



Village of Lawton
VILLAGE COUNCIL
REGULAR MEETING
125 S. MAIN, LAWTON MI 49065 269.624.6407
Tuesday February 11, 2025
MINUTES

- I. **Call to Order:** President Appleby called the February 11 2025, meeting of the Lawton Village Council to order at 7:00 p.m.
- II. **Roll Call:** *Present:* Appleby, Tanis, E. Dudek, Peterson, Turner, G. Dudek, Smith *Absent:* None. *Others Present:* Village Manager Hackenberg, Clerk Rathbun, Police Chief Cordes, and guests.
- III. **Pledge of Allegiance:** The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.
- IV. **Consent Agenda:** The Consent Agenda included the approval of the February 11 Council Agenda, the January 28, 2025 Council Meeting Minutes, approval of the January 2025 disbursements in the amount of \$716,148.38, as well as setting a Public Hearing for the Regular Council Meeting on February 25, 2025 to hear comment and consider adoption of Lawton 2025-2026 Fiscal Year Budget. Peterson made a motion to approve the Consent Agenda, supported by Smith. A unanimous roll call vote approved the motion.
- V. **Citizen's Comments (NON-LITTLE LEAGUE ITEMS):** None.
- VI. **Communications, Correspondence, and Presentations:**
 - A. Dessirae Sweet, the president of the Lawton Youth Softball and Baseball Little League board stated on behalf of the four board members that they appreciate what the council is doing. Sweet stated just as it is in the interest of the council to serve the tax payers, it is her interest as the president of the board to serve the Little League. Sweet stated she would like to go over questions. One, what has their board done in order to look into other properties? Sweet wanted to assure the people that the board has looked into other options, however they have not found anything within cost for their fields. Can the little league purchase the field? Sweet stated they were told they cannot purchase it, as the Village would like to sell it in order to increase the tax base. Can the fields be split? Sweet stated they cannot, as again the Village would like to utilize the buildable space to increase tax base. Can the village provide another location? Sweet stated that at the current time another location has not been provided. Can they play on the high school and middle fields? Sweet stated this would not be doable because of the space of the high school fields. Has the Village presented Grants? Yes in 2020 the village was willing to help then, but the little league have not heard anything since then. They would work with the village to look into grants, but they have not been presented with any and funding to build half of the fields would be very difficult. The Village has given verbal assurance that the 2025 season is not in jeopardy. Sweet stated as a little league board, a huge financial strain would be placed on them to move the fields. She has estimated

that a new field would cost 1-2 million dollars. Sweet stated that currently, the Lawton Youth Softball and Baseball is nonprofit, and provides scholarships and equipment to those who cannot afford to join. She stated they also allow for late registration because they don't want kids to miss out. Sweet stated it would be an uphill battle to provide this level of a program with a field move. Sweet stated a lot of people have different views on this topic, and the fact that so many community members are here tonight shows that there is a huge interest in this program. Sweet stated ultimately the goal of the little league is to not have to vacate this property. Sweet stated that she challenges Village members to come up with a better plan that does not affect little league.

- B.** President Appleby stated this is not a discussion any of them wanted to have, but in order to provide the residents' perspective, read the following prepared statement on behalf of the Village:

“Why is the village of Lawton considering development of the 27-acre property currently utilized by the Lawton Youth Baseball Program?”

Simply put, we are a small village of 1,800 residents, inflation has far outpaced revenue, and without some growth or significant tax increases the Village will be unable to maintain infrastructure and services.

We all pay taxes to the county, township, schools, and the state, as well as other millages such as libraries, veterans services, Conservation district, county road millage, special assessments for the drain commissioner etc. It makes our taxes look very high, and they are, but, it is important to understand where the money goes and what it is used for. The money that makes its way to the village is small.

The Village General Fund Budget

\$490,000 in taxes paid by village residents and businesses.

State revenue sharing is \$253,000.

LCSA reimbursement \$130,000 – This is the tax businesses used to pay on personal property and is reimbursed by the state. Nobody knows from year to year how much this will be, or if it will simply disappear.

