

VILLAGE OF ELSIE

September 8th, 2026, Regular Council

Meeting Minutes

1. Call to Order

The regular meeting of the Elsie Village Council was called to order by Village President, Jason Freeman at 7:00 P.M.

Members present and participating in discussion, as reflected in the record, included Council Members Kory Witt, Sam Frink, Dorothy Ornelas, Mark Helt, and Joe Ondrusek, Village Manager/Police Chief Destinee Bryce and Dpw Supervisor, Chris Ormes. With council member Todd Carroll absent.

2. Approval of Agenda

The floor was opened for corrections, additions, or deletions to the agenda. The following amendments were noted by Village President, Jason Freeman.

- Under Village Business – Personnel Issue: addition of the Clerk/Treasurer position.
- Under Manager/Zoning and Code, item #2: addition of a request by the Village Manager to enter into closed session to discuss amendment to employment contract and periodic personnel evaluation.

Motion: K. Witt moved to accept the agenda as amended. Seconded by S. Frink. Motion carried.

3. Approval of Minutes

The minutes of August 11, 2026, regular meeting were presented for approval.

Motion: D. Ornelas moved to approve the minutes as presented, with no corrections noted. Seconded by M. Helt. Motion carried.

4. Presentation and Approval of Bills

The bills were presented for approval in the total amount of \$50,689.80, which includes final payment to McKearney Asphalt for the walking path at the park and a donation of \$14,100.00 for the purchase of two Hero Park statues.

Motion: J. Ondrusek moved to pay the bills as presented. Seconded by K. Witt. Motion carried.

5. Hero Park Update (Dorothy Ornelas)

- The two statues – an EMT statue and a “No Soldier Left Behind” Vietnam-era statue – have been paid for and ordered; payment has been mailed.
- Approximately 16 red memorial bricks are in production and will be placed in the park in September.
- A minimum order of 10 additional bricks is required to place another order; no further brick orders are expected until next year unless demand increases.
- Donations continue to come in from canvassing efforts, including a \$50 gift card from Sam’s Club (designated for fuel for statue pick up located in Minnesota).
- Council Member, Mark Helt has offered to travel to Minnesota to pick up the statues and transport them back to Elsie at the end of September 2026.

6. Park Update (Elsie Park Representative, Resident Ed White)

- Overall Park condition is good; minor fence damage was identified at the northeast corner, where a couple of upright posts (and possibly caps) need replacement.
- Volunteer turnout for court maintenance has been difficult to secure, but the goal remains to complete a third pickleball/tennis court painting this year.
- Crooked fence poles are being straightened as time allows; full fence replacement is not financially feasible at this time.
- The damaged post is believed to have been struck by equipment during a prior project (unrelated to the recent walking-path repaving); it had previously been bent and leaned toward the track to keep it clear of equipment.

Discussion followed regarding repair costs. It was estimated that two to three posts may need replacement, at a rough cost of \$15–\$20 per post plus concrete and fence ties. Council discussed handling minor costs (under \$50) via receipt reimbursement without a formal motion but agreed that this repair should instead come back as an action item.

Motion: No motion was made. Council agreed by consensus to add fence post repair, with pricing and a not-to-exceed budget (approximately \$150 for three posts), as an action item on the next meeting's agenda. Ed White will obtain pricing before that meeting.

7. Clinton Area Ambulance Authority (CAAA) Update (K. Witt)

- Per-capita cost is anticipated to rise to roughly \$33; the Authority reiterated that the millage rate will not allow this figure to be exceeded.
- CAAA is considering investing available funds with an entity referred to as “Michigan Class,” a local government investment pool in which funds can be moved in and out daily with no penalty or cost, and daily investment returns are credited to the account.
- Reported results from other participants were strong: one municipality reported earning over \$8,000 in a few months, and Fairfield Township reported roughly \$1,000 in daily interest in its first month.
- The investments are described as low risk, though returns are not guaranteed.
- Separately, it was noted that the Cemetery (DWS/perpetual/endowment fund) currently earns interest that has historically been used for cemetery needs. Financial Controller, Steve Adair has proposed moving those funds into something like Michigan Class as well, to be discussed at the October/November meeting pending schedule arrangements.

K. Witt asked whether the Village should schedule a meeting to evaluate participating in Michigan Class, and whether this should be placed on the next Council meeting agenda.

