Purpose of this document:
This document aims to explain the history, purposes, values, and methods of East Lansing Info (ELi), a nonprofit local news service as well as to provide some detailed information on operations. This document is designed to be a “living document,” amended by leaders at ELi as time goes on. It is also designed to be open to the public and to help everyone understand ELi’s history, ethos, and operations.

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Part 1: Purpose and Mission of ELi

ELi aims fundamentally to be a socially-responsible local news provider. The goal of ELi is not to make money or to build empire. It is to make sure the people who live, work, retire, go to school, visit, and play in East Lansing are able to know what is going on here. We try to report on what we think year-round residents especially would want to know. We try to get answers to readers’ questions, and we try to function as a place of witnessing for local people.

Although we spent most of the first seven years of our existence as an online-only organization, we have always aimed to bring what a traditional newspaper used to bring in terms of community-oriented, responsible content. We try to tell people what is happening, day-to-day, in our City government, public schools, neighborhoods, local business community, parks, and arts and cultures scene.

We offer a place to share obituaries and death notices as well as “little local joys.” We strive to be equitable by paying attention to disparities in our community and by attending to the many forms of diversity that exist within our community, including religious, ethnic and racial, political, socioeconomic, age- and ability-related, identity-based, and more.

We strive to bring news that is meaningful, informative, accurate, clear, and fair. We aim our resources at important subjects that are otherwise ignored by other local news organizations. That includes bringing important investigative news.

We seek to run an efficient organization and to focus our spending on local people – to avoid paying big national corporations for things like Facebook “boosts” when we could be paying local people to bring the news. We take seriously our responsibility to keep locally-donated dollars in the local economy.

Transparency is something we value in government as well as in our own work. We try to keep donors and readers apprised of the finances of ELi, so that they can “follow the money” in our organization and remain confident that we are doing what we can to remain editorially independent and fiscally prudent.

We rely primarily on reader donations not only because that’s where we find support but because such dependence keeps us responsive to our community.

What is ELi? It’s a community project, a community asset, and a public service. It is today made up of hundreds of people who work together as administrators, reporters, editors, photographers, donors, tipsters, and advisors so that East Lansing is able to keep itself informed. It is a way in which this community seeks to take care of itself.

[Note: The ELi Board has never adopted a formal mission statement. If it does so, this would be the page to log the information about the statement and the date of its passage. Our general approach has been to use this as our mission statement: “We bring East Lansing the news.”]
Part 2: History of ELi

The first version of ELi, at eastlansinginfo.org, was started by Alice Dreger in 2012 as an unincorporated citizen news cooperative – running like a volunteer service organization rather than a business. The idea was to provide a place where factual local reporting could be shared among people who wanted to know more about what was happening here in East Lansing. Lisa Lees and Morgan Lees provided website help. Various local people contributed articles on local government, big real estate redevelopment, recreational opportunities, and so on.

While that version enjoyed some success in terms of news provision, without a paid staff, the reporting was irregular.

In 2014, with the support of others, Alice decided to try to create a 501c3 nonprofit public-service news version of ELi. The motivation for regularizing ELi arose from three chief concerns: (1) the City’s pension debt going largely undiscussed or downplayed by those in power; (2) the stalled “City Center II” redevelopment project that had left financially and culturally depressing blight at the main downtown corner, where East Lansing meets MSU; (3) the prolonged BWL outage following the ice storm of Winter Solstice 2013. In all of these cases, the people of East Lansing suffered from a lack of government-independent, smart, hardhitting news reporting.

When ELi was incorporated, Dudley “Smitty” Smith served as the first Managing Editor. Smitty developed with Alice our successful 501c3 application to the IRS. (Find it at eastlansinginfo.org/irs.) Thad Morgan provided pro bono legal services in the establishment, and the first Board of Directors consisted of Alice, former Mayor Vic Loomis, Prof. Michael Lawrence, and Prof. Stephen Thomas. Lisa Lees and Morgan Lees continued to provide the technical capabilities necessary to keep the website functional.

The organization grew over time. Ann Graham Nichols served as the second Managing Editor for about five years, and the Board of Directors and staff changed over the years. Jodi Spicer became our first General Manager in 2019, providing for the first time a true dedicated administrator (part-time) who was not juggling other jobs for ELi. In 2020, Alice left the Board to become an employee of ELi with the goal of developing a sustainable system for succession. (She was paid $12,000/year plus pay for any reporting at the standard reporting-pay scale.) Sam Hosey, Jr., became our second Board President, Alice became Executive Director and Publisher. Also in 2020, Emily Joan Elliott became our Managing Editor.

Today, ELi publishes original reporting at eastlansinginfo.news at a rate of about 500-600 articles per year. The work is unrestricted – there are no paywalls. We also publish via Mailchimp a daily email news and a twice-weekly e-news digest for those who choose to subscribe. Additionally, we provide a paper edition every 1-2 months. With Impact Radio (MSU’s student radio), we broadcast a half-hour news and analysis segment once a week which is also available as a podcast. We are working with WKAR as a way to share more of our work.
In terms of the historical trend, over the years, ELi has become more and more like a conventional news organization. The number of staff members volunteering their labor has dropped significantly, and the group we think of as “core staff” has grown. In 2021, we added a paper edition, increasing the public perception that we are an old familiar thing – “the local newspaper.”

But in many ways, we are different from “legacy newsrooms.” The chief difference is that traditional local newspapers have been organizationally for-profit. Our nonprofit approach means that we do not judge our work by what maximizes revenue. Instead, we pay attention to whether we are meeting our goals of informing and empowering the local public (including voters, long-time and short-term residents, and others) with meaningful local news and information.

We are also different in that we have (so far) no newsroom – we maintain no central office – and we keep expenses extremely low. In 2021, for example, our total expenses came to about $184,000. It would be good to raise more to pay our people better. But ELi has been surviving by keeping expenses low – bringing an incredible depth and consistency of news at a fraction of the traditional cost for news production.

We can do this partly because current tech allows news production at a fraction of what it cost in, say, 1980 to bring news reporting and editing, photos, audio, a print edition, etc. It’s also because we think very carefully about how to spend money, and we leverage partnerships with groups like Impact Radio and the League of Women Voters. We also still benefit from a lot of cost-free-to-ELi help from smart advisors and occasional reporters like Chris Root, contributing volunteer photographers, Lisa Lees in tech management, and so on.

We are also different from a traditional news organization in that many of us do not have formal training in journalism, but rather come to this work through content or method expertise. (So, for example, Alice and Emily have Ph.D.’s in History, Ann Nichols has a J.D., Chris Root has a Master’s in Economics.)

We are similar to traditional local newspapers in the sense that our readers now expect us to show up every day, expect us to listen to them, and expect us to care. Our readers and listeners quite actively engage with us as advisors, tipsters, and even “editors” in the sense that they send corrections when we need them, and sometimes work with us on drafts if we need their special expertise to get things right.

ELi has become a true community asset in East Lansing. People in the community reasonably feel that it is theirs – and it is. The Board runs ELi, but it does so on behalf of the community. The editing and reporting staff regularly discuss what we want out of a story versus what the community needs – and use the latter to guide our work.

The challenge remains turning that community appreciation into revenue that can support our operations. Giving Emily a second job in 2021 – hiring her not only as Managing Editor (at
$25,000/year) but as Donor Relations Manager (at $12,000/year) – made a huge difference in that regard. Our 2021 Sustainability Campaign for operations in 2022 raised about $163,000, or about $31,000 more than the prior year.

While we still struggle some to meet expenses, ELi has clearly developed a system that has been sustained for over seven years. There’s plenty of reason why other organizations now look to us for guidance in how to keep bringing news in a genuinely challenging news economy.
Part 3: Organizational Structure of ELi

ELi is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit corporation, incorporated in the State of Michigan. No one owns ELi. It is legally run by the volunteer Board of Directors. In terms of day-to-day management, it is run by staff.

**Board of Directors:** Fiduciary responsibility for the corporation and organization, including hiring/firing of the Executive Director/Publisher.
- **President:** Leads the board, including at meetings
- **Vice President:** Will fulfill the duties of President when needed
- **Treasurer:** Oversees bank accounts, budgets, annual tax filings, etc.
- **Secretary:** Keeps the minutes and other records
- **Public Editor:** Functions as the ombudsman for ELi’s constituents
- **Directors at Large:** Also serve on the Board as voting members
- **Executive Director/Publisher:** Ex-officio member of the Board

**Community Advisory Board:** Advises the Managing Editor chiefly about content but also sometimes about fundraising, community relations, etc. Members are typically chosen by the Managing Editor. Some members of the CAB are also Board of Directors members.

**Proposed Fundraising Board:** Would function specifically on revenue, if/when created.

**Executive Director/Publisher:** Functions as CEO, providing legal and financial oversight to the corporation and global oversight of content; responsible to the Board of Directors.
- Manages financial and legal needs of the corporation and consults with the Board on regular and extraordinary operations.
- Primary responsibility at ELi for tax requirements, state corporation requirements, employment, legal issues. (Files annually with LARA; manages the annual 990 forms for the IRS; etc.)
- Oversees/collaborates with all of the ELi administrative staff (Managing Editor, General Manager, Tech Managers, etc.) to support and review their work.
- Deals with personnel problems.
- Keeps track of policies and implementation of policies and possible improvements.
- Primary responsibility for raising the funds needed for ELi’s operation and creatively engaging the Finance Board.
- Primary responsibility for monitoring and adjusting expenditures.
- Connects with sister organizations, including through professional development opportunities.