All together our general fund is \$873,000

The Lawton Police department costs \$545,000 for 3 officers, a chief, some part-time employees, equipment and crossing guards.

That leaves \$327,000 for everything else the village does such as cemetery maintenance, office staff, tree removal, parks, mowing, trash removal, blight enforcement, equipment purchases, building maintenance etc.

Challenges of deferred maintenance over the years due to budget constraints.

Our parking lots are in disrepair, our sidewalks need repairs, our village hall is aging and needs maintenance, our Department of Public Works building leaks, is full of mold, is too small, and is generally falling apart. Our plow trucks are old, our bucket truck is broken beyond repair, our leaf equipment is inadequate. Kids dream is deteriorating, we need a vac truck desperately to maintain drains and service our water system. Our employees who are highly dedicated deserve better compensation on top of the ever-increasing costs of healthcare (up 13% again this year).

About our recent projects and where the money came from.

Reid's corner was funded with a grant of \$850,000.

Council planned for the streetscape project for 15 years saving funds as we went, most of the cost was under the road in all new infrastructure, replacing failing pipes.

We bring in \$197,466 in the local street millage, from that we maintain all the parking lots, sidewalks and local road repairs, including plowing and leaves. Leaves were \$70,000 this year and still are not done. We bring in \$240,000 for streets from the state, that money can only be used for road repairs and an additional \$25,000 from the county, again earmarked only for road repairs. For reference a mile of road can be \$1,000,000, and that is on the low end of estimates.

The sewer and water systems are enterprise funds, meaning they are fully supported by the users and no tax funds, general funds, state funds etc. are used for their operation. If you are not paying a water bill you are not paying into the system.

Our police department is fully funded by the people who pay taxes to the village of Lawton, but also end up serving people who do not pay for their services. We are proud to be able to include all of our students who do not live in the village. The fire department is fully volunteer, equipment is purchased through a millage covering the fire district. No General fund dollars are used to support them or Quick response team.

We can't tax our way out of this, we can continue to cut services and watch our beautiful town dwindle away, or we can actively pursue opportunities.

What have we done?

We have already eliminated two Department of Public Works positions. Todd is currently doing double duty as Department of Public Works Superintendent and Village Manager. We have eliminated two full time police positions. We are running a skeleton crew and cannot afford to lose any more staff.

For over 8 years we have been discussing the development of the ball fields with the Baseball Board. Together we have discussed many potential opportunities and the village's willingness to be part of that team. We have discussed other village owned properties including the additional 160 acres of land behind the water treatment plant, we hired a company to do a feasibility study and determined the land is too wet to build on. We have discussed several properties that are privately owned as feasible for

development, but they are not under village ownership. In addition, we have infrastructure available at the 27-acre village property that may be prohibitively expensive to develop in other areas.

We have applied and received grants to beautify the downtown, a major priority as defined by the residents of our community, we have developed a new town square due to the generosity of the Reid family and grant dollars, we have started upgrades at the park utilizing grant dollars including the addition of pickle ball courts soon to be installed. We have worked tirelessly to maintain the best Police Department, Department of Public Works and office staff our small budget can accommodate. We have aggressively pursued blight enforcement, and have even condemned and torn down some of our worst buildings. We are encouraging infill and secured a grant to remove the Washington street house so it can be redeveloped. We have updated the village's master plan, our zoning ordinances, and are pursuing a redevelopment ready community status to make us eligible for additional grant dollars and opportunities. We have a functioning Downtown Development Authority and an engaged planning commission. We have a village council that is open minded and focused on the community without personal gain or agendas. We have amazing residents who volunteer to make our community the best town in West Michigan.

To be clear the sale and development of the village's 27 acres is not a cash grab. The only way the village can continue to prosper where we have functioning services, safe neighborhoods and supported businesses is to grow our residential community. We need more people to pay into the system, use our water and sewer, frequent the business and become involved in the community. We need quality housing of various types so our residents can live their full lives without having to change communities. The only buildable piece of property the village owns is the 27 acres where the ball fields reside. Currently they are utilized approximately 2.5 months of the year, free of charge, for a great purpose. The reality is that many of the users are not village residents and are not paying village taxes. It would be to the benefit of all if we could work together to develop a recreation facility in the township or with the schools where all users are sharing in the real and opportunity costs."

