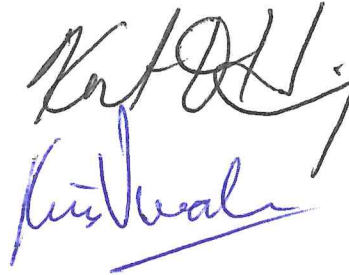


**Minutes**  
**Penn Township Advisory Board Meeting**  
**St. Joseph County Indiana**  
**Penn Township Trustee's Office**  
**210 E Russ Ave, Mishawaka, IN 46545**

**February 2, 2026**

**In attendance:**

Kent Hizer – Board President  
Mark Voelker-Board Member  
Kris Verash – Board Member  
Doris Portolese- Trustee  
Chief Gerndt – Fire Chief



**Members of the public in attendance:**

Nancy Duncan  
Michelle Gerndt

**5:30 pm- Pledge of Allegiance**

**Call to Order:** Kent Hizer

**New Business for Penn Township Board:**

- Approval of January 6<sup>th</sup>, 2026 minutes. Kent motioned for approval. Mark Voelker second it. All voted to approve.
- Kris Verash mentioned that Madison Township maybe looking to join up with another township. This was mentioned on a face book post. No one knew anything more regarding this issue.

**Approval of 2025 Annual Financial Report:**

- Kent Hizer began with general overview of this report. – This 38-page report shows all the details of what income and expenses there were in 2025 for Penn Township. This will be downloaded on to the Gateway Account once it is approved. Kent suggests to focus on Page 2 – overview by funds. General Township cash balance increased by \$1.3 million, Rainy Day fund was stagnated as we have not moved any money into this fund in 2025. Could be used for repair of parking lot for Russ Street office in the future. Non-reverting Fire Fund down \$35K, Poor Relief increased \$250K from 2024. Penn Township spent nearly \$215K which is about the same as income made from investments. Our investment covers the poor relief fund. This spending is about \$13K less than 2024. This shows that our community is faring well. Our association with Mishawaka Food Pantry should be a model within the state. Penn Township provides the building and pays for the cost of the building. This cooperation helps Penn Township provide appropriate poor relief services. County Grant for Fire station \$157K was transferred out into a General Grant fund. This was recommended action by the State auditor. End cash increased by \$800K. Our financial situation is very strong. Years ago, the township had to take cash emergency loans to pay bills. Doris should be commended for her stewardship. By the end of 2026 the Fire Debt fund will be paid off Est. \$600K –  
Open to questions –

Chief Gerndt - what the Non-Reverting Fire fund is. This is the fire recovery fund. This is not from taxes. This comes from special calls that we get from Insurance Companies. The fund is going down due to Insurance companies not paying for some of the services.

Mark Voelker – Why was Special Fire Protection Territory \$720K more than Receipts? Doris -This is due to extra pay we gave to the firefighters in April of 2025, which accounted for around \$640K of the increase. This pay increase was around 20% average. This new pay level was established by taking the average salary of 5 local departments plus 2%. Penn is now in the middle pay range of these various departments. Again – another reason for joining a new fire territory. Mark -Why is the General Fund and Poor Relief funds showing significant gains in cash on hand? Doris -The increase in the General Township is due to the need to break Mishawaka tax income separate so it is not applied to the Penn Township Fire funds. Mishawaka residents pay for fire service through the City of Mishawaka. This is around \$32K per month. Plus \$260K receipt was for Interest earned. Mark - Poor Relief only spent 40% of what was received why is that? Doris - I typically budget a little higher than past actual spends. I average the last 3 years to get amounts for rent and utilities. In 2025 our payments for heat were down. It looks like 2026 could be higher since the rates have increased and delivery charges are higher. Doris opinion is to have extra \$ instead of not enough.

Nancy Duncan – made comment about possible increases in waste for Mishawaka residents. She thinks it's wise to have extra funds budgeted as we could see increases in the future due to the increases by Mishawaka utilities.  
Kent Hizer – Residents are seeing huge increases from NIPSCO – which again could affect the demand for Poor Relief in the coming months.

Kris Verash motioned to approve Annual Financial Report. Mark Voelker seconded. All voted to approve. This is will be posted on Gateway on Tuesday February 3<sup>rd</sup>, and published in newspaper by February 13<sup>th</sup>.

- Doris passed out the Revised (Final) Investment Report which we reviewed and discussed last month.
- Doris explained the 2026 Standards & Guidelines resolution 2026-03. This is what Penn Township uses as how to determine what aid and support residents qualify for. Income qualification is based upon Federal guidelines. This year it's at \$13,030/yr single person/ family of 4 is \$2,750/month. The resolution is to change rent payment from \$650 to \$700. The average rental home in Mishawaka is \$980/month. Utilities to change from \$800 to \$850. Both are one time support that Penn Township can provide to residents. Burials rate will remain at \$750 which is average within the region. Cruz and Palmer are the primary funeral homes Penn Township works with. These are the only changes to the Standards & Guidelines that Doris is asking for. Kent Hizer made motion to approve Resolution 2026-03. Mark Voelker seconded it. All voted to approve.
- Trivia Fund raising event at the Mishawaka Food Pantry on February 28<sup>th</sup> at the old Moose lodge.

**Old Business:** none

**Chief Gerndt Report:**

- Chief Gerndt submitted call volume report: 192 incidents, 8 fire, 126 rescue & Emergency medical services, 45 good intent calls. Well within a normal month.
- Introduction of Sam Nowak – Penn Fire Department Firefighter/paramedic – who is spearheading Rescue Task Force (RTF) program for Penn Fire. He is responsible for training and preparing for mass shooting, act of assailant and how Penn Fire department should respond to these potential events. In 2025 Sam took the instructor course of Active Attack Integrated Response Course. He updated policies, and make sure personnel understand how the department will respond to possible events. Plus going over equipment and training. Also reviewed NFPA-3000 standard for active shooter/hostile event (ASHER) and started to develop a compliance document to ensure Penn is in compliance. This is important training incase Penn is ever taken to court and sued after event questioning how prepared the department is for such an event. Sam also developed a Newsletter which he hopes to release once a quarter highlighting books to read and keeping the department current with any update with past events around the country. Sam would like to host an Active Attack Integrated Response event this spring at Penn HS. This would be three – two-day courses. The hope is to coordinate with S. Bend, Mishawaka, and other safety departments. He is having issues trying to coordinate with Penn – may have to postpone until early summer. Cannot do it while school is in session. Dr. Joyce from St. Joseph County has asked Sam to be on the county wide planning team for RTF. The Penn Township Fire Department would provide rescue support through the Paramedics in an RTF event. The issue is – does everyone understand when and how to enter buildings to rescue injured people. Our law enforcement departments should be leading the process of training people. This training event at Penn will help all departments throughout the county understand how the coordination of various departments will occur. Plan is also to do instructor course to help train others. Sam is also looking for grants to purchase or use the training equipment for an active shooter event (\$50K). 2026 – continued training and getting NFPA 3000 standards in compliance, increase the number shift training for RTF Team.
- First Hearing for the new Fire Territory – February 16, at 5:30 PM at old Moose lodge. Two options have been presented. Hope is that at least one will pass. Other days are March 9<sup>th</sup> and March 24<sup>th</sup>. All townships will be represented at these hearings.

**Trustee's Report:**

- Accounts will be balanced by end of week, and TA-7 will be sent.

**Job of the Township:**

- No comments

**Call for adjournment: 6:10 PM** Hizer made a motion to adjourn. Verash second. Unanimous vote to adjourn.

**Next Meeting: Monday, March 2, 2026 – 5:30 PM at Trustee's office.**