



great lakes REPORTER

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GLX 2026

—
SPOT & FLEET RECAP

—
WOMEN IN PUBLIC WORKS

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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Jennifer Lawson, CSM, City of Ann Arbor

One of the things I have come to value most in my career—and in my service to the American Public Works Association Michigan Chapter—is that public works is, at its core, a **people profession**.

Yes, we manage infrastructure. Yes, we oversee budgets, compliance requirements, asset management systems, and capital projects. But at the heart of everything we do are people who have spent years, sometimes entire careers, learning how our systems function, how our communities grow, and how to respond when things don't go as planned.

We are responsible for complex infrastructure systems: long-range capital planning, stormwater networks that protect our communities from flooding, sanitary sewer collection systems that operate quietly beneath our streets, and countless assets that support public health and economic vitality. Our work is technical and data driven. It requires precision, foresight, and sound engineering judgment. But at the heart of everything we do are people who have spent years, sometimes entire careers, learning how our systems function, how our communities grow, and how to respond when things don't go as planned. And the foundation of all of it is knowledge—knowledge built over decades and passed from one professional to the next.

Throughout my career in infrastructure planning and utility management, I have witnessed a familiar moment. A long-serving employee retires after 30 or 35 years of service. We celebrate their dedication, reflect on major projects completed under their watch, and thank them for the systems they helped shape. Then, sometime later, a question arises:

“Why was this trunk line routed this way?”

“Why was this detention basin designed with that capacity?”

“Why do we respond to this neighborhood first during heavy rainfall events?”

“Why do we plow this route in this order?”

And we realize that part of the answer walked out the door with them.

Not because the information was intentionally withheld, but because so much of what we do lives in experience. Institutional knowledge is often embedded in lived history—the memory of a significant storm that overwhelmed a system, the lessons learned from a pump station failure, the rationale behind a policy change following a regulatory shift. These insights do not always appear in design files or asset inventories. They are carried in conversations, in stories, and in professional judgment shaped over time.

In stormwater management and sanitary sewer collection systems, understanding the “why” behind legacy decisions can be just as important as understanding current standards. When we respect the history of our infrastructure, we make better, more informed decisions about its future.

Across Michigan, our chapter includes professionals who have guided communities through economic cycles, evolving environmental regulations, and rapid development pressures. Their experience provides context. Their perspective tempers urgency with wisdom. Their stories remind us that infrastructure is not static—it is shaped by decades of adaptation.

At the same time, we are fortunate to have emerging leaders who bring new technologies, advanced modeling tools, data analytics, and innovative approaches to asset management. These perspectives are essential as we face increasing demands on aging systems and heightened expectations from the communities we serve.

Continued on page 6.



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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE CONT.

Our strength as a profession lies in bridging these generations.

When a young engineer takes time to listen to a veteran operator describe how a system truly behaves during a 100-year rainfall event, learning occurs. When a seasoned manager invites a newer professional to question assumptions and introduce new tools, growth occurs. Mutual respect—across disciplines and across generations—ensures continuity.

We are, ultimately, temporary stewards of long-term systems. The stormwater systems, sanitary collection networks, and treatment facilities we manage today were shaped by those who came before us. The bridges and roads that we build will be in place for our grandchildren to drive on (unless we have flying cars by then....). The capital plans we develop and the improvements we prioritize will influence the professionals who follow. Recognizing our role in that continuum brings both responsibility and opportunity.

As members of the Michigan Chapter, I encourage each of us to be intentional about preserving and sharing knowledge. Mentor a colleague. Document lessons learned after major projects or storm events. Invite retirees to share their experiences at a branch meeting. Ask not only how a system operates—but why.

Public works excellence depends on more than technical standards. It depends on listening, learning, and honoring the history that informs our work.

Thank you for your commitment to your communities and to this profession. By respecting those who built the foundation before us and investing in those who will lead after us, we ensure that public works in Michigan remains resilient, thoughtful, and strong for generations to come.



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APWA MICHIGAN CHAPTER SETS STRATEGIC COURSE FOR THE FUTURE OF PUBLIC WORKS

By Jennifer Lawson, MI-APWA President

In November 2025, the APWA Michigan Chapter took an important step toward shaping the future of public works across the state. Chapter board members and Young Professional representatives gathered for a two-day strategic planning retreat in Mt. Pleasant to define priorities, strengthen organizational direction, and ensure the chapter remains responsive to the evolving needs of its members and communities.

Facilitated by Gaining Ground, LLC, the retreat brought together a diverse group of leaders committed to advancing public works in Michigan. Through guided discussions and collaborative exercises, participants reflected on past accomplishments, examined current challenges, and developed a forward-looking framework to guide the chapter over the next three to five years.

A PROFESSION AT THE HEART OF EVERY COMMUNITY

Public works professionals play a vital but often underrecognized role in daily life. From maintaining safe roads and clean water systems to managing infrastructure and waste services, their work forms the backbone of healthy, functioning communities.

Participants emphasized that while much of this work happens behind the scenes, its impact is highly visible—ensuring public safety, supporting economic vitality, and improving quality of life. At the same time, the profession offers a strong sense of purpose, attracting dedicated individuals motivated by service, collaboration, and tangible community impact.

What is the Role of Public Works:

- Essential to public health, safety, and daily life

- Maintains infrastructure communities rely on
- Supports environmental sustainability
- Enables economic growth and stability
- Often unseen, but always critical

NAVIGATING A CHANGING LANDSCAPE

Despite its importance, the public works profession faces increasing complexity. Retreat participants identified several pressing challenges, including constrained and highly regulated funding, workforce shortages, and growing public expectations.

Agencies are frequently required to “do more with less,” balancing technical priorities with political influences and community demands. Recruitment and retention remain ongoing concerns, as professionals contend with burnout, compensation limitations, and unclear career pathways.

