

VILLAGE OF SOUTH RANGE
REGULAR MEETING
October 01, 2026
6:00 pm

The Regular Meeting of the Village of South Range Council was held on Thursday, October 01, 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 Parolini, Trustee Harkonen, Trustee Balma, and Trustee Korby. There were 3 guests in attendance. Others present: Clerk Schwandt

AGENDA ADDITIONS :

Trustee Marier motioned to add Resolution 2026-0004 and Village Insurance to the meeting agenda. The motion was seconded by Trustee Korby. Roll call: Ayes: President Eakin, Trustee Hill, Trustee Parolini, Trustee Balma, and Trustee Harkonen, Nays: None. Abstain: None. MOTION CARRIED.

PUBLIC COMMENT:

J. Ciucci expressed appreciation for the speed bumps placed on Stanton Avenue, noting that they have had a noticeable impact in slowing traffic. Tire tracks along the roadside indicate that some drivers have been using the Rangetown Apartments property to avoid the speed bumps. The Village will look into possible measures to address this issue before the speed bumps are reinstalled next spring.

K. Aho also expressed appreciation for the speed bumps and stated that they have been effective in slowing traffic. Aho thanked the Council for taking her concerns regarding increased snowmobile traffic through the Village seriously and for continuing to work toward solutions to reduce its impact on nearby residents. She was pleased to hear that the Council still intends to install additional signage in the area to help address noise and traffic concerns.

M. Franchi provided an update on Back Country Village, noting that tree clearing is underway in preparation for cabins and townhomes. He discussed plans for managing winter snowmobile traffic from the property and offered to assist with signage, similar to last year. Franchi also stated that the annual firewood giveaway and snowmobile event will return this year, with the snowmobile event expanding to two days.

President Eakin and Franchi noted that the DNR has determined that no additional trail connection to the property will be created. Trustee Parolini also asked about restricting access to the road leading toward Whealkate Bluff. Franchi stated that previous barriers had been moved and that a more permanent solution may be considered in the future.

MEETING MINUTES:

MOTION made by Trustee Marier, with support from Trustee Korby to approve the September 3, 2026 Regular Meeting Minutes.

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

Nays: None. Abstain: Trustees Balma and Harkonen. MOTION CARRIED.

MOTION made by Trustee Korby, with support from Trustee Balma to approve the September 15, 2026 Special Meeting Minutes.

Roll Call: Ayes: President Eakin, Trustee Parolini, and Trustee Marier

Nays: None. Abstain: Trustees Hill and Harkonen. MOTION CARRIED.

FIRE CHIEF'S REPORT:

Fire Chief Balma reported that two members will begin Firefighter I & II training and another member will attend Firefighter II training. The Department will also hold a fire prevention program for local grade school students on October 8.

Balma reported that the Department responded to a possible gas leak at Rangetown Apartments, which was determined not to be an active gas leak. He also recognized the passing of longtime firefighter Wayne Hackman, who served approximately 20 years with the Department, including five years as Chief.

The Department is preparing to host the Firemen's Tournament in June 2027, which will coincide with the Fire Department's 120th anniversary. Balma also reported that a State of Michigan grant application was submitted for new turnout gear and that radios obtained through a DNR grant are awaiting batteries and chargers.

Council briefly discussed the Fire Department's lack of an AED and the possibility of obtaining one for the Community Hall through an available community program.

STREET COMMISSIONER'S REPORT:

Assistant Public Works Director J. Fountaine reported that Public Works operations are going well and that the department is transitioning into winter preparations and equipment maintenance. Recent work included water and sewer maintenance, arrangements to refurbish the loader plow, preparations for lagoon discharge, and obtaining sand and salt for winter use. Fountaine also reported that several electrical outlets used for Christmas decorations are not working and will need to be repaired.

Fountaine reported that the hydrant at the top of Second Street is back in service. Chief Balma requested that the Fire Department be notified whenever hydrants are taken out of or returned to service.

A mower was damaged and required repair. Council directed that future incidents involving equipment damage or injury be documented. Council discussed future Public Works equipment needs and asked Fountaine to develop a priority list to be considered when creating the next year's budget. Council also noted that Fountaine has been adapting well to his role as Assistant Director and maintaining communication with the office and President Eakin.

Fontaine also reported that a new Christmas tree is needed for the area in front of the Community Hall and will work with Clerk Schwandt to prepare options for the next Council meeting.

PRESIDENT'S REPORT:

President Eakin reported that he and Clerk Schwandt are continuing to work on finalizing the Pastore Drive road name and have contacted several parties for clarification. Eakin will also speak with the Houghton Postmaster regarding the proper process. Eakin noted that M. Franchi plans to install a snow measuring device on his property and has asked Eakin to assist with monitoring it. Eakin also reported that he volunteered his time and cleaned the Community Hall floor following two wedding receptions and plans to do so again after the final event of the year in preparation for Christmas in South Range. He asked Council to consider purchasing a floor scrubber to be kept at the Hall to improve and streamline cleaning of the upstairs area.

