

**CHARTER TOWNSHIP OF COMMERCE
TOWNSHIP BOARD OF TRUSTEES SPECIAL MEETING
2009 Township Drive
Commerce Township, MI 48390
Tuesday, November 4, 2025, 5:30 p.m.**

CALL TO ORDER: Supervisor Gray called the Township Board of Trustees Special Meeting to order at 5:30 p.m.

ROLL CALL: Present: Larry Gray, Supervisor
Melissa Creech, Clerk
Molly Phillips, Treasurer
Rick Sovel, Trustee
Bob Berkheiser, Trustee
Robert Long, Trustee
George Weber, Trustee

Also Present: Katelyn Massey, Finance/HR Director
Natalie Hiney, Finance/HR Assistant
Dave Campbell, Planning Director
Mark Schoder, Maintenance Director
Emily England, Senior/Parks and Recreation Director
Jay James, PE Building Official
Alyson Lobert, Library Director
Mario Gibbons, Ordinance Director
Ben Sebrowski, IT Director
Deborah Watson, DDA Director
Capt. Schneider, Oakland County Sheriff's Office
Lt. Hix, Oakland County Sheriff's Office
Sgt. Leggat, Oakland County Sheriff's Office
Det. Brill, Oakland County Sheriff's Office

ITEM 1: Public Comments

Supervisor Gray opened Public Comments.

Seeing none, Supervisor Gray closed Public Comments.

ITEM 2: 2026 Flock Group, Inc. Presentation

Lt. Hix introduced Sgt. Leggat who will make a Power Point Presentation; Detective Brill who will give a live demonstration showing where all the active cameras are located and will discuss the retention period for records; Matt Leon and Dave Levalley from Flock; and Captain Schneider, who is in charge of the Technology, Information, and Innovation Division where he oversees all the info tech and the records division, which encompasses FOIA. In addition, he works closely with corporate counsel.

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ITEM 2: 2026 Flock Group, Inc. Presentation continued

Sgt. Leggat presented the Power Point presentation reviewing the benefits to Commerce Township such as the acquisition of a major investigative tool for criminal cases, the timely location of people and children during Silver and Amber alerts. The Flock system acts as a deterrent to criminals and provides timely notification of wanted vehicles that enter Commerce Township. He stressed that there is not a facial recognition component to the Flock system, all data is stored with end-to-end encryption, and all data is deleted after 30 days. The data is owned by the Township but all FOIA requests must go through Oakland County. The Technology, Information, and Innovation Captain is the administrator for license plate readers in Oakland County and it's his responsibility to establish protocols for storage, collection, and access to the data. In addition, the Captain insures that all personnel have the proper training and authorization and he is responsible for authorizing access to the system and the data from any outside agency. Camera placement was reviewed.

Trustee Berkheiser asked if they know where they want to place the cameras?

Sgt. Leggat said it is in the original proposal.

Trustee Sovel asked if the cameras are mobile?

Sgt. Leggat said it is not cost effective to move them around.

Trustee Sovel asked if there's a certain number of user licenses?

Matt Leon from Flock said it is unlimited.

Supervisor Gray asked for clarification on what it means that you receive a notification that a bad guy has come into Commerce Township?

Dispatch will receive a call that the license plate for a stolen vehicle just got a hit on a certain Flock camera heading in a particular direction.

Trustee Weber thanked everyone for a great presentation and said he has a couple questions.

Trustee Weber said the County makes the call about who has access to the data of the Township's cameras, does that mean everyone who is law enforcement has access to the cameras or is it on a per case basis?

Captain Schneider says that he has to make the decision as to whether additional people have access to the data. If it's a request from West Bloomfield, he'll probably grant access but if it's a request from Omaha, Nebraska, probably not.

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ITEM 2: 2026 Flock Group, Inc. Presentation continued

Trustee Weber asked what if the Feds request the data?

Captain Schneider said he has never received a request from the Feds and he would need to know why they needed the data before he granted the request. The County would not give the Feds access but we would search for the plate on their behalf.

Trustee Long expressed concerns about County personnel moving on to other positions and the Township does not have any guarantees that the subsequent people filling these roles will be as diligent in protecting access to the data.

Captain Schneider said the County also has a Privacy Officer who has been trained in HIPAA, PII, and CJI. Releasing that information can result in termination from the job.

Trustee Sovel asked if there's an activity log that tracks when someone accesses one of the Township's cameras and you can look and see who accessed it?

Captain Schneider said the camera itself is not accessed.

Detective Brill demonstrated how the system works.