Additionally, there is a need to better communicate the value of public works to decision makers and the public, particularly as infrastructure costs rise and scrutiny increases.

Issues of Concern and Frustration:

- Limited and restricted funding sources
- Workforce recruitment and retention struggles
- Burnout and increasing public scrutiny
- Political pressures influencing priorities
- Public misunderstanding of infrastructure value

STRENGTHENING THE APWA MICHIGAN CHAPTER

The retreat also focused on the role of the APWA Michigan Chapter in supporting its members. Participants highlighted the need for continued



Chapter board members and Young Professionals at the retreat

growth, stronger engagement, and improved coordination across branches.

Expanding membership is a top priority, along with increasing awareness of the chapter's value among professionals, local leaders, and decision makers. Enhancing communication, recognizing volunteer contributions, and aligning programs with member needs will be critical to maintaining relevance and impact.

Members are seeking expanded professional development opportunities, accessible training, and stronger networking connections. There is also a growing need for advocacy support and tools to navigate complex public and political environments.

What Can MI-APWA Do?

- Accessible training and continuing education
- Stronger networking opportunities
- Career development and leadership pathways
- Advocacy and communication support
- Increased regional representation

A CLEAR VISION FOR THE FUTURE

From these discussions, the group developed a clear and focused strategic framework to guide the Chapter forward.

Vision:

The APWA Michigan Chapter is a trusted and recognized leader in advancing Public Works.

Mission:

To provide exceptional education, outreach, support, and development opportunities that empower professionals and agencies to lead effectively, increase their impact, and elevate the industry.

To bring this vision to life, the chapter established seven strategic goals centered on membership growth, education, communication, advocacy, financial stewardship, and leadership development.

STRATEGIC PRIORITIES IN ACTION

Key initiatives include expanding membership recruitment and retention efforts, enhancing training opportunities through both in-person and virtual formats, and improving communication through updated digital platforms and coordinated outreach.



The strategic planning retreat included group discussion with the moderator.

The chapter also plans to strengthen relationships with local leaders, increase public awareness of the profession, and expand participation in events such as National Public Works Week. Legislative outreach and policy engagement will play a growing role, positioning the chapter as a trusted technical resource for decision makers.

STRATEGIC CONT.

Leadership development is another cornerstone of the plan, with a focus on mentorship, succession planning, and onboarding future leaders to ensure long-term organizational strength.

Strategic Goals:

- Grow and retain a strong, engaged membership base
- Expand education and certification opportunities
- Improve communication and marketing efforts
- Strengthen relationships with public officials
- Increase visibility of public works statewide
- Enhance legislative outreach and advocacy
- Develop future leaders through mentorship

COMMITMENT TO ACCOUNTABILITY

To ensure meaningful progress, the chapter has established an Implementation Matrix that will serve as a living document to track initiatives, measure outcomes, and adapt strategies as needed.

The board has committed to regular progress reviews, with leadership oversight provided by the past president and support from the current president. This structured approach will help maintain momentum, ensure accountability, and keep the organization aligned with its strategic goals.

LOOKING AHEAD

The 2025 strategic planning effort reflects a shared commitment to strengthening both the APWA Michigan Chapter and the broader public works profession. By focusing on innovation, collaboration, and member support, the chapter is positioning itself to meet today's challenges while preparing for the future.

As public works continues to evolve, the Michigan chapter stands ready to lead—supporting the professionals who keep communities running and ensuring their contributions are recognized, valued, and sustained for years to come.



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GLX: EDUCATION, EXHIBITORS AND NETWORKING

MAY 19-21, 2026 | BOYNE MOUNTAIN RESORT, BOYNE FALLS, MICHIGAN

We invite you to join the region's top public works leaders for three days of innovation and professional growth. As our biggest Expo yet, the 2026 event offers an unmatched platform to share ideas and discover cutting-edge solutions.

PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS:

Educational Excellence:

Deep-dive sessions covering infrastructure management, sustainable best practices, technology and more

Innovation Hub: A massive exhibitor floor featuring live equipment demos and the latest industry tech

Community & Celebration:

Networking with peers across the Great Lakes region during our signature social events and Awards Banquet



KEYNOTE SPEAKER

ANGIE MORGAN

Angie Morgan, former Marine Captain and New York Times Best-Selling Author, will be the GLX keynote speaker.

Angie is a leadership expert who helps leaders become “The Actual” in their lives. She provides strategies for achieving personal and professional growth while empowering individuals to lead authentically and create lasting impact.

In addition, Angie’s approach helps leaders overcome self-doubt while embracing their strengths.

Angie is the author of three books: “Leading from the Front,” “Spark,” and “Bet on You.”



Morgan

SESSION AGENDA

MAY 19 - 21, 2026

SCHEDULE AT A GLANCE

TUESDAY, MAY 19

11:30am - 6:30pm	Exhibitor Set-up
12:30pm	Golf Outing
1:00 - 5:00pm	Wine Tour
7:30 - 9:30pm	YP Welcome Reception

WEDNESDAY, MAY 20

7:00 - 8:30am	Registration Ope
7:00 - 11:00am	Exhibitor Set up
7:30 - 9:00am	Breakfast
8:00 - 8:30am	Annual Meeting - Branch President & Past President Awards
8:30 - 9:30am	MML Update
9:30 - 11:00am	Keynote Speaker
11:00am - 4:30pm	Exhibit Floor Open
11:00 - 11:30am	Break - Visit Exhibitors
11:30am - 12:30pm	Concurrent Sessions Multiple
12:30-2:00pm	Lunch with Exhibitors
2:00 - 3:00pm	Concurrent Sessions Multiple
3:00- 3:30pm	Break - Visit Exhibitors
3:30 - 4:30pm	Concurrent Sessions Multiple
4:30 - 5:30pm	Social Hour on Exhibit Floor

