

Cass Lake Village Charter Meeting

January 27, 2026

Finance Committee Present: Brik Pardo, Cathy Oconnell, Robert Redner. Jon Kellner, Chris LaDuke

Residents Present: 1

The meeting was called to order by Chris LaDuke

Roll Call: 5 Commissioners were present. (Attorney present)

Video Access:

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1UcpTho2bt4mnP-dQOsrV5ahVAUmliffY/view?usp=sharing>

Minutes:

- **Greer Road Funding Cancellation** Cass Lake Village Information reported that Ger Road funding for the final \$250,000 reimbursement has been canceled by the state, an action they believe is new and will be decided by the Michigan Supreme Court. They indicated that the Democrats are suing the Republicans, alleging the cancellation of previously passed appropriations is unconstitutional. The cancellation justification cited unspent funds from the 2025 fiscal year.
- **Road Funding Dispute Strategy** Cass Lake Village Information expressed confidence that their team will be successful at the Supreme Court in overturning the funding cancellation, arguing the process lacked transparency as it was a "backroom deal" without prior announcement or hearings. They noted that the village had already committed \$69,000 of the funds.
- **Charter Review and Meeting Attendance** Cass Lake Village Information acknowledged Jerry's changes to the charter and how it appeared they had watched the video discussion on the topic. They discussed low meeting turnout, speculating that many people who attended the first packed millage meeting received enough information then. They emphasized that the charter is very similar to what residents are already dealing with, other than the name and tax rate.
- **Board Term Length and Compensation** Cass Lake Village Information discussed the proposed four-year board term, which is a major change from the current one-year term. Chris and Kathy indicated they are running for the board. They debated compensation, with some members stating they would not accept any pay and suggesting that the charter or an ordinance should specify no obligation

to accept pay. Compensation for the first term was later agreed to be zero for officers and elected council members.

- **Intergovernmental Meeting Scheduling** Cass Lake Village Information informed John and Jerry about the township's suggested dates for the intergovernmental meeting, either next week or the week after. They recommended the second week to better manage their schedule.
- **Compensation and Removal from Office** The meeting started addressing the outstanding agenda items, beginning with Section 4.2F on compensation for officers, which was set to no compensation for the first term, with future terms set by ordinance. Discussion moved to Section 4.2I, removal from office, where they considered defining "no longer qualified" based on the original qualifications to run for office. Cass Lake Village Information agreed to keep the removal criteria simple, ensuring qualifications are defined elsewhere in the document.
- **Chapter 7: Financial Procedures Review** The discussion moved to Chapter 7, General Finance, beginning with Section 7.2. Cass Lake Village Information suggested having a financial expert review the chapter to ensure the definitions are not too rigid in the charter, noting that some villages rely on their townships for many financial tasks. A budget committee consisting of the president, clerk, and treasurer was established, with the clerk submitting the actual budget document.
- **Assessor and Board of Review** Section 8.5 regarding the assessor and board of review was discussed, where Cass Lake Village Information confirmed changes were made to designate the township assessor as the village assessor and the township board as the board of review, unless otherwise specified by ordinance, providing the village with an "out". The potential problem of having two different taxable values for a single property if the village had its own assessor was recognized, and following the West Bloomfield Township's assessment was deemed the easiest path, though the village retains the option to deviate by ordinance.
- **Tax Roll Certification** The team discussed Section 8.6 regarding the tax roll. Cass Lake Village Information suggested that the treasurer should be responsible for certifying the tax roll instead of the assessor, as they anticipate the township assessor will not want to be involved in the village's internal business. Cass Lake Village Information agreed to check the general property tax statute to ensure the assessor is not legally required to fulfill this role.
- **Tax Due Notification** Regarding notification of taxes due on page 27, Cass Lake Village Information agreed that publishing a notice in a local news source, such as the Beacon, is acceptable. They considered including an option to put it on the website or mailing a physical newsletter if a local news source is "reasonably expected to be delivered to each resident".

