

WHITEHALL
WORK SESSION MINUTES

Council Chambers

July 14, 2026

PRESENT Scott Brown, Tanya Cabala, Debra Hillebrand, Jeff Holmstrom, Bryan Mahan, Roger Squiers, and Tom Ziemer

ABSENT None

ALSO PRESENT Brenda Bourdon, Dan Tavernier, Will Meier

Mayor Ziemer called the meeting to order at 5:00 pm.

DISCUSSION ITEMS

Charter Amendments

Council Member Brown suggested that, after reaching the 12-year council term limit, former council members should not be eligible to return to the council following the current two-year hiatus period. Other council members expressed disagreement, citing the value of retaining individuals with institutional knowledge and experience. Council Member Hillebrand stated that she had no preference regarding the outcome of the term limit discussion but believed the policy should be consistent with those established for City boards and commissions.

Brown also expressed the opinion that providing lunch to committee members constitutes compensation and questioned whether the practice is consistent with the Charter's language regarding compensation for committee members. Council Member Mahan stated that providing meals is an appropriate way to show appreciation for volunteers' time and service to the city and suggested extending the practice to committee meetings held outside of lunchtime. Mayor Ziemer indicated that he does not consider providing lunch to be compensation.

Mayor Ziemer noted that the Charter establishes a \$5,000 threshold for expenditures requiring competitive bidding, while the City's ordinance has increased that threshold to \$10,000.

Council Member Cabala suggested establishing a mechanism for periodic review of the City Charter.

No additional charter amendments or changes were suggested by the remaining council members.

Strategic Planning

Following discussion, the consensus of the Council was that the document lacked sufficient detail, measurable goals, and did not adequately reflect the discussion that took place during the strategic goal setting meeting. Council viewed the document as more of a framework than a completed strategic plan. City Manager Tavernier will contact Double Haul to discuss revisions.

Consideration of Policy Guidance for Expenditures

Council Member Brown stated that taxpayers should not be funding meals for committee members and expressed concern that his previous suggestion to move the BLT Committee meetings to the evening had not been adopted. Council Member Squiers questioned whether the Council had authority over the Tax Increment Finance Authority, Brownfield Redevelopment Authority and the Local Development Finance Authority (BLT's) budgets. Council Member Mahan noted that the committee had previously discussed

meeting times and determined that lunchtime meetings resulted in better attendance than evening meetings. City Manager Tavernier and City Attorney Meier explained that, while the Council approves the budgets for the Tax Increment Finance Authority, Brownfield Redevelopment Authority, and Local Development Finance Authority, the authorities operate independently and make their own decisions regarding expenditures within their approved budgets. They further explained that any decision regarding the purchase of meals for committee members would be made by the respective authority, not the Council.

Thriftwood Drive:

Discussion focused on a dedicated 1950s "paper road" right-of-way that bisects two parcels owned by the same property owner. A letter was received from legal counsel representing Mayor Ziemer requesting that the fence be removed.

City Attorney Meier reiterated his previous explanation that, while state law creates a presumption that the City accepted the dedication of the right-of-way, longstanding case law allows a property owner to challenge that presumption if the City has never exercised control over the property. He noted that the city has not exercised control over the right-of-way for approximately 70 years and cautioned that formally asserting control over it now could expose the city to litigation. Meier further noted that, after receiving that legal advice at a previous meeting, the Council did not direct staff to pursue any action regarding the paper road.

Mayor Pro Tem Holmstrom, Council Members Mahan, Squiers, and Hillebrand expressed concerns regarding the approach taken by Mayor Ziemer after the City Attorney had already provided legal guidance and discussed the potential litigation risk associated with asserting control over the right-of-way. Council Member Squiers also noted that, during the previous discussion, a majority of the Council did not support formally claiming the paper road or pursuing a future pedestrian trail or park, particularly because the right-of-way bisects two parcels owned by the same property owner.

Mayor Ziemer apologized if obtaining the legal letter was not the appropriate approach. Council Member Hillebrand stated that the same concerns could have been discussed without what she viewed as the introduction of a legal threat.

INFORMATIONAL ITEMS

None

PUBLIC COMMENT

None

ADJOURNMENT

Mayor Ziemer adjourned the work session at 5:55 pm.

Respectfully submitted,
Brenda Bourdon, City Clerk



WHITEHALL

CITY COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES

Council Chambers

July 14, 2026

PRESENT Scott Brown, Tanya Cabala, Debra Hillebrand, Jeff Holmstrom, Bryan Mahan, Roger Squiers, and Tom Ziemer

ABSENT None

ALSO PRESENT Brenda Bourdon, Dan Tavernier, Will Meier

Mayor Ziemer called the meeting to order at 6:00 pm.

APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA

Motion by Cabala, seconded by Squiers to approve the agenda.

Voice Vote: All yeses

MOTION CARRIED

APPROVAL OF THE CONSENT AGENDA

- A. Approval of the June 26, 2026 Council Meeting Minutes
- B. Accounts Payable \$844,449.46
- C. Communications: None

Motion by Holmstrom, seconded by Mahan to approve the Consent Agenda.

Voice Vote: All yeses

MOTION CARRIED

MESSAGES FROM THE MAYOR, COUNCIL, AND CITY MANAGER

Messages were received from the City Manager, Council Members, and Mayor.

Council Member Cabala was concerned on how Council Members were informed of the July 27 town hall meeting, noting that the information was provided by email after the previous Council meeting. She expressed concern that the timing limited the opportunity for Council discussion in a public meeting under the Michigan Open Meetings Act, clarifying that her concern was with the communication process, not the town hall meeting itself. Other Council members viewed the event as an informational community meeting rather than a matter requiring Council deliberation or action.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Mark Nienhouse, Cathy Russell, Christina Normandin and Doug Boardwell provided public comment.

OLD BUSINESS

None

NEW BUSINESS

A. Cruz'in White Lake Request

Motion by Squiers, seconded by Brown, to approve the temporary closure of Hansen Street on Friday, July 31, 2026 from 8 am to 8 pm for the Cruz'in Burnout Pit.

Roll Call Vote: Yes – Squiers, Brown, Mahan, Holmstrom, Hillebrand, Cabala, and Ziemer;
No – None; Absent – None

MOTION CARRIED

B. Resolution 26-35 Obsolete Property Rehabilitation District

Motion by Holmstrom, seconded by Hillebrand to establish an Obsolete Property Rehabilitation District as shown on the included map.

Roll Call Vote: Yes – Holmstrom, Hillebrand, Squiers, Cabala, Brown, Mahan, and Ziemer;
No – None; Absent – None

MOTION CARRIED

C. Resolution 26-36 DPW Truck

Motion by Mahan, seconded by Brown to approve purchase of a 2019 Ford pickup truck for \$34,745 as approved in the 2026/2027 FY budget.

Roll Call Vote: Yes – Mahan, Brown, Holmstrom, Hillebrand, Squiers, Cabala, and Ziemer;
No – None; Absent – None

MOTION CARRIED

D. Resolution 26-37 Industrial Park Land Sale

Motion by Holmstrom, seconded by Squiers to approve the sale of parcel no 61-22-034-400-0002-10 in industrial park for \$7,500 authorizing the City Manager to execute the purchase agreement and related closing documents.

Roll Call Vote: Yes – Holmstrom, Mahan, Brown, Hillebrand, Squiers, Cabala, and Ziemer;
No – None; Absent – None

MOTION CARRIED

PUBLIC COMMENT

None

ADJOURNMENT

Mayor Ziemer adjourned the Council Meeting at 6:28 pm.

Respectfully submitted,
Brenda Bourdon, City Clerk