THURSDAY, MAY 21

7:30 - 8:30am	Breakfast on Expo Floor
7:30am - 2:00pm	Exhibit Floor Open
8:30 - 9:30am	Concurrent Sessions Multiple
9:30 - 10:00am	Break - Visit Exhibitors
10:00am - 12:00pm	Concurrent Sessions Multiple
12:00 - 2:00pm	Lunch with Exhibitors
2:00 - 4:00pm	Concurrent Sessions Multiple
5:30 - 6:00pm	Cocktail Hour
6:00- 7:00pm	Awards Ceremony
7:00 - 10:00pm	Dueling Pianos Night

Concurrent Sessions

- Fleet Track
- Management Track
- Operations Track

GLX 2026: YOU NEED TO BE THERE

By Linnea Rader, Founder, Lead with Linnea and Finance and Human Resources Director, Van Buren County Road Commission

GLX is coming up in May, and I want to say this as directly as I can: Every public works professional in the State of Michigan needs to be there – not check it out – but be there. This event has the potential to change how you do your job, how you lead your team, and how you grow in this profession. And I want to tell you why.

GLX 2026 runs May 19-21 at Boyne Mountain Resort in Boyne Falls, Michigan. Three days. Three educational tracks. An expo hall filled to the brim with vendors who provide the products that can genuinely advance your agency. And networking that, once you experience it and truly understand its value, you will never take for granted again.

Let me break down what is waiting for you there.

WHO CAN BENEFIT FROM GLX?

Everyone. Full stop.

It does not matter if you are brand new to public works or if you have been doing this for 30 years. It does not matter if you are a director, a superintendent, a technician, or somewhere in between. There is something at this event built for you. The question is not whether GLX has something to offer you. The question is whether you are going to show up to get it.

THE EDUCATION IS EXCEPTIONAL

Let's start with the keynote, because this year we have someone truly special on that stage.

Our keynote speaker is Angie Morgan, leadership expert, bestselling author, executive coach, and Marine Corps veteran. Angie is the kind of speaker who does not just deliver information and leave you with a handout. She challenges the way you think. She helps you find your why, the real reason you do this work, and she gives you practical tools to lead your

team better, starting the day you get home. I am genuinely excited for every person in that room to hear her.



Rader

Beyond the keynote, we have three concurrent educational tracks: management, equipment, and operations. At any point during the sessions you can choose the track that meets your needs most. If management is calling you one hour and operations the next, go where the content serves you. The flexibility is yours.

And here is something I want to say to anyone thinking about skipping a session because they already know the topic: Go anyway. Every single time I have heard a speaker, even one I have heard before, I walk out with something new. A different way of framing a challenge. A question I had not thought to ask. A reminder of something I let drift to the back burner. Education is not just about learning what you do not know. Sometimes it is about seeing what you already know from a completely different angle.

I love to learn. I love to grow. If I have the chance to sit in a room where ideas are being shared and knowledge is being built, I am there. Full stop.

THE NETWORK IS PRICELESS

When I first got into public works, I did not understand the value of networking. I looked at it and thought it looked fun, it looked engaging, but I did not see the true value. Honestly, I thought it was a complete waste of time.

I was wrong.

The value of a strong professional network is impossible to put a dollar amount on. But think about this. The next time you come across a challenge with a type of pipe you have not worked with much, you now know several more people who have worked with it and can give you advice. The next time a board member questions why a specific technique is all that you use, you have a network to reach out to that can give you additional feedback and information to back you up. When you run into challenges, it does not matter how big or small, you have a huge resource of individuals you can turn to.

We are public works. We are the ones who will always help, always answer, always be your guide. That is not something I say to sound inspiring. That is who we are. And GLX is where that community comes together in the most powerful way.

The connections you build at this event do not end when you check out of Boyne Mountain. They follow you home and show up in the moments that matter most. A phone call when a project goes sideways. A quick text when you need someone who has been there. A colleague who becomes a mentor, or a mentor who becomes a friend. I have seen it happen over and over again. The networking at GLX is truly exceptional, and if you let it, it will change your career.

THE EXPO HALL IS WORTH YOUR TIME

Do not rush through the expo hall. I know it can be tempting to do a quick lap and call it done, but the vendors in that hall are not there to hand you a brochure and send you on your way. They bring the products, the technology, and the solutions that can genuinely advance what your agency does.

Walk that floor with your real challenges in mind. What problems have you been trying to solve? What is coming up in the next few years that you need to start planning for now? What equipment decisions are on your horizon? Bring those questions with you and you will walk out with a much clearer picture of what is available, what is possible, and who can help you get there.

SHOW UP FOR YOURSELF

Here is something I think about a lot. We pour everything we have into our departments, our communities, our crews. We solve problems for everyone around us. But when is the last time you made an investment in yourself?

GLX is that investment. Three days to fill your own cup. To learn things that make you sharper. To connect with people who get it, who do what you do, who face what you face. To come home energized and ready to lead at a higher level.

Your team benefits when you grow. Your community benefits when you grow. And you deserve the chance to grow.

GET REGISTERED TODAY

Registration is open right now. Register and get all the details at michigan.apwa.org.

Whether you could benefit from building your network, learning from the education sessions, gathering information from vendors, or all of it, GLX is for you. Sign up today so you do not miss out. We will see you at Boyne Mountain.

If you want to consult on training or coaching for your team, please reach out. Linnia@leadwithlinnea.com | 269-621-5282. Be sure to check out my website and sign up for exclusive content www.leadwithlinnea.com.

YP GLX SCHOLARSHIPS

The YPC has chosen two Young Professionals to receive a scholarship to attend GLX.

As part of the scholarship requirements, both YPs must attend the full conference and volunteer at the conference golf outing on Tuesday, May 19.

