GRATIOT COUNTY WHISTLEBLOWER

FACTS | RECORDS | ACCOUNTABILITY

INDEPENDENT LOCAL NEWS AND PUBLIC-RECORDS REPORTING

NOVEMBER 6, 2026 | VOL. 1, NO. 5

TOP STORY | PUBLIC RECORDS | GRATIOT COUNTY | NOV. 3, 2026

We Filed Our First Public Records Request With Gratiot County: What We Asked For, What Happens Next and What It Could Cost

Nineteen items in five parts: the insurer's records on Animal Control firearms, county emails about this publication, grievances, the administrator's contract and opioid grants. How Michigan's FOIA works, the deadlines, the fees, and the full request.

BY W.E. | GRATIOT COUNTY WHISTLEBLOWER | NOV. 3, 2026

GRATIOT COUNTY — On Thursday, Oct. 29, Gratiot County Whistleblower filed its first public records request with Gratiot County under Michigan's Freedom of Information Act. It is a long one: 19 numbered items in five parts, covering the county's insurance records on Animal Control firearms, county emails about this publication, grievances, the county administrator's contract and opioid settlement grants. The full request is published below. We are waiting for the county's answer, and we will publish whatever comes back: a confirmation, an extension, a fee estimate, a full or partial denial, or the records themselves.

WHO SENT IT, AND TO WHOM

The request was emailed to the county's official records address, foia@gratiotmi.com (county FOIA page), addressed to Timothy Dolehanty, the county administrator, who is also the county's FOIA coordinator.

It was sent by our volunteer public representative, in her own name, with her mailing address, email and phone number. At the Oct. 6 board meeting the administrator said he had told county departments that anonymous requests need not be answered (recording, about 6:55). The county's approved minutes of that meeting say: "GC Whistle Blower.com was asking questions, and Tim is not going to respond unless they identify themselves" (minutes). Michigan law does not require anyone to identify themselves or give a reason for asking. A named requester takes that reason off the table. The county has her name; we are not publishing it.

WHAT WE ASKED FOR

- **Part A, Animal Control and the county's insurer (10 items).** On Oct. 20 the board voted 5–0 to end Animal Control officers' firearms authorization. The administrator said the county's insurer, the Michigan Municipal Risk Management Authority, had added a charge of about $95,000 a year, plus about $8,000 a year in workers' compensation, after an Oct. 12 meeting (Oct. 20 recording). No insurer paperwork was posted with the agenda. We asked for the insurer's notices, invoices and correspondence, the Oct. 12 meeting records, any talks since about lowering the charge, the firearms policies and the signed Oct. 20 resolution.
- **Part B, emails about this website (4 items).** The email the administrator described sending to "all of our departments," the board chair's Oct. 6 email to him about our request, other county emails that mention this publication, and the county's media policy.
- **Part C, grievances (3 items).** Every grievance, formal complaint and unfair labor practice charge the county has received that is still open, plus everything received since Jan. 1, 2025, with the county's responses, and any notice to a union about changes to Animal Control officers' equipment, firearms, reporting line, pay grade or duties. We told the county to leave out home addresses, phone numbers, Social Security numbers and medical information.
- **Part D,** the administrator's employment contract and any amendments.
- **Part E,** the list of round-one opioid settlement grant recipients and amounts.

We asked the county to release each part as soon as it is ready instead of holding everything for the slowest part.

HOW FOIA WORKS

Anyone can ask. Michigan's Freedom of Information Act (MCL 15.231 and following) lets any person request public records, with no reason, residency or identification required. A public record is anything a public body prepares, owns, uses or keeps in doing its official work, including emails and text messages, even on a personal phone or account when they concern public business.

The clock. An emailed request counts as received one business day after it is sent. The county then has five business days to respond. It can grant the request, deny it, grant part and deny part, or send one notice extending the deadline by up to 10 more business days (county procedures). For this request:

- **Sent:** Thursday, Oct. 29
- **Counts as received:** Friday, Oct. 30
- **County's answer due:** Friday, Nov. 6
- **Latest date with one extension:** about Friday, Nov. 20 (Monday, Nov. 23 if county offices close for Veterans Day)

Where it stands. As of Tuesday, Nov. 3, the county had not responded. That is not late: its answer is due Friday, Nov. 6. We will report what arrives, or that nothing did.

Continues online, with all sources: gcwhistleblower.com/articles/we-filed-our-first-public-records-request-with-gratiot-county

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OUR STANDARD

Facts are attributed to records. Open questions are labeled as open. Corrections are logged in public and published reports are not silently rewritten.

From the County Desk

3 reports published Oct. 23 to Nov. 4, 2026. Each full report, with its sources, is at gcwhistleblower.com.