**Managing Editor:** Primarily responsible for all day-to-day content, including that which is published at the website, podcast, and paper mailer. “Dean of reporters.”
• Oversees assignment of all articles to be written
• Decides on publication schedule
• Informs others of pub. Schedule on spreadsheet/tell public editor and proofreader
• Edits stories, or assigns another editor to them
• Queues them up at the website
• Either does social media push or asks others to do it
• Covers own beat, writes stories
• Determines which topics are worth pursuing
• Manages interns by assigning tasks, holding professional development meetings with them
• Assists Executive Director and General Manager with payroll/info on what type of story, how long it took, etc.
• Answers Contact form submissions and emails
• Keeps up-to-date record on disposition of contact submissions
• Tells contacts when story ran and/or forward on info, usually from the City
• Maintains info on all links; manages tabs
• Handles basic corrections
• Finds, hires, and trains new reporters, puts them in contact with GM for pay
• Selects stories for paper mailer and puts them on Google for designer
• Reviews proofs of paper mailers
• Occasionally mails and delivers mailers
• Point person for working with IMPACT radio
• Slates podcast segment for the week in consultation with Alice
• Contacts people to be involved with recording

General Manager: Handles our employment and financial infrastructures, supports staff operations, including:
• Maintains budgetary records, including monitoring the bank accounts, inputting all expenditures and deposits into QuickBooks, balancing the accounts several times a month
• Tracks expenditures by tracking receipts and categorizing expenses
• Responsible for transfer of funds from processing agencies (e.g., GiveGab, PayPal, Omella, MSUFCU M2M, etc.) and depositing of checks
• Communicates and manages our relationships with the revenue processing agencies and banks
• Accounts for all donations by inputting all of the data into our donation-tracking spreadsheets
• May deal with questions from donors about donation systems
• Manages payroll by tracking the “published articles” spreadsheet and transferring the gross payroll info to our payroll service (Clark Schaefer Hackett)
• Receives payroll net information from payroll service and pays employees via MSUFCU online system
• Communicates pay information to employees as needed, including sending out paystubs and year-end forms as needed
• Enrolls new employees with necessary paperwork, including managing work permitting for minor-age employees
• Sometimes handles price/option-comparisons for purchases and handles purchases
• Maintains a real-time database showing monthly expenses and revenues by category, allowing projections and look-backs
• Handles ELi’s post office box, including incoming mail
• Works with board members and administrative staff on fundraising and other projects as needed
• Helps share her work with sister organizations to promote their success

**Tech Manager(s):** Expert management of ELi’s websites and domain-based emails.
- Builds and maintains the website (.news).
- Maintains the huge ELi pre-.news archive (.org) including by installing Drupal core updates.
- Monitors the chief operational website (.news) daily to watch for problems.
- Twice a week, does a backup of the production site (.news) files and database. (Logs into our A2 Hosting cPanel to look for error flags.)
- Helps staff with requests and problems at the website and with domain-based email. (This includes everything from managing user access to changing how something functions at the website to dealing with instability problems in our Largo theme, etc., etc.)
- Keeps up a “how to” page explaining how the website works, available to staff logged-in to our website

**Donor Relations Manager:** Works on building and maintaining revenue relationships.
- Pursues sponsorships with local businesses and nonprofits
- Contacts designer to do graphic work if needed for sponsorship
- Contacts GM to work-up invoices
- Sends articles and mailers to show sponsors the sponsorship
- Works to turn subscribers into donors
- Lets core donors and frequent interceptors know about ELi events
- Plans events for ELi, like trivia night and budget news
- Adds names from running list to website
- Sends monthly and quarterly IRS thank you
- Reaches out to lapsed donors and leaves notes for GM

**Facebook Manager:** Monitors our Facebook presence and handles public relations through that venue. (This is very important because about half of ELi’s audience accesses us primarily or exclusively through Facebook.)
- Checks site every morning for new stories, and posts to Facebook around 7:00 am.
• May, during the day, post other stories as they are published, usually holding them until at least 5:00 pm.
• Checks comments on Facebook several times a day, responds when appropriate, refers issues to Managing Editor when necessary.
• Hides inappropriate comments and/or discussion-threads based on Eli’s standards.
• Checks Eli’s Facebook messages and either responds or forwards question to Publisher and/or Editor where they are better equipped to answer.
• Keeps track, in an informal way, of which stories are more and less successful based on “likes,” comments and shares.
• Works with Facebook’s algorithm to judge the best time to post stories on Facebook based on season, community availability and interest, and trends from the recent past.
• Sometimes shares emergency alerts on Eli’s Facebook page before an actual story is written (major accidents, school closings, serious crime, etc.)
• Updates Facebook posts as necessary to reflect new developments or major corrections.

Sub-editors: Created on an ad hoc basis to be primary managers and primary producers of content in a specific area, e.g., Schools, Sports, City Desk.
• Typically, sub-editors are the primary reporters in their own areas.
• Typically, they handle, to some degree, story assignment in their areas.
• Typically, sub-editors are the primary editors for other reporters’ work in their areas.
• Typically, sub-editors are the secondary fact-checkers for reporters’ work (after reporters).

Reporters: Assigned reporting by editors. Responsible for primary fact-checking of their own work.

Data analyst/FOIA tracker: Assigned work by editors for reporting that involves special types of data, including large quantitative data sets and tracking of FOIA requests.

Photojournalists: Assigned photography by editors. May also do videography, audio editing, etc.

Proofer and Mailchimp prepper: At the request of editors, proofs articles and prepares Mailchimp mailers.

Designer: Works with Executive Director and Managing Editor (primarily) on design work as needed.

Personnel as of Jan. 2022:

[Backup people are shown in brackets.]
Board of Directors:
- **President:** Samuel J. Hosey, Jr. [Jiquanda Johnson]
- **Vice President:** Jiquanda Johnson
- **Treasurer:** Raymond D. Vlasin
- **Secretary:** Amalia Medina
- **Public Editor:** Ann Graham Nichols
- **Director at Large:** Adan Tomas Quan

Community Advisory Board: Barbara Ball-McClure, Anne Hill, Alex Hosey, Samuel J. Hosey Jr., Meg Kroft, Mike Krueger, Amalia Medina, Adan Tomas Quan, Christine Root, Thasin Sardar.

Executive Director/Publisher: Alice Dreger [Emily Joan Elliott for Publisher and Jodi Spicer for ED]

Managing Editor: Emily Joan Elliott [Alice Dreger]

General Manager: Jodi Spicer [Alice Dreger]

Tech Manager(s): Lisa Lees and Morgan Lees [each other]

Donor Relations Manager: Emily Joan Elliott [Jodi Spicer]

Facebook Manager: Heather Brothers [Emily Joan Elliott]

Podcast Producer: Andrew Graham [Emily Joan Elliott]

Sub-editors: Created on an ad hoc basis. (For example, Andrew Graham is the Sports editor.)

Reporters: Regulars include Emily Joan Elliott, Alice Dreger, Andrew Graham, Al Hargrave, Heather Brothers, Sarah Spohn, Adan Tomas Quan, and Amalia Medina.

Data analyst/FOIA tracker: Nathan Andrus [Chris Root for data help]

Photojournalists: Dylan Lees; Gary Caldwell is also available to us.

Proofer and Mailchimp prepper: Heather Brothers [various]

Designer: Cait Palmiter
Part 4: ELi’s Assets and Relationships

ELi’s reputation is easily its biggest asset. This is the asset that allows us to do really informed reporting (because sources trust us) and to fundraise. This is the asset that allows us to draw excellent people to work with us.

To take good care of our organizational reputation, ELi’s Board and staff have made a practice of being thoughtful and deliberate in dealing with controversies and accusations. A reputation as good as ELi’s takes years to develop but can be damaged quickly. This is one reason we have a Defense Policy to deal with attacks. (See Appendix.)

As a practice, the staff also use a “two sets of eyes” policy – that nothing gets published without going through at least a second set of eyes with the exception of fairly trivial reporting (like PSA’s about a meeting being moved) or reporting on emergencies. For “hot” stories – reports that may be controversial – we often bring in more people to look at drafts.

The editorial operating policy of ELi has been to value quality over speed. If we’re not sure about something, we pause. If we think a piece needs more time to get just right, we take the time.

ELi’s bank accounts: We presently maintain two bank accounts, one with MSUFCU and another with Capital National. The MSUFCU account includes a checking and savings account and is used for our general operations. The Capital National account was created in order to obtain a forgiven SBA loan during the Covid-19 pandemic; it is presently being used as a kind of savings account.

ELi’s domains: ELi has two domains, eastlansinginfo.org (the original) and eastlansinginfo.news. At this time, the .org site functions as an archive.

ELi is recognized as a nonprofit publisher by the USPS. This status was achieved in 2021 and requires a yearly action to renew.

ELi’s social media accounts: ELi has a Facebook account and a Twitter account (both @eastlansinginfo). We have an Instagram account through the Facebook account, but we do not presently use the Instagram account. Who has had access to these accounts has varied over time, depending on who is doing what work.

