GRATIOT COUNTY WHISTLEBLOWER

FACTS | RECORDS | ACCOUNTABILITY

INDEPENDENT LOCAL NEWS AND PUBLIC-RECORDS REPORTING

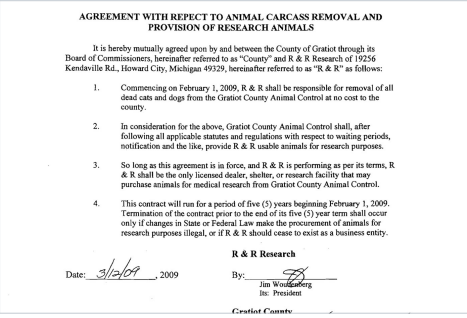
SEPTEMBER 30, 2026 | VOL. 1, NO. 2

RECORDS REPORT

From Gratiot County's Shelter to Research Labs: The Stories of Koda and Queenie

Two dogs tied to Gratiot County gave their names to bills in Lansing. County records show the contract behind the practice, a 2012 vote to limit it, and what is still not known.

BY W.E. | GRATIOT COUNTY WHISTLEBLOWER



AGREEMENT WITH REPECT TO ANIMAL CARCASS REMOVAL AND PROVISION OF RESEARCH ANIMALS

It is hereby mutually agreed upon by and between the County of Gratiot through its Board of Commissioners, hereinafter referred to as "County" and R & R Research of 19256 Kendaville Rd., Howard City, Michigan 49329, hereinafter referred to as "R & R" as follows:

1. Commencing on February 1, 2009, R & R shall be responsible for removal of all dead cats and dogs from the Gratiot County Animal Control at no cost to the county.
2. In consideration for the above, Gratiot County Animal Control shall, after following all applicable statutes and regulations with respect to waiting periods, notification and the like, provide R & R usable animals for research purposes.
3. So long as this agreement is in force, and R & R is performing as per its terms, R & R shall be the only licensed dealer, shelter, or research facility that may purchase animals for medical research from Gratiot County Animal Control.
4. This contract will run for a period of five (5) years beginning February 1, 2009. Termination of the contract prior to the end of its five (5) year term shall occur only if changes in State or Federal Law make the procurement of animals for research purposes illegal, or if R & R should cease to exist as a business entity.

R & R Research

Date: 3/2/09, 2009 By: Jim Woodenberg Its: President

Gratiot County

The county's 2009 agreement with R & R Research, from the Jan. 8, 2013 board packet. Gratiot County public record; cropped.

ITHACA — A Michigan law written in 1969 says a county that runs an animal shelter may sell unclaimed or unwanted dogs and cats to a Michigan research facility for no more than $10 apiece. That sentence is still on the books.

For years, Gratiot County was part of the system that law allowed. Two dogs reported to have passed through the county's shelter, a Malamute named Koda and a Dalmatian mix named Queenie, ended up at two of the state's largest universities. Each later gave a name to a bill in Lansing. Neither bill has become law.

This report sets out what the record shows, and says plainly where it stops.

Koda, 2007

Koda was a 3-year-old Malamute. CBS Detroit reported in June 2011 that his family surrendered him to the Gratiot County Animal Shelter on June 13, 2007. Six days later, the report said, he was sold to a federally licensed Class B dealer, a broker permitted to buy animals from shelters and other "random sources" and resell them for research. The dealer sold him to the University of Michigan.

He was used in the university's trauma-training course and then euthanized, according to that report, which attributed the account to the Michigan director of the Humane Society of the United States. The university stopped using live animals in the course in February 2009, CBS Detroit reported.

The reports we reviewed do not name the dealer that bought Koda, and neither do we. We have not seen the county's intake or transfer record for him.

The 2009 agreement

The Gratiot County Herald reported in January 2009 that members of several animal-welfare groups asked the Board of Commissioners not to renew the county's five-year contract with R&R Research, a dealer based in Howard City, and that commissioners renewed it. The Herald's report gives no vote count.

The agreement itself is a public record. It appears on page 82 of the county's Jan. 8, 2013 board packet, where the county administrator presented it to newly seated commissioners. It is one page long and has four terms:

- From Feb. 1, 2009, R&R removes "all dead cats and dogs" from Animal Control "at no cost to the county."
- "In consideration for the above," Animal Control, after following the laws on waiting periods and notification, shall "provide R & R usable animals for research purposes."
- While the agreement is in force, R&R "shall be the only licensed dealer, shelter, or research facility that may purchase animals for medical research from Gratiot County Animal Control."
- It runs five years from Feb. 1, 2009, and can end early "only if" the law makes the practice illegal or R&R goes out of business.

The agreement states no price per animal and no number of animals. It is signed for R&R by its president and for the county by the board chairman, the administrator, the county attorney and the Animal Control director. The county signatures that carry dates are from March 2009.

How commissioners voted in 2009 is not known. The underlying board minutes have not yet been located. The county's online meeting records begin in August 2010. We do not attribute a 2009 vote to any commissioner.

Queenie, 2009

Queenie was a female Dalmatian mix. A state senator's office and Bridge Michigan have described her as a stray from Gratiot County. A 2019 report by the Physicians Committee for Responsible Medicine, which says it obtained Wayne State University's purchasing and veterinary records for her under Michigan's Freedom of Information Act, states that she arrived at Wayne State on Sept. 16, 2009, "from the Gratiot County Animal Shelter in Ithaca, Mich., by way of R&R Research."

A county record touches this too, at one remove. On Feb. 21, 2012, a member of the public filed a handout with the board that included the group's magazine cover story on Queenie. The cover reproduces what appears to be a Gratiot County Animal Control card, serial number 259, stamped "RELEASED TO R&R RESEARCH." That is an advocacy publication reproduced in a county packet. The original card has not been located.

At Wayne State, Queenie was used in cardiovascular research. The Physicians Committee's report quotes technicians' notes describing whining, swelling at surgical sites and reluctance to stand, and says she was euthanized on June 29, 2010, after an implanted device broke.

What Wayne State says

Wayne State disputes the way Queenie's case is presented. In a written response to questions raised at a Michigan House committee hearing, the university called the reference outdated, noting that she "underwent studies in 2010." It said "a USDA review found interpretation of the medical record data was cherry-picked to portray a scenario far worse than what actually occurred," and that the U.S. Department of Agriculture "performed a multi-day investigation regarding Queenie's care; no animal care issues were identified."

The university said its heart research has been funded by the National Institutes of Health since 1991, that using shelter animals was "a historical practice," and that it has used only purpose-bred animals for the last decade. It wrote that using random-source animals "was outlawed by the USDA in 2015." The federal document we located is narrower: a National Institutes of Health notice that barred NIH money for dogs from Class B dealers starting with fiscal 2015 awards.

This report does not settle the scientific dispute. It reports what the records say and what each side says about them.

2012: the board limits the arrangement

County minutes from 2012 show the issue returning to the board. On Jan. 17, the chairman said he had received more than 1,800 e-mails about R&R Research and the gassing of animals. On Feb. 7, the Animal Control director told commissioners the e-mails were "not a fair representation of your county residents."