PATRICK MCNALLY

Patrick works for the City of Westland Department of Public Service as the Construction and Maintenance Supervisor.

He has worked in the industry for nine years, all with Westland. He started to become involved with APWA this year.

Patrick has an associate's degree from WCCCD but he chose to work as a mechanic for a few years in the private sector before starting in public works and working his way up.

As a public works professional, Patrick has come to enjoy learning the ins and outs of how the local government machine works and runs.

In his free time Patrick likes to golf and spend time with his wife and dogs, as well as spending time up north or traveling with family.



McNally

EMILY AUSE

Emily's career in municipal engineering began after graduating from Hope College in 2016 with a degree in Civil Engineering.

Her first role was as a consultant at Hubbell, Roth & Clark, Inc., where she worked for seven years before transitioning to the public sector with the City of Troy's Engineering Department. Around that same time, Emily became a member of APWA.

What Emily enjoys most about public works is connecting with residents in her community and serving them in a role that may be non-glamorous and often underappreciated but is essential. Emily is especially passionate about finding ways to clearly explain what public works professionals do to those outside the public works field.

Outside of work, Emily enjoys rock climbing, taking hot pilates classes, working as a personal finance coach and spending time with her fiancé and family.

Emily said she's grateful to APWA for this scholarship and the opportunity to attend and volunteer at the 2026 Great Lakes Expo.



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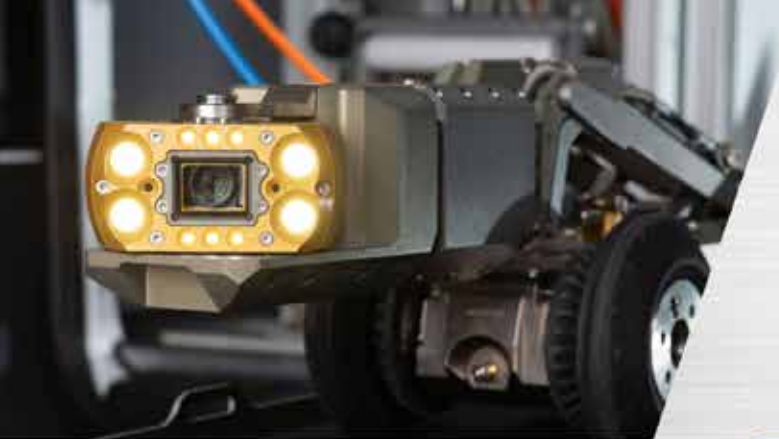
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KALAMAZOO STRIVES FOR MORE SUSTAINABLE BIOSOLIDS MANAGEMENT

The City of Kalamazoo is currently navigating a critical transition in its wastewater management.

As outlined at the 2025 Stakeholder Conference, the city is moving toward a more sustainable and cost-effective method for handling wastewater biosolids to address escalating landfill costs and environmental concerns.

The City of Kalamazoo Water Reclamation Plant (KWRP) provides wastewater treatment to more than 230,000 residents in more than 20

local jurisdictions. It's Michigan's only powdered activated carbon wastewater treatment plant, managing a substantial sewer system that spans nearly 900 miles. The plant produces around 220 wet tons of biosolids and trucks them to landfills daily, a costly and environmentally taxing process.

"The Department of Public Services is committed to sustainable biosolids alternatives that will be better for the environment, better for the community and at reduced costs to ratepayers," said James Baker, Public Services Director and City Engineer.

THE BIOSOLIDS CHALLENGE: SEEKING A SUSTAINABLE SOLUTION

A central focus of the plan is the management of biosolids at KWRP. Currently, the city spends over \$13.5 million annually on biosolids disposal, a figure that continues to rise due to escalating landfill costs and limited disposal options.

Kalamazoo faces a unique challenge because 60-70 percent of the organic load at its plant originates from industrial sources. This makes the resulting biosolids unsuitable for traditional agricultural land application.

Through a series of stakeholder conferences, the city evaluated several technologies to reduce the mass of biosolids:

- **Heat Dryers:** A proven technology that evaporates water, reducing biosolids mass by 70 percent and making them easier to landfill.
- **Energy Recovery System (ERS) Incineration:** This involves drying and then burning biosolids, which offers low operational costs and destroys many contaminants of emerging concern.



Aerial view of the Kalamazoo Water Reclamation Plant

“The Department of Public Services is committed to sustainable biosolids alternatives that will be better for the environment, better for the community and at reduced costs to ratepayers.”

James Baker, Public Services Director and City Engineer

- **Supercritical Water Oxidation (SCWO):** A high-tech process that uses extreme pressure and temperature to transform organics into gas and mineral ash, potentially eliminating odors and harmful air emissions.

FINANCIAL INVESTMENT AND RATE IMPACTS

The project is estimated to require a \$135 million investment, with a target activation date of

2031. Once operational, it is expected to achieve a 75 percent reduction in hauled sludge requirements.

To fund these improvements, the city is proposing a 9 percent system rate increase for 2026, with projected 7.5 percent annual increases through 2030. The financial plan aims for a “revenue-neutral” rate