ELi’s subscriptions: We currently have a subscription to the Lansing State Journal, used by the editorial staff to access articles that require a subscription.

ELi’s memberships: ELi is a member of LION (Local Independent Online News) Publishers and the Institute for Nonprofit News (INN). INN membership is required for participation in NewsMatch, the annual national philanthropic program for year-end fundraising.
Local relationships:
- In 2021, ELi partnered with **89FM Impact radio** to bring a Sunday morning (prerecorded) news/analysis segment that is also available as a podcast, called East Lansing Insider.
- ELi is also developing a more formalized relationship with **WKAR radio** as a way to have that organization share more of our original reporting.
- ELi has partnered with **ASMSU** (the undergraduate student government of MSU) and the **Lansing Area League of Women Voters** on candidate forums for City Council races. We survey readers to help the forum organizers develop questions and then promote the events beforehand and report on them afterwards. For several years, ASMSU also provided general operating funds for ELi.
- Pre-pandemic, the **Responsible Hospitality Council (RHC)** – an alliance of downtown bars and restaurants – provided funding to ELI at a rate of $1,200 per year. This stopped during the pandemic but we maintain good relations with members of this group.

Vendors we use:
- Clark Schaefer Hackett’s (CHS’s) East Lansing branch currently serves as our accountants and payroll processors (including for tax withholding and unemployment insurance). Alice has been preparing our 990-EZ filings with help from Vickie Crouch at CSH.
- QuickBooks online is what we use for bookkeeping.
- Mailchimp is the service we use for e-newsletter distribution.
- Zoom is used for virtual meetings.
- BRD Printing currently prints our paper editions.
- For accepting financial donations, we have accounts with PayPal, GiveGab, and Omella.
- To accept stock donations, we have a brokerage account with Upstream Investment Partners in East Lansing. This became effective in Dec. 2021.
- We have typically used RetroDuck in downtown EL for our t-shirts and mugs.
- Cait Palmiter does our contracted design work.
- Some of our part-time staff elect to be paid as independent contractors (W9/1099) rather than as employees (W4/W2). We generally let part-timers decide which way they want to be paid if they are going to be regularly working with us.
Appendix A:
Revision History

**NOTE:** When a new version of the Guidance Document is produced, please remember to upload the new version to: [https://eastlansinginfo.news/guidance/](https://eastlansinginfo.news/guidance/)

The original version of this document was assembled by Alice Dreger in June-July 2021 and revised in January 2022 with the help of Emily Joan Elliott, Jodi Spicer, and Raymond D. Vlasin.

In March 2022, Emily Joan Elliott added Appendix N: ELi and Fundraising.
Appendix B:
ELi’s Bylaws and Corporate Status Information

Notes:

• ELi is a nonprofit corporation registered in the State of Michigan since 2014.
• The archive of our corporate filings, including our Articles of Incorporation, are easily accessed at the LARA website, as with all Michigan corporations.
• Our IRS application for 501(c)3 status and the IRS determination letter at eastlansinginfo.org/irs (note these are at .org, not .news).
• ELi’s EIN is 46-5444564. (This can be looked up by anyone at the IRS.gov website.)
• Our Bylaws, shown below, were modeled on a standard set of Michigan corporate bylaws. Any amendments made should be noted, when made, in this Guidance Document with the change and date shown (as shown for section 3.15 below).

BYLAWS OF EAST LANSING INFO

APPROVED AND ADOPTED ON JULY 15, 2014;
AMENDED SECT. 3.15 AS SHOWN, ON OCT. 21, 2020

ARTICLE I
OFFICES

1.01 Principal Office. The principal office of the corporation shall be at such place within the state of Michigan as the board of directors may determine from time to time.

1.02 Other Offices. The board of directors may establish other offices in or outside the state of Michigan.

ARTICLE II
MEMBERS

There shall be no members.

ARTICLE III
BOARD

3.01 General Powers. The business, property, and affairs of the corporation shall be managed by the board of directors.
3.02 **Number.** There shall be not less than 3 nor more than 7 directors on the board as shall be fixed from time to time by the board of directors.

3.03 **Tenure.** Each director of the Corporation shall hold office until the director’s death, resignation, or removal.

3.04 **Resignation.** Any director may resign at any time by providing written notice to the Corporation. The resignation will be effective on receipt of the notice or at a later time designated in the notice. A successor shall be appointed as provided in section 3.06 of the bylaws.

3.05 **Removal.** Any director may be removed with cause by the remaining directors on the board.

3.06 **Board Vacancies.** A vacancy on the board may be filled with a person selected by the remaining directors of the board.

3.07 **Annual Meeting.** An annual meeting shall be held each year in **September.** If the annual meeting is not held at that time, the board shall cause the meeting to be held as soon thereafter as is convenient.

3.08 **Regular Meetings.** Regular meetings of the board may be held at the time and place as determined by resolution of the board without notice other than the resolution.

3.09 **Special Meetings.** Special meetings of the board may be called by the president or any two directors at a time and place as determined by those persons authorized to call special meetings. Notice of the time and place of special meetings shall be given to each director in any manner at least three days before the meeting.

3.10 **Statement of Purpose.** Neither the business to be transacted at, nor the purpose of, any regular or special meeting of the board need be specified in the notice for that meeting.

3.11 **Waiver of Notice.** The attendance of a director at a board meeting shall constitute a waiver of notice of the meeting, except where a director attends a meeting for the express purpose of objecting to the transaction of any business because the meeting is not lawfully called or convened. In addition, the director may submit a signed waiver of notice that shall constitute a waiver of notice of the meeting.

3.12 **Meeting by Telephone or Similar Equipment.** A director may participate in a meeting by conference telephone or any similar communications equipment through which all persons participating in the meeting can hear each other. Participation in a meeting pursuant to this section constitutes presence in person at the meeting.
3.13 *Quorum.* A majority of the directors then in office constitutes a quorum for the transaction of any business at any meeting of the board. Actions voted on by a majority of directors present at a meeting where a quorum is present shall constitute authorized actions of the board.

3.14 *Consent to Corporate Actions.* Any action required or permitted to be taken pursuant to authorization of the board may be taken without a meeting if, before or after the action, all directors consent to the action in writing. Written consents shall be filed with the minutes of the board’s proceeding.

3.15 *Appointment of Managing Editor, Executive Director and Publisher.* The board shall by a majority vote have the power to appoint or discharge the Managing Editor, Executive Director and Publisher, to determine his or her duties, and to fix his or her compensation. [This amendment was approved by the Board on Oct. 21, 2020, by a unanimous vote.]

**ARTICLE IV**

**COMMITTEES**

4.01 *General Powers.* The board, by resolution adopted by a vote of a majority of its directors, may designate one or more committees, each committee consisting of one or more directors. The board may also designate one or more directors as alternate committee members who may replace an absent or disqualified member at a committee meeting. If a committee member is absent or disqualified from voting, members present at a meeting who are not disqualified from voting may, whether or not they constitute a quorum, unanimously appoint an alternate committee member to act at the committee meeting in place of the absent or disqualified member. All committees designated by the board shall serve at the pleasure of the board.

A committee designated by the board may exercise any powers of the board in managing the corporation’s business and affairs to the extent provided by resolution of the board. However, no committee shall have the power to

(a) amend the articles of incorporation;

(b) adopt an agreement of merger or consolidation;

(c) amend the bylaws of the corporation;

(d) fill vacancies on the board; or

(e) fix compensation of the directors for serving on the board or on a committee.
4.02 Meetings. Committees shall meet as directed by the board, and their meetings shall be governed by the rules provided in article III for meetings of the board. Minutes shall be recorded at each committee meeting and shall be presented to the board.

4.03 Consent to Committee Actions. Any action required or permitted to be taken pursuant to authorization of a committee may be taken without a meeting if, before or after the action, all members of the committee consent to the action in writing. Written consents shall be filed with the minutes of the committee’s proceedings.

ARTICLE V
OFFICERS

5.01 Number. The officers of the corporation shall be appointed by the board. The officers shall be a president, a secretary, and a treasurer. There may also be a vice president and such other officers as the board deems appropriate. The president shall be a voting member of the board. Two or more offices may be held by the same person, but such person shall not execute, acknowledge, or verify an instrument in more than one capacity if the instrument is required by law or by the president or by the board to be executed, acknowledged, or verified by two or more officers.

5.02 Term of Office. Each officer shall hold office for the term appointed and until a successor is appointed and qualified. An officer may resign at any time by providing written notice to the corporation. Notice of resignation is effective on receipt or at a later time designated in the notice.

5.03 Removal. An officer appointed by the board may be removed with or without cause by vote of a majority of the board. The removal shall be without prejudice to the person’s contract rights, if any. Appointment to an office does not of itself create contract rights.

5.04 Vacancies. A vacancy in any office for any reason may be filled by the board.

5.05 President. The president shall be the chief executive officer of the corporation and shall have authority over the general control and management of the business and affairs of the corporation. The president shall have power to appoint or discharge employees, agents, or independent contractors, to determine their duties, and to fix their compensation, with the exception of the Executive Director/Publisher who will be appointed, discharged, and compensated by vote of the majority of the board. The president shall sign all corporate documents and agreements on behalf of the corporation, unless the president or the board instructs that the signing be done with or by some other officer, agent, or employee. The president shall see that all actions taken by the board are executed and shall perform all other duties incident to the office. This is subject, however, to the president’s right and the right of the board to delegate any specific power to any other officer of the corporation.
5.06 **Vice President.** The vice president, if any, shall have the power to perform duties that may be assigned by the president or the board. If the president is absent or unable to perform his or her duties, the vice president shall perform the president’s duties until the board directs otherwise. The vice president shall perform all duties incident to the office.