On March 20, 2012, the minutes record this action: "Motion by Bailey, second by Merignac to only give one animal a year to R&R Research until the contract expires." The March 20, 2012 minutes record the motion as carried 6-0 with no votes against, but the clerk's minutes contain an internal discrepancy over the individual vote list. For that reason we do not list who voted.

The motion was a limit, not a termination. A one-animal-a-year limit is not a term of the 2009 agreement, and no written amendment has been located. On May 1, 2012, a commissioner asked for

discussion of a letter "from an attorney at Foster Swift regarding a breach of contract with R&R Research and the earlier resolution passed." The board then met in closed session on June 5 and June 12 to discuss attorney-client correspondence about R&R. On Aug. 14, the chairman said: "The Resolution still stands, but the Board did send questions to counsel." The letter, any county reply and the outcome are not in the online record.

The numbers

A table handed to the board on Feb. 12, 2013, compiled by the rescue group Help Furry Friends, lists animals that left the county shelter "to research": 376 in 2006, 287 in 2007, 346 in 2008, 171 in 2009, 30 in 2010 and 39 in 2011. The county's own annual reports behind those figures have not been obtained. The Animal Control quarterly reports we did find show zero dogs and zero cats sent to research in April through June 2012 and in October through December 2012.

The written 2009 agreement's stated five-year term would have ended January 31, 2014. No subsequent renewal has yet been located. The county's shelter operating procedures, effective March 5, 2019, state: "Gratiot County does not sell, nor otherwise supply, live animals for research to any organization."

The bills

Koda's Law. House Bill 4663 of 2009 would have let a person surrendering a pet say whether it could go to research, barred shelters from giving strays to dealers, and deleted the $10 provision. The House passed it 78 to 20 on July 28, 2010. It died in a Senate committee.

Queenie's Law. House Bill 4254 of 2025 would bar a public body, including a public university, from using a dog in an experiment that causes pain or distress. On Oct. 30, 2025, the House Regulatory Reform Committee voted 14-0, with two members passing, to send it to the Rules Committee, according to the committee's minutes. The full House has not voted. The Senate version, Senate Bill 127, was referred to the Regulatory Affairs Committee on March 6, 2025, and that is the last formal action on it. The committee took testimony on May 20, 2026, without a vote. Both statuses were checked on Sept. 30, 2026.

Neither bill would change the 1969 statute on shelter animals.

What we could not establish

- How any commissioner voted on the 2009 agreement, the tally, or the meeting date.
- Which dealer bought Koda.
- The county's own intake and transfer records for either dog.
- What R&R's lawyers claimed in 2012, what the county answered, and how the dispute ended.
- When the last animal went from the county shelter to research.
- What happened when the agreement's term ran out.

These gaps need records requests, which under Michigan law must carry a requester's name and address. They are among the first tasks for the volunteer public representatives this publication is recruiting. Gratiot County, Wayne State University, the University of Michigan and R&R Research have not been asked to comment for this report. Each is welcome to respond at contactus@gcwhistleblower.com, and any response will be published.

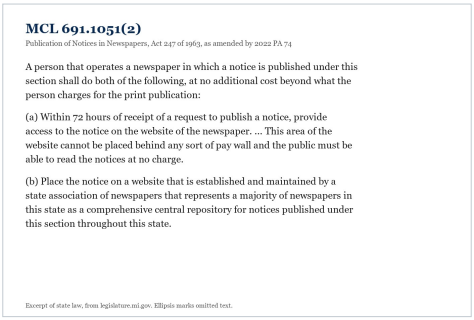
Records to watchThe board and Finance Committee minutes from January through March 2009; the earlier R&R contract; the 2012 attorney letter and the county's reply; Animal Control's annual reports from 2004 to 2014; and the disposition records for both dogs.

Sources: 2009 agreement, in the Jan. 8, 2013 board packet (p. 82); March 20, 2012 minutes, in the April 10, 2012 packet; Help Furry Friends statistics handout, Feb. 12, 2013; MCL 287.389 (the 1969 statute); CBS Detroit, June 11, 2011; Physicians Committee report, Oct. 7, 2019; HB 4663 of 2009; HB 4254 of 2025; SB 127 of 2025; House committee minutes, Oct. 30, 2025; NIH notice NOT-OD-14-034. Links at gcwhistleblower.com.

PUBLIC NOTICES | GRATIOT COUNTY | SEPT. 30, 2026

Gratiot's Legal Notices Are Missing From the Statewide Archive State Law Calls For

A 2022 law says a newspaper that prints legal notices must also place them in a statewide online repository. Searches for the Gratiot County Herald there return nothing.



MCL 691.1051(2)

Publication of Notices in Newspapers, Act 247 of 1963, as amended by 2022 PA 74

A person that operates a newspaper in which a notice is published under this section shall do both of the following, at no additional cost beyond what the person charges for the print publication:

(a) Within 72 hours of receipt of a request to publish a notice, provide access to the notice on the website of the newspaper. ... This area of the website cannot be placed behind any sort of pay wall and the public must be able to read the notices at no charge.

(b) Place the notice on a website that is established and maintained by a state association of newspapers that represents a majority of newspapers in this state as a comprehensive central repository for notices published under this section throughout this state.

Excerpt of state law, from legislature.mi.gov. Ellipsis marks omitted text.

The part of Michigan law that sets a newspaper's duties when it publishes a legal notice. Text from legislature.mi.gov; graphic by Gratiot County Whistleblower.

GRATIOT COUNTY — Foreclosure sales, zoning hearings, election notices and requests for bids in Gratiot County are printed each week in the Gratiot County Herald. A statewide online archive that Michigan law says those notices must also be placed in shows none of them.

What the law says

Michigan's law on publishing notices in newspapers was amended in 2022. It says a person who operates a newspaper in which a notice is published "shall do both of the following, at no additional cost beyond what the person charges for the print publication."

First, within 72 hours of receiving a request to publish a notice, the newspaper must make it available on its own website, in an area that "cannot be placed behind any sort of pay wall." Second, it must "place the notice on a website that is established and maintained by a state association of newspapers that represents a majority of newspapers in this state as a comprehensive central repository." The Michigan Press Association runs such a site, mipublicnotices.com.

What the repository shows

The repository lists the Gratiot County Herald among the publications a visitor can choose. On Sept. 24 and again on Sept. 30, this publication searched it with only that filter set. Both times the result was "No notices found."

To test whether the search was working, we ran the same search for the Midland Daily News. It returned 2,520 notices. A search by county, for Gratiot with no newspaper selected, returned 11 notices, all of them statewide items from 2020. No local Gratiot County notice from any newspaper appeared.

What the Herald's own website shows

The Herald does post its notices on its own site, free and without a paywall, in weekly bundles labeled with the print date. Since mid-January 2026, the listing shows them posted the day before or the day of publication in nearly every week.

That was not so last fall. For the print issues of Oct. 9, 16, 23 and 30, Nov. 6 and 13, and Dec. 25, 2025, and Jan. 1, 2026, the site's own posting dates are six to 14 days after the print date. Because a request to publish comes before the print date, those postings fell outside the 72-hour window in the law. Four more weeks in 2026 (April 23, June 11, July 2 and Aug. 6) show a six-day gap.