3 REPORTS | PUBLISHED OCT. 23 TO NOV. 4 | GRATIOT COUNTY WHISTLEBLOWER

COUNTY BOARD | PINE RIVER TOWNSHIP | NOV. 4, 2026

County Board Approves Lakeside Estates Tax-Capture Plan, 3-2

Bailey, Gay and Owens voted yes; Bunting and Sopocy voted no. Local leaders from five communities urged approval, while two Lakeside Estates residents said their subdivision is the wrong place for the homes.

BY W.E. | GRATIOT COUNTY WHISTLEBLOWER

ITHACA — Gratiot County commissioners on Nov. 3 approved a plan that lets a developer recover future property taxes for building 19 homes in the Lakeside Estates subdivision in Pine River Township. The vote on Resolution 26-470 was 3-2, seven weeks after the board tabled the plan so residents' questions could be answered.

THE RECORD AT A GLANCE

- **The vote:** Commissioners George Bailey, Tim Gay and Chair Dave Owens voted yes. Commissioners Jan Bunting and Steve Sopocy voted no (recording, 55:43).
- **A motion to wait:** a motion to postpone the vote "until after this board has received unbiased training on this matter" was defeated when commissioners answered aloud, two in favor and three opposed (recording, 37:19).
- **The plan:** 19 homes on vacant lots; four would be income-restricted rentals for 10 years. The plan's listed figures total $2,404,849, captured over an estimated 24 years (our Sept. 21 report).
- **The conditions:** the resolution caps tax capture at 30 years and makes approval "contingent upon an executed Reimbursement Agreement" (Resolution 26-470).
- **Public comment:** leaders from Alma, Ithaca, St. Louis, Ashley and Pine River Township, two business owners and an Alma resident spoke for the plan. Two Lakeside Estates residents and another resident spoke against it.

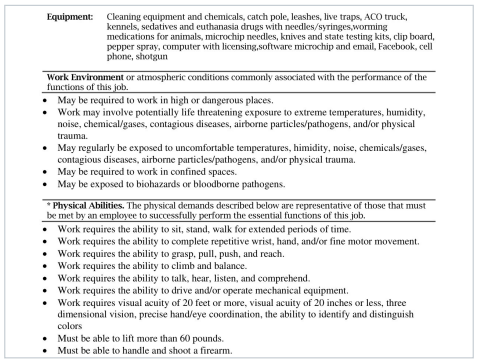
WHAT THE BOARD APPROVED

The resolution says the county's Brownfield Redevelopment Authority recommended the plan, dated Aug. 13, 2026, on Aug. 18, and that the Pine River Township Board adopted resolutions supporting it the same day. It finds that the plan "constitutes a public purpose" and that its costs are "reasonable and necessary." It estimates the plan's duration at 24 years and says capture shall not "extend beyond thirty (30) years" (Resolution 26-470).

The tax capture works this way: the property taxes the 19 lots pay now keep going to the county, schools and township. The new taxes the finished homes generate are captured to repay the developer's eligible costs, with interest, instead of going to those budgets. The plan was prepared for Michigan Housing Partnership, LLC; the builder is Allen Edwin Homes (our Sept. 21 report).

Full report and sources: gcwhistleblower.com/articles/county-board-approves-lakeside-estates-tax-capture-plan-3-2

PUBLIC SAFETY | GRATIOT COUNTY | OCT. 23, 2026



Equipment: Cleaning equipment and chemicals, catch pole, leashes, live traps, ACO truck, kennels, sedatives and euthanasia drugs with needles/syringes,worming medications for animals, microchip needles, knives and state testing kits, clip board, pepper spray, computer with licensing,software microchip and email, Facebook, cell phone, shotgun

Work Environment or atmospheric conditions commonly associated with the performance of the functions of this job.

- May be required to work in high or dangerous places.
- Work may involve potentially life threatening exposure to extreme temperatures, humidity, noise, chemical/gases, contagious diseases, airborne particles/pathogens, and/or physical trauma.
- May regularly be exposed to uncomfortable temperatures, himidity, noise, chemicals/gases, contagious diseases, airborne particles/pathogens, and/or physical trauma.
- May be required to work in confined spaces.
- May be exposed to biohazards or bloodborne pathogens.

* **Physical Abilities.** The physical demands described below are representative of those that must be met by an employee to successfully perform the essential functions of this job.

- Work requires the ability to sit, stand, walk for extended periods of time.
- Work requires the ability to complete repetitive wrist, hand, and/or fine motor movement.
- Work requires the ability to grasp, pull, push, and reach.
- Work requires the ability to climb and balance.
- Work requires the ability to talk, hear, listen, and comprehend.
- Work requires the ability to drive and/or operate mechanical equipment.
- Work requires visual acuity of 20 feet or more, visual acuity of 20 inches or less, three dimensional vision, precise hand/eye coordination, the ability to identify and distinguish colors.
- Must be able to lift more than 60 pounds.
- Must be able to handle and shoot a firearm.

Page 3 of the county's Animal Control Officer job description (effective 6/1/24), as posted on the county website Oct. 23, 2026. Gratiot County public record; cropped.