5.07 **Secretary.** The secretary shall (a) keep minutes of board meetings; (b) be responsible for providing notice to each director as required by law, the articles of incorporation, or these bylaws; (c) be the custodian of corporate records; (d) keep a register of the names and addresses of each officer and director; and (e) perform all duties incident to the office and other duties assigned by the president or the board.

5.08 **Treasurer.** The treasurer shall (a) have charge and custody over corporate funds and securities; (b) keep accurate books and records of corporate receipts and disbursements; (c) deposit all moneys and securities received by the corporation at such depositories in the corporation’s name that may be designated by the board; (d) complete all required corporate filings; and (e) perform all duties incident to the office and other duties assigned by the president or the board.

**ARTICLE VI**

**CORPORATE DOCUMENT PROCEDURE**

No corporate documents (including stocks, bonds, agreements, insurance and annuity contracts, qualified and nonqualified deferred compensation plans, checks, notes, disbursements, loans, and other debt obligations) shall be signed by any officer, designated agent, or attorney-in-fact unless authorized by the board or by these bylaws.

**ARTICLE VII**

**INDEMNIFICATION**

7.01 **Nonderivative Actions.** Subject to all of the other provisions of this article, the corporation shall indemnify any person who was or is a party, or is threatened to be made a party to, any threatened, pending, or completed action, suit, or proceeding. This includes any civil, criminal, administrative, or investigative proceeding, whether formal or informal (other than an action by or in the right of the corporation). Such indemnification shall apply only to a person who was or is a director or officer of the corporation or who was or is serving at the request of the corporation as a director, officer, partner, trustee, employee, or agent of another foreign or domestic corporation, partnership, trust, or other enterprise, whether for profit or not for profit. The person shall be indemnified and held harmless against expenses (including attorney fees), judgments, penalties, fines, and amounts paid in settlement actually and reasonably incurred by the person in connection with such action, suit, or proceeding, if the person acted in good faith and in a manner he or she reasonably believed to be in or not opposed to the best interests of the corporation. With respect to any criminal action or proceeding, the person must have had no reasonable cause to believe his or her conduct was unlawful. The termination of any action, suit, or
proceeding by judgment, order, settlement, or conviction or on a plea of *nolo contendere* or its equivalent, shall not by itself create a presumption that (a) the person did not act in good faith and in a manner the person reasonably believed to be in or not opposed to the best interests of the corporation, or (b) with respect to any criminal action or proceeding, the person had reasonable cause to believe that his or her conduct was unlawful.

7.02 *Derivative Actions*. Subject to all of the provisions of this article, the corporation shall indemnify any person who was or is a party to, or is threatened to be made a party to, any threatened, pending, or completed action or suit by or in the right of the corporation to procure a judgment in its favor because (a) the person was or is a director or officer of the corporation or (b) the person was or is serving at the request of the corporation as a director, officer, partner, trustee, employee, or agent of another foreign or domestic corporation, partnership, joint venture, trust, or other enterprise, whether or not for profit. The person shall be indemnified and held harmless against expenses (including actual and reasonable attorney fees) and amounts paid in settlement incurred by the person in connection with the action or suit if the person acted in good faith and in a manner the person reasonably believed to be in or not opposed to the best interests of the corporation. However, indemnification shall not be made for any claim, issue, or matter in which the person has been found liable to the corporation unless and only to the extent that the court in which the action or suit was brought has determined on application that, despite the adjudication of liability but in view of all circumstances of the case, the person is fairly and reasonably entitled to indemnification for the expenses that the court considers proper.

7.03 *Expenses of Successful Defense*. To the extent that a person has been successful on the merits or otherwise in defense of any action, suit, or proceeding referred to in sections 7.01 or 7.02 of this article, or in defense of any claim, issue, or matter in the action, suit, or proceeding, the person shall be indemnified against expenses (including actual and reasonable attorney fees) incurred in connection with the action and in any proceeding brought to enforce the mandatory indemnification provided by this article.

7.04 *Contract Right; Limitation on Indemnity*. The right to indemnification conferred in this article shall be a contract right and shall apply to services of a director or officer as an employee or agent of the corporation as well as in such person’s capacity as a director or officer. Except as provided in section 7.03 of this article, the corporation shall have no obligations under this article to indemnify any person in connection with any proceeding, or part thereof, initiated by such person without authorization by the board.

7.05 *Determination That Indemnification Is Proper*. Any indemnification under sections 7.01 or 7.02 of this article (unless ordered by a court) shall be made by the corporation only as authorized in the specific case. The corporation must determine that indemnification of the person is proper in the circumstances because the person has met the applicable standard of conduct set forth in sections 7.01 or 7.02, whichever is applicable. The determination shall be made in any of the following ways:
(a) By a majority vote of a quorum of the board consisting of directors who were not parties to such action, suit, or proceeding.

(b) If the quorum described in clause (a) above is not obtainable, by a committee of directors who are not parties to the action. The committee shall consist of not less than two disinterested directors.

(c) By independent legal counsel in a written opinion.

7.06 Proportionate Indemnity. If a person is entitled to indemnification under sections 7.01 or 7.02 of this article for a portion of expenses, including attorney fees, judgments, penalties, fines, and amounts paid in settlement, but not for the total amount, the corporation shall indemnify the person for the portion of the expenses, judgments, penalties, fines, or amounts paid in settlement for which the person is entitled to be indemnified.

7.07 Expense Advance. Expenses incurred in defending a civil or criminal action, suit, or proceeding described in sections 7.01 or 7.02 of this article may be paid by the corporation in advance of the final disposition of the action, suit, or proceeding, on receipt of an undertaking by or on behalf of the person involved to repay the expenses, if it is ultimately determined that the person is not entitled to be indemnified by the corporation. The undertaking shall be an unlimited general obligation of the person on whose behalf advances are made, but it need not be secured.

7.08 Nonexclusivity of Rights. The indemnification or advancement of expenses provided under this article is not exclusive of other rights to which a person seeking indemnification or advancement of expenses may be entitled under a contractual arrangement with the corporation. However, the total amount of expenses advanced or indemnified from all sources combined shall not exceed the amount of actual expenses incurred by the person seeking indemnification or advancement of expenses.

7.09 Indemnification of Employees and Agents of the Corporation. The corporation may, to the extent authorized from time to time by the board, grant rights to indemnification and to the advancement of expenses to any employee or agent of the corporation to the fullest extent of the provisions of this article with respect to the indemnification and advancement of expenses of directors and officers of the corporation.

7.10 Former Directors and Officers. The indemnification provided in this article continues for a person who has ceased to be a director or officer and shall inure to the benefit of the heirs, executors, and administrators of that person.

7.11 Insurance. The corporation may purchase and maintain insurance on behalf of any person who (a) was or is a director, officer, employee, or agent of the corporation or (b) was or is serving at the request of the corporation as a director, officer, employee, or agent of
another corporation, partnership, joint venture, trust, or other enterprise. The insurance may protect against any liability asserted against the person and incurred by him or her in any such capacity or arising out of his or her status as such, whether or not the corporation would have power to indemnify against liability under this article or the laws of the state of Michigan.

7.12 Changes in Michigan Law. If there are any changes in the Michigan statutory provisions applicable to the corporation and relating to the subject matter of this article, the indemnification to which any person shall be entitled shall be determined by the changed provisions, but only to the extent that the change permits the corporation to provide broader indemnification rights than the provisions permitted the corporation to provide before the change.

ARTICLE VIII
COMPENSATION

When authorized by the board, a person shall be reasonably compensated for services rendered to the corporation as an officer, director, employee, agent, or independent contractor, except as prohibited by these bylaws.

ARTICLE IX
FISCAL YEAR

The fiscal year of the corporation shall end on June 30.

ARTICLE X
AMENDMENTS

The board of directors at any regular or special meeting may amend or repeal these bylaws, or adopt new bylaws by vote of a majority of the directors, if notice setting forth the terms of the proposal has been given in accordance with any notice requirement for the meeting of the board.
Appendix C:
Board of Directors’ Roles and Responsibilities
as Adopted by the ELi Board of Directors on Oct. 21, 2020

Board Roles and Responsibilities

To help advance East Lansing Info (ELi), the Board of Directors is setting forth its roles and responsibilities for individual board members and the entire Board. The roles and responsibilities for the Board in the first listing are grouped below under four categories for ease of reference and understanding. This listing below is minimal since ELi is highly regarded and has been functioning very effectively for six years. Modifications can be added later as the board obtains experience in functioning with these Board Roles and Responsibilities. The first listing does not duplicate the responsibilities set forth in the Bylaws for ELi on pages 11 and 12 of the articles of Incorporation. Those are added to the end of the first listing.

Strengthening ELi’s Identity and Direction

Periodically when helpful, the Board will review, revise as appropriate, and adopt the strategic direction for ELi and see that its strategic priorities are reflected in its annual budget.