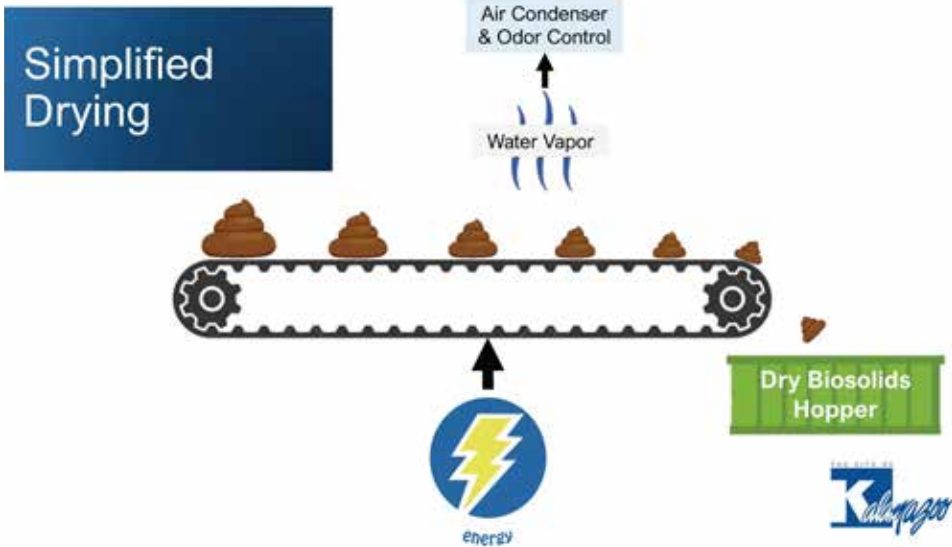
adjustment in 2031 once the new biosolids cost structure is fully implemented.

NEXT STEPS

The city is currently conducting onsite equipment pilot studies to test different drying technologies while performing extensive emissions modeling to secure necessary air permits. A resubmittal for state funding is planned for May 2026, with the goal of being ready for project bidding by May 2027.

The end goal of the project is to implement improvements that reduce or eliminate the mass of biosolids while aligning with the city’s strategic vision and being a good community partner.

Kalamazoo has partnered with Jones & Henry Engineers to design the solution.



The drying process is a proven technology that evaporates water, reducing biosolids mass by 70 percent and making them easier to landfill.

THE STRATEGIC PIVOT

Due to regulatory challenges and funding pressures — specifically due to EPA regulations requiring permitting the proposed Energy Recovery System (ERS) as an incinerator created concerns about emissions.

The project could not be scored by EGLE for 2026 funding due to regulatory and emissions concerns. In response, the city has pivoted to a Heat Dryer Facility as the immediate first step.

This pivot offers several advantages:

- **Lowest capital cost** and fastest path to design and construction.
- **Flexibility** for future expansion, including potential onsite incineration or offsite partnerships.
- **Immediate cost reduction** by decreasing the volume and mass of waste sent to landfills.

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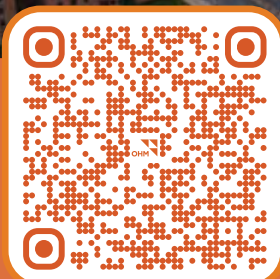


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2025 BRANCH AWARDS

Following are the winners of branch awards for 2025 Project of the Year.

SOUTHWEST

Transportation \$500,000-\$1M

Mechanic Street Improvements
Village of Berrien Springs

Transportation more than \$1M

Whites Road Improvements
City of Kalamazoo

Intergovernmental Cooperation more than \$1M

Watermain Key for Regional Economic
Development
Emmet Charter Township

Environment \$1M-\$5M

Watkins Road Culvert and Utilities Improvement
Project
City of Battle Creek

Environment more than \$5M

Resurrecting a Decommissioned Wastewater
Treatment Plant
Village of Constantine

Structures \$1M-\$5M

Lakeview Park Renovation
City of Portage

Structures more than \$5M

Kalamazoo RESA Career Connect Campus
Kalamazoo RESA

Quality of Life more than \$1M

Claude Evans Park Improvement Project
City of Battle Creek

DETROIT METRO

Environment less than \$1M

H2S Optimization & Corrosion Prevention Program
White Lake Township

Environment \$1M - \$5M

Joy Park Parking Lot & Recreational Improvements
Clinton Township



Mechanic Street Improvements



Whites Road Improvements



Resurrecting a Decommissioned Wastewater Treatment Plant



Kalamazoo RESA Career Connect Campus

AWARDS CONT.

Environment \$5M - \$25M

13 Mile Pump Station Rehabilitation and Force Main
City of Roseville

Government Cooperation

Safe Streets and Roads for All Safety Action Plan
Road Commission for Oakland County

Quality of Life \$1M - \$5M

South Bloomfield Highlands Water Main
Bloomfield Township

Technology & Innovation

Modern, Ongoing Optimization for FOG
Maintenance, Treatment, and Prevention
City of Flint

Transportation less than \$1M

Willits & Bates Paving
City of Birmingham

Transportation \$1M - \$5M

Three Bridge Bundle
Road Commission for Oakland County

MIDWEST

Environmental \$500,000 to \$1M

Harbor Island Former Coal Yard Closure
City of Grand Haven

Environmental more than \$1M

Sanford Street & Columbia Avenue
Rehabilitation
City of Muskegon Heights

Quality of Life less than \$250,000

Bicentennial Park & Five Mile Hill Improvements
City of Grand Haven

Quality of Life \$250,000-\$500,000

Tri-Cities Connector Pathway Improvements
City of Ferrysburg, City of Grand Haven, Village of Spring Lake



Claude Evans Park Improvement Project



Harbor Island Former Coal Yard Closure



Sanford Street & Columbia Avenue Rehabilitation



Tri-Cities Connector Pathway Improvements

Quality of Life more than \$1M

Pedestrian Bridge over M-11
City of Wyoming

Structures more than \$1M

Public Services Center
City of Grand Rapids

Transportation more than \$1M

Fruit Ridge and I-96 Interchange Reconstruction
MDOT, City of Walker

Lisa Barnes Service and Dedication Award

John Gorney



Pedestrian Bridge over M-11



John Gorney accepting award

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- Water resources
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- NPDES stormwater compliance
- Contaminated site restoration
- Green stormwater infrastructure & low impact design
- Oil & gas services
- Environmental compliance & sustainability
- Cultural resources management



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RECOGNIZING PAST PRESIDENTS



From left to right: Jen Lawson (current president); Nelson Wesenberg (2001-2002); John Gorney (2013-2014) James Hurt (2017-2018); Brandy Siedlaczek (2024-2025); Evan Pratt (2005-2006); John Thompson (2019-2021); Duane Poole (2021-2022)

In February, the MI-APWA Board of Directors hosted a luncheon to recognize the contributions of past presidents.