Why it matters, and what it does not mean

Local governments pay for these notices with public money. County claims lists from 2012, the most detailed we have located, show payments to the Herald for drain-office legal publications, election notices and the treasurer's tax-foreclosure listing, including a single payment of $6,669. The county's current yearly total is not published.

The purpose of the repository is to let anyone search every notice in the state in one place and sign up for alerts. A Gratiot County resident who relies on it today would find nothing about Gratiot County.

Several cautions apply. The law states a duty but no penalty, and whether a missing repository entry affects a notice's legal validity is a question for courts, not for this report. The Herald is not alone: another newspaper that circulates in the county does not appear in the repository's publication list at all. We have not determined why the Herald's notices are absent; a technical or clerical cause is possible. And this publication does not sell or carry legal notices.

The Gratiot County Herald and the Michigan Press Association have not been asked to comment for this report. Either is welcome to respond at contactus@gcwhistleblower.com, and any response will be published in full.

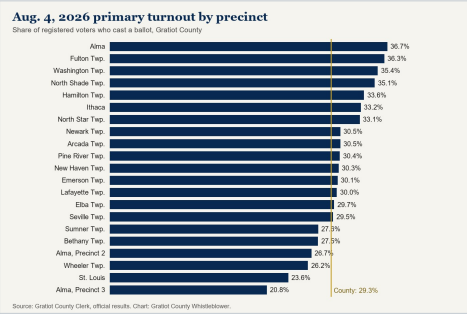
Records to watchThe county's payments to newspapers for legal notices since 2022; whether notices begin to appear in the repository; and any response from the Herald or the press association.

Sources: MCL 691.1051 (state law); Repository search: Gratiot County Herald; Gratiot County Herald legal notices; Gratiot County Herald public notices. Links at gcwhistleblower.com.

ELECTIONS | GRATIOT COUNTY | SEPT. 30, 2026

Three in Ten Voters Decided 12 Tax Questions in August. All 12 Passed.

Official results show 29.3 percent turnout countywide, from 36.7 percent in one Alma precinct to 20.8 percent in another. Three more local questions are on the Nov. 3 ballot.



Turnout in each Gratiot County precinct in the Aug. 4 primary. Chart by Gratiot County Whistleblower from the county clerk's official results.

GRATIOT COUNTY — Five weeks before the Nov. 3 general election, the county clerk's official results from the Aug. 4 primary show how few voters settled a long list of local tax questions: 7,987 of 27,294 registered voters cast a ballot, a turnout of 29.3 percent.

Twelve millage questions were on Gratiot County ballots that day. Every one passed.

Where people voted, and where they did not

Turnout was highest in the City of Alma's Precinct 1, at 36.7 percent, followed by Fulton Township at 36.3 percent and Washington Township at 35.4 percent. It was lowest in Alma's Precinct 3, at 20.8 percent, and in the City of St. Louis, at 23.6 percent. Alma alone spanned nearly the whole range: its three precincts came in at 36.7, 26.7 and 20.8 percent. The City of Ithaca was at 33.2 percent.

The two countywide renewals

- Senior Citizens Services millage renewal: 5,654 yes, 1,703 no (76.9 percent yes).
- Agricultural and Economic Development millage renewal: 4,908 yes, 2,453 no (66.7 percent yes).

Local questions

- Gratiot Emergency Services Authority fire and EMS renewal: 1,805 yes, 447 no.
- Pine River Township fire and rescue renewal: 444 yes, 99 no.
- Arcada Township fire and rescue renewal: 285 yes, 68 no.
- Ashley Area Fire Authority renewal: 440 yes, 137 no.
- Seville Township fire and first responder renewal: 308 yes, 143 no.
- New Haven Township roads, bridges, hall and cemetery renewal: 135 yes, 48 no.
- North Star Township road improvements renewal: 128 yes, 85 no.
- Ithaca Public Schools operating millage renewal: 1,123 yes, 552 no.
- Fulton Schools operating millage renewal: 495 yes, 343 no.
- Village of Ashley millage increase to restore its authorized operating millage: 59 yes, 52 no.

The Ashley village question was the closest, decided by seven votes out of 111. It was also the only one of the 12 described on the ballot as an increase rather than a renewal. The totals above are the votes counted in Gratiot County; school districts and fire authorities that cross county lines may have additional votes elsewhere.

Both parties' nominees for county road commissioner were unopposed. Jennifer Lobdell received 3,096 votes in the Democratic primary and Aaron L. VanHorn Sr. received 3,705 in the Republican primary. They meet on Nov. 3.

What is next

The Nov. 3 ballot carries at least three more local money questions that this publication has reported on: a new county-wide transit millage, a 1-mill levy for the Alma Public Library building, and a $12.4 million Breckenridge Community Schools bond. General elections draw far more voters than August primaries, so those questions will be decided by a larger and different electorate.

Records to watchThe county clerk's final candidate and proposal list for Nov. 3; the early-voting site notice and hours; and the precinct turnout report after the general election.

Sources: Official results, Aug. 4, 2026 primary (Gratiot County Clerk); Gratiot County Clerk, Elections; Our report on the transit millage. Links at gcwhistleblower.com.

VOLUNTEERS WANTED | 3 TO 5 POSITIONS

Be Our Public Representative

Some officials will not answer questions from an anonymous publication, and records requests under Michigan law need a real name and address. We are looking for three to five Gratiot County residents to contact public offices, ask our questions and file records requests under their own names, on our behalf. Our editors write or approve every question. The role is unpaid, and your name will appear on the letters and requests you send.

Read the full role and apply: gcwhistleblower.com/volunteer

ROADS | BRECKENRIDGE | SEPT. 30, 2026

$3.7 Million M-46 Resurfacing Runs Through Mid-October, With a Detour at the Breckenridge Rail Crossing

The state is repaving about 12.5 miles from Croswell Road to Merrill. MDOT lists Oct. 16 as the end date.



M-46 where it crosses the railroad on the west side of Breckenridge, before this year's work. USDA NAIP aerial imagery via USGS, public domain; cropped.

BRECKENRIDGE — Drivers on M-46 east of St. Louis have about two more weeks of lane closures ahead, according to the Michigan Department of Transportation's schedule for a $3.7 million resurfacing project.

MDOT says it is investing approximately $3.7 million to resurface about 12.5 miles of M-46 from Croswell Road to the west village limit of Merrill, in Gratiot and Saginaw counties. The department lists a start date of Sept. 8 and an end date of Friday, Oct. 16.

Traffic is being maintained with single-lane closures and flaggers. Starting the week of Sept. 15, MDOT said, a detour would be posted at the railroad crossing in the village of Breckenridge while the crossing is rebuilt. The department describes the work as weather-dependent, so the end date can move.

Full report and sources: gcwhistleblower.com/articles/m-46-resurfacing-runs-through-mid-october

COUNTY AGENCIES | GRATIOT COMMUNITY AIRPORT | SEPT. 28, 2026

Airport Jet Fuel Sales Down 28% This Year as Taxilanes Are Repaved

The Airport Authority's Sept. 15 packet logs a month of paving and crack sealing, a pre-bid meeting on the terminal, and fuel sales well behind last year.