Motion: No formal motion was made. Council indicated support for K. Witt coordinating with the Michigan Class Investments to schedule further discussion, with a report back to Council.

8. School Project Update (Developer Ken Harris)

- The Michigan Economic Development Corporation (MEDC) has approved funding for its portion of the school redevelopment project; all follow-up questions, including those regarding historic status, were resolved with a favorable outcome.
- MEDC has issued a grant; MEDC will next verify the information submitted by the developer (property ownership, property tax payment status, brownfield TIF documentation, etc.), a process typically taking about 45 days.
- The project's bank is visiting the site tomorrow to review progress; closing will occur once MEDC provides its official approval letter.
- A building permit is ready for pick-up once financing closes. The roof has been replaced, environmental work is complete, and the building is partially framed.

- Projected timeline: the first unit is expected to be ready for occupancy in approximately 10 months, following completion of a full building “white box” (drywall, electrical and plumbing rough-in, and fire suppression/sprinklers operational). Thereafter, units will be completed at a rate of three per month until full build-out, for a total build-out of under a year and a half.
- The Village TIF (Tax Increment Financing) Board may need to reconvene to review updated project financials and finalize official TIF approval incorporating the MEDC grant; the developer will follow up with the Village on timing, potentially before the next meeting.
- Total MEDC grant amount is \$896,202, adjusted upward from the developer’s original request as part of financing negotiations; program rules cap investor returns and factor project cost against rent levels to keep the project bank financeable.
- Proposed rents: one-bedroom units at \$995/month, including all utilities and in-unit washer/dryer, compared with area market rents of roughly \$1,500–\$1,600/month for similar units.
- No formal waiting list has been started; the developer plans to open one approximately three months ahead of anticipated occupancy to avoid an overly long list.
- Remaining site includes demolition and grading of the former boiler room; a prior miscommunication regarding lawn mowing responsibilities has been resolved.
- The project remains contingent on official MEDC approval, which will allow the developer to close its bank loan and begin full construction.

Council thanked the developer for the update and offered continued assistance, including reconvening the TIF Board as needed.

9. Village Business – Clerk/Treasurer Personnel Matter

Council was updated on outstanding personnel issues involving the Clerk/Treasurer, previously outlined by Village Financial Controller, Steve Adair. The Village Manager attempted to conduct a performance review with the employee, who left the meeting before it was completed. The employee was not present at this Council meeting and did not request a closed session.

The Personnel Committee met to review the matter, with a Council member sitting in for a member who was unavailable. The Personnel Committee’s recommendation to Council was termination of the Clerk/Treasurer’s employment.

***Motion:** A motion was made to relieve the Clerk/Treasurer, Kelsey Kelly of her clerk and treasurer duties by Joe Ondrusek. Seconded. By Mark Helt. A roll call vote was taken Dorothy Ornelas – Aye; Mark Helt – Aye; Kory Witt – Aye; Sam Frink – Aye; Joe Ondrusek – Aye. Jason Freeman – Aye; Motion carried unanimously (6–0).*

10. Clerk/Treasurer's Report

Council President Jason Freeman read the Clerk/Treasurer's report into the record.

- Continued updates and modifications to the Village website, including ongoing work to update and improve online and printable forms for accessibility and ease of use.
- Village tax payments are due Monday, September 14; additional escrow payments are anticipated as the deadline approaches.
- Utility shutoff notices may be issued toward the end of September; residents with past-due balances are encouraged to bring accounts current beforehand.
- 11 pavilion rentals have been booked for 2026 to date, with 4 rentals already booked for the 2027 season.

Motion: A motion was made by Kory Witt to approve the Clerk/Treasurer's report. Seconded by Sam Frink Motion carried.

11. Police Report (Chief Bryce)

- The Elsie Police Department conducted 7 traffic stops this month; total calls decreased to 42, down from 50 the previous month. A total of 152 hours were worked by the Department this month.
- August police activity included traffic enforcement, motor carrier enforcement, suspicious activity response, a child neglect matter, one warrant arrest, ordinance violations involving ORVs and dirt bikes, and community policing events.
- Code and zoning enforcement: two zoning permits were issued (a shed and a porch); two code enforcement letters were issued; two properties were mowed by the Village for tall grass, with costs to be assessed to next year's taxes.
- Blight progress continues, with attorney's involvement pursued on one property on East Main Street and one on East Oak Street.
- On September 3, 2026, the Department completed its three-year LEIN Audit and remains fully compliant.

