications** Cass Lake Village Information brought up the consequences of ordinance violations, discussing whether they should be treated as a crime (misdemeanor) or a civil infraction, noting an example of a dog barking ordinance being a misdemeanor punishable by a fine or jail time. A public comment was raised about the overlap between West Bloomfield Township and the Village ordinances. A motion was made and approved that the general rule for ordinance violations would be a civil infraction, unless a specific ordinance designates it as a misdemeanor.
- **Motion Passed Ordinance is a Civil Infraction unless designated as a misdemeanor.**
 - Chris LaDuke Motion
 - Second Bob Redner
- **Village Ordinance Precedence and Intergovernmental Agreements** Cass Lake Village Information confirmed that the Village ordinances take precedence over Township ordinances. However, they noted that if the Village co-uses the Township's administrative services, such as for zoning or police enforcement, the Township could require consistency with their ordinances as part of the intergovernmental agreement. They also clarified that state law, such as regulations on motor vehicles allowed on roads, would take precedence over a Village ordinance.

Meeting Conclusion Cass Lake Village Information concluded the discussion for the current agenda and noted that there would be a robust discussion on ordinances later. A motion to adjourn was made, seconded by John and Cathy, and approved.

Lakeside Park Charter Commission Meeting Agenda

November 17th, 2025

4927 Greer Rd West Bloomfield MI 48324

1. Name of village / Preamble
2. Office Term Length
3. How many people will be on the council
4. Are we going to stagger the first election
5. Election of President
6. Term of the President if a separate election
7. Process for removal of council member
8. Clerk selection (this will be an employee with regular hours per week)
9. Treasurer selection
10. Can elected officials also work for the village?
11. How is a vacancy filled on the council
12. Vice President selection (President Pro Tem)
13. Heads of departments
14. Can council members be heads of departments
15. If a council member is the head of a department, do they get an extra \$
16. How are the amounts paid to council heads determined

17. Who is eligible for elections?

18. Should people who want to run have to get X number of signatures on a nominating petition

19. If the clerk/treasurer is elected, should they get extra compensation

20. Any change in compensation won't go into effect until the next term

21. Does the President get a vote

22. Defines which "rules" require an ordinance vs a resolution.

23. Special assessments

24. Ordinance Violation and Ramifications

25. Zoning of village and guidelines Boundaries

26. General Powers followed by the Home Rule Act

27. Powers of the Village