The Board will review, sign and assure submission of ELi’s annual reports.

The Board will provide ongoing strategic counsel and advice. Board members need to make themselves accessible to ELi’s Executive Director and Publisher.

Enhancing ELi’s Necessary Resources

The Board expects all its members to be active participants in fundraising events and actions that will advance fundraising in the present and in the future.

The Board expects its members to advance ELi’s reputation, to seek and be aware of information related to its reputation, and to share that information with ELi’s Executive Director and Publisher.

The Board expects its members to solicit and encourage donors and also to help advance the membership for ELi’s readership who in turn may become donors.

Providing ELi Helpful Oversight

1 These materials are intended for use only by the East Lansing Info (ELi) Board of Directors.
3 Strategic direction is both less formal and less process demanding than a detailed “strategic plan”.

Footnotes: 1, 2
The Board will inform itself of ELi’s financial health and deliberate with ELi’s Executive Director and Publisher regarding plans and possibilities for strong financial health.

The Board will inform itself about specific plans for and achievements of goals related to ELi’s programs, and stand ready to assist in achievement of those goals.

The Executive Committee of the Board will once annually discuss performance with ELi’s Executive Director and Publisher, giving special attention to strengthening and supporting performance, including compensation. Results of the review will be shared with the entire Board membership.

**Bringing Member Strength to the Board and Its Effective Operation for ELi**

Board members are expected to prepare for and attend board meetings—whether person-to-person or virtually. Also, members are expected to participate in one or more board committees, such as (a) Executive Committee, (b) Fundraising Committee, (c) Reach Committee, and (d) any committee to identify and recruit new board members.

Board members are expected to be vigilant to newsworthy opportunities and possible associated fundraising opportunities, and call those to the attention of ELi’s Executive Director and Publisher.

Board members are expected to exercise discipline and not interfere with the day-to-day operations of ELi, unless called upon by ELi’s Executive Director and Publisher to provide operational assistance.

The Board will periodically assess its own performance in relation to these roles and responsibilities, and such others as it may enact for its effective operation. And, it will share that assessment with ELi’s Executive Director and Publisher and such others as it believes may advance the spirit of openness and transparency.

**Additions from the Bylaws of Incorporation**

3.01 General Powers. The business, property and affairs of the corporation shall be managed by the board of directors.

3.02 Number. There shall be not less than 3 nor more than 7 directors on the board as shall be fixed from time to time by the board of directors.

3.03 Tenure. Each director of the Corporation shall hold office until the director’s death, resignation, or removal.

3.04 Resignation. Any director may resign at any time by providing written notice to the Corporation. The resignation will be effective on receipt of the notice or at a later time designated in the notice. A successor shall be appointed as provided in section 3.06 of the bylaws.

3.05 Removal. Any director may be removed with cause by the remaining directors on the board.

3.06 Board Vacancies. A vacancy on the board may be filled with a person selected by the remaining directors of the board.

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4 The Board Roles and Responsibilities set forth here complement, but do not duplicate, ELi’s “Board of Directors’ Conflict of Interest Policy” adopted by the Board of Directors on July 15, 2014, and currently in full effect.

5 ELI MI Articles of Incorporation and Bylaws.
3.07 Annual Meeting. An annual meeting shall be held each year in September. If the annual meeting is not held at that time, the board shall cause the meeting to be held as soon thereafter as is convenient.

3.08 Regular Meetings. Regular meetings of the board may be held at the time and place as determined by resolution of the board without notice other than the resolution.

3.09 Special Meetings. Special meetings of the board may be called by the president or any two directors at a time and place as determined by those persons authorized to call special meetings. Notice of the time and place of special meetings shall be given to each director in any manner at least three days before the meeting.

3.10 Statement of Purpose. Neither the business to be transacted at, nor the purpose of, any regular or special meeting of the board need be specified in the notice for that meeting.

3.11 Waiver of Notice. The attendance of a director at a board meeting shall constitute a waiver of notice of the meeting, except where a director attends a meeting for the express purpose of objecting to the transaction of any business because the meeting is not lawfully called or convened. In addition, the director may submit a signed waiver of notice that shall constitute a waiver of notice of the meeting.

3.12 Meeting by Telephone or Similar Equipment. A director may participate in a meeting by conference telephone or any similar communications equipment through which all persons participating in the meeting can hear each other. Participation in a meeting pursuant to this section constitutes presence in person at the meeting.

3.13 Quorum. A majority of the directors then in office constitutes a quorum for the transaction of any business at any meeting of the board. Actions voted on by a majority of directors present at a meeting where a quorum is present shall constitute authorized actions of the board.

3.14 Consent to Corporate Actions. Any action required or permitted to be taken pursuant to authorization of the board may be taken without a meeting if, before or after the action, all directors consent to the action in writing. Written consents shall be filed with the minutes of the board’s proceeding.

3.15 Appointment of Executive Director and Publisher. The board shall by a majority vote have the power to appoint or discharge the Executive Director and Publisher, to determine his or her duties, and to fix his or her compensation.
Appendix D:
ELi Board of Directors’ Conflict of Interest Policy

Note: ELi’s Board of Directors adopted the Conflict of Interest Policy recommended by the IRS when we obtained our 501(c)3 nonprofit status. We have had one instance of needing to invoke the policy, namely when a Board member was a paid speaker for Facebook at a time when we were sometimes paying Facebook for paid ads (boosts). We held a special Board meeting to manage the conflict according to this policy, documenting management of it. (The bottom line was that we made sure the Board member who was paid by Facebook was not making decisions about ELi’s spending at Facebook.)

East Lansing Info
Conflict of Interest Policy for Officers and Directors
ADOPTED BY THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS ON JULY 15, 2014

Article I
Purpose

The purpose of the conflict of interest policy is to protect East Lansing Info’s interest when it is contemplating entering into a transaction or arrangement that might benefit the private interest of an officer or director of the Organization or might result in a possible excess benefit transaction. This policy is intended to supplement but not replace any applicable state and federal laws governing conflict of interest applicable to nonprofit and charitable organizations.

Article II
Definitions

1. Interested Person
Any director, principal officer, or member of a committee with governing board delegated powers, who has a direct or indirect financial interest, as defined below, is an interested person.

2. Financial Interest
A person has a financial interest if the person has, directly or indirectly, through business, investment, or family:
- a. An ownership or investment interest in any entity with which the Organization has a transaction or arrangement,
- b. A compensation arrangement with the Organization or with any entity or individual with which the Organization has a transaction or arrangement, or
- c. A potential ownership or investment interest in, or compensation arrangement with, any entity or individual with which the Organization is negotiating a transaction or arrangement.

Compensation includes direct and indirect remuneration as well as gifts or favors that are not insubstantial.

A financial interest is not necessarily a conflict of interest. Under Article III, Section 2, a person who has a financial interest may have a conflict of interest only if the appropriate governing board or committee decides that a conflict of interest exists.

Article III
Procedures
1. Duty to Disclose
In connection with any actual or possible conflict of interest, an interested person must disclose the existence of the financial interest and be given the opportunity to disclose all material facts to the directors and members of committees with governing board delegated powers considering the proposed transaction or arrangement.

2. Determining Whether a Conflict of Interest Exists
After disclosure of the financial interest and all material facts, and after any discussion with the interested person, he/she shall leave the governing board or committee meeting while the determination of a conflict of interest is discussed and voted upon. The remaining board or committee members shall decide if a conflict of interest exists.

3. Procedures for Addressing the Conflict of Interest
a. An interested person may make a presentation at the governing board or committee meeting, but after the presentation, he/she shall leave the meeting during the discussion of, and the vote on, the transaction or arrangement involving the possible conflict of interest.
b. The chairperson of the governing board or committee shall, if appropriate, appoint a disinterested person or committee to investigate alternatives to the proposed transaction or arrangement.
c. After exercising due diligence, the governing board or committee shall determine whether the Organization can obtain with reasonable efforts a more advantageous transaction or arrangement from a person or entity that would not give rise to a conflict of interest.
d. If a more advantageous transaction or arrangement is not reasonably possible under circumstances not producing a conflict of interest, the governing board or committee shall determine by a majority vote of the disinterested directors whether the transaction or arrangement is in the Organization's best interest, for its own benefit, and whether it is fair and reasonable. In conformity with the above determination it shall make its decision as to whether to enter into the transaction or arrangement.

4. Violations of the Conflicts of Interest Policy
a. If the governing board or committee has reasonable cause to believe a member has failed to disclose actual or possible conflicts of interest, it shall inform the member of the basis for such belief and afford the member an opportunity to explain the alleged failure to disclose.
b. If, after hearing the member's response and after making further investigation as warranted by the circumstances, the governing board or committee determines the member has failed to disclose an actual or possible conflict of interest, it shall take appropriate disciplinary and corrective action.

Article IV
Records of Proceedings
The minutes of the governing board and all committees with board delegated powers shall contain:
a. The names of the persons who disclosed or otherwise were found to have a financial interest in connection with an actual or possible conflict of interest, the nature of the financial interest, any action taken to determine whether a conflict of interest was present, and the governing board’s or committee’s decision as to whether a conflict of interest in fact existed.
b. The names of the persons who were present for discussions and votes relating to the transaction or arrangement, the content of the discussion, including any alternatives to the proposed transaction or arrangement, and a record of any votes taken in connection with the proceedings.