C. N. Smith read a prepared statement that stated the following:

"I would like to make a statement to the public. My name is Nicole Smith. I understand that this has been a difficult and emotional time for many people. I have been serving as a council member for over 4 years and recently started a new term. I have learned a lot in the last 4 years being on the council. I have served alongside these individuals and I can assure everyone in this room that this board has the good of the community at the forefront of all decisions that are made for the Village of Lawton.

The Village of Lawton is about 2 square miles. When you look at other neighboring communities this is not a lot. We as a council are responsible for the Lawton Police Department. This department alone costs the village over \$540,000 per year. This is an expense that is solely on the people that live in the Village. The department goes outside

of the 2-mile radius to help in to other townships and this bill is covered completely by the Village of Lawton. The police department also plays a huge role at the school keeping all of our children safe if and when needs arise. This is a service that we as a council have heard is important to the people that live in the village, and we are dedicated to continuing this service to the community.

The village currently has as a deficit financially. As explained at the meeting on January 28, 2025. Inflation has affected the costs of the village greatly. We are coming up short on services we are currently responsible for providing the community. We discussed these short falls with the baseball/softball board and the community members that attended. It cost over \$70,000 per year to do leaf pickup. We as a village have been failing to successfully provide this service to the village year after year. We have roads within the village that are falling apart and very limited resources to fix the roads. The DPW building was also discussed and the many issues that building has. We have aging equipment that is not keeping up with the demands of the village. This is not mismanagement, quite the contrary, it is the reality.

I have been a member of several board since moving to Lawton. I served on the baseball/softball board for several years. I would like to state for the record that during my time on that board we were made aware of the village's intent to sell the fields. A question I have is what has the baseball/softball board done to secure or investigate other options? To my knowledge, there has been nothing of this nature discussed with the village. From what I am gathering, and from the events that have transpired over the last several days the expectation is the village is supposed to do this for the program. As a council member, my job is to solve issues that are related to the village of Lawton, when needs or issues arise in the village, it is my job to help come up with a solution. As members of the baseball/softball board have you been looking at solutions for the location of the fields, or have you been waiting on others to solve this for you?

It is disappointing that community members and members of the baseball/softball board have taken to social media and the media to tell the community things that are not true. As a person who has been a member of several boards, it is never appropriate for a board member to take to a keyboard to dispense only snippets of information and not all the facts to further a cause. People who have never been to a council meeting, and that don't live in the village have put a petition out to recall the village president, and the recall contains several statements that are untrue. The village has been transparent about the issues we are dealing with, and they have also been honest. There have been comments made on social media that the village has mismanaged money and resources and that is why we are selling the fields. These statements are simply false.

I have served along side of these other six council members for over four years, and I can assure you all that none of the decisions made are taken lightly. The members of this council have served in the community not only as council members, but in so many other ways. You have seen them volunteering at sporting events, being football chain gang members, coordinating parades, summer fest, volunteering with senior citizens, planting and watering flowers downtown, volunteering as firefighters, and the list goes on. Selling the fields is a difficult decision and every one of us has signed up to do hard/difficult things. We have exhausted the resources we have, and we are short. If

we don't fix this problem moving forward other services, the village provides to the community will be in jeopardy due to lack of funds. Emotions don't pay bills. We as a council have been transparent with the community on our issues and we cannot continue to levy more financial responsibility on the taxpayers in the village. We will tax people out of wanting to be in the community. Thank you."