Commissioners End Animal Control Firearms Access Without Waiting for the Sheriff; the County's Job Description Still Lists a Shotgun

The board voted 5–0 on an item added from the floor to end officers' firearms access, on the administrator's account of a $95,000-a-year insurance charge. He said the sheriff had asked it to wait. The county's posted job description still lists a shotgun and warns of "potentially life threatening exposure."

BY W.E. | GRATIOT COUNTY WHISTLEBLOWER

GRATIOT COUNTY — Gratiot County's own job description for Animal Control Officer lists a shotgun as equipment, requires firearm training and says an officer "must be able to handle and shoot a firearm," for work it warns "may involve potentially life threatening exposure." On Oct. 20 the Board of Commissioners voted 5–0, on an item added to the agenda from the floor, to end officers' authorization to carry or have access to firearms on duty. The county administrator said the sheriff had asked the board to wait. The board did not. No one speaking for the department is heard on the recording, and the county's posted job description has not been changed.

THE RECORD AT A GLANCE

- **The county's document:** a shotgun is listed under equipment, firearm training is a minimum qualification and shooting a firearm is a physical requirement.
- **The department's case in 2025:** when it asked the board to let officers carry sidearms, the director called firearms "a necessary tool for immediate protection."
- **The vote:** 5–0 on Oct. 20, on an item the posted agenda did not list, about 17 minutes after it was introduced.

Full report and sources: gcwhistleblower.com/articles/commissioners-end-animal-control-firearms-access-without-waiting-for-sheriff-job-description-lists-shotgun

LOCAL GOVERNMENT | GRATIOT COUNTY | NOV. 4, 2026

Trash Hauler Granger Asks Gratiot Cities for a Diesel Fuel Surcharge; St. Louis Approves It

Granger cites diesel at $6.35 a gallon in September. In St. Louis the charge moves with fuel prices, 27 cents a household at September's rate; Granger's letter to Ithaca puts it at 10 cents. Ithaca's Oct. 20 decision is not yet posted.

BY W.E. | GRATIOT COUNTY WHISTLEBLOWER

GRATIOT COUNTY — Granger Waste Services, the trash hauler under residential contracts with St. Louis and Ithaca, has asked both cities to approve a temporary surcharge because of diesel prices. The St. Louis City Council approved it Oct. 20. A St. Louis agenda statement says the Alma City Commission approved the same provision Oct. 13, contingent on St. Louis's approval. Ithaca's council had the request on its Oct. 20 agenda; its minutes of that meeting are not yet posted.

THE RECORD AT A GLANCE

- **Why:** Granger's letters say its contracts allow a surcharge when diesel stays above $4.00 a gallon for three straight months, subject to council approval. Granger says it is using $5.00 instead.
- **The prices Granger cites:** $5.417 a gallon in August and $6.351 in September (Midwest No. 2 diesel, retail).
- **St. Louis:** one cent per household per month for each 5 cents diesel costs above $5.00. At September's price, Granger says that would be 27 cents per household.
- **Ithaca:** Granger's letter to Ithaca puts the surcharge at 10 cents per household per month.
- **How long:** it ends when the monthly diesel price falls below $5.00, and could not return until diesel stays above $5.00 for another three months.

WHAT GRANGER ASKED ST. LOUIS FOR

Granger's Oct. 8 letter to St. Louis (Oct. 20 packet, PDF p. 196) says it is the first time the company has asked for a fuel surcharge during the contract's term, and that it chose the $5.00 benchmark "in an effort to lessen the impact on the municipality and its residents." It calculates the charge at $0.01 per household for each $0.05 increase above $5.00 and gives an example: "Based on September's rate, the surcharge would be $0.27 per household for the month." If approved, the letter says, the surcharge "would first appear on the municipality's invoice for November 2026 service using the October 2026 monthly rate," and the amount "may increase or decrease from month to month as diesel costs fluctuate."

Full report and sources: gcwhistleblower.com/articles/granger-asks-gratiot-cities-for-diesel-fuel-surcharge-st-louis-approves

From the County Desk (Continued)

3 reports published Oct. 25 to Nov. 5, 2026. Each full report, with its sources, is at gcwhistleblower.com.

3 REPORTS | PUBLISHED OCT. 25 TO NOV. 5 | GRATIOT COUNTY WHISTLEBLOWER

PUBLIC SAFETY | GRATIOT COUNTY | NOV. 5, 2026

K9 Maverick Medically Retires After 400-Plus Deployments; Central Dispatch Signs Him Off on His Last Radio Call

A protein-wasting disease found two months ago ended his career; he is responding well to treatment. In more than 400 deployments he tracked suspects and missing hunters and helped seize over $30,000 in illicit drugs.