The group discussed the advancement of public works, including welcoming more women into the industry. In addition, past presidents reflected on the effect of Sept. 11 and the challenges of recruiting younger people to public works.

Thank you for the past and present APWA-MI leadership!

FUN FACTS:

FOUR INDIVIDUALS HAVE SERVED MORE THAN ONE TERM AS APWA-MI PRESIDENT

- George Thompson (1939, 1940, 1947, 1948)
- Stanford Besse (1949, 1950)
- Clyde Palmer (1962, 1963)
- John Thompson (2020, 2021)

FIRST FEMALE PRESIDENT:

Lenora Jadun (1995)

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WINTER PREPARATION: SPOT AND FLEET MAINTENANCE

In October, the Michigan Chapter of APWA hosted Snow Plow Operator Training (SPOT) and a Fleet Maintenance Seminar, both of which provide a comprehensive toolkit for tackling the upcoming snow and ice season.

This year's event was held at Schoolcraft College in Livonia. New this year: a wing section course.

More agencies are using wing operators so the addition fills a much-needed void, said Duane Poole, road foreman (now retired) for Bloomfield Township.

Again this year, the event was at capacity, with 94 attendees, many of whom are newbies, said Bryan Pickworth, safety and projects analyst for the City of Farmington Hills.

Unlike the Snowplow Rodeo – which is a competition – SPOT is truly a training program. In fact, it's a Train the Trainer program.

On the course, two- or three-person teams navigate real life scenarios complete with makeshift mailboxes, inside and outside curves, spinning devices and cul-de-sacs.

There's also a defect truck where individuals try to find things wrong, such as a disabled horn or loose lugnut.

In addition, there's a fleet maintenance track designed for mechanics. Topics include hydraulics, electronics, mechanical technologies, brakes and even rust proofing.

HISTORY

In 2017, Poole and Pickworth returned from the APWA North American Snow Conference inspired by a snowplow operator training program the Iowa Chapter had been presenting about. They had learned about this intense, comprehensive program and thought Michigan should take note.



Poole and Pickworth



Public Works professionals from the City of Ann Arbor

And so, in 2018, MI-APWA's Snow Plow Operator Training (SPOT) program was born. It's the only program of its kind in the state that includes "hands on training" as well as safety and best practices in winter maintenance.

KEY TRAINING MODULES:

Basics & Best Practices: Instruction on snow plowing fundamentals, with an emphasis on efficient and environmentally friendly operations.

Hands-on Maneuvering: Operators bring their own equipment—trucks equipped with front plows and wings—to navigate a dedicated training course that mimics real-world obstacles.

Chemical Management: Understanding the science of salt and liquid de-icers to reduce environmental impact and costs.

LOOKING AHEAD

The knowledge gained during SPOT and the Fleet Maintenance Seminar is put to the ultimate test just weeks later. By aligning operator skill with mechanical reliability, public works agencies ensure they are not just reacting to the weather but proactively managing it.



Training course



Trucks navigating the training course



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NATIONAL PUBLIC WORKS WEEK: MAY 17-23, 2026

Simultaneously held with GLX, National Public Works Week is May 17-23, 2026.

Since 1960, APWA has sponsored NPWW the third week of May.

This year's theme is "Rooted in Service, Powered by Community." It acknowledges the roots of service run deep in public works. It's what has propelled public works innovations that have helped communities evolve into places where people can lead lives of purpose and possibility.

Some work—like building roads and bridges—is highly visible, while other public works contributions—like maintaining water and sewer systems—are sometimes hidden from view. Together, these efforts form the foundation of thriving communities, reminding

us that every project, seen or unseen, powers the connection between service and the people it supports.

National Public Works Week aims to raise awareness about the importance and criticality of public works in our daily lives: planning, building, managing and operating at the heart of their local communities to improve everyday quality of life.

Resources can be found on the APWA website. Resources include a poster, proclamations and a guide for celebrations. There's also a social media guide. The hashtag for the week is #NPWW.

For more information, visit apwa.org/events/national-public-works-week-npww/.



YP NETWORKING AT PISTONS GAME

Andrew Johnstone, PE, Spalding DeDecker

On February 3, the APWA Young Professionals, in conjunction with the Institute of Transportation Engineers (ITE) and American Society of Civil Engineers (ASCE) Young Professionals groups, hosted the annual ASCE/APWA/ITE Joint Networking Event - Pistons game. The intent of the event is to gather like-minded professionals from the three organizations to enjoy a night of networking alongside friends and family.

This year had a fun wrinkle: the Pistons were... actually good? In stark contrast to previous years, the Pistons came into this game with a 36-12 record and first place in not only their division, but in the entire Eastern Conference! That is a remarkable turnaround from the 6-41 record they carried into the inaugural event in February 2024, and a solid improvement over last year, when they were a pedestrian 24-24 heading into the game.

This event is ultimately about networking, and it is consistently well attended by members of all three organizations. The fact that the Pistons were playing well this year and took home a hard-fought 124-121 victory was a much-appreciated bonus. An added treat was that Nuggets three-time MVP superstar Nikola Jokić was back in the lineup after missing 16 games with a knee injury.

Before the game, the group met up at Bookies Bar and Grille, roughly a five-minute walk from Little Caesars Arena. With temperatures in the low 20s (quite balmy compared to the prior few weeks to be honest) the pregame drinks were a welcome tradition and a great way to kick off the evening's networking.