VII. Citizen Comments (LITTLE LEAGUE ITEMS):

- A.** Megan Richter, a non-resident, stated she is a former Lawton youth baseball softball board member and was in 2020 when this came up. M. Richter stated she is someone who likes to look for solutions, and that is her intent. M. Richter stated for her family baseball and softball are like breathing, her husband is the varsity baseball and softball coach, as well as providing other functions to the Lawton High School. M. Richter stated her daughter is currently on a collegiate scholarship playing softball. She stated she and her husband both believe in providing opportunities. M. Richter stated several board members were on in 2020. In 2020, when the youth organization found that the village was going to sell the fields which caused an uproar as it is now. She stated at that point, the solution was to work together to collaborate and a committee was formed. M. Richter stated the solution was for pickle fields to be where things were moved, and the discussion was to do this through funds collaboratively led by the village. M. Richter stated the council was also going to use the sale of the fields money to put toward a new field location. She stated she would like verification as to why the village's stance to work together changed and why the village did not bring this to the organization.

In response, president Appleby stated that it is not the council's desire *not* to collaborate. The Council has not given a hard date to vacate, which is a possibility if that is an issue for the league board, and that there would be a proposal for a committee later in the evening. Appleby stated in short, the village does not own the pickle factory fields, and assured that the village council is very willing to work with the Little League.

- B.** Emily Taylor at 511 E Second came to the floor to speak. Taylor stated she lives in the village and does not mind paying more taxes for a youth program. Her questions for the council were how much is expected to bring in with the sale and how will that impact future inflation?

In response, trustee Peterson stated the standard is four houses per acre, which comes up to a little more than 100 houses when all 27 acres are included. Peterson stated there are ways to calculate those exact numbers, and she did not do that, as this is still early on in the conversation, however, the calculations she has done people per house. Peterson stated if you consider 100 plus new kids for the schools, average water and sewers for 100 houses per month, and average taxable value on these new homes being built. Peterson stated she is unsure of the exact amount, but these are all calculations being considered. Taylor stated if we don't have the numbers from that, it makes it more

difficult to work with the little league, and if we bring more houses into the village, we have more children that could benefit from this program as well.

- C. Janel Nugteren from 209 Franklin came to the floor to speak. Nugteren asked if 100 new kids came in, with the elementary bursting at the seams now, what will that do. Will that not raise tax dollars to build a bigger school? In response, president Appleby stated council will take that into consideration. It is still early in the conversation and they have not yet been sold.
- D. Kristin Taylor, a non-resident, stated she has been a board member since 2021. Taylor stated she heard a comment stating that the Little League have not been looking into other places when they have. She stated she moved here with little league in mind, and would like to see it stay.
- E. Kelly Stephayn-Liddington, a non-resident stated she has a daughter who played in little league program, and now coaches softball at Western Michigan University. Stephayn-Liddington wanted to read a statement from her daughter, as she could not attend the meeting. Upon reading her daughter's statement it said the following: for many people who don't know these fields were made by my grandfather. These fields were a huge reason I got into the sport and dedicated myself to it, made many memories with friends surrounding the sport, and led to my reason for coaching but my grandfather's legacy lives on. His passion for helping and caring for others carries on here. The village of Lawton is trying to sell the land for the growth of the community, it would help with growing the community long-term, however, it's not the fields that made the memories but the people. This experience was shared among people who provided that dedication together. The solution may look a little different and may be finding different fields, but the program can still go on.
- F. Mike Stephayn from 710 E Fourth Street spoke. He stated he was speaking on behalf of he and his wife, Lisa. Stephayn stated his father started the little league program. Stephayn stated his father had dementia and he could walk to those fields and remember them. Stephayn stated all of that said, his father's legacy is not the fields, it's the program. The village didn't build those fields his father did. Stephayn stated the fields would have never happened if volunteers hadn't stepped up. Stephayn stated he is laying it out there because his name is attached to it. Stephayn went on to say he will be on any committee that has to do with this. He followed up his speech stating he believed the Village owns 60-acre plot, and 80-acre plot that are unbuildable. He would like to know how many acres on the 60-acre plot are outside the village if what he believes is correct. Council agreed to look into this for him. He went on to read an article about his father and how involved in community sports he was. Stephayn stated that's my father I am his legacy. He stated it's going to take the village, not the council, but the people sitting in these chairs to figure out where it goes. It was donated the first time, and the community can do it together again.