BY W.E. | GRATIOT COUNTY WHISTLEBLOWER

ITHACA — K9 Maverick, a Gratiot County Sheriff's Office police dog, is medically retiring after more than four and a half years. About two months ago he was found to have a protein-wasting disease, and the medication he needs "puts him at too great a risk to continue working," the Sheriff's Office announced Nov. 4 (Sheriff's Office announcement). "In good news, K9 Maverick is responding very well to treatment."

He will live with his handler, Deputy Tahvonen, as a pet, the announcement says. The Sheriff's Office also posted a video of his last radio call, in which Central Dispatch told him, "Your final deployment is retirement" (Sheriff's Office video).

"Today came faster than I imagined," the deputy wrote. "He has been the best partner, and friend a guy could ask for."

HIS RECORD

"In that time he has been deployed over 400 times," the announcement says. "This includes many successful tracks of both suspects and missing/injured hunters, positive K9 alerts to illicit drug odor, and countless appearances at community events. In his career K9 Maverick has assisted in the seizure of over $30,000 worth of illicit drugs!"

"We as a Sheriff's Office will never forget the smile he always wore to work, and the smile he put on the faces of those he met," it says.

THE LAST RADIO CALL

In the video, the deputy sits in his patrol car with Maverick as Central Dispatch asks all departments and units to hold for a special broadcast (0:31). "After four and a half years of faithful service, Gratiot County K9 Maverick will be out of service for the final time," the dispatcher says (0:40).

"K9 Maverick had over 400 deployments, including many successful tracks, assisting in arrests, attending countless community events, and accurate canine alerts resulting in the seizure of over $30,000 worth of illicit drugs" (0:48).

Full report and sources: gcwhistleblower.com/articles/k9-maverick-makes-his-last-radio-call-with-the-gratiot-county-sheriffs-office

COUNTY FINANCES | GRATIOT COUNTY | OCT. 25, 2026



Stock photo of naloxone, a drug used to reverse opioid overdoses. Photo: NEXT Distro / Unsplash.

Opioid Settlement Money: What Gratiot Has Received, Who Decides, and What's Next

A follow-up to our Sept. 18 report on the county's request for proposals. Round-one grants run through Dec. 31; the posted records do not list who received them.

BY W.E. | GRATIOT COUNTY WHISTLEBLOWER

GRATIOT COUNTY — Gratiot County is preparing its second round of grants from national opioid settlement money. The request for proposals we reported Sept. 18 closed Oct. 16. This report sets out what the public record shows about how much money there is and how it has been handed out.

HOW MUCH

The county's May 2025 request for proposals says Gratiot had received $615,000 from opioid settlements and expects an average of about $120,955 a year for 18 years. It notes that the amount changes from year to year.

WHO DECIDES

A steering committee, run through the Mid-Michigan District Health Department, scores proposals and recommends awards; the county holds the money, and the Board of Commissioners approves the awards. Money may go to prevention, harm reduction, treatment, recovery and education programs that serve Gratiot residents.

ROUND ONE

The committee's June 24, 2025 recommendation covers grants running Aug. 1, 2025 through Dec. 31, 2026, and says the awards fit within the expected 18-year allocation. The recipients and amounts are not in the text of the recommendation as posted on BoardBook.

Full report and sources: gcwhistleblower.com/articles/opioid-settlement-money-what-gratiot-has-received-and-whats-next

PUBLIC SAFETY | SEVILLE TOWNSHIP | NOV. 4, 2026



GRATIOT COUNTY

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OFFICE OF THE SHERIFF

Tom Clark, Sheriff

11/03/2026 @ 15:49

On 11/03/2026 at approximately 15:49 hours, Deputies from the Gratiot County Sheriff's Office were dispatched to the 8500 mile of West Monroe Road, in Seville Township, in reference to a multi vehicle fatal crash. Preliminary investigations indicate that a vehicle was slowed/stopped on West Monroe Road to turn into a driveway. A second vehicle driven by a 36-year-old Edmore man slowed/stopped to allow the turn. A third vehicle driven by a 41-year-old Vestaburg woman failed to stop and rear-ended the second. The second vehicle was then forced into the eastbound lane and struck a vehicle head on. The driver of the head-on collision was pronounced deceased on scene. She was a 43-year-old female from Saginaw, Michigan. Drugs and alcohol do not appear to be factors in the crash. The crash remains under investigation.

The Gratiot County Sheriff's Office was assisted by Alma Police Department, Alma District Fire/Rescue, St. Louis Police Department, The Michigan State Police, MMR, Gratiot County Central Dispatch, Gratiot County Road Commission, and Gratiot Towing.

Thank You,

Sheriff Tom Clark

Sheriff Tom Clark's release, posted on the Sheriff's Office Facebook page on Nov. 4.

Saginaw Woman, 43, Killed in Multi-Vehicle Crash on West Monroe Road

The Sheriff's Office says a rear-end collision pushed one vehicle into the eastbound lane, where it struck her vehicle head-on. Drugs and alcohol do not appear to be factors; the crash is under investigation.