This year, 110 tickets were sold across the three groups – a strong turnout and comparable to previous years. The seats are in the North End Club (also known as the Labatt Blue Club) and include all you can eat popcorn, hot dogs, and other snacks, as well as a Pistons



Group selfie



Arena sign welcoming the group

merchandise item. Attendees largely agreed that this year's merch was the best yet. It's a small but appreciated detail that adds to the overall experience, especially for someone like me who has very little Pistons merch.

Overall, this was another successful year for the ASCE/APWA/ITE Joint Networking Night. This event has become a reliable staple of the Young Professionals calendar, and the continued growth in attendance speaks for itself. We hope to see you there next year, whether you're bringing coworkers, fellow organization members, or just the family for a fun night out!

INDUSTRY ADVANCES: WOMEN IN UTILITIES AND PUBLIC WORKS

In an industry traditionally dominated by men, women are increasingly taking on leadership roles in utilities and public works, driving innovation, sustainability, and community-focused solutions.

Women in utilities and public works are not only breaking long-standing barriers: They are redefining what leadership in these essential fields looks like.

Through innovation, resilience, and a deep commitment to serving their communities, women are leading with purpose and bringing new perspectives to complex challenges. As more women step into technical, operation, and executive roles, they are transforming the landscape of the industry, fostering more inclusive workplaces and forward-thinking solutions. Their impact is shaping a stronger, more equitable future for infrastructure, public service, and the communities that depend on them every day.

We asked three women within utilities and public works to participate in a question-and-answer session. We asked each participant the following questions:

- How long have you been in the industry, and what kept you interested?
- How have you seen the involvement of women in the industry change?
- Has there been a female, in the industry or outside, to inspire you to accomplish what you have?

JAMIE HARMON, P.E., DEPUTY DIRECTOR, CITY OF PORTAGE

Jamie Harmon is the Deputy Director for the Transportation & Utilities Department for the City of Portage. She manages the city's road and utility projects, prepares project estimates for budgeting, writes news releases and letters to citizens, helps secure funding for projects and interacts with the public daily. Jamie was the second graduate from Western Michigan

University's Civil Engineering program in 2005, worked in the private sector for 10 years and then joined the City of Portage in 2015. She has been a board member of the Southwest Branch of APWA since 2019, having served as President from 2023-2024.



Harmon

STARTING OUT: For over 20 years, I built a career in engineering design and municipal project management. Serving the public sector and providing services that directly impact local communities is very fulfilling. Each project is unique and brings its own challenges. It's rewarding to see each one through final completion.

CHANGES: Since I began my career, women are becoming more visible in leadership roles and choosing career paths that provide flexibility, which are now more balanced between the public and private sectors. Women are also better represented across the industry and are being hired and promoted based on skills and experience, which has helped level the playing field for women.

INFLUENCES: My mom was a huge inspiration for me growing up, having watched her start as a secretary and work her way up to the top position of Watch Commander in a career traditionally dominated by male officers. She taught me at a young age to push myself and always reach for the stars.

AMY REMINDER, ADMINISTRATIVE AIDE, SPRING LAKE TOWNSHIP

Amy Reminder is an Administrative Aide within the Spring Lake Department of Public Works (DPW), which covers two separate municipalities – The Village of Spring Lake and Spring Lake Township. She is a lifelong resident of Spring Lake who loves her town and the people who

reside within it. Amy's passion for community started inside the church when she was younger, which grew into her joining the fire department and eventually gearing her career path to the Spring Lake DPW. Every day, Amy has the opportunity to interact with residents and work to keep their community beautiful, safe, and connected.



Reminder

STARTING OUT: I have been with Spring Lake Department of Public Works for almost four years. It is easy to stay interested when you can see the work you are doing in the department making impacts in the community. That may be

MARY BEDNAR, P.E., CFM, DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC SERVICES, CHARTER TOWNSHIP OF CLINTON



Bednar

Mary Bednar has worked for the residents of Clinton Township for 24 years. Clinton Township is the largest township in the state. As the Director of Public Services, her responsibilities include all water and sewer, public works, parks, buildings and grounds engineering, GIS and refuse activities. Mary oversees an approximate \$60M budget and approximately 75 employees. She graduated from the University of Notre Dame and was on their varsity fencing team.

“Women are better represented across the industry and are being hired and promoted based on skills and experience, which has helped level the playing field for women.”

Jamie Harmon, Deputy Director, City of Portage

coordinating a six-street complete infrastructure improvement project, getting called in for a water system emergency, or maintaining one of our beautiful parks – you see it.

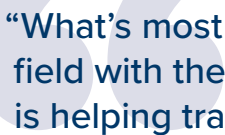
CHANGES: There is no question this is typically a male-dominated field; however, I have been able to work with many women during my time here, in administrative roles and on crews, in planning meetings and on job sites. It is a cool feeling to be able to look around and see other women in these roles.

INFLUENCES: My Aunt has always worked in community-focused non-profits, and she is my No. 1 role model, inspiration, and cheerleader. She has consistently encouraged me to strive to be my best, learn the next thing, and to be OK by taking up space and using my voice.

When Mary graduated, she was one of two female students (out of 20 total students) who graduated with a BS in Civil Engineering. She has been married 33 years to her husband, who is also a Civil Engineer. They have three adult children and one grandchild on the way. Mary's hobbies, besides family, include hiking, kayaking, reading and quilting.

STARTING OUT: I have been in the industry for 34 years. My primary interest has always been helping people with concerns and issues—from providing safe and reliable water to providing recreational amenities to assuring their refuse is picked up. Serving the community has always been important to me because it strengthens neighborhoods, improves the way we live and fosters growth.