- G. Matthew Johnson, a non-resident came to the floor to speak. He stated he has no problem donating time and effort into new fields, but questioned what is to stop this village from coming into hard times and this to happen again at the new location.

Appleby stated it depends on whether it is on village land or not, and he is correct, so maybe the village does not want to own the next piece of property this will be one. Appleby stated this should all be a part of the upcoming decision.

- H. Sharon Sweet, Luke and Dessirae Sweet's mother stated the little league program here and the impact that the coaches and people have on these kids is worth more than anything. S. Sweet stated she would like to know what the village has done since 2020 to help moving things forward. She questioned how equipment gets so bad, and wanted to know if you would let your roof leaked until it doesn't work anymore. S. Sweet stated she knows inflation hits us all but she doesn't let it get her home. S. Sweet stated that Marcellus is a small league as well, but they don't even have to mow it because it is on school property, which maintains the fields for them. S. Sweet stated these volunteers run things here mowing lawns and doing all of the maintenance. S. Sweet shared a story about her son and the impact of Lawton and Marcellus Little League on her son and his life and how important it was.
- I. P. Rathbun a resident 725 Delaware court stated he lives in the village and is on the planning commission. P. Rathbun stated his children have both played, and this is a great program that is looked forward to each year. He stated from what he has gathered this has been issue for a long time, and he believes everyone in the room right now is looking for a solution to the problem. P. Rathbun stated the village of Lawton only has certain amounts of buildable property, this one being the one that unfortunately keeps coming up. He also said he is curious what percentage of kids who participate in this program live in the village itself and are impacted by the taxes vs. in the township, who are unimpacted by a tax raise. P. Rathbun stated as a parent of a softball player, I want to see this program around, for a long time to come. It is a great program. However, as a resident of Lawton I don't want services cut, or taxes raised too high to be livable rather than another solution found to keep the program.
- J. Madison Ludwig, head coach and teacher in Lawton, stated softball was and is her life with the help of Derek Weurding have worked to grow their middle school program, they have built their program in part because of the youth little league and softball program. Ludwig stated in looking at this, we are risking taking away vital programs from these kids. Ludwig stated our local teams are a source of pride and spirit fills the air on game day. She wanted to stress these fields have a lot of long-term consequences if they are gotten rid of. Ludwig stated the loss of recreational fields is going to last longer than housing benefits on our future.

- K.** Jeff Mack, Lawton's former police chief, stated he loves baseball more than anything, and he was on the board for a long time. Mack stated over the years, he has spent a lot of time there. Mack stated he personally worked on the field improvements. He stated he understands everyone's desire to keep the fields. There is no argument that there are great memories there that no one wants to see end. Mack stated he was the chief of police of Lawton for 6 years, and that he sat on the panel in 2020 when this came up. Mack stated as the chief of police his perspective changed and his responsibility was to protect the people of Lawton, which was very difficult with the funding available. The equipment was lacking, and they were unable to get officers on. Mack stated no one wants to get rid of the fields, but it's the reality. Mack stated over the past several years, we have been working together to find solutions, and he doesn't want things to change. Mack stated when Little League was started there was tradition and history behind it. No one will deny that, but if it was done once it can be done again. Mack stated there is no set date, and he has seen it from both sides. It is a difficult thing for everyone.
- L.** Brad Pueller a non-resident stated he is a member of the little league board and employee at Fishbeck. He wanted to clear some misinformation. Pueller has had multiple meetings with the Village in public and private to collaborate. To say nothing has been done in the last few years is false. He stated we have been waiting on studies, and he was in direct communication with Lisa Imus until she left. When everything went on during the streetscape project, things went on hold so that could be the focus. Pueller stated things really blew up when the former property owner caught them off-guard wanted to purchase the land. Pueller stated the communication has not been great on either side. Pueller stated it hasn't been forgotten about, it was all about timing not knowing when things would be done, so, they took a wait and see approach.