Gratiot Community Airport on West Seaman Road, Arcada Township, before the August work. USDA NAIP aerial imagery via USGS, public domain; cropped.

ARCADA TOWNSHIP — Gratiot Community Airport sold about 28 percent less jet fuel in the first eight months of 2026 than in the same months of 2025, according to the airport manager's report in the Gratiot County Airport Authority's Sept. 15 meeting packet.

The report's tables show 15,655.6 gallons of Jet A sold from January through August, down 6,073.8 gallons from the same period a year earlier. August alone fell from 8,178.1 gallons to 4,513.7. Sales of 100LL, the fuel used by most small piston planes, were down about 10 percent, to 15,475.5 gallons. The report also counts 71 days this year with no fuel sales at all, 19 more than in the same months of 2025, and lists low ceilings, high winds and severe weather as the causes.

The manager's daily log for August describes a pavement project. Rieth-Riley Construction built a temporary road and removed concrete on Aug. 3, crews pulverized the taxilanes on Aug. 4, and the first 1.5-inch layer of asphalt went down on Aug. 8. The final asphalt layer was laid Aug. 11, and topsoil and hydroseeding followed. From Aug. 24 to Aug. 28 a crack-sealing contractor worked on Runway 18/36, the taxilane to Runway 27, the midfield taxilane and the ramp. A seal coat planned for Aug. 31 was rained out, the log says.

Full report and sources: gcwhistleblower.com/articles/airport-fuel-sales-down-as-taxilanes-are-repaved

SCHOOLS | BRECKENRIDGE | SEPT. 23, 2026

Breckenridge Schools Ask Voters for a $12.4 Million Bond With No Change in the Tax Rate

The Nov. 3 question would add elementary classrooms and replace 1966-era plumbing. The ballot says 2027 debt millage would stay at its current level, with an average of 2.22 mills over 15 years.



The Breckenridge Community Schools campus on Wright Street. USDA NAIP aerial imagery via USGS, public domain; cropped.

BRECKENRIDGE — Breckenridge Community Schools is asking voters Nov. 3 to approve borrowing up to $12.4 million in general obligation bonds, according to the ballot language on the county clerk's unofficial proposal list.

The question lists the purposes as "erecting, furnishing, and equipping structures and additions to the elementary school; remodeling ... school buildings, including HVAC and school security improvements; acquiring and installing instructional technology; ... improving playgrounds, parking lots, and sites; and purchasing buses."

The district's bond page describes the plan in more detail: four new elementary classrooms, an expanded cafeteria and kitchen, parking and traffic changes, playground work and secure entries, plus replacement of the middle/high school's underground plumbing, which dates to 1966, and its kitchen, ventilation, electrical and PA, bell and clock systems.

Full report and sources: gcwhistleblower.com/articles/breckenridge-schools-ask-voters-for-12-4-million-bond

ROADS | SEVILLE TOWNSHIP | SEPT. 23, 2026

Lumberjack Road Bridge Bid Came In $857,000 Under the Engineer's Estimate

The Pine River crossing is closed through Oct. 30 while it is replaced. State letting records show nine bidders and a low bid of $1.95 million.



Lumberjack Road where it crosses the Pine River in Seville Township, before the bridge closure. USDA NAIP aerial imagery via USGS, public domain; cropped.

SEVILLE TOWNSHIP — The bridge that carries Lumberjack Road over the Pine River is being replaced this year under a contract that came in well below what the county's engineers expected, according to Michigan Department of Transportation letting records.

The Gratiot County Road Commission says the bridge, between Madison and McGregor roads, is closed while it is replaced, with a project completion date of Oct. 30, 2026. Traffic is detoured on M-46, Warner Road and Blanchard Road.

MDOT's results for its Jan. 9, 2026 letting list the job as a local-agency project, number 29000-220524, described as "bridge reconstruction including replacement with 36-inch x 49-inch prestressed concrete superstructure and approach work on Lumberjack Road over Pine River." Nine contractors bid. The low bid, from Davis Construction, Inc., was $1,949,242.56. The engineer's estimate was $2,806,943.05, so the low bid was 30.56 percent under the estimate, a difference of about $857,700. The second bid, from Grand River Construction, Inc., was $2,028,025.98; the highest, from C. A. Hull Co., Inc., was $3,028,361.76.

Full report and sources: gcwhistleblower.com/articles/lumberjack-road-bridge-bid-came-in-857000-under-estimate

COUNTY CONTRACTS | GRATIOT COUNTY | SEPT. 23, 2026

County Seeks Bids to Rebuild the Commission on Aging Parking Lot; Bids Due Friday

Project 10-26 calls for pulverizing and repaving about 43,000 square feet of asphalt. Sealed bids are due at 11 a.m. Sept. 25; the board is scheduled to award Oct. 6.

ITHACA — Gratiot County is taking sealed bids through Friday to rebuild the parking lot at its Commission on Aging building, according to an Invitation to Bid the county released Aug. 21.

The specification, Project No. 10-26, describes about 43,000 square feet of existing asphalt to be pulverized, regraded and paved with 2.5 inches of hot-mix asphalt, then restriped, including accessible parking spaces. Bids must reach the county administrator's office at 214 E. Center St. by 11 a.m. Sept. 25; they are opened at 11:01 a.m. Written questions were due Sept. 15. The document says the Board of Commissioners is scheduled to consider an award at its Oct. 6 meeting.

The invitation does not state a budget or engineer's estimate. It says bids will be judged in part on the "reasonableness of total contract price in relation to the current budget," and it requires performance and payment bonds if the contract exceeds $50,000.

Full report and sources: gcwhistleblower.com/articles/county-seeks-bids-to-rebuild-commission-on-aging-parking-lot

CITY CONTRACTS | ST. LOUIS | SEPT. 23, 2026

St. Louis Takes Bids to Demolish a House on S. East Street; Contractors Told to Assume Asbestos

The city says the building at 117 S. East St. is too deteriorated to survey safely. Bids are due 3 p.m. Oct. 1; a separate Oct. 6 hearing concerns a tax exemption at 137 N. Mill St.

ST. LOUIS — The city is seeking a contractor to tear down a house at 117 S. East St., and its bid specification tells bidders to treat the building as if it contains asbestos because it is too unsafe to inspect.

The specification, dated Sept. 2, covers "complete demolition, removal, transportation, and lawful disposal" of a residential structure with a footprint of about 2,480 square feet, including contents, porches, foundations and basement floor. A detached 16-by-20-foot garage on the south property line stays. Utilities are to be cut off at the right-of-way, the sewer lateral capped and marked, and the lot graded, seeded and left "mowable." Work must finish within 20 calendar days of the notice to proceed, with liquidated damages of $100 a day after that.

On asbestos, the city writes that "due to the Building's deteriorated structural condition and associated safety hazards," it is "unsuitable for the occupancy and inspection activities necessary to conduct a comprehensive asbestos survey," so the contractor "shall assume that asbestos-containing materials are present." Because of the building's age, lead paint is presumed as well. The contractor handles the state and federal demolition notifications and must document disposal.

