



**Village of Lawton**  
**VILLAGE COUNCIL**  
**REGULAR MEETING**  
**125 S. MAIN, LAWTON MI 49065 269.624.6407**  
**Tuesday November 26, 2024**  
**MINUTES**

- I. **Call to Order:** President Appleby called the November 26, 2024, meeting of the Lawton Village Council to order at 7:00 p.m.
- II. **Roll Call:** *Present:* Appleby, E. Dudek, Peterson, Turner, G. Dudek, Tanis *Absent:* Smith. *Others Present:* Clerk Rathbun, Village Manager Hackenberg, and two guests.
- III. **Pledge of Allegiance:** The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.
- IV. **Consent Agenda:** The Consent Agenda included the approval of the November 26 Council Agenda and the November 12, 2024 Council Meeting Minutes. Peterson made a motion to approve the Consent Agenda as presented supported by E. Dudek. A unanimous voice vote approved the motion.
- V. **Communications, Correspondence, and Presentations:**
  - A. County Commissioner Tina Leary stated that the presidential election had a huge turnout, approximately 1/3 of people early voted, 1/3 of people voted in person, and 1/3 of people voted absentee, so early voting is definitely catching on in Van Buren County. Leary stated that MSU does a number of different trainings for board members, including an in-person Saturday class 9am-12:30pm on Government Essentials at the Skills Center in Hartford. She stated that there was a presentation today by the Domestic Violence Coalition including housing, youth mentoring for kids with parents in that type of situation. She stated the county has a new lead defense attorney, after splitting with Allegan County. Van Buren County's Defense Attorney is now Carla Tackett, who has received a new grant to help with funding her new office. Due to the split from Allegan, Van Buren County is actually receiving more funding for the state, while costs to the county are remaining the same. Leary also reported that the county put a .1 mill for the Parks and Recreation Commission that they have started. One project they are doing this year will be on the Paw Paw trail access, near Hartford, there will be an ADA compliant access for a kayak launch for the Paw Paw River. The total cost is 405K. 70% of that is grant funded, the other 30% of funds are coming from a combination of the conservation district, Hartford township, and the county.
- VI. **Citizen Comments:**
- VI: **Public Hearings/Appointments/Proclamations:** None.
- VII. **Old Business:** None.

**VII: New Business:**

- A.** President Appleby brought the rental inspection ordinance draft to the floor. The administrator from Zoning Solutions was again available to answer questions. Zoning Administrator Middleton-Pompeii stated that she noticed that a recurring concern throughout the questions the attorney answered was a concern of eviction. She stated that she would like to alleviate this concern by reassuring council that removal is only done if something is unsafe for them, and they should not be there anyways. After a few more questions, she also advised that the Village would not be responsible for relocation costs such as hotels if someone does need to be removed from a rental. Zoning Solutions also provides a list of community and county services to families that need to be removed for their safety after inspections.

Costs of registration were discussed, and a finalized fee schedule will need to be come up with to go along with the ordinance. Most inspections are approximately \$200 each on average as of right now to cover costs, and we can look into a different pricing based on how many units (within the same building) are involved. Zoning Solutions recommends not charging a separate cost for rental registration paperwork. This cost should be built into the cost of inspection.

Middleton-Pompeii stated that we could look into building in a stipulation for an update of information for each tenant. This could be a fillable form that tenants could update online at no cost. This is an upside for both tenants and owners should something go wrong as well.

Council brought the concern of what will happen when a few years go by and we find a rental has not been registered. The current ordinance has this built in with a civil infraction of up to \$1,000 per day as a penalty, and Zoning Solutions stated other communities also allow them to file an injunction against the property owner, typically the permit costs also double for owners in that case, so we will need to include this in the fee schedule. She also stated the Post Office in many cases will also help with confirming suspicions on an unregistered location being a renter, and this can be cross-checked with the Township website.

With discussion, it was determined that both registrations and inspections will need to be staggered once this goes into effect. The easiest way to do this is to take the list of known rentals that have already been discovered on the Township website and water bills, determine the type of rental, and implement registration this way. The current discussion is to give owners approximately three months to comply after receiving a letter. One suggestion from Zoning Solutions was that rentals must abide by zoning regulations within verbiage to allow for more mixed use. Council also had some questions on the rental property checklist, meanings. Essentially, what it comes down to is they are looking for obvious safety issues on these.

Clerk Rathbun will follow up with the Village attorney on a few questions, and this meeting will be discussed again at the second February meeting.

**VIII: Board, Committee, and Staff Reports:**

**IX: Council Comments:**

**X. Adjournment:** Turner moved, with support from Tanis to adjourn the Village Council Meeting at 8:38 p.m. Next council meeting to take place on December 10, 2024 at 7:00 PM.

Respectfully Submitted by,

Brittany Rathbun  
Village Clerk