

# **Cass Lake Village Charter Commission Minutes**

January 6, 2026

**Charter Commission Present:** Bob Redner, Cathy O'Connell, Brik Pardo, Jon Kellner.  
Attorney Jerry Fisher

**Residents Present:** 7 Residents

**Meeting was called** to order at 6:00 PM by Bob Redner

**Roll Call:** 4 Commissioners were present.

**Minutes:** - The meeting started with a summary / reference to the online version for those who wish to learn more about the minutes of the Brik Pardo.

*Notes:*

- **Meeting Logistics and Attendance** The meeting opened with greetings and a Happy New Year to Jerry, acknowledging that Chris would not be attending, and asking Jerry to assist with meeting components. It was noted that the group would be meeting at the township at some point. Attendees included Commissioners Bob Redner, Cathy O'Connell, Brik Pardo, and Jon Kellner, along with Attorney Jerry Fischer. Chris LaDuke was not in attendance.
- **Review of Previous Meeting Minutes and Charter Status** The group decided to avoid a full redraft of the last meeting's minutes and simply state that the charter was reviewed. The discussion covered that the draft charter documents were not yet online to prevent public confusion due to potential changes. It was clarified that the charter would only be put online once finalized by the commission.
- **Commission Size Proposal and Discussion** A motion was proposed to reduce the number of board members from seven to five to ensure all seats remain filled, given the small community size. Cathy O'Connell opposed this, citing that the current board has nine people (including a treasurer but not a clerk) and has never had trouble filling the seats. Jerry Fischer noted that five is typical for small villages, but suggested an option of keeping the council at seven members while setting the quorum at three to ensure meetings can still be held and benefit from a broader knowledge base.
- **Public Comment on Quorum and Board Size** During public comment, one resident questioned if a quorum should require at least four members—a majority of a seven-person board—to avoid a split opinion. Cass Lake Village Information agreed with the difficulty of getting enough people, but acknowledged Cathy O'Connell's point about having never had problems. The topic was ultimately tabled for later discussion, with the current board size of seven remaining.

Another public comment suggested limiting the scope of actions (e.g., tax, water rate, dockage issues) that could be taken by a board operating with only a minimum quorum of three people. Jerry Fischer explained that once a quorum is set, full action can be taken unless a supermajority (e.g., two-thirds) is required for certain items.

- Proposed Amendments to Enumerated Powers in the Charter** Jerry Fischer reviewed pages of the charter up to the middle of page 15. They suggested two new provisions for the charter's powers section, which were added and highlighted in heavy black font. The first amendment was to authorize the village to adopt a vehicle code, likely by referencing the state code without publication, to allow local police to write village tickets and provide a financial incentive through fine revenue. The second proposed addition was to allow the acquisition of property through lease-purchase or installment contracts, providing another option besides borrowing from a bank.
- Charter Chapter 6: Elections** The group reviewed Chapter 6 on elections, covering that voting will be village-at-large. The regular election date was set for the first Tuesday after the first Monday of November in even-numbered years, aligning with statewide or national elections to boost turnout. The charter provides that the village will not hold a regular primary election but can hold special elections if needed to reduce candidates. State law largely governs nomination procedures, and the township can conduct the election, which is the anticipated plan to save costs, though the village expects to pay for specific ballots and special expenses.
- Charter Chapter 7: Finance and Taxation** Cass Lake Village Information noted that they skipped Chapter 7 on finance and taxation because of an upcoming educational meeting on Friday about the millage rate and how it is determined. It was acknowledged that determining the millage rate will be an important decision in the near future to finalize the charter and prepare for the election.
- Charter Chapter 9: Ordinances and Publication Requirements** The discussion moved to Chapter 9 on ordinances, specifically the requirement for publication before an ordinance is effective. Concerns were raised about the state law requiring publication in a newspaper, as many residents do not read newspapers. Jerry Fischer clarified that if no newspaper is published in the village, notices, resolutions, or ordinances can be printed and posted on the village website and in at least four physical places within the village, one being the place of meetings. It was also confirmed that village ordinances, such as for zoning, would override those of West Bloomfield Township unless otherwise stated.
- Initiative and Referendum Provisions for Ordinances** Jerry Fischer introduced the concepts of initiative (citizens petitioning to create an ordinance) and referendum (citizens petitioning for a public vote on a council-adopted ordinance). They argued against initiative, citing risks of national funding, deception, and poor work products without the benefit of public discussion and

compromise in council meetings. Jerry Fischer designed the charter with a provision to allow referendum but not initiative, so citizens could reject council ordinances but would have to convince the council to adopt new ones. Public comment supported allowing referendums but not initiative. Currently, 30% of registered voters is set in the charter as the threshold for triggering a referendum.