Full report and sources: gcwhistleblower.com/articles/st-louis-takes-bids-to-demolish-117-s-east-street-house

ELECTIONS | ALMA | SEPT. 23, 2026

Alma Voters to Decide a 1-Mill Levy for the Public Library Building on Nov. 3

The ballot calls it a renewal. It would raise an estimated $235,000 in its first year for library repairs and maintenance, 2027 through 2032.

ALMA — City of Alma voters will be asked Nov. 3 to approve up to 1 mill for six years for "the capital improvements, repairs and maintenance of the Alma Public Library building and grounds," according to the county clerk's unofficial list of proposals for the general election.

The question, titled "Renewal Millage Proposition," asks whether the city's tax limit may be increased by up to 1.0000 mill ($1 per $1,000 of taxable value) for 2027 through 2032. The city estimates first-year revenue of $235,000. The ballot language says the money goes to the City of Alma.

Two things are worth knowing before voting. First, the ballot word "renewal" means an existing library levy is expiring; the clerk's list does not say what the current rate is or what it has paid for, and we have not yet located the city resolution that placed the question. Second, the levy is restricted to the building and grounds, not library operations, so it cannot be used for staff or books.

Full report and sources: gcwhistleblower.com/articles/alma-voters-to-decide-1-mill-library-building-levy

PUBLIC SAFETY | ALMA | SEPT. 22, 2026

Scanner: “Possible Stolen Ambulance” Call in Alma Was a Sideswipe, Dispatch Later Said

An evening radio call about an ambulance at a North Alger Road credit union was corrected on the air within minutes. No agency has released a report.

ALMA — At about 6:56 p.m. Monday, Gratiot County dispatch radio carried a call about a possible stolen ambulance at Michigan One Community Credit Union on North Alger Road. Within minutes, according to the same radio traffic, the call was corrected: the ambulance, an MMR unit, had been sideswiped, not taken.

That is the whole of what is known tonight. The audio does not say whether the ambulance was on a call, whether anyone was aboard or hurt, what struck it, or whether it stayed in service.

We are noting it because the first version of the call, a stolen ambulance, is the kind of thing that travels fast on social media and scanner apps, and the correction usually does not travel with it. The corrected version is the one the dispatch traffic settled on.

Full report and sources: gcwhistleblower.com/articles/scanner-ambulance-sideswiped-alma-credit-union

COUNTY GOVERNMENT | SHERIFF’S OFFICE | SEPT. 22, 2026

County Reviews Workplace Complaints at the Sheriff’s Office, Adopts a New Harassment Policy — Then Publicly Rebuts a Former Sergeant

Eight people raised workplace concerns at a June meeting. A county review followed, along with a new policy. A later public statement from the administrator responded to a TV interview by a fired corrections sergeant.

ITHACA — Eight people spoke at the June 2 Gratiot County Board of Commissioners meeting about workplace conditions at the county jail. What followed, according to county records, was a formal review of the Sheriff’s Office work environment, a new countywide harassment policy, and — weeks later — a pointed public statement from the county administrator responding to a television interview given by a fired corrections sergeant.

The June 2 meeting. The minutes record eight people by name during public comment — Chrystia Downer, Lisa Rousseau, Chris Ziglar, Kiley Braman, Lacey Braman, Michael Jerome, Jerri Upright and Ryan Bates — who, the minutes say, “came to talk about Sexual Harassment in the work place, that it is not acceptable.” The minutes record no further detail of what any individual said.

The review. According to a written summary the county administrator presented to the board July 7, a team including the administrator, the sheriff, the deputy administrator, the county attorney and officials from two unions representing Sheriff’s Office employees interviewed every employee of the department on June 17 and June 24. Each was asked three questions: whether they had seen or heard anything concerning about another employee’s conduct; whether they were afraid to report concerns out of fear of retaliation; and how confident they were that a report would be addressed.

Full report and sources: gcwhistleblower.com/articles/sheriffs-office-workplace-review-and-new-harassment-policy

PUBLIC RECORDS | SHORT ITEM | SEPT. 22, 2026

What We Know So Far: “Simmons vs Gratiot County”

One sentence in the county's own minutes is the entire public record we could find. Here is exactly what it says, and what an extensive search did not turn up.

ITHACA — This is a short item, not a full investigation, and we want to be upfront about that.

In the administrator’s report at the Sept. 15, 2026 Gratiot County Board of Commissioners meeting, the minutes record this sentence: “Simmons vs Gratiot County FOIA appeal the legal team submitted wanting everything to be dismissed and the ruling came back in the Counties favor.”

That is the complete extent of what we have found. We searched every Gratiot County Board of Commissioners meeting packet, agenda and set of minutes posted for 2026 — more than 30 meetings — for any earlier reference to a requester or appeal named Simmons, the kind of written FOIA fee appeal letter the board has filed publicly in other cases this year. We found none. There is no case number, no filing date, no description of what records were originally requested, and no copy of any ruling in the public meeting record.

Full report and sources: gcwhistleblower.com/articles/what-we-know-simmons-v-gratiot-county-foia-case

COUNTY BOARD | ALMA | SEPT. 22, 2026

Commissioners Discuss a Possible Bond for a New Gratiot Integrated Health Facility

The county's mental-health agency's current building has ADA, sewer, and heating problems, commissioners were told June 2. No vote, dollar figure or timeline has appeared in the public record since. Here is what we could independently verify about the agency itself.

ITHACA — Gratiot County commissioners spent a few minutes on June 2 discussing whether to pursue a bond to build a new facility for Gratiot Integrated Health, the county’s community mental health agency. The county’s own record of that discussion is brief, and nothing about it has resurfaced in board minutes since. We went looking for more.

What the county’s record says — in full. Item K.1 on the June 2 agenda: “Gratiot Integrated Health discussion for possible Bond for Contraction of a new facility.” The minutes then record: “The building is not ADA compliant. There is a sewer smell. Heating and Cooling problems. And space is limited.” No motion was made, no cost estimate is recorded, and no commissioner is quoted by name. We found no earlier or later board discussion of the same subject in any 2026 meeting packet.

What Gratiot Integrated Health is. Gratiot Integrated Health Network (GIHN) is the county’s designated community mental health authority, providing mental health and substance-use-disorder services and belonging to the Mid-State Health Network, a regional network of Michigan community mental health agencies. According to GIHN’s own website, it operates from at least two addresses in Alma — 608 Wright Ave. and 340 Pine Ave. — and its board meets monthly, alternating between the two.

Full report and sources: gcwhistleblower.com/articles/commissioners-discuss-possible-bond-for-new-gratiot-integrated-health-facility

COUNTY BOARD | COUNTYWIDE | SEPT. 22, 2026

Voters to Decide County-Wide Transit Millage in November; Board Split 4-1 to Put It on the Ballot

The 0.5-mill, four-year proposal would fund public transit and is tied to a state grant that requires a local funding match. Commissioner Steve Sopocy cast the lone vote against sending it to voters.