BY W.E. | GRATIOT COUNTY WHISTLEBLOWER

SEVILLE TOWNSHIP — A 43-year-old Saginaw woman died Nov. 3 in a crash involving several vehicles on West Monroe Road, the Gratiot County Sheriff's Office said. Deputies were sent to the 8500 block of West Monroe Road at about 3:49 p.m., according to a release from Sheriff Tom Clark.

WHAT THE SHERIFF'S OFFICE SAYS HAPPENED

The release describes the crash this way, from what it calls preliminary investigations (Sheriff's Office release):

- A vehicle slowed or stopped on West Monroe Road to turn into a driveway.
- A second vehicle, driven by a 36-year-old Edmore man, slowed or stopped to allow the turn.
- A third vehicle, driven by a 41-year-old Vestaburg woman, "failed to stop and rear-ended the second."
- The second vehicle "was then forced into the eastbound lane and struck a vehicle head on."
- The driver of that vehicle, a 43-year-old woman from Saginaw, was pronounced dead at the scene.

"Drugs and alcohol do not appear to be factors in the crash," the release says. "The crash remains under investigation."

Full report and sources: gcwhistleblower.com/articles/saginaw-woman-43-killed-in-multi-vehicle-crash-on-west-monroe-road

From the Cities

3 reports published Nov. 4 to Nov. 5, 2026. Each full report, with its sources, is at gcwhistleblower.com.

3 REPORTS | PUBLISHED NOV. 4 TO NOV. 5 | GRATIOT COUNTY WHISTLEBLOWER

LOCAL GOVERNMENT | ST. LOUIS | NOV. 4, 2026

St. Louis Approves Cemetery Design, Lift-Station Planning, a $56,700 Demolition and a Hydro Repair; Manager's Contract Extended to June 2027

All passed unanimously Oct. 6, per the approved minutes. The hydro request said Generator #6 was "completely inoperable." On Oct. 20 the council extended City Manager Kurt Giles's contract and approved a $102,065 software move.

BY W.E. | GRATIOT COUNTY WHISTLEBLOWER

ST. LOUIS — The St. Louis City Council on Oct. 6 approved four items we had reported on before the meeting: a higher design fee for expanding the city cemetery, $32,570 to plan a new sewer lift station, a $56,700 contract to demolish the house at 117 S. East St. and $13,582 to repair two motors needed to run the city's hydroelectric generators. Each passed with all members voting yes, according to the minutes, which the council approved Oct. 20. On Oct. 20 the council also extended City Manager Kurt Giles's employment agreement through June 30, 2027.

THE RECORD AT A GLANCE

- **Cemetery design:** Spicer Group's preliminary design fee raised from $12,000 to $18,000, and an $8,000 final design phase approved.
- **Sewer planning:** $32,570 to OHM for planning a North Union Street lift station.
- **Demolition:** awarded to Bierlein Companies for $56,700, the lower of two proposals. The other was $99,650.
- **Hydro repair:** $13,582 to York Repair. The city's request said Hydro #6 was "completely inoperable currently."
- **City manager:** contract extended through June 30, 2027. The minutes say the current one expired Oct. 25, 2026.

CEMETERY EXPANSION

Our Oct. 2 report described Spicer Group's request for more money after a new survey found ground conditions that did not match the 1999 plan. The Oct. 6 minutes (PDF p. 4) record that Council Member Kevin Palmer moved, and Council Member Robin Hart supported, approving the revised proposal: phase 2 preliminary design "from the approved $12,000 cost to $18,000" and a phase 3 design cost of $8,000. All ayes carried the motion. The same night the council adopted Resolution 2026-22 on a 5–0 roll call, authorizing a petition to the county drain commissioner to abandon part of the #199 Drain (PDF p. 8). Our earlier report explained that the city says the drain crosses the expansion area.

Full report and sources: gcwhistleblower.com/articles/st-louis-council-approves-cemetery-design-lift-station-planning-demolition-and-hydro-repair

VILLAGE GOVERNMENT | BRECKENRIDGE | NOV. 5, 2026

Breckenridge's Police Chief Resigned Dec. 24; Village Minutes Show No Vote on What Replaced the Department

One line in a manager's report is the only record. The village website still says it has a full-time police chief, and a resident was upset in April when the village could not produce a police report.

BY W.E. | GRATIOT COUNTY WHISTLEBLOWER

BRECKENRIDGE — The Village of Breckenridge's police chief resigned effective Dec. 24, 2025. In the five months of council minutes the village has posted since then, there is no vote to replace him, to close the department or to contract with the Gratiot County Sheriff's Office for patrols. The only record of the change is one line in the manager's report.