Trustee Long said it was an interesting presentation. He didn't hear anything unfavorable or concerns the public may have. Can you address that?

Sgt. Leggat said there are people who have issues with this and that's why he put on the slide that license plates do not have the expectation of privacy. There are procedures in place and penalties for misuse of the system.

Trustee Berkheiser said there are cameras in our parks and along roadways and there are no expectations of privacy in either place.

Trustee Long reiterated that there's a tremendous amount of public apprehension regarding this system. He can see why law enforcement wants to use it but he's just not sure the public is ready for it. It's a hard decision.

Captain Schneider said this innovation is a game changer for law enforcement similar to the invention of the Taser. The closure rate on murders increases dramatically with the deployment of this system. The good outweighs the concerns and he thinks it's one of the best tools they have.

Matt Leon from Flock said that Flock recently passed 1,000 people recovered through the use of their system. When Flock receives an alert from The National Center for Missing and Exploited Children, that information immediately goes into the system as

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ITEM 2: 2026 Flock Group, Inc. Presentation continued

they track cars used to kidnap children and area police officers are notified. He gave a real life example from Farmington Hills where a young girl was recovered.

Trustee Weber said the Board can approve this for 2026 budget purposes but there are some issues with that contract that need to be resolved.

Trustee Berkheiser asked if surrounding communities put additional constraints on the sharing of information from their Flock cameras?

Captain Schneider said no, they've left it up to him as the system administrator.

Trustee Berkheiser asked what type of control does the Oakland County Board of Commissioners have over the system?

Captain Schneider said they do not have control over the policies or the system. They are set by law and the recommendations of corporate counsel.

Trustee Weber said the policy must be included in the contract as an exhibit and any changes to the policy would have to come back to the Township Board. He wants Flock to provide that language for the Trustees to review and once there's agreement on the contract language then we can start the process, with no billing until January 2026.

MOTION by Gray, supported by Sovel, to approve the Flock Camera System for the 2026 budget and to move forward with contract negotiations.

MOTION CARRIED

Trustee Long voted no.

ITEM 3: Pathways Discussion

Supervisor Gray said that Treasurer Phillips will be able to answer the questions regarding an SAD versus a millage. Tonight we are just looking for approval so the attorneys can start working on the language if the Board decides to move forward with an SAD or a millage. This is not a discussion on where the pathways will go.

Trustee Sovel said this is just to decide whether it'll be an SAD or a millage and if we are moving the path from the west side of Bogie Lake Road to the east side of Bogie Lake Road.

Treasurer Phillips said she was tasked with asking Hans the difference between an SAD and a millage and for clarification on real and/or personal property. Hans said if it is a voter approved millage then it is automatically assessed on real and personal property. Next, we have to decide if we are including the Village of Wolverine Lake and

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ITEM 3: Pathways Discussion continued

it is unclear if the Township will have to give the Village the funds collected from Village residents generated by the millage. If the Board does an SAD then it is on real property only. In addition, a voted millage would be subject to Headlee reduction which is a rate calculated by Oakland County. The Board has the ability to set the rate for both an SAD and a millage and it does not have to be the maximum rate approved by voters. Neither are subject to capture by the DDA or Brownfields.

Further, Treasurer Phillips said there's a disconnect about concerns of overcharging residents. The residents are not paying for the pathways; they are paying to pay back the debt. The debt is paying for the pathways so if we need \$16 million to build the pathways then we'll need \$16,200,000 to cover things like fees and interest, which is about 4.5% right now. Treasurer Phillips said she did very simple math assuming we are extinguishing the debt evenly over 10 years. She referred to an excel spreadsheet showing the results of using different millage rates and if the Township does not charge at least .60 mills there will be a shortfall.

Trustee Weber said you are saying the .60 mills is the right number based on a 4.5% interest rate.

Treasurer Phillips said the .60 mills is the right rate if you include the Village and both real and personal property. It's not enough if we include just the Township.

Trustee Weber asked if the SAD gives the Township greater flexibility and less risk because there's no Headlee? Is there any benefit of a millage over an SAD?

Treasurer Phillips said that with an SAD the Township can only charge real property.

Trustee Sovel said we'd have to charge .65 mills because the homeowners will have to pay more because the personal property of businesses is excluded.

Trustee Berkheiser asked if it's possible to get bonds that can be paid off early.

Treasurer Phillips said it depends on the bond.

Trustee Sovel said they want to put it on the November 2026 ballot and if it's approved, what is the time frame for going out for a bond and locking in the interest rate?

Treasurer Phillips said it would go on the December tax roll and we can put the bonds out to bid as soon as it passes and it would probably be around March 15, 2027 for the process to be completed.

