

NORTHWEST OTTAWA RECREATION AUTHORITY

NORA ADVISORY BOARD MEETING MINUTES

Date: April 23, 2026

Time: 5:30 P.M.

Location.: ESC Building (GHAPS)

1.Call to order: Chairperson – William Montgomery, Ferrysburg: the meeting was called to order at 5:30 p.m.

2.Roll Call.

Mary Jane Belter, GH Twp - present

Howard Behm – GH Twp - present

Sarah Kallio - Grand Haven - present

Lyndsey Huisman - Grand Haven - absent

William Montgomery – Ferrysburg - present

Craig Bessinger – Ferrysburg - present

Marc Eickholt – GHAPS - present

Sarah Elliott – GHAPS – arrived at 5:36 p.m.

Rick Mikkelsen – Robinson Twp - present

Rebecca Hopp - At Large – present

Motion to approve the absence of Lyndsey Huisman: Hopp, Mikkelsen. Motion passed: 8-0

3.Approval of Meeting Agenda: motion to approve the agenda:

Motion by Belter, second by Hopp. Vote: 8-0

4 Approval of Consent Agenda: Motion to approve the consent agenda:

Motion by Hopp, second by Belter. Vote: 9-0

Discussion of the consent agenda included discussing the budget for FY 2026-2027, the need for a public hearing. Bessinger read from the NORA by-laws the section regarding the budget which did not mention the need for a public hearing. He suggested amending the by-laws to include a section about holding a public hearing to approve the budget.

A. Approval of Board Meeting Minutes of February 26, 2026 as printed.

B. Financial Reports: 1. March 2026 Financials – Revenue & Expense Sheet

Financial reports: Bailey noted that mailing costs have increased

Eickholt: suggested that the discussion of financials be moved to New Business

Elliott arrived at 5:36 p.m.

5.New Business

A. Spring/Summer Programming Update

5th and 6th grade sports: track and volleyball are on schedule with 133 kids participating in volleyball. Middle school baseball and softball are on schedule.

There are 21 kids in archery with an elementary tournament in May and a middle and high school tournament following.

Kayaking and canoeing will be starting up.

The Get Outdoors for Girls is a very popular program Now the boys want an all boys outdoor rec program which will be called BRO: boys recreating outdoors

Rec summer school registrations have started with 34 registered at this time. Registrations start slow.

Elliott had questions about anyone from GHAPS reaching out about rec summer school.

B. Port Sheldon Update

Staff went to Port Sheldon and met with the rec committee and supervisor as there were questions about why Port Sheldon sends a donation to NORA. It was explained that the contribution enables the reduced participation fee for township residents.

NORA staff will be working to connect with the Port Sheldon area more including participation in their township activities to give NORA more exposure. That date is May 30. NORA will have a variety of activities, an info table, flyers, etc.

Discussion of the Port Sheldon event led to a discussion of NORA having more promotional items for other events including banners.

Hopp asked if staff need help from board members.

Port Sheldon will have a concert with donation split between NORA and the tech center.

Staff will work to schedule pickleball events at Port Sheldon.

Governmental units and pickleball courts:

Montgomery reminded staff and the board that there are pickleball courts in Ferrysburg

Montgomery suggested that perhaps Grand Haven Township could waive their fees for non-profit events. Bailey commented that there has not been a lot of consistency with Grand Haven Township. The first year of the courts there were no fees charged, now fees are charged.

C. Schedule special meeting date – budget approval

The consensus was to hold the budget hearing at the regular June NORA board meeting. Staff will publish the necessary public notices. Emily Greene (CoGH finance dept) will be present to review the budget.

Also includes election of officers

6. Old Business

A. Unicorn Fundraiser Reminder – July 21, 2026

A committee needs to be in place.

Bailey will send info to the board from previous events as a reference, starting point for this year.

Bailey will contact Karen Lowe to assist

Hopp work on a timeline and will spearhead the work to obtain silent auction items and will reach out to the DDA

Montgomery will talk to Gary (Unicorn) about signage the night of the event – if people stop thinking the restaurant is open to the public – they can pay the dinner fee and join the event.

Kallio will help with graphics for the event.

It was suggested that info from last year's bids be reviewed to determine the most popular items and use that as a guide for this year.

Letters for corporate sponsorships need to be mailed out.

Montgomery: have different breaks with someone talking about the impact of NORA

Info and donation cards on the tables

Sarah Elliott: perhaps have kids offer info, have their parents talk about the impact on the kids.

Bailey and Jackie will work on this and work on developing a video/slide show of NORA activities for people to watch.

Perhaps a video, video slide show of activities – running for people to watch

B .Millage Discussion

Eickholt: develop where the funding will go, show the need, work on the messaging.

Make sure that the board is fully informed as to the ask and the results of where the money will go.

Do strategic marketing

Board members expressed their thoughts:

Bessinger: put on the ballot this year otherwise we have to wait until 2028

Belter: economy unknown, people are struggling, cost of living is increasing, 2 other issues on the August ballot, GHAPS on the Nov ballot

Behm: concern about being a no vote for the third time

We are past august – would be the November election

Need everything in place by august for the Nov election

Elliott: we need to separate from county parks and GHAPS, families are struggling, economy is hurting people.

Eickholt: amount of work that needs to be done within the next couple of months, doubtful that it can be done even using past info; wait

Hopp: millage this year

Mikkelsen: this year

Kallio: concern with the other ballot millage requests,

The consensus is to wait until 2028. In the meantime start to build the case for why the millage is needed. Kallio will work with NORA staff on beginning the marketing and will ask Karen Lowe to assist.

Look at any possible millages that will be on the ballot in 2028.

Bailey: will pull past info. He and Jackie will develop plans, recommendations for what a millage would do for NORA. Gather info on future growth within our NORA govt area for determining what millage amount to ask for, best guess for increased operating costs for NORA, etc.

10.Public Comments:

Jackie: feels good about the direction NORA is headed, positive newspaper coverage for the program for girls in the outdoors.

11.Advisory Board Comments

Belter: Get agenda, etc. out a week before the meeting

Behm: meeting info out early

Hopp: thank you to the staff.

Sarah Kallio: Thank you to the staff

Sarah Elliott: thank you to the staff for the benefit for our children, she has friends with kids that are helping with programs

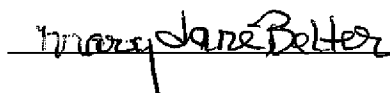
Montgomery: thank you to staff, continue to grow the programs, ask the board for help

12.Next Scheduled Meeting – June 25, 2026

13.Adjournment

Motion to adjourn: Hopp, Elliott

Meeting adjourned at 6:33 p.m.



Mary Jane Belter
NORA Board Secretary