

Keene Township Board Meeting – Minutes April 14, 2026

I. Call to Order: 6:00 PM

II. Attendees ~ Supervisor: Sandy Smiley

Trustees: Christine Hendrick, Holli Melton, William Pflugradt, Nate Wolff

Agenda & Minutes

III. Approval of Agenda - Agenda adjusted to place zoning/code enforcement under the Zoning Administrator report and related under New Business. Added Pinckney Cemetery survey under Unfinished Business item 4. Motion by Melton, seconded by Pflugradt → **Motion carried 5-0**

IV. Approval of Minutes - March 10, 2026 - approved with a spelling correction. Motion by Wolff, seconded by Pflugradt → Motion carried **5-0**

Approval of Minutes - Special meeting March 30, 2026 - Motion to approve by Melton, seconded by Pflugradt → **Motion carried 5-0**

New ZA Introduction Larry Mercer Jr - our new Zoning Administrator, introduced himself. 4.5–5 years of experience; focuses on interpreting the ordinance and following MZEA rules. Complaints under monitoring; field checks and ordinance reviews to guide next steps. Prefers email for faster response. Review of Open Activities since April 1. Complaints under monitoring; field checks and ordinance reviews to guide next steps.

V. Public Comment & Guests - Approximately 11 members of the public were present.

Miguel Pillar - Candidate Introduction for **Michigan House District 78** - priorities include affordability, education, rural energy policy; Lansing experience and youth engagement highlighted. No other Public Comment/

VI Reports.

1. Treasurer's Report - Financials displayed; auditor's cover letter and governance questionnaire to be completed by all board members. Auditor onsite week of May 11; records centralized in BS&A; trial balances already requested; schedules/worksheets can begin.

2. Clerks Report - AP and Payroll Financials displayed; Major payments made: MML liability insurance; Belding fire Services; Saranac Fire Department Services (~\$38,000), Life EMS quarterly payment; Apex assessor software; employer retirement contributions (~\$4,400).

Approval of Payroll and Payables; Smiley made a motion to approve AP \$66,470.24; and payroll: \$4,046.55. Total combined 70,516.79, with Hendrick second → **Motion passed 5-0**

Board of Review Compensation - BOR members are paid for the entire year after the March meetings. Compensation covers training and meeting hours for March and December. No July meeting held.

Policy Discussion: Supervisor BOR Pay - Historical practice in Keene paid the supervisor for BOR duties; motion proposed to continue supervisor pay for BOR meetings. Supervisor will forego training going forward, with initial training deemed sufficient.

Roll call initiated; Motion to approve by Hendrick- Yea, with second by Wolff - Yea; Melton - Yea; Pflugradt - Yea; Smiley Abstaining → **Motion carried 4-0-1**

VII. Zoning Report provided for review - A review of specific non-compliance cases and the need to formalize enforcement procedures. A procedure will be reviewed for further action.

VIII. Supervisors Report - Attended Boston Township meeting for Fire Millage Discussion - Meeting covered fire millage language amid unfinished agreements; treasurer concerned about lack of reports; suggestion to pass millage funds directly to fire department raised compliance issues (L-4029). Transparency concerns persist. **Public hearing scheduled for April 28 on revenue/expenditures.**

Officials Meeting - Ionia County: Countywide Fire/EMS Millage Concept and Township Concerns, considering current Millages in place; **Ionia County - MSU Extension millage on ballot** - value questioned relative to township benefits. **Temporary Campgrounds and Event-Driven Tourism** - Health department/EGLE requirements explained;

Revenue Volatility from State Sources - continues to decline with declining marijuana sales reducing anticipated state-shared revenues; **Michigan Public Policy Survey (MPPS) and Data Privacy** - Sandy had privacy concerns about potential misuse; Supervisor marked some areas on the survey with not applicable. **Additional MPPS Survey - Challenges in Recruiting Local Government Candidates - informational** - Widespread difficulty recruiting candidates; barriers include compensation, time, knowledge, harassment, and costs; **State-Level Housing Bills and Local Control Concerns regarding housing and zoning** - Bills would reduce local control over housing and preempt local zoning/master plans; petitions opposing state preemption available.

PA233 Advances in Court - 4-15-2026 Court of Appeals oral arguments on PA 233 - Awaiting appellate decision; encourage public to stay informed.

Wind Energy Developments and Landowner Outreach - NextEra registering short-form leases in unzoned areas; Evolve/Consumers Energy pursuing easement agreements; concerns about misrepresentation; public meeting with land agents noted; residents contacting the township with concerns and documents.

IV. Unfinished Business/Updates

1. **ZBA Alternate** - Official swearing-in administered for Travis Ebmeyer as ZBA alternate
2. **Deputy Clerk** - Official swearing-in administered for Travis Ebmeyer as Deputy Clerk
3. **Sheriff Call Sheet** (Sent by Officer Farrell) - Provided for Public Review
4. **Pinckney Cemetery Survey** - Schedule the Pinckney Cemetery survey with Mulder Associates and coordinate with the cemetery committee and mowing contractor to manage marker raising and mowing pauses. Item is already in the FY 26/27 Budget. Motion to approve my Melton, seconded by Hendrick → **Motion carried 5-0**

V. New Business

1. **Master Plan resolution (Board right of final approval)** - the Board adopted a resolution to clarify our role in the final adoption of the Master Plan. This was done to make sure the process is clear and consistent with the Michigan Planning Enabling Act, which provides for Planning Commission preparation of the plan and allows the Township Board, by resolution, to assert final approval authority over the Master Plan. Motion was made by Christine, seconded by Nate, and followed by a roll call vote of five ayes → **Motion carried 5-0.**
2. **Zoning Ordinance Clean-up: Special Land Use Language; Private Rd. Township Engineer etc.** Clearer language, reinforcing review, and Board decisions. Work on and bundle ordinance clarifications (SLUPs, private roads, other unclear provisions) to minimize time & costs; draft internally with ZA; hold a single public hearing. Conclusion: Pursue a comprehensive cleanup package with efficient drafting and a single hearing over time.

3. Ballot Language Road Millage - Road funding measure approved for ballot submission on August 4 Election. Motion was made by Melton, seconded by Christine. Roll call vote of five ayes→**Motion carried 5-0.**

VI. Public Comment - A call for public comments was made - and none were offered.

VII. Motion to Adjourn - Melton made a motion to adjourn, seconded by Pflugradt. Motion carried → 5-0 meeting adjourned at 8:23 PM