Article V
Compensation
a. A voting member of the governing board who receives compensation, directly or indirectly, from the Organization for services is precluded from voting on matters pertaining to that member’s compensation.
b. A voting member of any committee whose jurisdiction includes compensation matters and who receives compensation, directly or indirectly, from the Organization for services is precluded from voting on matters pertaining to that member’s compensation.
c. No voting member of the governing board or any committee whose jurisdiction includes compensation matters and who receives compensation, directly or indirectly, from the Organization, either individually or collectively, is prohibited from providing information to any committee regarding compensation.
Article VI

Annual Statements

Each director, principal officer and member of a committee with governing board delegated powers shall annually sign a statement which affirms such person:

a. Has received a copy of the conflicts of interest policy,
b. Has read and understands the policy,
c. Has agreed to comply with the policy, and
d. Understands the Organization is charitable and in order to maintain its federal tax exemption it must engage primarily in activities which accomplish one or more of its tax-exempt purposes.
Article VII

Periodic Reviews

To ensure the Organization operates in a manner consistent with charitable purposes and does not engage in activities that could jeopardize its tax-exempt status, periodic reviews shall be conducted. The periodic reviews shall, at a minimum, include the following subjects:

a. Whether compensation arrangements and benefits are reasonable, based on competent survey information, and the result of arm’s length bargaining.

b. Whether partnerships, joint ventures, and arrangements with management organizations conform to the Organization’s written policies, are properly recorded, reflect reasonable investment or payments for goods and services, further charitable purposes and do not result in inurement, impermissible private benefit or in an excess benefit transaction.

Article VIII

Use of Outside Experts

When conducting the periodic reviews as provided for in Article VII, the Organization may, but need not, use outside advisors. If outside experts are used, their use shall not relieve the governing board of its responsibility for ensuring periodic reviews are conducted.
Appendix E:

ELi’s Revenue and Expenses

Summarized by Calendar Year

Notes:

- The attached Profit and Loss documents are generated from our QuickBooks account and show revenue and expenses by calendar year.
- ELi’s Fiscal Year runs July 1 – June 30 but looking at our operations makes more sense in practice by calendar year, particularly since that is how we fundraise now (with a Sustainability Campaign each year from roughly October to December). There is, however, a usefulness in having the practice of looking at our annual work twice, at the end of the FY and at the end of the CY.
# East Lansing Info

## Profit and Loss

January - December 2014

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## East Lansing Info

**Profit and Loss**  
*January - December 2015*

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**GROSS PROFIT**  
**$37,486.21**

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**NET OPERATING INCOME**  
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**NET INCOME**  
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# East Lansing Info

## Profit and Loss

**January - December 2016**

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# East Lansing Info

**Profit and Loss**

**January - December 2017**

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## East Lansing Info
### Profit and Loss
#### January - December 2018

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## East Lansing Info

### Profit and Loss

**January - December 2019**

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## East Lansing Info
### Profit and Loss
#### January - December 2020

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| GROSS PROFIT                | $160,417.40 |

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| NET OPERATING INCOME        | $ -14,601.48 |
| NET INCOME                  | $ -14,601.48 |
## East Lansing Info

### Profit and Loss

**January - December 2021**

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**Expenses**

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Appendix F:

Legal and Financial Obligations of ELi

This appendix serves as a reminder to the administrative team about obligations that need to be met. See also Part 4 of this Guidance Document for our “Assets and Relationships.”

**Payroll obligations:** We are assisted with this by our payroll service, which handles the withholding for our W-2 employees and submits the necessary forms and payments to the various entities (IRS, State of Michigan, City of East Lansing, etc.). We pay into the unemployment system. In January, we must provide W-2 forms to our W-2 employees. We also must provide 1099 forms to those W-9 workers who have earned more than $600 in the prior year from work with ELi. (Our payroll service assists with this.)

**Annual LARA corporate filing:** Nonprofit corporate annual filings are due with Michigan’s LARA (Michigan’s Department of Licensing and Regulatory Affairs) by Oct. 1. [Learn more at this LARA page.](#)

**Annual IRS 990 form:** Our Fiscal Year runs July 1 – June 30, which means our annual 990 form is due on Nov. 15. An extension can be obtained through May 15 if an extension form is filed. Find the dates [here.](#)

**Post office box:** To retain our P.O. Box at the Abbot Road branch of the East Lansing post office, it is important to pay the rental fee on time.

**Nonprofit status with USPS:** In 2021, ELi obtained recognition as a nonprofit publisher with the United States Postal Service. This may need to be maintained via an annual set of actions including publication of status in our paper edition.
Appendix G:

ELi’s Policy for Accepting and Selling Stock Donations

On Nov. 2, 2021, the ELi Board of Directors passed the following motion: “that ELi establish, through this vote, a policy to accept donated stock and to instruct ELi’s broker to immediately sell any donated stock.”

At the same meeting, the Board of Directors voted to authorize the Executive Director and Publisher to engage Upstream Investment Partners, LLC, of East Lansing, as our stockbroker.

At the same meeting, the Board of Directors voted to authorize Alice Dreger as Executive Director and Jodi Spicer as General Manager to have access to the Upstream account.

At the same meeting, the Board of Directors voted to accept the Corporate and Unincorporated Organization Resolution for National Financial Services LLC, partner of UPSTREAM, and to authorize Alice Dreger to sign.

By practice, we acknowledge in our letter to a donor of stock the date of the donation, the name of the stock, and the number of shares. We also acknowledge the average value of the stock on the day it was donated. (We do NOT acknowledge the amount for which we sold it, because that could be a different value from the date of donation.)
Appendix H:

ELi’s Editorial Independence Policy

Note: This appears at our About ELi page. If it is changed, please also change it at that page. This policy is required by the Institute for Nonprofit News, of which ELi is a member.

What does it mean when we say ELi is independent?

ELi (East Lansing Info) is unaffiliated with local government, is non-profit, and is overseen by a volunteer Board of Directors. We retain full authority over what we publish, and we take very seriously our duty to the community to provide accurate, nonpartisan, factual news.

In keeping with the standards of the Institute for Nonprofit News, of which we are a proud member, our organization make public which donors give a total of $5,000 or more per year on our Sponsors page. We will accept anonymous donations for general support only if it is clear that sufficient safeguards have been put into place that the expenditure of that donation is made independently by our organization and in compliance with INN’s Membership Standards. No donations are anonymous to the Board of Directors (the Board of Directors can see all of our financial information, including all donors and donations). Unless a donor specifically requests to be anonymous and donates less than $500 per year, his or her name will be listed on our sponsors page.

We do not take donations from individuals seated on or running for East Lansing City Council, East Lansing Public Schools Board of Trustees, or a judgeship on the bench of the 54B District Court. We reserve the right to refuse donations from other individuals if we believe the donations could detract from our reputation as an independent, trustworthy, and reliable news source.

The Board reviews possible corporate sponsorships and will decline any that might cause us editorial or reputational difficulties. We do not publish any “sponsored content” or “native advertising.” We acknowledge our gratitude to our corporate sponsors by presenting their logos in certain parts of our productions. We do not accept any conventional advertisements.

We add conflict of interest disclosures to articles where there might be a perceived financial conflict of interest, and if a perceived financial conflict of interest might cause doubt about our legitimacy, we will not publish an article that involves such a conflict. We strive to not make news decisions on the basis of donor support, because we see our duty as being to the community as a whole.

ELi may consider donations to support the coverage of particular subject areas or topics, but our organization maintains editorial control of the coverage. We will cede no right of review or influence of editorial content, nor of unauthorized distribution of editorial content.
Appendix I

ELi’s Reporting Standards and Corrections Policy

Materials for reporters, including our standards, are available and updated on occasion at our page of resources for reporters. Please see that page for that material.

Our corrections policy is simply to promptly correct factual errors and to note at an article when corrections have been made. (We make an exception to posting a note about a correction when a correction is simply the correction of a typo, such as correcting the date “2020” to “2021” if that’s just a typo, or correcting the spelling of “John” to “Jon.”)
Appendix J

ELi’s Defense Protocol

East Lansing Info

Protocol for Responding to Attacks on ELi’s Work

as adopted by the Board of Directors on Oct. 21, 2020;

revised after the Nov. 18, 2020, test drill.

This version is called the “Jan. 2021” version.

The purpose of this protocol is to provide guidance for responding to public attacks on ELi’s work in organized and effective fashion.

This protocol assumes the existence of a Rapid Response Team (RRT) designated by the Board of Directors. If the Board of Directors has not specifically designated a RRT when use of this policy is found to be needed, the RRT shall automatically consist of:

- The Executive Director/Publisher, who shall act as Chair
- The Managing Editor
- The Board President, who may designate an incident-specific substitute or add members to the team, as noted below. If the President is not available or not responding, the Vice President will play the role of the Board President.

Note: An exception to this list could occur if one (or more) of these members are the subject of an individually-named attack, in which case the RRT will initially form without the implicated individuals. They may be invited subsequently to join the RRT or to be consultants to the RRT. The RRT may of course choose to communicate and consult with any individuals in order to understand and respond to the situation.

The RRT needs to remain small to remain nimble. The following protocol provides for the rest of the Board of Directors to remain apprised and engaged.

