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Village of Caledonia
Village Clerk
250 Maple Street SE
Caledonia, MI 49316

August 22, 2025

Re: Violations of Ethics Complaints Against the Council of the Village of Caledonia:

I am, with support of others, formally submitting these allegations and complaints to the Village Clerk:

The Village Council members have and continue to violate multiple sections of the Caledonia Village Code of Ethics, individually and collectively, by supporting the (Paul Henry/ Thornapple Trail) trailhead parking lot for business use again revealed during the July 14th, 2025 meeting, and intentionally altering the recorded minutes to obscure and ignore the personal attack upon a resident in a public forum, and ignore the expressed opposition of residents and will of the community, and by their elimination of public statements of record by trustees, again revealing the true intent of the trailhead parking project for private non-resident business and commercial use. This constitutes not only serious violations of ethics, but more specifically fiscal irresponsibility of the trailhead project without the consensus of the majority of the tax paying and voting residents, who deserve open, honest and transparent interaction with this council, a consensus which they do not have in any way, shape or form, and have not acted with full transparency, nor in the best interests of the residents at large.

Comparing the August 11, 2025 meeting printed minutes of the Village Clerk submitted for approval in agenda (formally opposed by this resident) to my August 10th, 2025 transcript of actual trustee comments derived from the Vimeo posted council meeting of July 14th video (hand delivered copies of my comments and transcript to all council members) during agenda item 14, it shows clear and overwhelming evidence this council is prioritizing a select group of non-resident, for-profit business interests directly conflicting with the intent and legal requirements of the DNR Passport Grant, intentionally ignoring and obfuscating the requirement for recreational use of funding. This council continues to move forward, disregarding overwhelming community opposition. Therefore, the continued support by this council for this parking project for private business, against the will of the people, breaches and violates the following ethical and lawful obligations of the elected Council of the Village of Caledonia:

Section A (Ethics, General) : The council's decisions to prioritize and favor a small group of non-resident business interests, and continued ignorance of public opposition, undermines the core principles of integrity and transparency, as this council disregards and continues to disregard overwhelming documented resident concerns and opposition, continues to advance a private internal agenda to the benefit of a small group of non-resident business owners, specifically against their Oath of Affirmations to uphold the Village Code of Ethics.

Section A1 (Acting in Public Interest) : By approving the trailhead parking lot project for non-resident businesses benefit despite public objections, as captured in my transcript, the council fails to prioritize the community's interest, instead favoring private commercial gain of the few, while ignoring overwhelming resident opposition including the Stop The Lot petition.

Section A2 (Comply with Law) : The council's actions violate legal standards for public engagement, as village policy requires fair and equitable consideration of resident input, which was ignored, as evidenced by the minutes and transcript comparison. The council and clerk continue to understate village opposition by purposely limiting, editing and manipulating agenda public comment by residents at multiple recent village meetings and purposely attempting to accept inaccurate records with omissions and editing of statements made by residents and trustees.

Section A3 (Conduct of Members) : The council's continuous collective dismissal of public concerns during multiple village meetings reflects unprofessional conduct, failing to uphold the expected standards of responsiveness which is their sworn responsibility to resident constituents.

Section A5 (Conduct at Public Meetings) : The council breached standards for transparent and respectful public discourse by ignoring significant resident opposition and proceeding with a decision that clearly ignores overwhelming resident objections raised at numerous council meetings and specifically during agenda item 4 and 14, as shown in the referenced meeting agenda for August 11, 2025. Additionally neither the president nor any council member made any objection during that public meeting to the unethical reproach of a resident by trustee Schuler at the time of or after the occurrence, with in fact trustee Miller fully in agreement with trustee Schuler's comments and actions, placing trustee Miller as well in violation of the code of ethics.

Section A6 (Decisions Based on Merit) : The council's approval lacks merit-based reasoning, as it dismissed resident input without equitable justification, favoring a small group of businesses over community choice.

Section A7 (Conflicts of Interest) : The council's continued approval of the trailhead parking for the benefit of main street businesses suggests potential conflicts of interest, as the decision to proceed with a project that clearly benefits a few non-resident business entities with public monies over the public general good, and ignoring and discriminating against the other dozens of village businesses not on Main Street, who receive little to no village services, yet paying overwhelmingly more in taxes than the benefitting Main Street merchants, raises alarming questions about equity, decorum and impartiality as dictated by the Village Code of Ethics.

Section A12 (Advocacy) : The council improperly advocates for a few business's interests over community needs and general public good, as evidenced by their continued advance of the project despite clear public opposition they have via the Stop The Lot petition, the transcripts and all prior village meeting public comments and letters. The clerk blatantly omitted the admissions of trustees at the August 11th village meeting that the trailhead parking project is not for trailhead parking, but for non-resident private commercial gain, which is a clear violation of village ethics codes and the public trust.

Section A15 (Positive Workplace Environment) : By prioritizing a select few businesses, the council created a divisive environment, discouraging fair public participation and trust.

Section C (Code of Ethics and Standards) : The council's actions broadly violate ethical standards by prioritizing a project that is stated to be specifically for private interests, ignoring the will of the people and fully lacking transparent and accountable governance, undermining public trust, submitting the application for DNR Passport Grant monies with vague and purposely misleading statements and documents, and continuing to move ahead despite clear and overwhelming opposition from lawful residents they swore oath to.

Page 9 (Acknowledgment of Affirmation of Oath) : The Village of Caledonia council has violated their sworn affirmation of oath to act with integrity, honesty, and dedication to the public majority by collectively approving a parking lot plan, with public and granted funds, for the benefit of private non-resident interests, against the majority will of residents, as documented in the August 10th transcript and sanitized in the clerk modified August 11th minutes provided for agenda approval. This complaint is grounded in the council's collective decision to continue to support the trailhead parking lot for non-resident, private business use, against DNR Passport Grant stipulations, and continuing to disregard overwhelming public opposition.

Conclusion and Remedy: The actions of this village council to promote and advance private, non-resident businesses agenda for commercial parking, without creating a Special Assessment District to fund it, at the general village resident's expense, while ignoring the majority public outcry, constitutes multiple egregious violations of their sworn oath of ethics.

These are the resulting actions of remedy demanded after a thorough investigation:

1. Without taking a formal vote of the village residents for a majority consensus, this council shall at upcoming council meeting formally make motion and vote to cancel all actions regarding modification of the Paul Henry Thornapple trailhead property, and retraction of all contracts and commitments including the application for the DNR Passport Grant made to this date.
2. Apologize publicly, to the village residents for each violation of ethics referenced.
3. Require all council members to attend refresh training on the importance and strict adherence to the Village Code of Ethics and how to effectively and honestly communicate to and with their constituent residents.
4. To prevent repeating this gross disconnect of communication with residents, immediately call for agenda discussion to introduce ordinance or code mandating this elected body gain resident majority consensus by formal polling or vote of the residents before acting upon all major actions and projects that effect change or alter existing public areas, landscapes, properties, or infrastructure that impact the well being of residents and/ or the existing small town character of the Village of Caledonia.

Submitted and Signed this day August 22, 2025

Jeffrey Kusmierz, et al

Caledonia Village Resident