Motion: A motion was made by Mark Helt to approve the police report. Seconded. by Dorothy Ornelas Motion carried.

12. Village Manager's Report (Destinee Bryce)

- The FY26 financial audit was submitted to the State of Michigan as of August 24; the auditing firm will present findings to Council in October or November, pending scheduling. Financial Controller Steve Adair will also present financials at October or November council meeting.
- Treasury has provided the Village with a Memorandum of Understanding for the DWSRF (Drinking Water State Revolving Fund) project plan, totaling \$26,000.
- Financial status reports have been completed for the water meter replacement grant (period of October 1, 2025 – March 30, 2026); status reports for the additional Treasury-funded grants (fire hydrants, mini excavator and trailer) will follow.
- The workers' compensation audit has started and will be completed ahead of the October deadline.
- MML building insurance valuations will be conducted by CBS Valuation Group on September 25, 2026, covering Village-owned structures valued at \$100,000 or more.
- A USDA payment of \$68,420 was electronically withdrawn from Village accounts on September 1, 2026, for the sewer lagoon loan.
- The annual title certification compliance form has been submitted.
- Tax payments received to date total \$112,185.96 across 135 escrow tax parcels. Monday, September 14 is the final day tax payments can be collected by the Village; the office will remain open from 9:00 a.m. to 9:00 p.m. that day to accommodate residents.
- Michigan Rural Water will begin an energy efficiency audit for the Village later this month, requiring a year of utility billing data for lift stations, pump houses, and the water tower.
- The Ordinance Committee continues evening workshops; amendments and new ordinances will be presented to Council following Village Attorney review.
- A new personnel manual is being developed by the Village Manager and Financial Controller; once reviewed by the Personnel Committee, it will be brought to full Council for adoption.
- New part-time DPW employees have completed drug testing and physicals: Jayden Schultz is working alongside Chris and Keegan; Anthony Farr is expected to start soon.
- The fire hydrant replacement project continues, with 20 of the grant-funded hydrants installed; remaining hydrants will be completed soon.

- The Village Manager will attend a two-day fiscal management training (water, utilities, infrastructure, and cost allocation) on September 9–10, hosted by the Michigan Infrastructure Council.
- Treasury has offered to sponsor Village representatives to attend the Integrated Infrastructure Conference on September 23–24 in Livonia (\$200/person, covered by Treasury); interested attendees must notify Treasury by noon the following day.
- Community notice: Captain Kirby's Touch-a-Truck event will be held September 15, 5:00–7:00 p.m. at Granger Meadows Park, featuring food trucks, cider, donuts, and family activities.

***Motion:** A motion was made by Kory Witt to approve the Village Manager's report. Seconded. by Mark Helt. Motion carried.*

13. Closed Session – Village Manager Employment Contract-Mers Correction and Periodic personnel evaluation

Council entered closed session at the request of Village Manager Destinee Bryce to discuss her employment contract. Village Manager, Destinee Bryce submitted a written request dated September 7th, 2026, pursuant to MCL 15.268(a) of the Michigan Open Meetings Act, requesting a closed session to discuss (1) an amendment to her employment contract regarding MERS changes voted on by the Council on May 12, 2025, and (2) a periodic personnel evaluation of the Village Manager.

***Motion:** A motion was made to enter closed session at 7:40 pm. by Kory Witt Seconded by Sam Frink. Roll call vote; Dorothy Ornelas – Aye; Mark Helt – Aye; Kory Witt – Aye; Sam Frink – Aye; Joe Ondrusek – Aye. Jason Freeman – Aye Motion carried unanimously*

***Motion:** Following discussion in closed session, a motion was made to return to open session at 8:18 p.m. by Kory Witt Seconded by Sam Frink. Motion carried on a voice vote.*

Upon returning to open session, the Council took the following action: ***Motion** was made by Kory Witt to amend the Village Manager's employment contract to correct an oversight identified in review of past meeting minutes: a previously discussed and approved amendment to the contract addressing the Village Manager's participation in the Michigan Municipal Employees' Retirement System (MERS) was never formally executed in signed employment contract. This motion authorizes and directs that the MERS provision be incorporated into the Village Manager's contract as previously discussed, with no other terms of the contract altered, and directs that the amended contract be signed by the appropriate parties. Seconded by Sam Frink. Roll call vote: Joe Ondrusek – Aye; Sam Frink – Aye; Cory Witt – Aye; Mark Howe – Aye; Dorothy Ornelas – Aye; Jason Freeman – Aye. Motion carried unanimously*

