

Helena Township Planning Commission Meeting and Public Hearing Minutes

Thursday, May 08, 2025 @ 5:30pm

8751 Helena Road, Alden, Michigan 49612

Call to Order: Chair Mike Robinson called the meeting to order at 5:32pm.

Pledge of Allegiance: All in room participated.

Roll Call: Present – F. VandenBerg, J. Bassil, J. Gurr, M. Robinson, G. Schafer and J. Schilling. Absent – S. Moglovkin

Township Officials Present: Butch Peeples and Bob Logee.

Approval of Agenda: Due to a scheduling conflict this May 08 meeting replaced the May 01, 2025. J. Gurr motioned to approve agenda and G. Schafer seconded. Motion approved.

Statement of Conflict of Interest: No conflicts.

Approval of April 03, 2025 Minutes: J. Schilling motioned to approve minutes and J. Gurr seconded. Motion approved.

Communications:

- Planning Commission and ZBA compliance training was successfully completed by individuals on the Helena Township Planning Commission (HTPC) and Zoning Board on May 1st, 2025.
- Thursday, June 5th, 2025 at 5pm is the next Helena Township Planning Commission meeting.

Public input related to Ordinance 5.02.02 and definitions was re-opened in response to increased resident interests and concerns with April revisions in ordinance language:

1. Laura Wilcox inquired about, and does not agree with this rescheduled monthly meeting.
2. Linda Wayne inquired about the changes from 4 to 2 powered watercraft (PWC) per 100 linear feet or less of shoreline frontage, and 2 PWC each additional 50 linear feet to 1 PWC each additional 50 linear feet of shoreline frontage. Linda encouraged and thanked members of the HTPC for providing an input opportunity on language to create a balanced ordinance meeting waterfront property owners and residents rights.
3. Michael McCracken suggested 4 PWC/100 linear feet or less of shoreline frontage, and 1 PWC/25 additional linear feet of shoreline frontage. Michael feels decisions about permitted waterfront activities should be completed over the summer when more property owners are present and are provided an opportunity to be represented.
4. Laury Stone expressed concerns that it was unreasonable to limit permitted PWC.
5. Lyal Bigger expressed concern about potential conflict between the PWC ordinance with shared lakefront access for property owners and potential grandfathering and/or exemptions for property owners belonging to the Crystal Springs Property Owners Association. Lyal also encouraged the HTPC to provide clarification of the word "use" in the ordinance at [5.02.02, D. *Additional Restrictions – 3*) "Use " of powered watercraft shall be...]
6. Tom McCully expressed concern that the ordinance would be an abuse of property owners' rights.

7. Darren Whipple, representing himself and the Coverts, expressed concerns about ordinances being too restrictive that will limit property owner rights as well as devalue their waterfront property if the more restrictive 2 PWC per 100 linear feet of shoreline frontage, and 1 PWC each additional 50 linear feet of shoreline frontage is implemented.
8. Oryana Leffew, representing Albert Cash, indicated that as modified to read 2 PWC per 100 linear feet of shoreline frontage, and 1 PWC each additional 50 linear feet of shoreline frontage is an absurd consideration.

It was determined the purpose of this meeting could not be achieved without additional considerations and input from and to the Planning Commission. The motion to table this portion of the meeting was made by J. Schilling, seconded by G. Schafer. Motion to confirm tabling ordinance 5.02.02 public input was voted on and passed. The ordinance portion of the meeting was tabled for further resident input and Planning Commission consideration. In addition, the specific action items below were identified during the HTPC meeting:

Note: The HTPC is actively seeking additional input, comments, suggestions and concerns on this subject. Please share these meeting minutes with others, attend the June 5th meeting, or send a brief note or letter with input to: Fay VandenBerg, 7187 Crystal Springs Road, Bellaire / 49615. All notes and letters containing specifics are helpful, and will be shared at the next meeting. Resident input is critical.

1. Clarify and document specific 5.02.02 terms for grandfathering and exemptions.
2. Consider maximum number of PWC on waterfront property over 200 linear feet of shoreline frontage to be 8 PWC.
3. Some concern was shared that more restrictive ordinances would most likely greatly increase the number and time involved with Special Use Permits and/or Exemptions.
4. Clarify the term “use” as it would be applicable to 5.02.02, D. Additional Restrictions – “Use” of powered watercraft shall be...
5. For clarification: Bryan Graham is a well-respected retired attorney, and new to membership on the Antrim County Planning Commission. Bryan has begun to standardize the methodology and format in which the Antrim County Planning Commission receives township requests. The proposed new process/documentation will satisfy conditions of the Planning and Zoning Enabling Act and resultant statutes. HTPC commits to ensuring documentation will follow the updated process.

New Business:

- Bob Logee, Zoning Administrator, shared the April 2025 zoning activity report.
- Walkway/sidewalk at the marina will be completed for public safety – this was donated by the Stones.
- Newly created public restroom signs have been completed and will be installed.
- Unfortunately, other signage at and around the Alden marina was vandalized earlier in May.

Old Business:

- Franklin Street house – representatives for the owner were contacted about safety concerns, and remediation plans are being resolved.
- Waterfront RVs – the RV on Green Street has been removed.

Adjourn:

- J. Gurr motioned to adjourn and F. VandenBerg seconded. May 08, 2025 meeting adjournment was approved at 6:15pm.

Respectfully Submitted, Fay M. VandenBerg, Helena Township Planning Commission Secretary