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ITEM 3: Pathways Discussion continued

MOTION by Sovel, supported by Weber, to authorize the attorney to draft ballot language for Commerce Township and Wolverine Lake Village for real and personal property at .60 mills for a ten-year millage

MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

ITEM 4: 2026 Township Budget Discussion

Maintenance Director Schoder presented the proposed 2026 Maintenance Department budget.

He reviewed his capital outlay requests such as the maintenance garage addition, 1 pick-up truck replacement, and the purchase of a blower, a plow, and a hydraulic lift.

IT Director Sebrowski presented the proposed 2026 IT Department budget. Director Sebrowski said the biggest expense in his budget is to upgrade the Township's software as soon as possible next year because the current version will no longer be supported by Microsoft.

Trustee Berkheiser asked about subscription versus per computer.

Director Sebrowski said the Township has more users than workstations and the subscription model costs double the amount of buying the software per workstation.

Trustee Berkheiser said the website still sucks but he thinks a Township app is a great idea. He wonders if there's anything we can do to make it better for our residents?

Director Sebrowski said that if the Township moves forward with a media person, this is something they should be involved in. Whatever we go with in terms of an app, it would be branded as Commerce Township. He's been looking at the White Lake app to see what another municipality is doing.

Trustee Weber asked if all the department heads would be involved?

Director Sebrowski said yes but the library already has a very successful app.

Trustee Weber said the app is so successful we would definitely want Alyson's input.

Trustee Berkheiser asked what is the projected cost of the Township app?

Director Sebrowski said he estimated about \$7,000/year.

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ITEM 4: 2026 Township Budget Discussion continued

Trustee Sovel asked whatever technology the media person needs; which budget will that fall under?

Supervisor Gray said it should come out of the IT budget.

The Board further discussed the integration of an online app with the website and the ability to pay online for Township services.

Ordinance Director Gibbons presented the proposed 2026 Ordinance Department budget.

Director Gibbons said he would like to hire a third part-time employee. He said the department has a hard time keeping up with re-inspections and the Township still does not have weekend coverage.

Trustee Berkheiser said that when the Board created the Ordinance Director position, we were supposed to get weekend coverage and apparently that's not happening. What assurance do we have that if the Board approves another part-time person, that we'll get weekend coverage?

Trustee Sovel asked if the Ordinance Department works on Fridays?

Director Gibbons said they are rotating employees and splitting Friday and Saturday coverage. We are doing better with sign removals. He did some research and Waterford Township has 5 full-time ordinance officers for an area just slightly larger than Commerce Township.

Director Gibbons said that he wants to be able to respond to complaints in a timely manner.

Trustee Berkheiser asked what's your definition of a timely manner?

Director Gibbons says he wants all complaints closed out in less than 28 days, or if they need an extension then 30 to 35 days.

Trustee Long wonders if as the residents become aware that ordinances are routinely being enforced, residents will realize they will get caught and the number of complaints will decrease sometime this summer?

Treasurer Phillips said she thinks that people in neighborhoods probably stayed silent before because they thought nobody would do anything about an issue and now they see that something is being done and that may increase the number of complaints

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ITEM 4: 2026 Township Budget Discussion continued

received by the Ordinance Department. Some people may clean up their acts but there's always people who will not. There also needs to be a succession plan for the 2 gentlemen who are working part-time right now.

Trustee Weber asked if there are any imminent retirements?

Director Gibbons said there has been talk. In addition, he does not want to let the people of the Township down. He wants to deliver a service and it's important to cross train. They are doing fire alarms which is a lot of administrative work and preparing for court takes a lot of time as well. He would also like to do outreach because communication is key.

Supervisor Gray says that the Township continues to grow and he sees the hard work Mario and the ordinance officers put in every day and he thinks the Board should approve an additional part-time ordinance officer.

Trustee Sovel said that once you catch up the back log, you'll be able to deal with current complaints. So what would it look like next year with a third person?

Director Gibbons he would be proactive instead of reactive and get more properties cleaned up.

Trustee Weber said if you have too much on your plate and you need an additional employee to take some of it off, then tell us that.

Planning Director Campbell presented the proposed 2026 Planning Department budget. He said the budget is very similar to past years. One notable change is they are no longer sharing a staff person with KER Engineering in the Building Department. Once the Associate Planner position was created we went away from that. In an effort to fill that position, he is hoping to increase the salary range to \$60,000 to \$65,000 in order to deepen the pool of potential candidates. The amounts for capital outlay and supplies did not really change.