WHAT THE RECORD SAYS

The Dec. 22, 2025, council minutes, under the manager's report, read: "As of 12/24, Police Chief Weslock has resigned. Manager Ostrander met with Gratiot County Sherriff Tom Clark regarding police coverage in the interim. Council would like to meet with Sherriff Clark." (minutes, Dec. 22, 2025)

The council's next five meetings, on Jan. 26, Feb. 23, March 23, April 27 and May 18, 2026, record no motion, vote, contract or report about police coverage, and no meeting with the sheriff (Jan. 26, Feb. 23, March 23, April 27, May 18).

Residents noticed. At the April 27 meeting, one resident "wanted a police report from the county and was very upset when we could not produce one," the minutes say (minutes, April 27, 2026). Two weeks earlier, the village planning commission was told that "the Council received comments about policing for Breckenridge" (planning commission minutes, April 13, 2026).

WHAT THE VILLAGE WEBSITE STILL SAYS

- The Visitors page: "Breckenridge has a police department with a full time police chief." (village Visitors page)
- The Government page lists James Durham as police chief (village Government page). The council thanked Durham "for the 30 years of service to Breckenridge" in April 2022, when he left (minutes, April 25, 2022).
- The Police Department page lists two crossing guards as staff and gives 989-875-7505 as the non-emergency number (village Police Department page). That is the administrative line of Gratiot County Central Dispatch (Central Dispatch minutes).

Full report and sources: gcwhistleblower.com/articles/breckenridge-police-chief-resigned-dec-24-minutes-show-no-vote-on-what-replaced-the-department

VILLAGE GOVERNMENT | BRECKENRIDGE | NOV. 5, 2026

Breckenridge's Manager Sits on the Zoning Appeals Board, Which State Law Closes to Village Employees

In December the village also cut its planning commission to seven members with three seats for officials, above the one-third limit in state law. Commissioners raised the concern in their own minutes; the chairman who voted no is no longer on the commission.

BY W.E. | GRATIOT COUNTY WHISTLEBLOWER

BRECKENRIDGE — Breckenridge's village manager has been a member of the village Zoning Board of Appeals since 2017, and the village website lists him there today. Michigan's zoning law says village employees may not serve on that board. Separately, the village cut its planning commission to seven members in December, keeping three seats for village officials; state law caps such members at one-third.

THE ZONING APPEALS BOARD

On July 24, 2017, the council voted "to appoint the following individuals to serve on the Zoning Board of Appeals Board. Jerry Loyselle, Nick Lux, Roy Shankel, Charles Seeley and Manager Jeff Ostrander." (minutes, July 24, 2017) The village's Zoning Board page lists the same five members today (village Zoning Board page).

The Michigan Zoning Enabling Act says: "An employee or contractor of the legislative body may not serve as a member of the zoning board of appeals." (MCL 125.3601) The same section allows one member of the council on the board, as long as that member does not chair it. Charles Seeley is the village president.

A zoning appeals board hears appeals of zoning decisions and requests for variances. In Breckenridge, the village lists Ostrander as its zoning administrator, the official who makes those decisions in the first place (village office page).

THE PLANNING COMMISSION

At its Dec. 8, 2025, meeting, the planning commission took up a change to its own ordinance. The minutes say: "Currently, the Planning Commission sits at 9 members. Due to attendance and occasional quorum issues, it has been proposed to reduce the number of members to 7. This would reduce the number of Village residents on the commission to 4 instead of 6. The other 3 members remain the Village President, one Administrator Official of the village, and one member of Council." (planning commission minutes, Dec. 8, 2025)

Full report and sources: gcwhistleblower.com/articles/breckenridge-manager-sits-on-zoning-appeals-board-state-law-closes-to-village-employees

From the Cities (Continued)

2 reports published Nov. 4, 2026. Each full report, with its sources, is at gcwhistleblower.com.

2 REPORTS | PUBLISHED NOV. 4 | GRATIOT COUNTY WHISTLEBLOWER

LOCAL GOVERNMENT | ITHACA | NOV. 4, 2026

Ithaca Sells Its $4 Million Union Street Bond; Six Firms Bid, and the Lowest True Interest Cost Was 4.71%

The council authorized the bond 6–0 on Sept. 18, and the city manager awarded it Sept. 30 to Robert W. Baird & Co., the lowest of six bids. S&P rated it "A," stable. Payments run through 2041.

BY W.E. | GRATIOT COUNTY WHISTLEBLOWER

ITHACA — Ithaca has sold the $4 million bond that pays for its Union Street project. Six firms bid on Sept. 30, and Robert W. Baird & Co. of Milwaukee offered the lowest true interest cost, 4.706114 percent. City Manager Jamey Conn signed the order awarding the sale the same day, according to the city's Oct. 6 council packet. S&P Global Ratings rated the bonds "A" with a stable outlook. The bonds are to be repaid by April 1, 2041.

THE RECORD AT A GLANCE

- **The vote:** the council adopted Resolution 2026-17, authorizing the bonds, 6–0 at an 8 a.m. special meeting on Sept. 18. Councilperson Brooke Vernon was absent.
- **The sale:** six bids were opened Sept. 30. The lowest true interest cost was 4.706114 percent; the highest was 5.144330 percent.
- **The winning bid:** Baird offered to pay $4,021,153 for the $4 million in bonds, a premium of $21,153.
- **The rating:** "A," stable outlook, from S&P Global Ratings, dated Sept. 18.