CLERK'S REPORT:

Clerk Schwandt reported that QuickBooks blocked Village payroll, so a temporary Excel system is being used until the new payroll software is operational, expected around March 2027. Quarterly payroll taxes have been completed. Schwandt reported positive feedback from MDOT regarding Village reporting and noted that a meeting with the new accountant is scheduled to address final financial questions. The new time clock system has been installed and is working well overall. Schwandt also reported two fraudulent checks on the Village account. The funds were recovered, and the Village will change account numbers, order new checks, and transition to online bill payment when possible. The Public Works Director position received 10 applications.

PERSONNEL COMMITTEE REPORT:

Trustee Marier reported that the Personnel Committee discussed the temporary seasonal Public Works position, applications for the Public Works Director position, and the remaining corrective action section of the Employee Handbook. The Committee reviewed all 10 Director applications and selected four candidates for interviews, with three interviews currently scheduled. Marier recommended holding a special meeting following the interviews to discuss the results and determine the next steps for Public Works. The special meeting is scheduled for October 6, 2026. The Committee also recommended adding the corrective action section to the Employee Handbook and reposting the temporary Public Works position as a part-time position at \$24.00 per hour, running from mid-November through mid-April.

BUSINESS-UNFINISHED/NEW:

Clerk Schwandt updated Council on the status of the two dangerous building cases currently in progress. While some action has been taken on one property, progress has been slower than expected and the Village will continue with the enforcement process. No progress or communication has been received regarding the second property. Both cases will proceed to Council hearings to be scheduled during the November regular meeting.

Council discussed purchasing additional signage related to snowmobile traffic and noise, and Clerk Schwandt will order appropriate signs for placement this winter. Council also discussed adding signage near the top of Fourth Street to better identify the split between Whealkate Avenue and Siira Road. Council also reviewed the current snowbank pushback policy and agreed that possible revisions for the 2026–2027 winter season will be discussed at the November regular meeting.

DECISIONS:

Trustee Marier made a motion to post a seasonal, part-time Public Works position from mid-November through mid-April, requiring a Class B CDL and starting at \$24.00 per hour. The motion was seconded by Trustee Balma.

Roll call: Ayes: President Eakin, Trustee Korby, Trustee Hill, Trustee Parolini, and Trustee Harkonen. Nays: None. Abstain: None. MOTION CARRIED.

Trustee Balma made a motion to remove Steven Dorsey as an authorized signer on Village bank accounts at Miners State Bank and Superior National Bank and to add Trustee Justin Marier as an authorized signer. The motion was seconded by Trustee Korby.

Roll Call: Ayes: President Eakin, Trustee Hill, Trustee Parolini, Trustee Marier, and Trustee Harkonen. Nays: None. Abstain: None. MOTION CARRIED.

Trustee Marier made a motion to amend Ordinance 2024-2, Council Salaries, to provide Trustees, excluding the President, \$50.00 for each additional meeting attended outside of the regular monthly Council meeting, including special meetings and committee meetings, for up to two additional meetings per month. Trustee Korby seconded the motion. Roll call: Ayes: President Eakin, Trustee Balma, Trustee Hill, Trustee Parolini, and Trustee Harkonen. Nays: None. Abstain: None. MOTION CARRIED.

Trustee Marier made a motion to approve payment of the annual insurance premium in the amount of \$29,863.80. Trustee Balma seconded the motion. Roll Call: Ayes: President Eakin, Trustee Hill, Trustee Parolini, Trustee Korby, and Trustee Harkonen. Nays: None. Abstain: None. MOTION CARRIED.

Trustee Marier made a motion to enter into closed session at 7:54 p.m. pursuant to Section 8(h) of the Open Meetings Act to consider material exempt from disclosure by statute, specifically a written legal opinion from Village counsel exempt from disclosure under Section 13(1)(g) of FOIA. Trustee Korby seconded the motion. Roll Call: Ayes: Trustee Hill, Trustee Parolini, Trustee Balma, and Trustee Harkonen. Nays: None. Abstain: President Eakin. MOTION CARRIED.

Trustee Marier made a motion to return to open session at 8:32 p.m. Trustee Korby seconded the motion. Roll Call: Ayes: Trustee Hill, Trustee Parolini, Trustee Balma, and Trustee Harkonen. Nays: None. Abstain: None. MOTION CARRIED.

Trustee Marier made a motion to approve Resolution 2026-0004, a Resolution of Censure concerning President George Eakin. Trustee Korby seconded the motion. Roll Call: Ayes: Trustee Hill, Trustee Parolini, Trustee Balma, and Trustee Harkonen. Nays: None. Abstain: President Eakin. MOTION CARRIED.

FINANCIAL REPORT:

President Eakin asked if there were any questions about the September, 2026 bills. Trustee Korby asked about receipt procedures, and Clerk Schwandt reviewed the account coding requirements for Public Works purchases.

Trustee Harkonen motioned to approve payment of the bills, totaling: \$43,676.24, seconded by Trustee Korby. Roll call: Ayes: President Eakin, Trustee Parolini, Trustee Marier, Trustee Balma, and Trustee Hill. Nays: None. MOTION CARRIED.

With no further business brought before the Council, Trustee Balma motioned to adjourn the regular meeting at 8:49 PM. with support from Trustee Hill.

Roll call: Ayes: President Eakin, Trustee Parolini, Trustee Korby, Trustee Harkonen and Trustee Marier

MOTION CARRIED - Meeting adjourned.

Submitted by: Sydni Schwandt, Village of South Range Clerk

Sydni Schwandt