

VILLAGE OF SARANAC
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES
July 13, 2026

The Saranac Village Council Regular Meeting was called to order by President Darby at 7:00 p.m. at the Saranac Village Office, 27 N Bridge Street.

The meeting was opened with the Pledge of Allegiance.

Present: President Darby, Straubel, DPW Koster; Trustees – Day, Klutman, Mulnix, Talcott, Whorley
Absent: Doll
Guests: None

Motion was made by Mulnix, supported by Talcott, to approve the Regular Agenda. All yeas.

Public Comments – None

Law Enforcement Report

Council members reviewed Ionia County Sheriff Office stats for Village of Saranac patrol for the month of June 2026.

Council members reviewed a Resolution to Accept Contract #26-5259 with the Michigan Department of Transportation, for the Summit Street project.

Motion was made by Mulnix, supported by Talcott, to adopt the Resolution to Accept Contract #26-5259 with the Michigan Department of Transportation and to Authorize Sharon Darby, Village President, to sign said contract.

Roll call vote: yeas – Day, Klutman, Mulnix, Talcott, Whorley, Darby; nays – none; absent – Doll.

Council members reviewed proposed Resolution #071326, a Resolution to Support the Sale and Continued Operation of Webber Dam from Consumers Energy to Confluence Hydro LLC. A representative of Consumers Energy requested that council consider adopting the resolution.

Council members discussed at length, the impact of selling the dam. Concerns for residents who rely on the dam for electricity, and the future of the dam if it is sold, were raised.

Motion was made by Mulnix, supported by Talcott, to vote on Resolution #071326, a Resolution to Support the Sale and Continued Operation of Webber Dam from Consumers Energy to Confluence Hydro LLC. All nays.

Council members reviewed a letter from Meghan Chipman, owner/operator of Megg's Coffee Food Truck. Chipman requests that the approved timeframe for operation at Lake Creek Park of 6:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. on Fridays, be expanded to 6:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. every day of the week. In her letter, Chipman states that while she does not anticipate setting up more than twice a week, having a broader approval will provide flexibility to adjust her schedule when opportunities arise, without requiring additional requests to the council each time.

Motion was made by Day, supported by Klutman, to grant Chipman's request of expanded hours from 6:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. every day of the week. All yeas.

Council members discussed a village resident's request that they consider adopting an ordinance regulating the consumption of marijuana within the village limits to better protect public health, neighborhood quality of life, and the peaceful enjoyment of private property.

Straubel sought the opinion of village attorney, Jim Doezema. Doezema replied that the Michigan Regulation and Taxation of Marijuana Act seemingly allows private property owners to ban use on private property, but not a municipality. The village could try to regulate under a nuisance type ordinance but such an ordinance may be challenged on preemption argument, and the village may find itself in litigation. The owners could also file their own nuisance law suit.

Day researched a nuisance ordinance where the property owner would contact the police to report a suspected violation.

Klutman pointed out that there were no village residents in attendance supporting an ordinance regulating the consumption of marijuana within the village limits.

After lengthy discussion and careful consideration, motion was made by Mulnix, supported by Klutman, to rely on the opinion of village attorney, Jim Doezema, and not pursue an ordinance regulating the consumption of marijuana within the village limits. Yeas – 5; nays – 1; absent – 1.

Council members reviewed a status report from Angie Stephens, Executive Director of the Saranac Housing Commission and Third-Party Administrator (TPA) for the Homeowner Rehabilitation Project. To date, 18 applications have been approved and 15 home inspections completed. Stephens stated that applications continue to come in weekly.

Council members reviewed a report from Straubel on the number of hours she has spent from 1/1/26 – 6/30/26 on the Homeowner Rehabilitation Project. The CDBG grant which is funding the project, allows for reimbursement of time and expenses not only for the TPA, but for village employees as well. Straubel has spent 185 hours on the project to date. The village will be reimbursed \$10,668 for Straubel's time. Straubel is requesting to be compensated for her time at the rate of \$45/hour (\$8,325), which mirrors the hourly rate that the Saranac Housing Commission is compensating the Executive Director for her time.

Much discussion was had regarding the reasonableness of Straubel's request, as well as the cost of employer taxes and retirement benefits in addition to the compensation. Straubel offered that she would waive the employer match contribution to her retirement fund on this compensation.