CHANGES: Over the span of my career, I have witnessed a remarkable and uplifting transformation in the participation of women within the utilities and public works fields. When many of us initially joined the industry, it was typical for a woman to be the only female present in meetings or on project teams. This scenario is evolving. A growing number of women are taking on roles as engineers, operators, supervisors, and directors, and they are introducing innovative perspectives into how we design, construct, and oversee our infrastructure.



“What’s most exciting now is seeing more young women entering the field with the expectation that they belong here. That shift in mindset is helping transform the industry, and it will continue to shape the future of public works.”

Mary Bednar, Director of Public Services, Charter Township of Clinton

INFLUENCES: I must look younger than I am because 34 years ago there wasn’t a lot of women for me to look up to in the field. I did (and do) have a significant support network of women who have gone through similar experiences as

I. This group of women, WOWZA, still supports each other and we are now trying to inspire younger women in the profession. This type of support truly impacts women, particularly those who are embarking on their careers in a field that has historically been dominated by men.

I’ve also been inspired by women in my personal life who demonstrated resilience, determination, and a commitment to doing meaningful work. Those examples reinforced the idea that leadership isn’t about fitting into a mold. It’s about showing up, doing the work well, and helping create opportunities for the next generation.

What’s most exciting now is seeing more young women entering the field with the expectation that they belong here. That shift in mindset is helping transform the industry, and it will continue to shape the future of public works.

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

GLX

May 19-21, 2026
Boyne Mountain Resort

North American Snow Conference

April 26-29, 2026
Cleveland, Ohio

Eric Scott Fishing Tournament

May 13, 2026
Grand Haven

Rod Korhorn Golf Outing

July 15, 2026
Alto

Les Bland Memorial Scholarship Golf Outing

August 24, 2026
Midland

APWA PXW 2026

August 30-September 2, 2026
Houston

Snow Plow Rodeo

October 14, 2026
Walker

Visit our website, michigan.apwa.net, for details on these events and more!



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**Mark Bonkowski, APWA Michigan, Partner Relations Chair
President, Precision Concrete Cutting**

APWA exists to support our public works professionals. Our objectives include the development and education of the people and organizations that plan, build, and maintain the core infrastructure of our communities. As a partner with APWA, you will network with the professional people and agencies that our citizens/residents count on to maintain and improve the public works components of our communities. Partners become part of the larger organization that the public counts on.

We invite you to become a 2026 partner (sponsor) of the APWA Michigan Chapter to help the organization further achieve our mutual goals. As a partner with the State Chapter, you are also a partner in each of our five Michigan local branches. There are numerous branch activities throughout the year that you can also participate in, ranging from benefit golf outings, conferences, equipment shows, lunch n learns, municipal snow rodeos, and various networking events, including the up-and-coming APWA Young Professionals.

The Michigan Chapter has a long, 90 year history, as it was established back in 1936. The Chapter is built on the success of the past and engages in the same educational, networking, and public service activities as the national parent APWA organization. Nevertheless, we do so close to home where members can easily take advantage of our programs. The flagship of our networking and educational events is the annual Great Lakes Expo (GLX), held the third week of May in Northern Michigan. With attendance exceeding record levels, members find great value participating in GLX as they can earn CEUs by attending numerous formal education sessions, networking during a golf scramble or wine tour, and browsing the expo floor where partners can share their latest offerings and learn what their customers really need. Attendance includes public works

directors, superintendents, project managers, engineers, consultants, and other professionals. Hands-on equipment, trucks, and site tours are also typical.

APWA Michigan also publishes a periodical known as the “Great Lakes Reporter” that is released three times a year. The publication includes stories on public works current events, educational segments, what’s new, and advertising opportunities for our partners to increase exposure to public works.

The cost to be an APWA Michigan Partner is only \$450/year (plus your cost of being a National APWA member). Your partnership promotes and enables the educational mission and goals of the Michigan Chapter. It enables you to enhance relationships with existing clients, facilitate new relationships with potential clients, and strengthen your exposure to the state-wide public works sector. Additional opportunities exist once a partner. You can select a la carte advertising or choose one of our packaged partner levels that provide savings for being actively involved with the Chapter. Upon reviewing the four different levels of partnership, consider the one that best fits your offering and marketing budget for the calendar year. We look forward to your support and involvement.

We appreciate your consideration in being an APWA Michigan Partner.

Our website has additional information at <https://michigan.apwa.org/>

If you have questions, please contact Mark at (616) 403-0205 or MBonkowski@PCCMich.com.

Partner Packages

BRONZE - \$450

- Company name and link on website \$250
- Company name in Great Lakes Expo (GLX)
- Program Guide \$200
- Company listed in one edition of Great Lakes Reporter (GLR) \$200

Package value: \$650

SILVER - \$2,200

Bronze Level Package features (\$650) plus the following:

- Two registrations for MI APWA Great Lakes Expo (GLX) \$900
- Half page color ad in Great Lakes Reporter \$1,350
- GLX Exhibit booth (or ad in program) \$450

Package Value: \$3,350

GOLD - \$3,300

Silver Level Package (\$3,350) features plus:

- Increased ad size to Full Page Color Ad in Great Lakes Reporter \$300
- Receive both GLX Exhibit Booth & GLX Program Ad \$450
- Lunch Sponsor at GLX \$500 (includes signage)
- Sponsorship at PWX Michigan Night \$300 (includes signage)

Package Value \$4,900

PLATINUM - \$5,400

Gold Level Package (\$4,900) features plus the following:

- GLX Dinner Sponsor \$1,000 (includes signage)
- GLX Special Event Sponsor \$1,000 (includes signage)
- SPOT & Fleet Maintenance Expo Sponsor \$300 (includes signage)

Package Value \$7,200



The vendor included a putting green



A vendor truck on display at GLX



Vendors mingling with GLX attendees

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