Trustee N. Smith wanted to clarify what happened at that meeting when it came up in the minutes leading to tonight's discussion. Smith stated there had been activity on Facebook, and she has made it very clear that communication needs to be made. That was the intent, it was not anything trying to be malicious, Smith stated she was unaware of the meetings discussed, and is glad to hear there have been proactive steps. But she wants to clarify there was nothing malicious, it was a statement to try to serve both parties, and that is how this came about. Smith stated this has blown up overnight probably due to lack of communication but the whole intention was to have communication with the little league board.

- M.** B. Smith, a resident at 776 Niagara Court stated he has served on many volunteer boards over the years. He stated he volunteered for little league from T-ball to 12U, and since has volunteered at every opportunity that his children have had sports or activities over the years. B. Smith stated that everyone has an opinion, which is excellent. There is a reason the first amendment is very important. B. Smith then said sometimes some voices have a little more weight. Specifically, in municipal economics. But the people in the village pay the taxes for the village of Lawton. He stated when chief Cordes and his police

go outside the village, he is paying for that. Every time you drop the kids off on the roads surrounding the school, as a village taxpayer, he is paying for that. B. Smith stated he is hoping for a good solution, but it is not just the people of the council, but the people of Porter and Antwerp township who utilize this as well. He would like to see the little league talk to Ben Banfield about the old AYSO fields that are not being used, or talk to local businesses about donations that may be available to them. B. Smith stated as elected officials, the council's ultimate responsibility the village and if it takes increasing the village taxes by 5-7 mills for this, that is a hard no for him.

- N.** Kati Wright, a non-resident, stated she is not from here, but her children are, they both have disabilities and are served well by Lawton. Lawton is a special place because of the programs here. Wright stated programs like this have helped her family feel like they are a part of this community, and not just transplants. She stated she knows this is an impossible choice for the village to make, but she just wants the village to know it makes transplants feel like they are at home here. Wright stated if the baseball fields close she has one less reason to come into Lawton and spend her dollars in Lawton. Wright stated she knows they are small considerations, but, she wanted to share these concerns that these people don't feel alone due to these programs.
- O.** Ron Packer, a non-resident stated he would like to see more information. Packer stated a lot of good information has been stated but he would like more information from the village plan made public. His questions for consideration were: can the section of the old railroad be broken off and left for public use, and how much revenue can be made on a sale?
- P.** Pam Stermer a resident at 1130 East 3rd Street stated it is nice to see people here want to save this area because it could be a dying town. Stermer stated she does love the area but she has some questions. Stermer stated she has been in school business for several years, and there they don't have ways to get more money for the schools. Stermer stated sometimes they have to cut expenses and take a hard look at things. Stermer stated she is not saying council hasn't done this, but there is always somewhere that can be cut. Stermer stated to her, 100 houses on 27 acres seems impossible, and the plan is also sketchy right now, so she would like to see questions answered. More houses and more kids would be great, but would families even come here without little league? Stermer stated she would ask council to take a hard look at the village budget. She stated as a resident, taxes keep going up, and she wants to know what has changed to make this impactful. Stermer's request to the Village Council is to take a hard look at what expenses, are and have a plan in place.
- Q.** Chris Richter, Lawton Community School's Athletic Director, stated in 2020 Rick Reeves stated the money from the sale of the property would go toward building a new property and wanted to know if that is still the case.

Appleby stated he is not saying yes or no at this point to that, as in 2020 they were presented with a very different plan than what they have now. Appleby stated there is a housing study that was done by the county that shows what type of housing we are lacking, we are *not* looking for more low-income housing we are looking for market level housing if someone is interested. Appleby also stated there has been a lot of talk on the trail, and he would like to see that maintained and turned into a trail to Paw Paw, so this is being looked into to see if it is feasible as well. Appleby stated there are a lot of great questions here and we don't yet have the answers, as it is early on, but each of these questions will be taken into consideration upon further planning.

- R. Paige Stermer, a non-resident, wanted to ask what the plan is going forward and what we are doing with the questions that have been asked tonight going forward. She stated she knows Appleby stated a lot is preliminary, but she would like to know what the next steps are going forward.