Building Department Official Jay James presented the proposed 2026 Building Department budget. He said his budget is pretty straightforward. He does his best to estimate the number of permit applications that will be received. The Board discussed contractual obligations and capital outlay

Library Director Lobert presented the proposed 2026 Library budget. She began by reviewing revenues and expenditures. She budgeted for a 3% increase for all full-time staff and she is proposing an additional youth librarian. She said it's the only way to be at programming capacity and to meet the demand of residents. She reviewed the library

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ITEM 4: 2026 Township Budget Discussion continued

hierarchy. She said demand for all programs is very strong and often results in wait lists. She said surveys indicate that residents want more programming. She wants to add more community and school visits.

Trustee Weber said that the work you and Emily are doing is exactly what we should be doing for our residents.

Trustee Berkheiser asked about a line item for computer services for \$80,000.

Director Lobert said that covers new self-check machines, updating iPads, and the library's portion of updating Microsoft Suites.

Director Lobert said that in terms of program expenses we are looking at a proposed increase up to \$77,000. This includes concerts, youth programming, history lectures, programs for babies and toddlers, adult art instruction, etc. She proposes increasing the Imagination Library budget to \$33,000. It's been a pretty steady rate over the last few years in terms of the number of children enrolling and aging out.

Director Lobert proposes \$150,000 for library furniture which includes updating display spaces, the youth, teen, and adult departments, single user free-standing study spaces, seating, and refreshing the circulation desk.

Director Lobert said a future project would be a space for moms to nurse their babies. Currently the only space available is the family bathroom. The library is beautiful but it is lacking some comforts.

She would like to put in some quiet seating in the non-fiction area of the library which would include some lounge chairs, laptop tables, and some ottomans.

Director Lobert said that in terms of her books and materials budget, she did increase it a little bit for 2026.

She budgeted \$55,000 for the electronic library system which runs the library and the app.

The Trustees discussed the possibility of federal funding being cut to all libraries.

HR/Finance Director Massey presented the proposed 2026 HR/Finance budget.

DDA Director Deborah Watson presented the proposed 2026 DDA budget.

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ITEM 4: 2026 Township Budget Discussion continued

Supervisor Gray asked if the trustees looked at the spreadsheet of proposed raises and asked if the Board had any comments.

Trustee Long said some seemed a little low.

Trustee Weber said this is supposed to recognize performance.

Trustee Long recited salary totals he'd like to see for a numbered list of directors. He thinks the top 3 should be higher. He thinks the number requested for number one is off by \$1500 or so. He said there are definitely people on this staff we don't want to lose.

Trustee Berkheiser said he doesn't have any issues with that but the Township Board is not on the list and they should be increased to \$300/meeting.

Trustee Sovel said his numbers are higher than what Trustee Long suggested.

The Trustees further discussed additional directors and salary numbers for 2026.

Clerk Creech asked if they are still doing percentages for the deputies?

Treasurer Phillips said yes.

The Trustees agreed to vote on salary increases at a future meeting.

ITEM 5: Capital Asset Policy

HR/Finance Director Massey said she wants to increase the capital asset threshold and capital asset policy from \$5,000 to \$10,000.

Trustee Berkheiser confirmed that this has nothing to do with the authority to spend funds?

Treasurer Phillips said no, it just determines how things are capitalized or depreciated. Further she said that most of that is stuff that ends up falling below the \$10,000 threshold.

MOTION by Berkheiser, supported by Creech, to change the capital asset threshold from \$5,000 to \$10,000. **MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY**

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ITEM 6: Other Matters

Trustee Berkheiser said the boy scout troop is working on signs at the parks.

Supervisor Gray said the Board discussed putting \$800,000 and \$400,000 in the fire fighter fund for future costs. It's been suggested that the Board change that to \$500,000 per year starting in 2025, not 2026.

Supervisor Gray said a company contacted him about putting a cell phone tower at station one and he didn't think it was a good fit with the water tower there and the helicopter pad at the hospital. They came back with a second location at Benstein and Sleeth Roads. Do you want him to entertain the offer?

The Trustees are ok with the Supervisor discussing it.

Supervisor Gray gave an update on Victory Park. Some dirt and cement shifted and opened up some holes which we are in the process of filling and leveling back out.

Supervisor Gray gave an update on the Michigan Airline Trail. Someone would like to donate a park bench that does not have the arm support in the center.

Adjournment

MOTION by Creech, supported by Sovel, to adjourn the meeting at 9:19 p.m.

MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY



Melissa Creech, Clerk
Charter Township of Commerce