As noted in Step 1 below, this protocol is only meant to be used when an attack on ELi’s work is significant enough to warrant a formal response from the Board of Directors. Actual examples of when a protocol like this might be used include when School Board members or City Council members have misrepresented ELi’s reporting and publicly suggested that ELi is untrustworthy; when a mayor complained to the Board about ELi’s work; when a mayor complained about our
work during a Council resignation; when a city manager used the City’s website to launch
counter-factual attacks on ELi’s investigative reporting; when a city attorney threatened to sue
ELi over reporting that implicated him; and when a team of developers launched a website,
video, press conference, and Facebook ad campaign to undermine ELi’s work.

Step 1: Identify attacks worth addressing using this protocol

The following questions should guide the decision to enact use of this protocol. Two or more of
these questions should be answered in the affirmative to proceed with use of the protocol.

1. Is this really an attack, and not merely a criticism – is it designed or likely to generally
undermine ELi’s work rather than to make more accurate some specific part of ELi’s
reporting? (Criticisms and requests for corrections should be engaged as such.)
2. Is the attack something we can document (or is it merely a hearsay rumor)?
3. Is the attack by someone who is able to wield substantial influence – politically,
financially, etc.?
4. Does the attack “have legs”? (Is it garnering or is it likely to garner attention? Are there
resources invested in it? Do they have a large platform?)

Step 2: Document the attack, convene the RRT, and alert the Board of Directors

Once an attack is identified by anyone as worthy of addressing, the next steps should be
followed as soon as possible.

1. Any member of the ELi organization aware of a significant attack should immediately
and in writing (by email) alert the Executive Director/Publisher and also the President
of the Board. They should do this even if they believe someone else in ELi is doing so,
even if just with a simple note (text or email) to say “I believe X is getting in touch with
you about this attack but just wanted to let you know to contact me if X is not in touch
asap.” This way it does not fall through the cracks and we do not lose time in response.
2. The ED/Publisher should immediately advise the Board President and Managing Editor
that s/he has received the information and is working on the next steps. If it’s time to
automatically recuse any party, now is a reasonable time. (As noted above, they may be
added back after appropriate consideration, or simply consulted.)
3. The ED/Publisher should ask the President if they want to designate someone to
function in their own place on the RRT or if they want to add someone to the RRT for
this specific incident. (This would be smart, for example, if the President is very busy at
the moment, or if someone else on the Board might have useful expertise in the issue or
useful experience with the individual launching attacks.) The President may also need to
replace the ED/Publisher and/or Managing Editor on the RRT if they are specifically
named in the attack, as noted above.
4. If the President does not respond soon, the ED/Publisher should add the rest of the
Board officers to the discussion at this point.
5. The President should let the ED/Publisher know who the President wants on the RRT
from the Board and should formally designate who will be the RRT Chair in the event the
ED/President is named in the attack. (If the President is still not responding, the role of
the President in this case should be temporarily taken over by the Vice President or that person’s designee.)

6. The RRT Chair (with assistance as needed) should immediately document the exact nature of the attack, including the place, time, words used, and context. (This may include screenshots and downloading of materials including videos.) If attacks have been oral and unrecorded, it may make sense to ask the individual to go on the record, following a conversation among the RRT about how to make that request.

7. All of the relevant material should be stored in an electronic drive available to the full Board and to those working on the response. The file should include a contact spreadsheet for everyone involved, including all of the Board.

8. The RRT Chair should immediately share that dedicated drive with the full Board of Directors and let them know about next steps.

Step 3: RRT produces a response plan

Because it is important to be able to nimbly and effectively respond to attacks, this step does not have specific instructions but rather calls for the Chair of the RRT to work with the RRT to produce a response plan. Here are some guiding questions:

- Who should be the audience and what should be the venue for the response? (Should it be a privately-delivered letter? A phone call? A “Your ELi” column from ELi’s Public Editor or Publisher? Some combination of these?)
- What would be a proportional response? (Does this require something in the name of the full Board of Directors or some individual representing ELi?)
- Should the response contain specific requests and/or demands?
- Do we want to ask any experts to weigh in? (E.g., call the hotline for the Reporters Committee for Freedom of the Press?)
- Do we need to consult an attorney at this point? (Information about attorneys who might be consulted will be in the drive’s contact sheet.)
- If a specific person within ELi is being attacked, is that person receiving adequate emotional and organizational support from the team internally?
- Does it make sense to contact the person who has made the attack in order to get more information from them?

Step 4: Response occurs, with the Board staying informed

After the RRT comes up with a plan:

1. The RRT Chair sends an email to the RRT, cc to the full Board, documenting the plan for response. Members of the Board can provide advice as they see fit.
2. The RRT Chair follows through on directing the response plan, keeping the Board fully informed along the way.
3. The response to the attack is prepared, reviewed, and dispatched.
4. The RRT continues to manage the issue as needed.

Step 5: Follow-up
After the plan has been implemented and all communications/issues are finished or have been resolved:

1. The ED/Publisher and Managing Editor will share substantive community responses with the Board of Directors, including those submitted anonymously through ELi’s web portal.
2. The Board Secretary will ensure a record is kept of all attacks, official ELi/Board responses, and any other relevant materials. These records shall be accessible to future RRTs and to the Board. A reasonably detailed record of the attack and the response will be added to the agenda of the next ELi Board meeting for purposes of record-keeping within Board minutes.
3. The RRT will hold a discussion, as soon as possible, about whether there has been “collateral damage” to community members from the attack and will work to mitigate that harm. Consideration will include the well-being of the person(s) who launched the attacks.
Appendix K:

About the ELi Paper Editions

Note: This material below is drawn from a page on our paper editions. (If this is updated, please update that page.) In practice, the paper edition is produced through the work of three people: ELi’s Publisher, Managing Editor, and designer Cait Palmiter. Our practice has been to mail it to people who subscribe and to a list that includes ELi donors and active East Lansing voters. We also distribute free editions by hand through local coffee shops and the like and through the help of volunteer distributors to area senior housing complexes.

Why a paper edition?

East Lansing Info (ELi) started production of a paper edition in 2021, our seventh year of publication. We decided to take on an occasional paper edition after a lot of strategic consideration and advice from sister local news organizations nationwide. And the results have far exceeded our hopes!

With the paper edition, we are now reaching senior citizens in East Lansing at an unprecedented rate, including seniors who are mostly or entirely offline and who live in dedicated senior housing and nursing homes.

And we are also reaching young people at an unprecedented rate. It turns out that our editorial team’s social media circles don’t overlap enough with East Lansing’s younger residents, but our coffee habits do. So, we drop free copies at Biggby, Foster, Blue Owl, Campbell’s Market Basket, and so on, and we’re connecting electronically with younger residents by first connecting through paper!

Thanks to the paper edition, we’ve also connected with Impact 89FM radio, which now broadcasts our weekly East Lansing Insider news podcast on Sunday mornings.

About six months into paper production, we were delighted to be notified that MSU Archives had decided to archive ELi’s paper and electronic versions.

“We want to ensure this important documentation of East Lansing is preserved for future generations,” said Erin Passehl Stoddart, head of MSU Archives. “Accepting ELi resources into the Archives’ collections ensures both the preservation of content as well as provides additional avenues for everyone to discover and access ELi’s reporting.”

Perhaps most importantly, the paper edition has enabled us to explain effectively to members of our community why we need their financial support to keep this very high-quality investigative news service going. We can see from people using the envelopes included with
the mailed copies that we have had a critical breakthrough in terms of reaching people who can and will support honest, truly-local news production.

The ELi newspaper is designed by Cait Palmiter. As we have shared the end results of her work on our newspaper with our readers and our sister organizations, Cait’s work has been hailed from around the country as simply outstanding.

Wrote one ELi reader, “Just received Vol. 1, Issue 7 and I have to say that the overall layout, typography, and graphics are a knockout. Fully embracing an accent color in the mix of grayscale and having those pop-outs in imagery and behind the vectors across the spread is brilliant. I also love the stock you printed on—it smells fantastic. Keep it up!”

We love bringing this “best of” paper edition to our people and doing it in a way that is so graphically compelling.
Appendix L:

About ELi’s Summer Youth Journalism Program

Note: Material about this program is available through our page on the Summer Youth Journalism Program. Please see that page for full information.
Appendix M:
Standards for Posting to ELi’s Community Calendar

Note: This material is taken from our page providing information about what we will post at our community calendar. If this is updated, please update that page.

ELi Calendar of Events Guidelines

Submitting an event for the ELi Calendar does not guarantee that it will be included. The ELi Calendar editors use the following guidelines in sorting out which submitted entries are published in the ELi Calendar.

ELi’s Calendar focuses on free or low-cost events that would be of interest to our readers and their contacts in and around East Lansing. Special attention is paid to local not-for-profit and governmental meetings/events that are open to the public. Most events covered in a published ELi article will also have a calendar entry.

Some events submitted to the Calendar are not published for the following reasons:

- high admission cost;
- not at an East Lansing location;
- for-profit events;
- events having paid advertisements elsewhere;
- member-only or closed events (not open to general public);
- material not likely to be of general interest to ELi readers or EL public;
- on-going classes, workshop series, religious services, and courses (instead of special single events);
- and (rarely) space limitations (more than 4 entries already listed on that one day at the same time).