- **Charter Chapter 12: Utilities and Franchises** Chapter 12 addresses utilities, franchises, and licenses, predominantly focusing on granting utility companies the right to use rights-of-way for installations like cables and wires. Cass Lake Village Information clarified that this chapter would allow the village to specify requirements, such as underground cabling.
- **Charter Chapter 13: Contracting and Leasing** Chapter 13 outlines a process for entering into contracts. It permits the council to waive detailed requirements, like open bidding and advertising, with a two-thirds vote, such as in cases where only one company performs the work. If a two-thirds vote is not achieved, advertising and making the process public is necessary. The charter includes exceptions for professional services and contracts below a certain dollar amount, which the board suggested defining by ordinance for easier modification. A conflict of interest provision was also inserted, prohibiting council members from voting on contracts in which they have a financial interest, with the council majority authorized to define what constitutes a financial interest.
- **Charter Chapter 16: Schedule for Transition** Chapter 16, the schedule, was identified as the next crucial item to consider, as it outlines the nomination and election procedures for the members of the first council. The election to approve the charter and the election to elect the first council are planned to occur simultaneously. This election is tentatively planned to tie into the West Bloomfield election in August, which would require the first council candidates to collect signatures several months prior.
- **Charter Review and Timeline** Cass Lake Village Information discussed the need for extra time for people to become familiar with the charter and for printing, especially if it is to be on the ballot. They noted that a condensed version of the charter, like a bullet list of what the statute requires, would likely be on the ballot, as seen in state law initiatives, but the full document must be made available to the people. A tentative timeline for the charter approval was discussed, with Cass Lake Village Information asking for a target date, suggesting that the Governor's office, which relies on the Attorney General, may need 60 to 90 days for review and approval, especially since the Attorney General may be busy during an election year.
- **Charter Approval Process and Time Constraints** Cass Lake Village Information outlined the process for charter approval: the commission tentatively approves it, sends it to the Governor, and if the Governor approves, the commission formally adopts and distributes it. If the Governor does not approve, they can offer

suggestions, which the commission can either incorporate or override. Cass Lake Village Information expressed concern that this process puts them on a time crunch to get the charter written, disseminated for public review, and incorporate information meetings.

- **Charter Clarity and Public Meetings** Cass Lake Village Information emphasized the need to determine the deadline for the final charter product and petitions for office. They also mentioned a desire to keep the HOA meetings separate from the information meetings about the charter, suggesting that multiple meetings may be needed for people to review the document. Cass Lake Village Information inquired about the clarity of the new charter, referencing the Beverly Hills charter as an example of an easily understandable document, to which Cass Lake Village Information confirmed they have tried to improve the language, noting that the Beverly Hills charter they reviewed was written about 50 years ago.
- **Governor's Approval and Practicality** Cass Lake Village Information confirmed that the Governor only gets one shot at approving the charter and is likely to approve it unless something offensive is included, since most of it is built around state law. They provided an example where the Governor might object, such as having a council of 24 for a community of 600, suggesting that the Governor's comments would be practical.
- **Meeting Conclusion and Audit** Chris LaDuke joined the meeting and confirmed they were "auditing the class". Cass Lake Village Information stated that the primary mission for the night—going through Jerry's task list—had been accomplished. Chris LaDuke confirmed they were checking in with Jerry on the overall project status and outstanding items, but Cass Lake Village Information indicated that since the tasks were already discussed and recorded, Chris LaDuke could catch up via video.

## Suggested next steps

- ✓ Cass Lake Village Information will determine the date by which the petitions and the final charter product need to be completed to meet the August date.
- ✓ Chris LaDuke will catch up on the project status from the video recording.

<https://bsaonline.com/>, which will reference all municipal information.