

VILLAGE OF SOUTH RANGE
SPECIAL MEETING
SEPTEMBER 15, 2026
6:00 pm

A Special Meeting of the Village of South Range Council was held on Tuesday September 15, 2026 to discuss staffing changes and open positions 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 Korby, Trustee Parolini, Trustee Marier & Trustee Balma. Others present: Clerk Schwandt

PUBLIC COMMENT:

There was not a public hearing at the meeting.

ADDITIONS TO THE AGENDA

Trustee Marier made a motion to add Grant Resolution to the meeting agenda. Trustee Korby seconded the motion.

Roll call: Ayes: President Eakin, Trustee Parolini.

Nays: None. Abstain: Trustee Balma. MOTION CARRIED.

Trustee Parolini moved to add Firefighter Equipment to the meeting agenda. Trustee Korby seconded the motion.

Roll call: Ayes: President Eakin, Trustee Marier.

Nays: None. Abstain: Trustee Balma. MOTION CARRIED.

BUSINESS-UNFINISHED/NEW:

Trustee Marier resolved to approve Fire Chief, Mike Balma, to sign the grant application for the State of Michigan Fire Equipment Grant with support from Trustee Korby. President Eakin declared the Resolution adopted.

Roll call: Ayes: President Eakin, Trustee Parolini.

Nays: None. Abstain: Trustee Balma.

It was brought to the Council's attention that the temporary seasonal position posting may need to be reworded or handled differently due to possible changes in applicable laws or regulations. Council clarified that the intent is to engage a self-employed independent contractor on an as-needed basis. The matter will be referred to the Village attorney for review of the posting language and appropriate classification before proceeding.

Clerk Schwandt developed an interim payroll process pending the transition to new software, avoiding a \$3,000 temporary software expense. The existing subscription will be canceled once necessary payroll records have been retrieved and verified, saving \$439 per month.

PERSONNEL COMMITTEE REPORT

The Personnel Committee presented its report and recommendations concerning Public Works staffing, leadership, and operations, which were the primary purpose of the special meeting.

Employee Meetings and Staffing Concerns

The Committee reported meeting with Dave, C. Burkman, and J. Fontaine regarding working conditions, staffing concerns, and the department's direction. Discussion included Dave's upcoming departure, employee retention, and J. Fontaine's interest in assuming additional responsibilities. Committee members expressed concerns regarding employee supervision, training, delegation, and accountability, while recognizing the value of C. Burkman's experience and knowledge of Village operations.

Recommended Staffing Changes

The Committee recommended moving C. Burkman from the Director of Public Works position to a crew position while retaining his current pay in recognition of his experience, knowledge, and certifications. The Committee also recommended offering J. Fontaine the Assistant Director of Public Works position at \$29 per hour, with additional increases upon obtaining water and sewer certifications, and advertising for a new Director of Public Works. Members emphasized the need for a director with proven leadership skills, a strong work ethic, and the ability to train and manage employees.

Continuity of Operations

Concern was raised that changing leadership before winter could disrupt essential preparations, including ordering winter sand and salt, given J. Fontaine's limited time with the Village. Committee members clarified that the recommendation would remove C. Burkman's employee supervisory responsibilities while retaining his operational duties, including winter preparations and water and sewer sampling. Maintaining his current pay would recognize the continued expectation that he contribute his experience and knowledge to these responsibilities during the transition.

Work Planning, Accountability, and Reporting

Council discussed developing written task lists, recurring maintenance schedules, and clear priorities to improve productivity and accountability. Clerk Schwandt reported distributing employee surveys to obtain input on operations, including the snow pushback policy. Members discussed using employee feedback to identify essential duties and improvement projects, strengthen supervision, and assist incoming leadership. Discussion also emphasized improving

reports to Council to address project progress, emergencies, equipment issues, and work beyond routine maintenance.

Trustee Marier moved to reassign C. Burkman from Director of Public Works to a Public Works crew member position with no reduction in pay. Trustee Parolini seconded the motion.

Roll call: Ayes: President Eakin, Trustee Korby, Trustee Balma

Nays: None. Abstain: None. MOTION CARRIED.

Trustee Marier moved to offer J. Fountaine the Assistant Director of Public Works position at \$29 per hour, with eligibility for an additional \$1.50 per hour for each water and sewer certification obtained. Trustee Korby seconded the motion.

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

Nays: None. Abstain: None. MOTION CARRIED.

Trustee Marier moved to advertise the Director of Public Works position at a minimum starting wage of \$30 per hour, with a higher rate possible based on experience and certifications, requiring a CDL and proven leadership experience. Trustee Korby seconded the motion.

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

Nays: None. Abstain: None. MOTION CARRIED.

Trustee Korby moved to approve the purchase of batteries and chargers for the new Fire Department radios at an approximate cost of \$4,000. Trustee Marier seconded the motion.

Roll call: Ayes: President Eakin, Trustee Parolini.

Nays: None. Abstain: Trustee Balma. MOTION CARRIED.

Council discussed expectations for President Eakin regarding professional conduct, respectful and consistent communication, follow-through, impartiality, and handling sensitive personnel matters. Members acknowledged shared responsibility for improving Village operations and emphasized teamwork and accountability. President Eakin acknowledged the concerns and the need for improvement.

With no further business brought before the Council, Trustee Balma motioned to adjourn the regular meeting at 7:22 PM with support from Trustee Parolini. VOTE: All ayes.

MOTION CARRIED - Meeting adjourned.