

VILLAGE OF SOUTH RANGE
REGULAR MEETING
January 08, 2026
6:00 pm

The Regular Meeting of the Village of South Range Council was held on Thursday January 08, 2026 at the Village of South Range Community Hall; 45 Trimountain Avenue; South Range, MI 49963

The meeting was called to order at 6:00 PM. The following council members were present: President Eakin, Trustee Marier, Trustee Hill, Trustee Korby, Trustee Parolini & Trustee Balma. There were 5 guests in attendance. Others S. Schwandt

PUBLIC COMMENT:

There was not a public hearing at the meeting.

Future projects were discussed at the meeting. Board members expressed concern about having to pay for both the lagoon project and the EGLE enforcement project in 2027. The engineer clarified that, once Rural Development reaches closing on the loan/grant, construction costs are covered through Rural Development draws and "invoice loans," with minimal up-front village cash beyond any agreed portion of design. The typical approach is that a local bank fronts about 80% of costs under a small interest "invoice loan," Rural Development reimburses those draws, and the village is not expected to cover the full construction cost out-of-pocket. Some communities choose to pay a portion (e.g., 20%) of design costs before starting invoice loans; the engineer indicated that for this project, the goal is that "the bulk of the construction" (if not all) is financed through Rural Development.

Resident K. Aho expressed her concerns with the current snowmobile route located west in South Range. She described living at a corner lot where the new snowmobile route passes nearby. She reported that she learned the trail routing had been changed and that her property was now directly affected by snowmobile traffic, with no prior announcement beyond new signs and Facebook posts. K. Aho installed Ring cameras and conducted a 10-day informal traffic study at the intersection, recording 24 hours per day and categorizing traffic by time windows: midnight–6AM, 5AM–noon, noon–6PM, and 6PM–midnight. She measured vehicle counts from each entrance to exit through the intersection and reported an average daily volume of 332 vehicles. The highest daily volume observed was 500 vehicles, which occurred on the day school resumed; the lowest was 184 vehicles on December 29th, when traffic was lighter. The totals included an average of 29 snowmobiles per day, with a peak of 96 snowmobiles on one day, primarily on a Thursday–Sunday stretch with heavier recreational use. C. Aho requested that the village consider creating a planning commission to manage ongoing tourism, residential, and business growth along Main Street, including participation from residents, council members, and developers so economic development does not come at too great a cost to nearby residents.

AGENDA:

MOTION made by Trustee Balma, with support from Trustee Marier to approve the January 08, 2025 agenda.

Roll call: Ayes: President Eakin, Trustee Hill, Trustee Korby, Trustee Parolini

Nays: None. Abstain: None. MOTION CARRIED.

MEETING MINUTES:

MOTION made by Trustee Marier, with support from Trustee Korby to approve the December 04, 2025 Regular Meeting Minutes with the amendment of adding Commissioner Burkman as present for the meeting.

Roll call: Ayes: President Eakin, Trustee Hill, Trustee Balma, Trustee Parolini

Nays: None. Abstain: None. MOTION CARRIED.

STREET COMMISSIONER REPORT

President Eakin presented the street commissioners report for January 2026. President Eakin reported that public works has been plowing and working on widening the roads with all the recent snow. They have been cutting back the snowbanks and removing snow with the dump trucks. Christmas decorations will be coming down this month.

PRESIDENT'S REPORT:

President Eakin notified the council that the "Welcome to South Range" sign was damaged due to a snowmobile accident. President Eakin spoke with the Village attorney regarding the future lease for the baseball fields. The lease is in progress and will have more information later on a completion date. The attorney also discussed concerns with delays in Whealkate lots development projects and said that no legal action can be taken to speed up development. Furthermore, the Village garbage truck had minor repairs completed on it. A newer vactor truck is needed for the future at public works. Adams Township will possibly have a used one for South Range to purchase. Lastly, water meter readings were estimated for the month due to bad weather and snow.

CLERK REPORT:

S. Shwandt stated that a president's newsletter was sent to every resident in South Range. CD renewal at Miners State Bank was successfully renewed. Other CDs will mature during 2026 and decisions on what to do with those will be discussed when they come due. A new auditor team was hired; they were pleased to be approved and a meeting with them is scheduled for next week. S. Shwandt has contributed to organizing physical paperwork, significantly reducing a large stack of documents, which is expected to be appreciated by the auditors.

FIRE REPORT:

Chief Balma stated that the fire department was awarded a grant from the DNR for new equipment. Christmas in South Range went well with over 200 children participating. In December, the department got called out once to assist Adams Township fire with a car accident. An association meeting will be held in the South Range community hall hosted by

Adams Township on January 22, 2026. Chief Balma mentioned the upcoming pigs/heat tournament and stated that South Range will have a few members participating in that. SRFD's newest member will soon take the fire certification test. If he passes, all 17 members will be certified with the firefighter 1 certification. Lastly, Chief Balma requested that new uniforms for the firefighters be considered when creating the 2026 budget.

FINANCIAL REPORT:

President Eakin inquired if there were any questions or concerns regarding the December 2025 bills. Trustee Korby motioned to approve payment of the bills, seconded by Trustee Balma. Bills totaling: \$100,460.84

Roll call: Ayes: Trustee Marier, Trustee Hill, Trustee Parolini

Nays: None. MOTION CARRIED.

BUSINESS-UNFINISHED/NEW:

A motion was made by Trustee Marier, and seconded by Trustee Korby to issue a notice to Cooper Burkman in writing, that he must obtain his CDL by June 4th 2026 or face termination. The letter will be signed by president Eakin and signed by Cooper, acknowledging that he got it.

Existing employee reviews were mentioned: There was some confusion about which committee (finance or personnel) should handle reviews and wage decisions, especially because a personnel committee had been created. Participants debated whether wage decisions and reviews fall under finance (budget-related) or personnel (hiring/firing and evaluations). One participant noted a potential conflict of interest in serving on a personnel committee if the committee is also reviewing that member. It was acknowledged that someone is "stuck involved" either way, and the group decided the finance committee would meet to make recommendations on wages because of budget implications. The finance committee members discussed their availability, ultimately leaning toward a Tuesday evening meeting around 5:00–5:30.

The council revisited the idea of using the Sheriff's Department crew to clear hydrants. It was confirmed that the township must pay the Sheriff's Department for this service and that they had checked on this last year. Current practice involves public works going around with a loader to clear hydrants so they are visible, with some recent work noted within the last couple of weeks. However, several hydrants are still snowed in, and one participant volunteered to go out with a shovel over the weekend.

The annual budget meeting for South Range will take place January 15, 2026. Food will be offered to the council and the meeting should take approximately 4-5 hours.

With no further business brought before the Council, Trustee Balma motioned to adjourn the regular meeting at 7:58PM with support from Trustee Parolini. VOTE: All ayes.

MOTION CARRIED - Meeting adjourned.

Submitted by: Steven Dorsey, Village of South Range Clerk