ITHACA — Gratiot County voters will decide in November whether to tax themselves to fund public transit, after commissioners voted 4-1 on June 2 to put a county-wide transit millage on the ballot.

What’s being asked. Resolution 26-431 sets the ballot language for a proposal that would let the county levy up to 0.5 mill — 50 cents per $1,000 of taxable value — for four years, 2026 through 2029. The resolution estimates the levy would raise about $1,016,843.66 in its first year, based on the county’s 2025 equalization report. The money would fund “operating funds for county-wide public transit service,” and the resolution says a portion could also be shared, as state law allows, with the downtown development authorities of Alma and St. Louis and the county’s Brownfield Redevelopment Authority.

Why now. The resolution ties the millage to a new state funding source: the Neighborhood Roads Fund, which it says was established Oct. 7, 2025 under the Michigan Transportation Fund Act. The Michigan Department of Transportation issued a call for transit projects under that fund, and the resolution says the Alma Transit Center submitted a proposal to expand service to all of Gratiot County, contingent on a state grant to cover start-up costs. Grant eligibility, the resolution says, requires “a demonstrated local financial commitment for long-term operations” — which the millage is meant to provide.

Full report and sources: gcwhistleblower.com/articles/voters-to-decide-county-wide-transit-millage-november-2026

PUBLIC RECORDS | GRATIOT COUNTY | SEPT. 22, 2026

County Board Denies Records Requester’s Appeal Over GIS Data Fee

A requester sought digital parcel, zoning and address data and argued the county used the wrong fee formula. Commissioners disagreed, 5-0, citing a different state law that governs bulk mapping data.

ITHACA — Gratiot County commissioners voted 5-0 on June 2 to deny a fee appeal from someone who had requested the county's digital parcel, zoning and address-point data, upholding the county's decision to charge under a separate state law that governs bulk mapping records rather than the standard public-records fee formula.

The request. According to the county's written response, the requester asked in May for three digital datasets in their native format: the current parcel layer with tax attributes, zoning district boundaries, and address points. The county said it would provide the records under the fee structure in Michigan's Enhanced Access to Public Records Act (EAPRA), which lets a public body charge a separate, board-adopted fee for geographic information system data and other bulk digital access, rather than the itemized labor-based fee that applies to an ordinary Freedom of Information Act request. The county asked for a deposit equal to half the estimated cost and noted that some of the underlying information is already available on its website.

The appeal. The requester appealed, arguing the fee should have been calculated under the state Freedom of Information Act's general fee section instead, and objecting to the flat fee and the lack of an itemized labor breakdown that FOIA requires.

Full report and sources: gcwhistleblower.com/articles/county-board-denies-records-requesters-gis-fee-appeal

COUNTY BOARD | SUMNER & SEVILLE TWP. | SEPT. 22, 2026

County Tells Solar Developer Its Own Zoning Rules Don't Meet the State's Minimum

A special meeting Aug. 11 drew residents on both sides of a proposed solar farm. The board's own comparison shows where its ordinance is stricter than state law requires — a finding that can let the project skip local approval.

ITHACA — Gratiot County commissioners voted 5-0 on Aug. 11 to tell a solar developer, in writing, that the county's own zoning ordinance does not meet the minimum the state now requires — a finding that can let the project skip county and township approval entirely and go straight to state regulators.

How it started. ibV Energy Partners, LLC, of Dallas, Texas, is proposing a solar farm called the Honeyoey Creek project in Sumner and Seville Townships. Under a 2023 state law, the Clean and Renewable Energy and Energy Waste Reduction Act, large solar, wind and battery-storage projects normally go through the Michigan Public Service Commission rather than local zoning — unless the local government has adopted what the law calls a "compatible renewable energy ordinance," one no stricter than the state's own minimum standards.

County records show ibV sent a certified letter July 14 invoking that provision. Board Chairman Dave Owens and other county officials met with Honeyoey Creek representatives July 22. At that meeting, according to the resolution the board later adopted, the developer identified four places where Gratiot County's solar ordinance is stricter than the state standard. The county was then required, within 30 days, to tell the developer in writing whether it agreed.

Full report and sources: gcwhistleblower.com/articles/county-tells-solar-developer-its-ordinance-is-not-compatible

COUNTY BOARD | NEWARK TOWNSHIP | SEPT. 22, 2026

County Buys the Animal Shelter Building It Already Operates — for $138,703, From the City of Ithaca

The shelter has been run by the county for years. Until this June 16 vote, the land and building under it belonged to the city.

ITHACA — Gratiot County commissioners voted 5-0 on June 16 to buy the county Animal Shelter's building and roughly five acres of land at 2675 W. Washington Road for up to $138,703 — property the county has long operated on but did not own.

What the record shows. Resolution 26-433 states that the Animal Shelter, located in Newark Township on parcel 08-003-07-00, "is owned by the City of Ithaca," and that the city "has offered to sell the animal shelter building and approximately five acres to Gratiot County." The resolution says county officials inspected the building, found it in good condition, and independently confirmed its appraised value before the vote.

Commissioner George Bailey moved to approve the purchase; Commissioner Steve Sopocy seconded. The roll call, according to the signed resolution: Gay, Sopocy, Bailey, Bunting and Owens voting yes, none opposed. The resolution authorizes County Administrator Tim Dolehanty to sign the purchase agreement, subject to review by the county attorney, and directs the county's finance director to make the budget adjustments the purchase requires. Minutes from the meeting say the money comes from the general fund's fund balance.

Full report and sources: gcwhistleblower.com/articles/county-buys-animal-shelter-building-from-city-of-ithaca

COUNTY BOARD | PINE RIVER TOWNSHIP | SEPT. 21, 2026

County Board Tables $2.4 Million Tax-Capture Plan for 19 Homes at Lakeside Estates

A resident handed commissioners 20 written questions about the plan at a Sept. 15 public hearing. The board voted 5-0 to wait for answers.

ITHACA — Gratiot County commissioners on Sept. 15 put off a decision on a plan that would let a developer recover about $2.08 million in future property taxes for building 19 single-family homes in the Lakeside Estates subdivision north of Alma.

After a public hearing, Commissioner Jan Bunting moved "to table this so questions can be answered." Commissioner Tim Gay seconded. The motion carried 5-0, according to the meeting minutes.

What the plan says. The brownfield plan, dated Aug. 13, 2026, was prepared under Michigan's Act 381 by Miller Johnson Growth Advisors of Kalamazoo for Michigan Housing Partnership, LLC. The plan says that company and a second entity to be formed are "commonly owned and controlled by the principals of Allen Edwin Homes," which would build the houses.

Full report and sources: gcwhistleblower.com/articles/county-board-tables-2-4-million-tax-capture-plan-for-lakeside-estates

COUNTY BUDGET | GRATIOT COUNTY | SEPT. 21, 2026

County Adopts 2027 Budget and 8.3922-Mill Levy; Sets Elected Officials' Pay

Commissioners also approved an October start for a new assistant prosecutor and a $1-a-year lease for a county splash pad in Alma.