- **Emergency Bonds and Indebtedness** The discussion focused on Section 9.2, paragraph C, concerning emergency bonds for fire, flood, or other calamities, which are currently "due and not more than three years". Concern was raised that three years is too short to pay back large emergency funds, which could affect the ability to issue bonds in the first place. They decided to recommend changing the limitation to "a period not in excess of the useful life of what is built".
- **Refunding Bonds and Voter Approval for Local Improvement Bonds** They clarified the meaning of "refunding" in Section 9.2F, which refers to issuing bonds to pay back the county for taxes that were not paid. In Section 9.3, they addressed the requirement for a three-fifths vote of electors for issuing most bonds. An exception allows the council to issue special assessment bonds for the village portion of local improvements, not to exceed 40% of the cost of the improvement, without a three-fifths vote. This provision was confirmed to be a mechanism to limit the board's ability to issue bonds without a vote of the people.
- **Financial Restrictions and Bond Issuance** Cass Lake Village Information discussed limitations on financial contributions for projects, noting that without a public vote or supermajority, the village could only contribute up to 40% of the cost, with the rest paid by those who wanted the project. They considered changing the requirement from a supermajority (three-fifths) to a simple majority. The speaker also expressed concern that overly restrictive rules could prevent the council from responding to emergencies like a bridge collapse or a needed water system repair.
- **Ad Hoc Contracts and Purchasing Procedures** The discussion turned to authorizing ad hoc contracts and setting a threshold for when formal procedures are required. Cass Lake Village Information suggested \$1,000 or less as a flexible limit for small contracts. It was noted that contracts below a certain amount (initially considering \$500) could potentially be executed without published advertisement if approved by a two-thirds vote of the council members.
- **Emergency Services and Contract Ordinance** The speaker confirmed that emergency situations like water leaks are handled outside of the standard contract approval process, typically by a company they already work with, and that such emergencies do not require board approval for immediate contracting. The group concluded that the formal policy for purchasing and contract formality will ultimately be set by ordinance, which is the general rule. They agreed that the dollar amount threshold for contracts that don't require specific procedures could also be set by ordinance, allowing it to change with factors like inflation.
- **Review of Documentation and Leasing Property** The team confirmed that documentation for big projects (costing more than a specified amount) must remain on file with the village clerk for public inspection. They reviewed Section 136 regarding leasing and letting property, which currently requires two-thirds

council approval. Cass Lake Village Information raised concerns about the practice of issuing dollar leases or easements for public ways like road ends, suggesting that this might require a vote of the whole community.

- **Lease vs. License for Property Use** The speaker advised that granting a license for property use is preferable to a lease because a license does not grant an interest in the land and can be revoked, unlike a lease, which would necessitate eviction procedures. They discussed past instances where the community association handled easements and adverse possession claims, such as selling property rights to residents who had a strong adverse possession claim due to maintenance. The speaker suggested that offering a license for usage, rather than allowing continued use without permission, undermines claims of adverse possession.
- **Adverse Possession and Village Authority** The group debated the village's flexibility in managing potential adverse possession claims, particularly for properties like road ends that are not practically roads. Cass Lake Village Information expressed concern that requiring a public vote on selling property to resolve an adverse possession threat would remove the necessary flexibility and could lead to costly lawsuits for the village. They proposed an alternative to the requirement for an electorate vote: allowing a unanimous vote of the council to approve the property transaction.
- **Exemptions for Rentals and Public Facilities** The discussion shifted to exempting certain rentals from the public vote requirement, specifically, annual seasonal rental of boat slips and the rental of the community center. The team agreed that the requirement should not apply to seasonal rentals of docks or boat slips, or to the rental of the community center, to facilitate normal operations.
- **Election Procedures and State Law Consistency** Cass Lake Village Information raised concerns that the draft charter's section on election schedules and nomination procedures might conflict with state law, which governs these processes. The group confirmed that the West Bloomfield Township clerk will administer the charter commission election, not the village, and that the language should be made consistent with state law, potentially involving the township clerk and county clerk for ballot printing and canvassing.
- **Property Description and Next Steps** The team decided that the extensive property description for the village should be included as an appendix to the charter. The goal is to finalize and send the charter to the governor as soon as possible, ideally within the first or second week of February. They tentatively scheduled the next meeting for a final vote on the charter on Friday, February 13th, at 6 o'clock. Public comment was opened, with one community member, Sherry, expressing thanks for the hard work on the charter.

Suggested next steps

- Cass Lake Village Information will forward the email regarding the dates to meet for the intergovernmental to Jerry.
- Cass Lake Village Information will try to get dates for the intergovernmental meeting during the second week.
- Cass Lake Village Information will reword the itemized estimate of the expenditures for the next year in the Chapter 7 financial procedures and check the general property tax statute to ensure the assessor is not required for the village's tax procedures.
- Cass Lake Village Information will change the word "assessor" to "treasurer" in everything under tax role in section 8.6, page 26.
- The group will consider including an option to put a notice of taxes due on the village website or a newsletter in addition to a local news source.
- Cass Lake Village Information will change the due time for emergency obligations in section C, page 29, to be a period not in excess of the useful life of what is built.
- Cass Lake Village Information will look into whether the same rule applies for a village as it does for an HOA regarding easements and leases/licenses.
- Cass Lake Village Information will call Debbie Binder to ask for clarification regarding the election certification process for the charter commission election.
- Cass Lake Village Information will print the property description for the village on an 8 and a half by 11 sheet in Word format to be attached to the charter as appendix one.
- The group will schedule the next meeting for a vote on the final form of the charter. 2/13/26 is the scheduled date.

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