14. Dpw Compensatory Time

***Motion:** A motion was made by Kory Witt and seconded by Sam Frink in regard to the adoption of compensation time for Dpw personnel. Motion carried.*

Council agreed to establish/continue a Personnel Committee workshop, an Ordinance Committee workshop, and a Fire Authority workshop, to be scheduled (see Action Steps, below).

16. DPW Report (Supervisor Chris Ormes)

- Of the 27 fire hydrants covered under the current grant, 20 have been completed and 7 remain; the installation contractor is on a scheduled break and expected to resume and finish within the week upon return.
- Two water valves have been identified as leaking – one on North Ovid Street and one on East/West Main Street, located about four feet apart; quotes have been requested for replacement before failure.
- Approximately 14 additional hydrants beyond the current 27-hydrant grant scope will need replacement in the future; the Village intends to pursue grant funding for this work next year.
- The Village's new mini excavator has been used twice, including cemetery work, without incident or damage.

- One lift station pump is operating at reduced capacity (taking roughly twice the normal time to pump) and will be repaired as funding allows.

Motion: A motion was made by Kory Witt to approve the DPW report. Seconded by Sam Frink. Motion carried.

17. Action Steps

- Ordinance Committee workshop scheduled for Thursday, September 24, 2026, at 6:00 p.m.
- Personnel Committee workshop scheduled for Tuesday, September 15, 2026, at 7:00 p.m., with the goal of finalizing the personnel manual before October 1.
- Fire Authority workshop scheduled for Wednesday, September 30, 2026, at 7:00 p.m. (public meeting; Fire Board to be invited); the Village President will confirm availability with the Fire Board via email and post notice once confirmed.
- Fence post repairs in the park are carried forward as an action item for next month.
- DPW to obtain quotes for replacement of the two leaking water valves identified above.

18. Other Business / Public Comment

- A Council member, also serving on the Fairfield Township Board of Trustees, reported that Fairfield Township's recent audit received a clean opinion; one resulting action item is a \$500 check to the Village to clear an uncashed February recycling reimbursement.
- DPW confirmed plans to sell decommissioned fire hydrants once removed from service.
- The hydrant installation contractor is expected to return this year to restore disturbed areas (grading and reseeding) once remaining hydrant work is complete.
- A request was made to restore vegetation/turf around the water tower area once related work is finished.
- A resident asked for help locating equipment (an excavator or small dozer with extended reach) to turn the park's compost piles this fall or spring. A Council member described a neighboring township's arrangement, in which a contractor grinds and screens compost in exchange for a portion of the material, and offered to inquire about a similar arrangement for Elsie.

19. Adjournment

Motion: A motion was made to adjourn at 8:37hrs at by Kory Witt and. Seconded by Sam Frink Motion carried.

Summary of Action Items

- Ed White: obtain pricing for replacement fence posts and bring to Council next month as a scheduled action item.
- DPW Chris Ormes: obtain quotes for two leaking water valves (North Ovid St. and E./W. Main St.) and coordinate replacement.
- M. Helt / Mark Helt: complete Minnesota trip to retrieve the Hero Park statues (travel window affects late-September scheduling).
- D. Ornelas/Dorothy Orenelas: continue coordinating memorial brick orders and placement (16 bricks expected in September; 10-brick minimum for future orders).
- K. Witt / Kory Witt: coordinate with Michigan Class on scheduling a discussion of participation in the Michigan Class investment program.
- Developer Ken Harris: follow up with the Village regarding reconvening the TIF Board to review updated project financials and confirm TIF approval.
- Village President/Jason Freeman: confirm Fire Board availability and post notice for the September 30 Fire Authority workshop

- Personnel Committee workshop – Tuesday, September 15, 2026, 7:00 p.m.
- Ordinance Committee workshop – Thursday, September 24, 2026, 6:00 p.m.
- Fire Authority workshop (public) – Wednesday, September 30, 2026, 7:00 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Village Manager, Village of Elsie