ITHACA — Gratiot County commissioners adopted the county's budget for fiscal year 2027 on Sept. 15 by a 5-0 roll-call vote, after a public hearing that the minutes show ran from 4:33 to 4:34 p.m. The fiscal year begins Oct. 1.

Resolution 26-457 authorizes a total county levy of 8.3922 mills: 5.5206 for general operations; 0.6000 for Central Dispatch; 0.5492 for senior citizens services; 0.4994 for the library; 0.4486 for safety; 0.4250 for agriculture and economic development; and 0.3494 for parks and recreation.

The resolution adopts the administrator's recommended budget "by reference" and does not itself state total revenues or spending. The general-fund figures presented to the board were reported here Sept. 18. At the Sept. 1 meeting, Administrator Tim Dolehanty told commissioners the budget "is using Fund Balance, but that is being used for Capital Improvements that are one time costs," according to those minutes.

Full report and sources: gcwhistleblower.com/articles/county-adopts-2027-budget-and-8-3922-mill-levy

DEVELOPING REPORT | GRATIOT COUNTY | SEPT. 19, 2026

Animal Control Inquiry Routed to County Administration After Publication Seeks Comment

County administrator cites FOIA requirements and declines anonymous questions; publication seeks clarification on how county departments handle media inquiries.

GRATIOT COUNTY — A request for comment that Gratiot County Whistleblower sent to the county's Animal Control director after the Sept. 15 Board of Commissioners meeting was answered by the county administrator, who wrote that he is the board's official spokesperson and that he will not respond to questions posed by anonymous persons.

This publication is a participant in the exchange described here, not an outside observer of it. For that reason the report relies on the emails themselves, quoted exactly as written, and separates what those emails establish from what they do not. It reaches no conclusion about why any person acted as they did.

Commissioners discussed Animal Control at length during the Sept. 15 meeting, including a request to reclassify Animal Control officers' pay. To understand the department's perspective on those topics, the publication emailed Animal Control Director Jaime Haase on Sept. 17, 2026, under the subject line "Questions Regarding the September 15 Meeting." The full text follows, unedited, including a misspelling of the director's first name in the greeting.

The email asked whether someone would answer questions. It did not ask for any public document or record.

Full report and sources: gcwhistleblower.com/articles/animal-control-inquiry-routed-to-county-administration

PUBLIC SAFETY | PINE RIVER TOWNSHIP | UPDATED SEPT. 19, 2026

What Is Publicly Known About Human Remains Found Near U.S. 127

Road Commission workers made the discovery April 7 near Michigan Avenue. Public reports reviewed for this update did not identify the person or establish a cause or manner of death.

PINE RIVER TOWNSHIP — Gratiot County Road Commission employees found human remains April 7 while performing maintenance along northbound U.S. 127 near Michigan Avenue, according to reports based on information released by the Sheriff's Office.

The remains were found beyond the guardrail on the east side of the northbound lanes. Michigan State Police forensic personnel and a K-9 team assisted, and the Michigan State University Anthropology Unit confirmed the remains were human.

Authorities sent the remains to the Genesee County Medical Examiner's Office, working with the MSU unit, for examination and identification. Reports published in April said that work was continuing.

Full report and sources: gcwhistleblower.com/articles/what-is-publicly-known-about-human-remains-found-near-us-127

EDUCATION | ALMA | SEPT. 19, 2026

Alma College Adds Chemistry Transfer Route From Montcalm Community College

Students who finish an associate degree at Montcalm Community College now have a mapped two-year path to a chemistry bachelor's degree in Alma, the college says.

ALMA — Alma College and Montcalm Community College have added chemistry to the list of majors covered by their transfer agreement, the college announced Aug. 27.

Under the arrangement, a student completes an associate degree in arts or sciences at Montcalm, then transfers to Alma to finish a Bachelor of Science in chemistry. The college describes the Alma portion as two additional years.

The two schools have had a transfer agreement since 2023. Until now it covered four fields: accounting, business, communication and psychology. Chemistry is the first laboratory science on the list.

Full report and sources: gcwhistleblower.com/articles/alma-college-adds-chemistry-transfer-route-from-montcalm

COMMUNITY | ALMA COLLEGE | SEPT. 19, 2026

Five Alumni to Be Honored at Homecoming; Retired Choir Director Will Lead Parade

Alma College has named its 2026 Tartan Award recipients and chosen Will Nichols, who conducted the college choirs for more than four decades, as parade grand marshal.

ALMA — Five Alma College graduates will receive Tartan Awards during Homecoming weekend, Sept. 25–26, the college announced. The awards are scheduled to be presented at a luncheon Saturday, Sept. 26.

The recipients, as listed by the college:

Amy McGinnis, class of 1992 — Hugh Brenneman Distinguished Alumni Award. McGinnis teaches in Central Michigan University's management department and directs student-engagement and leadership-scholar programs there. A first-generation college student, she earned a master's degree at Michigan State University and previously led human resources and communication work at Lansing Community College. The college notes six years on the West Midland Family Center board and teaching and advising awards from CMU.

Full report and sources: gcwhistleblower.com/articles/five-alumni-to-be-honored-at-homecoming-retired-choir

INFRASTRUCTURE | ALMA | SEPT. 19, 2026

Alma's $40 Million Wastewater Plant Request Is Fully Funded. Most of It Is a Loan.

A city notice says the state has committed the full amount Alma sought to rebuild its wastewater treatment plant. The same notice shows that $34.8 million of the package must be repaid, and it says the funding will affect what sewer customers are charged.

ALMA — The City of Alma says Michigan's Clean Water State Revolving Fund will cover the entire $40 million the city requested for a complete rehabilitation of its wastewater treatment plant.

According to a public notice still featured on the city's website, the Michigan Department of Environment, Great Lakes, and Energy informed Alma on July 13 that additional money had been added to its application. The notice lists three pieces.

The largest is a traditional revolving-fund loan of $31,208,000, which the city says grew by $16,965,000. The second is a $3,592,000 loan through the federal Bipartisan Infrastructure Law, which did not change. The third is $5,200,000 in principal forgiveness, up by $2,535,000. Principal forgiveness is the portion a community does not have to pay back.

Full report and sources: gcwhistleblower.com/articles/almas-40-million-wastewater-plant-request-is-fully-funded

COMMUNITY ACHIEVEMENT | ALMA COLLEGE | SEPT. 18, 2026

Alma College Graduate Jake Kelley Wins MasterChef Season 16

The self-taught cook and 2024 neuroscience graduate won the national competition after advancing through a season built around global cuisines and cultural heritage.

ALMA — Jake Kelley, an Alma College class of 2024 graduate who grew up in Hemlock, won Season 16 of MasterChef: Global Gauntlet in the finale broadcast Sept. 16.

Kelley finished ahead of fellow finalists Heidi Muston and Peter Egede. Coverage of the finale identifies the award as the MasterChef title, trophy and a $250,000 prize.

The season's judges were Gordon Ramsay, Tiffany Derry and Joe Bastianich. According to TV Insider's interview with Kelley, his three-course finale menu opened with a smoked appetizer he named for the kraken, the sea monster of legend, followed by a traditional mole served with octopus and a dessert of profiteroles with ice cream, coulis and ganache.