To clarify: The ELi Calendar will include items that would be of interest to the general East Lansing community and are open to the public. Events designed for membership-only groups or religious groups that are primarily for their own members are not included. Events typically included in internal bulletins or newsletters, such as announcements of weekly or holiday religious services, are not included.

Community-wide activities are typically included even when hosted by one specific religious institution. Examples include the Interfaith Community Thanksgiving Service, the community arts and solar events at the Islamic Center, and the Interfaith Clergy Association of Greater Lansing-sponsored event to support the Jewish community after the shootings in Pittsburgh.
Partisan political events such as fundraisers for a specific candidate are not included in the ELi Calendar. Elected officials’ constituents meetings or coffee hours that are open to the public may be included. If there are county, state, or national policy/legislative/election discussion meetings that directly impact life in East Lansing in very direct ways and in ways that are disproportional to how other communities might be impacted, and these are events about which people might otherwise not learn, they may be covered in an ELi article and may be also published in the ELi Calendar. Political candidate forums sponsored by non-partisan groups such as ASMSU or League of Women Voters may be included in the ELi Calendar, particularly if they center on an election specific to East Lansing (like City Council or School Board).

In general terms, events included in the Calendar typically include welcoming phrases, like “the public is invited” or “everyone may attend.”

*Events for the calendar can be submitted via [our special portal]*.
Appendix N: Fundraising and ELi

The purpose of this document is to explain ELi’s philosophy on fundraising and how it funds.

Philosophy on Fundraising

East Lansing Info is a 501(c)3 nonprofit, which means that we are a tax-exempt charity according to the IRS.

ELi’s nonprofit status is also critical to how ELi understands its position in the community and how it approaches fundraising. ELi believes that access to fair, fact-based news is important to creating an informed and active community. We fight for transparency in our local government and believe in keeping our readers informed.

We believe that everyone should have access to the news and have taken steps, such as developing our podcast and paper edition and pursuing partnerships with IMPACT Radio and WKAR, to expand our reach, particularly to senior citizens and younger people. We believe our news reporting should reflect the issues and items of interest for all residents. We should strive for inclusive news.

We understand that not everyone can afford to pay for the news. In our sustainability campaigns, we ask our readers to give what they can. That looks different for every donor. Donors often value that their money is going toward making sure the entire community has access to the news.

We also take seriously thanking our donors for their support. During our sustainability campaigns, we try to send individualized thank yous within 24 hours of a donation being made. During the year, we aim for within 2 weeks.

ELi’s Year Round Approach to Fundraising

ELi runs on a budget of a little over $200,000 a year. We try to raise that during our sustainability campaign, but the most we have ever raised was about $160,000. Therefore, there are a few things we try to do during the year.

Small fundraising events and goals

During 2020, ELi held a small spring fundraiser that was done completely online trying to raise money from tax returns and stimulus checks. We set a small goal, wrote articles, and updated social media with our progress.

Similarly, in 2021, we held a small fundraiser, setting a goal of $15,000, to support our Summer Youth Journalism Program (SYJP). We used a ruler to demonstrate our progress and regularly shared on social media. We also wrote several articles, including
one that showed what our SYJP participants had written for ELi over the past year. We reached our goal in about 10 days.

Starting in 2022, ELi would like to hold 2-4 in person events for fundraising. This will be updated with information on what we have done.

**Thank yous**

During the year, ELi also sends thank yous to one-time donors who give by check of MSUFCU Member2Member. We also send quarterly thank yous to monthly donors who give by those means. (See examples in this [folder](#).)

The General Manager (GM) and Director of Development (DD) also coordinate to follow up with lapsed donors. (See an example email [here](#).) Some donors do not respond. Others articulate why they are no longer giving to ELi. Others still renew their donations.

ELi also allows local businesses to take out sponsorships. Please note that as a nonprofit, ELI CANNOT ALLOW ADVERTISEMENTS. Please review these guidelines on sponsorships versus advertisements. In short, sponsorships can show the logo of a business and a short tagline expressing shared community values. It cannot promote the business, explicitly ask readers to frequent a business, or provide coupons and discounts.

Here are some examples of sponsorships that we have run in the past. Sponsorships should never go in our paper edition because they could complicate our nonprofit postage status.

**Overview of ELi’s Sustainability Campaign**

ELi’s sustainability campaign officially runs from Nov. 1 through Dec. 31, but the legwork takes a longer period of time.

The goal of the sustainability campaign is to raise all the money ELi will need to function in the upcoming year. We have found that having a year-end sustainability campaign helps us because:

- Reminds our readers that our sustainability depends on THEM.
- Makes readers realize why we come back to them every year.
- Results in a reasonably predictable budget for us.
- Helps us ride out difficult moments during the calendar year.
- Provides us an opportunity to (again) be transparent about expenses and income.
- Keeps us all focused on the critical mission of providing EL news.
Our sustainability campaign also overlaps with NewsMatch, matching dollars provided by the Institute for Nonprofit News. The funds made available from NewsMatch have declined over the years but still amount to over $10,000 each year.

**Here’s how the sustainability campaign works.**

We begin our work in September by setting our fundraising goal. We do this by considering our monthly burn rate through looking at our monthly and annual budgets. The main work after that in September and October is soliciting core donors. Core donations provide us with a pot of matching funds. Ideally, ELi should raise about $80,000 in matching funds. We have always matched all funds.

**Core donors**

ELi should contact all core donors from the year before and send them an email similar to this one that identifies what they gave last year. Often, donors match or exceed the amount that they donated the year before.

ELi should also look through the previous donations and identify any big donors who were not technically core donors. An email similar to this one should be sent, asking if they are interested in becoming core donors.

ELi also found that donors were interested in donating stock and IRA disbursements. Information on this should be added to the above emails.

**Preparation for Sustainability Articles**

During October, the Managing Editor should begin soliciting “Why I Report for ELi” articles from reporting staff. Examples of those and other fundraising articles are available here.

The Managing Editor should also begin working on an article that announces the Sustainability Campaign on Nov. 1. The ME should also consider running this article alongside an important piece of investigative news.

Throughout the Sustainability campaign, the ME should publish weekly updates on the campaign or small nudges. Special nudges can also be done solely on social media in consultation with the social media manager.

During October, the ME should also consider large investigative pieces to bring out during the Sustainability Campaign to emphasize the excellent reporting ELi brings forward to the community.

In December, end of year lists, like the biggest stories of the year past and the year ahead, as well as articles that show reporters’ favorite pieces, are helpful from both a news and fundraising standpoint.
General Preparation for the ELi Team

The Director of Development should update reporters, the Community Advisory Board, and the Board of Directors about plans for the Sustainability Campaign. All should be provided with generic emails they can send and social media posts that they can make to drum up support for ELi.

When events are planned or set, all should be notified and encouraged to come and spread the word.

Throughout the Campaign, the Boards should receive updates every 2-3 weeks about progress being made.

The Director of Development and Managing Editor should ask reporters to submit “Why I Report for ELi” articles in October to have them ready to run for November and December. ELi usually pays $50 for these articles.

Successful Ways to Solicit Money

In addition to what is mentioned above (core donors, article publication, etc.) here are some other things that ELi has done.

In October, the fundraising team prepares a donation letter and insert that is mailed via the USPS to previous donors who have not yet given that year. In early November, someone on the fundraising team hosts an envelope stuffing party where letters are personalized, envelopes stuffed and addressed. For postage, we often buy discount stamps from Mark Grebner.

Paper editions should be sent to arrive in early to mid-November AND December. Those editions should include return envelopes. We had high levels of success getting donations this way.

The Director of Development should also create a special pitch for Giving Tuesday, sending a mailer one week in advance and setting an achievable goal. $10,000 has worked in the past. A few nudges on social media the two days leading up are good. The real push itself is on Giving Tuesday. Another email should be sent and updates on the amount raised posted on social media throughout the day. People really responded to seeing the numbers go up and it encouraged them to give. Previous examples are available on MailChimp.

Events have also helped. ELi held its first ever gift auction and spelling bee in 2021 and its first ever telethon in 2020. Both were successful and have potential to grow and adapt.
End of the year emails to previous donors who have not yet given and to people who subscribe to our email lists but don’t donate yield success, particularly when sent between Dec. 26 and Dec. 31.

Wrapping it up

In early January, ELi runs an article making an announcement about how much we have raised. The ED, DD, and GM work together to complete paperwork for INN and NewsMatch. The GM sends end of the year IRS letters to donors.

Here is a timeline of what should be done when.

- September
  - Set fundraising goal
  - Develop spreadsheet for campaign
  - Develop list of core donors
  - Develop email to core donors (include stocks and IRA info)
  - Plan events and set dates
- October
  - Contact core donors
  - Solicit “Why I report”
  - Plan and submit November paper edition
  - Write and print stuff for hard-copy mailer
- November
  - Announce Campaign
  - Remember weekly articles
  - Finalize December Paper Edition
  - Mail snail mail mailers
  - Hold event
  - Giving Tuesday push
- December
  - Hold event
  - Follow up with previous donors and mailer subscribers over email on Dec. 26-31
  - Top 10 articles
- January
  - Annual report
  - IRS letters from Jodi
  - INN and NewsMatch paperwork

Important Documents

Documents are available on ELi’s Google Drive.