Ryan Hesche, President of the Saranac Housing Commission (SHC) Board, submitted a letter to the Saranac Village Council. In his letter, Hesche gives recognition to both Straubel and Stephens for their roles in the Homeowner Rehabilitation Project. He states; "The successful allocation and utilization of \$1.2 million in funding benefiting Village of Saranac homeowners, would not have been possible with Becky's expertise and leadership; and, without Angie stepping up to take on this role, the SHC wouldn't have the extra nonfederal funds, nor would they be able to reach out to the needs of the community."

Motion was made by Mulnix, supported by Day, to compensate Straubel at the rate of \$45/hour for the reimbursable time she has and will spend on the Homeowner Rehabilitation Project and that she will not receive employer contributions to her retirement fund on these wages.

Roll call vote: yeas – Day, Klutman, Mulnix, Talcott, Whorley, Darby; nays – none; absent – Doll.

Council members reviewed a report from Shelby Engel on IT services provided to date, as well as ongoing and future services. Straubel expressed that she is very happy with the services provided by Engel thus far.

Engel answers questions and resolves issues in a timely, effective manner. Overall, Straubel feels a certain level of comfort that wasn't there before, knowing that the village's information technology is safe and in good hands.

Motion was made by Talcott, supported by Whorley, to accept minutes of the June 8, 2026 Regular Meeting. All yeas.

Motion was made by Mulnix, supported by Talcott, to accept the Treasurer's Report of June 30, 2026. All yeas.

Various Accounts Payable items were reviewed and questions answered.

Motion was made by Mulnix, supported by Day, to approve the Accounts Payable of July 13, 2026, in the amount of \$113,162.49

Roll call vote: yeas – Day, Klutman, Mulnix, Talcott, Whorley, Darby; nays – none; absent – Doll.

The Zoning Administrator's Report of Services for June 2026 was reviewed.

The Planning Commission's regular meeting for the month of July was cancelled due to lack of business.

Committee Reports

Budget – No report

Personnel

Darby summarized for council members, the rationale for hiring Seth Pike without advertising the position.

Motion was made by Talcott, supported by Klutman, to compensate Seth Pike at the rate of \$18/hour, for up to 30 hours/week.

Darby reported that DPW employees requested a meeting with the Personnel Committee, which is scheduled for later this week. Some DPW employees have expressed that they are not happy with the fact that they cannot leave town when they are on-call.

Darby informed council members that Dennis Bowen, Boston Township Supervisor, contacted her about a seminar he attended regarding the classification of firefighters (volunteers vs employees). Darby explained that the main criteria is whether calls are mandatory, and whether performance criteria exist. Darby and Chief Koster have reviewed policies and SOG's pertaining to these criteria.

Council members discussed the fact that the village only has two employees who are certified water and sewer operators. They concurred that it would be wise to look into back up operator services. Koster stated that the Michigan Rural Water Association provides this service.

Darby requested that Straubel email minutes to all council members when completed, as opposed to waiting until the Thursday prior to council meetings.

Public Safety

Chief Koster reported that Engine 6 will be posted for sale tomorrow, for \$190,000.

Chief Koster also reported that additional costs to outfit the new engine will be approximately \$20,000, bringing the total cost to \$774,276, which is \$25,724 under budget.

Per Chief Koster, the department is at 430 calls to date, pacing at 800+ for the year.

Chief Koster informed council members that the department recently had an ISO inspection that went very well. If the fire department's ISO rating decreases as a result, residents could see a reduction in homeowner insurance rates.

Parks & Recreation

Mulnix reported that the Parks Committee will be meeting tomorrow with Kayla Palmer and Marlena O'Connell of Fleis & VandenBrink Engineering. They will be reviewing bubble diagrams for village parks, other than Scheid Park which has its own concept plan. After review of the bubble diagrams, Palmer and O'Connell will prepare a concept plan for presentation to council.

Streets – No report

Buildings & Grounds – No report

Water & Sewer

Koster reported that he and the DPW crew will be conducting lead & copper testing tomorrow.

Public Comments – None

Additional Information/Business

Straubel provided council members with a Spring Cleanup cost history.

Council members received an invitation for the Harker Place Project Kickoff.

Straubel provided council members with flyers received from the Material Management Planning Commission. Straubel will post the flyers on the village Facebook page.

Straubel received a request to share resources regarding Asbestos on the village website, from a company in Florida. Council members denied the request.

Darby informed council members of recently passed state legislation regarding the potential use of golf carts on municipal streets.

Koster reported that he was approached by Synergy EV about a proposed charging station within the village. He will find out additional details.

Meeting adjourned at 8:56 p.m.



Becky Straubel,
Village Treasurer/Deputy Clerk