Full report and sources: gcwhistleblower.com/articles/alma-college-graduate-jake-kelley-wins-masterchef-season-16

EDUCATION | ALMA | SEPT. 18, 2026

Alma College Reports Fall Enrollment of 1,229

Alma College says total fall enrollment is five students higher than last year, while its full-time and transfer counts show larger gains.

ALMA — Alma College reported total fall 2026 enrollment of 1,229 students, an increase of five from fall 2025.

The college's Sept. 17 release says full-time enrollment increased by 28 students and undergraduate full-time-equivalent enrollment rose by 10.1. New undergraduate enrollment was described as stable.

Transfer enrollment increased 27.3%, according to the college. Alma also reported fall-to-fall re-enrollment rates of 82.4% for first-time students and 86% for transfer students.

Full report and sources: gcwhistleblower.com/articles/alma-college-reports-fall-enrollment-of-1229

LOCAL SPORTS | ALMA HIGH SCHOOL | SEPT. 18, 2026

Baltierra Wins Division Race at Spartan Invitational

Alma's Ezekiel Baltierra took first in the boys Bronze Division race Sept. 11, according to MileSplit Michigan's published meet recap.

EAST LANSING — Ezekiel Baltierra of Alma won the boys Bronze Division, Division 2 race at the 2026 Spartan Invitational with a reported time of 16 minutes, 5 seconds.

MileSplit Michigan's race recap says Baltierra moved ahead early and won by 15 seconds. Petoskey won the team competition with 102 points; Alma finished second with 118.

In cross-country, a team's score is the sum of its top five runners' finishing places, so the lowest total wins. A 16-point gap means Petoskey's scoring runners finished, on average, about three places ahead of

Alma's.

Full report and sources: gcwhistleblower.com/articles/baltierra-wins-division-race-at-spartan-invitational

INFRASTRUCTURE | ITHACA | SEPT. 18, 2026

Ithaca Narrows Union Street Financing to One $4 Million Bond

A change in Ithaca's financing plan could lower the cost of issuing debt for the Union Street project, according to the city manager's written report. The public record available Friday morning did not yet show the result of a special council vote.

ITHACA — City Manager Jamey Conn reported that Ithaca planned to issue one $4 million Capital Improvement Bond for the Union Street project rather than combining that issue with a separate Michigan Transportation Fund bond.

According to Conn's Sept. 15 written report, municipal adviser Bedzinski and Company recommended the change after construction bids came in favorably. The report says one larger offering was expected to attract more bidders and a more favorable interest rate.

The change also affects the cost of the bond adviser. The report lists $30,850 for one issue, compared with $47,000 if the city proceeded with two. Ithaca also reported meeting with S&P Global as part of the credit-rating process.

Full report and sources: gcwhistleblower.com/articles/ithaca-narrows-union-street-financing-to-one-4-million-bond

PUBLIC RECORDS | ST. LOUIS | SEPT. 18, 2026

St. Louis Packet Proposes $1,000 Fees for Two Bulk Data Exports

A proposed policy would set prices for complete assessment and cemetery-data exports while leaving ordinary individual-record requests under existing public-record laws.

ST. LOUIS — Draft resolutions in the Sept. 15 City Council packet describe two standardized electronic data products and the fees that would apply to them.

Finance Director Bobbie Marr submitted the two items. The first, Resolution 2026-18, would adopt an Enhanced Access to Public Records Policy under a 1996 Michigan law, Public Act 462, which lets a public body offer bulk digital access to non-confidential records and charge reasonable fees meant to recover, over time, the operating costs of providing it. The law requires such a policy to be adopted first. The second, Resolution 2026-19, names the data products and sets the prices.

Marr's memo says the city periodically receives requests for large electronic exports of assessment, cemetery and financial-transaction information, and that recent requests showed the need for a consistent policy. It describes the policy as meant mainly for cases in which all of a database is requested, not specific records.

Full report and sources: gcwhistleblower.com/articles/st-louis-packet-proposes-1000-fees-for-two-bulk-data-exports

COUNTY CONTRACTS | GRATIOT COUNTY | SEPT. 18, 2026

County Opens Bidding for Opioid Remediation Services

Project 12-26 is open for responses through 11 a.m. Oct. 16. The notice starts a competitive process; it does not identify a selected provider or contract price.

GRATIOT COUNTY — The county published a request for proposals for opioid remediation services on Sept. 14, beginning a process that could lead to a future service contract.

The official posting identifies the solicitation as Project No. 12-26 and lists the Gratiot County administrator as the bid recipient. Responses are due by 11 a.m. Oct. 16; the posting says late responses will be disqualified.

The 26-page request for proposals says the money comes from national opioid settlements with drug distributors, manufacturers and pharmacy chains. It estimates Michigan's total at about $1.6 billion, split between the state and local governments, and says Gratiot County expects to have roughly $121,000 a year on average, an amount that will change from year to year.

Full report and sources: gcwhistleblower.com/articles/county-opens-bidding-for-opioid-remediation-services

PARKS | ITHACA | SEPT. 18, 2026

Draft Fitness-Court Plan Calls for $174,050 in Local Funding

A draft resolution pairs a $50,000 National Fitness Campaign grant with a proposed $174,050 local commitment for an outdoor court intended to be free to the public.

ITHACA — The Sept. 15 council packet includes a draft resolution supporting an outdoor Fitness Court and confirming local money for the project.

The draft identifies a $50,000 National Fitness Campaign grant and $174,050 in local funding. It also says the city would need outside vendors for the concrete pad and assembly work.

Together the two figures come to $224,050, although the draft does not state a total project cost. It says added funding requirements for the concrete and assembly work are set out in a National Fitness Campaign requirements document attached to the grant.

Full report and sources: gcwhistleblower.com/articles/draft-fitness-court-plan-calls-for-174050-in-local-funding

ELECTIONS | ALMA | SEPT. 18, 2026

Three Filed Candidates Seek Four Alma Commission Seats

Alma voters are scheduled to fill four City Commission seats Nov. 3, but the city's election page lists only three candidates who filed nominating petitions.

ALMA — Andrew Bare, Roxann Harrington and Danny Wernick filed to appear on the November ballot for four available City Commission seats, according to the city's official election page.

Because only three candidates filed, Alma says the commission contest did not appear on the Aug. 4 primary ballot and will instead appear at the Nov. 3 general election.

The filing deadline was April 21. The city lists four commissioners whose terms expire this year: Bare, Harrington, Wernick and Michelle Pitts. Pitts is not among those who filed, which is why one of the four seats has no candidate on the ballot.

Full report and sources: gcwhistleblower.com/articles/three-filed-candidates-seek-four-alma-commission-seats

ABOUT THIS EDITION

How to Reach Us, and How We Correct

Every report in this edition was first published at gcwhistleblower.com, where each one carries links to the public records behind it. The text here is the published text. Longer reports are shortened in print and marked with the address of the full version.

Tips, responses and corrections: contactus@gcwhistleblower.com. Any official or organization named in these pages is welcome to respond, and responses are published. Corrections are logged at gcwhistleblower.com/corrections and published reports are not silently rewritten.

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