HOW THE BOND WAS APPROVED

In September we reported that the city planned one $4 million capital improvement bond for Union Street and had scheduled a special meeting to consider it, and we said we would not report the authorization as final until adopted minutes or a signed resolution were posted. Both are now in the city's packets.

The minutes of the Sept. 18 special meeting (PDF p. 5) record that Councilperson James Andrew moved to adopt Resolution 2026-17, "Authorizing Capital Improvement Bonds," and Councilperson Clark Hubbard seconded. The roll call was Kristyn Roethlisberger, Andrew, Rob Endter, Brandon Ester, Hubbard and Mayor Brett Baublitz, all yes, with Vernon absent. No one spoke during public comment. The minutes say the meeting was called to order at 8 a.m. and adjourned at 8:04 a.m. The council's draft minutes of Oct. 6, in the Oct. 20 packet, record that the council approved the Sept. 18 minutes that night.

The signed Order Awarding Sale (PDF p. 14) says the resolution adopted Sept. 18 authorized "not to exceed Four Million Dollars ($4,000,000)" in limited tax general obligation bonds, that a notice of sale was published in The Bond Buyer on Sept. 21 and that bids were opened at 11 a.m. Sept. 30. The resolution let the mayor, city manager, treasurer or clerk award the sale to the bid with the lowest true interest cost. The order is signed by Conn and dated Sept. 30.

THE SIX BIDS

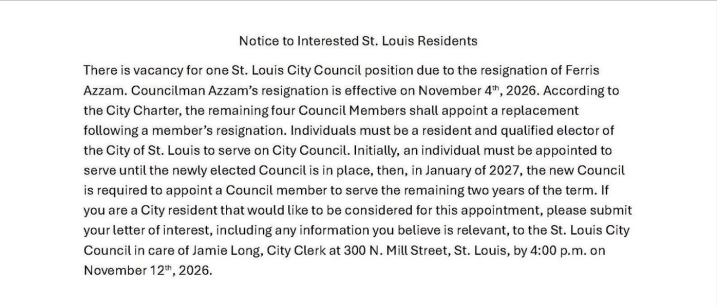
The packet's Exhibit A (PDF p. 16–21) reproduces each bid. Ranked by true interest cost, the measure the sale was decided on:

- Robert W. Baird & Co., Milwaukee: 4.706114%
- Stifel, Nicolaus & Co., Birmingham, Ala.: 4.848351%
- BOK Financial Securities, Dallas: 4.865144%
- StoneX Financial, Winter Park, Fla.: 4.942613%
- Bernardi Securities, Northfield, Ill.: 4.957119%
- Huntington Securities, Chicago: 5.144330%

On the schedule in its bid, Baird listed a total interest cost of $1,572,636.81 and, after the premium, a net interest cost of $1,551,483.81. The next-lowest bid, Stifel's, listed a net interest cost of $1,596,177.11, or $44,693.30 more. Huntington's, the highest, listed $1,682,365.64, or $130,881.83 more than Baird's.

Full report and sources: gcwhistleblower.com/articles/ithaca-sells-4-million-union-street-bond-six-firms-bid

LOCAL GOVERNMENT | ST. LOUIS | NOV. 4, 2026



Notice to Interested St. Louis Residents

There is vacancy for one St. Louis City Council position due to the resignation of Ferris Azzam. Councilman Azzam's resignation is effective on November 4th, 2026. According to the City Charter, the remaining four Council Members shall appoint a replacement following a member's resignation. Individuals must be a resident and qualified elector of the City of St. Louis to serve on City Council. Initially, an individual must be appointed to serve until the newly elected Council is in place, then, in January of 2027, the new Council is required to appoint a Council member to serve the remaining two years of the term. If you are a City resident that would like to be considered for this appointment, please submit your letter of interest, including any information you believe is relevant, to the St. Louis City Council in care of Jamie Long, City Clerk at 300 N. Mill Street, St. Louis, by 4:00 p.m. on November 12th, 2026.

The City of St. Louis posted this notice on its City Hall Facebook page on Nov. 4.

St. Louis Seeks Applicants for Council Seat After Ferris Azzam Resigns; Letters Due Nov. 12

The remaining four council members will appoint someone to serve until the newly elected council takes over; in January 2027 the new council appoints someone for the last two years of the term.

BY W.E. | GRATIOT COUNTY WHISTLEBLOWER

ST. LOUIS — The City of St. Louis is taking letters from residents who want to be appointed to the City Council seat left by Ferris Azzam, who has resigned. Letters are due to the city clerk by 4 p.m. Nov. 12, according to a notice the city posted Nov. 4.