E. Dudek stated the intention was to make a motion to form an ad-hoc committee which is a subcommittee to work hand in hand with youth baseball going forward to make plans. E. Dudek stated it takes time for anything to happen, and at this point, the council does not yet know how much time, exactly this will take. His suggestion was maybe three council members, and some Little League board members can share information, so the council can help navigate grant opportunities as well as options out there. E. Dudek stated he agrees 100% with Mike Stephayn, he was there when it was built, and played on the fields as a child. E. Dudek stated it is hard to see a piece of your childhood go away, but, it takes revenue to grow and he does not want to become a dying town, as some of the towns around Lawton have done. E. Dudek stated it is not the field, it is not the property, but the program, and in 40 years the same discussion could happen, but it is important for him as a current council member and a member of the community to preserve youth baseball. E. Dudek stated where it is played doesn't matter as much, and he will speak with Dessirae right after this meeting to set a time to talk to start things. E. Dudek, made a motion to set a committee with the Lawton Youth Softball and Baseball Program members to work together and discuss the future of the fields as well as solutions, seconded by Smith. A voice vote was taken with all in favor and none opposed. Motion carried. President Appleby stated council does want to be transparent and work together hopefully they understand the issues in the village because the village understands Lawton Youth Baseball and Softball's plight.

- S. Joe Magers, the owner of Longship Brewing, stated he is a previous coach for the little league and made many memories there. Magers stated he seconds everything every parent and everyone has said about the little league. Magers stated he does not support the fields being sold whatsoever. Magers stated he does have questions for the council to ponder. With the selling of the property if it is 50-100 houses, he believes that would be an approximate annual tax revenue of \$175,000, however, most subdivisions don't sell right away. Magers questioned whether, at the maximum amount that is enough to

actually support what the deficit is or whether it was a Band-Aid solution. Magers stated in the past he has worked emergency services, he has worked with very small budgets before looking at some of the numbers, there is a police agency that is costing over half a million per year, twice as high as he believes selling the fields would generate in tax income, for a 2-square mile area. Magers stated at one point in his career, he worked in an 8-person department for a population of approximately three million people, and the village has to ask, is the sale of this and what are going to get going to cover this is it worth it for two square miles? He stated the Sherriff's department provides support for this county, and other surrounding township, and stated while he does not want to see the police department disbanded, he would like to know how to move forward. Magers also stated he would like to see the entire surrounding community make the decisions for the village and not just the tax payers or the little league. Magers stated he would like to see council focus on youth rather than just a Band-Aid fix to sell the property.

- T.** Laura Mack who is an employee at the elementary school, stated that she is a huge baseball fan. She addressed the council president stating she knows there is a petition going around for his resignation over this, and she doesn't know a lot about it. L. Mack then addressed the crowd and states she needs everyone to understand what is happening with baseball doesn't determine who this man is. She stated Appleby serves on the fire department and does so much for this community. She wanted to show support for Appleby and doesn't want to see him resign. She stated this should not have come to a personal attack.
- U.** Matt McCory, a resident of 120 Third Street, stated his kids played and he coached many kids. McCory stated always wanted to see things done there, and the fields are currently short many things. McCory stated Lawton programs are programs not a location. He stated while he loves the location, to be honest, he believes something better is needed for Lawton Youth Softball and Baseball long term. McCory stated the parking is currently inadequate, and right now, the fields that we are sitting at aren't what anyone wants. He wants to find a solution, and believes we can if people work together. McCory stated everyone he knows on this board is a very hard worker and cares deeply about this town. He hopes it is a thing for many years to come, but, we cannot deny the problems that we are faced with. McCory pled with the audience to please not take personal attacks at people because it doesn't look good on us as a community. In closing, McCory stated we all need to work together to find the best solution.
- V.** Public Comment closed on 8:39 PM upon there being no further comment.

- X. **Adjournment:** Appleby made a motion to table the remainder of the agenda until the February 25, 2025 meeting, supported by Turner. Voice vote taken all in favor none opposed. Motion carried. Meeting adjourned at 8:40PM.

Respectfully Submitted by,

Brittany Rathbun
Village Clerk