THE RECORD AT A GLANCE

- **The vacancy:** one council seat, "due to the resignation of Ferris Azzam." The notice says his resignation "is effective on November 4th, 2026" (city notice). The motion proposed for the Nov. 3 meeting said Nov. 3 (PDF p. 55).
- **Who chooses:** "the remaining four Council Members shall appoint a replacement," according to the notice, citing the city charter.
- **Two appointments:** one person is appointed "to serve until the newly elected Council is in place." Then, in January 2027, the new council must appoint someone "to serve the remaining two years of the term."
- **Who can apply:** applicants "must be a resident and qualified elector of the City of St. Louis."
- **How to apply:** a letter of interest, "including any information you believe is relevant," to the St. Louis City Council in care of City Clerk Jamie Long, 300 N. Mill St., by 4 p.m. Nov. 12.

THE RESIGNATION

Azzam's one-paragraph letter, addressed "To city staff and council" and dated Oct. 20 (PDF p. 56), says he had served "for almost three years on city council but must now resign because I'm moving out of town." It reads in part: "It was a pleasure working with other council members and city staff. I learned a lot. For that I'm truly grateful." A handwritten postscript says, "I will attend the meeting on Nov. 3rd 2026, as it will be my last meeting."

The resignation was item 11A on the council's Nov. 3 agenda, "Resignation of Council Member and Discussion of Potential Appointment to Fill Vacancy" (PDF p. 2). The clerk's agenda statement says the charter requires the vacancy to be filled within 30 days by a majority vote of the remaining members (PDF p. 55). The city's notice gives no date for the first appointment.

The council's minutes list him as Fares E. Azzam. His letter, the agenda statement and the city's notice spell his first name Ferris.

Full report and sources: gcwhistleblower.com/articles/st-louis-seeks-applicants-for-council-seat-after-ferris-azzam-resigns

Who We Asked, When, and What Came Back

Every request we send to a public official or agency is listed with the date sent, the date we asked for a reply and the result, and the full text is public.

PUBLIC RECORD | AS OF NOVEMBER 6, 2026 | gcwhistleblower.com/requests

When we ask a public official or agency for comment, we list it with the date, who we asked and what came back, whether the answer helps us or not. The log records what happened and does not guess at why an office answered, declined or did not reply. Where an office answers, we publish the answer in full or link to it. We list offices and roles, not private individuals.

NONE DATED IN THIS EDITION

No request for comment dated Oct. 23 to Nov. 6 is listed in the log. Earlier requests and their results remain at gcwhistleblower.com/requests.

RECORDS TO WATCH

What Each Report Is Waiting On

None of this edition's reports lists records to watch.

Corrections, How to Reach Us and Who We Are

Changes to our reporting in this period, and an honest account of why this publication is anonymous.

PUBLICATION STATEMENT | NOVEMBER 6, 2026

CORRECTIONS & UPDATES

No corrections or updates are logged for Oct. 23 to Nov. 6. Every correction is dated, explained and kept on a permanent public log.

Full log: gcwhistleblower.com/corrections

REACH OUT

Email contactus@gcwhistleblower.com with tips, responses, corrections or records. Any official or organization named in these pages is welcome to respond, and responses are published in full.

OUR RULES

We start from the record. We ask before we publish and say what the answer was. Anyone named can answer at any time, and a reply is published in full. We label what is not settled, we do not guess at motives, and we correct in public. Read all fourteen rules at gcwhistleblower.com/how-we-work.

ABOUT US: HONEST ABOUT ANONYMITY

Who we are. Gratiot County Whistleblower is an independent local news publication. The people who run it do not publish their names. That is a deliberate choice, and you deserve to know the reasons: to protect residents and public employees who share information they are entitled to share, to keep attention on the records and not on who wrote the story, and to ask hard questions without fear of payback.

What it costs. You cannot check who is behind this. So we made the work checkable: every report links to the documents it rests on. Some officials will not answer an anonymous publication, and records requests under Michigan law need a real name, so volunteer public representatives contact offices under their own names (gcwhistleblower.com/volunteer). We are unpaid volunteers, have earned no money and are not yet a registered business.

How we are paid for. There is no paywall and we do not accept money from readers or payment for coverage from anyone. The site may carry clearly labeled advertising placed automatically by an ad network, and advertisers have no say in what we cover.

There is one address, contactus@gcwhistleblower.com, open to anyone, including anyone we have written about. A reply sent there is published.

PHOTO AND IMAGE CREDITS

Each caption in this edition names its credit; the credits are repeated here.

- Gratiot County public record; cropped.
- Stock photo of naloxone, a drug used to reverse opioid overdoses.
- Photo: NEXT Distro / Unsplash.

Earlier issues: Vol. 1, No. 1 (Sept. 18); Vol. 1, No. 2 (Sept. 30); Vol. 1, No. 3 (Oct. 2); Vol. 1, No. 4 (Oct. 23), at gcwhistleblower.com.