

Call to Order: Chair B. Peeples called the meeting to order at 7:02 pm.

Pledge of Allegiance: All present participated.

Roll Call: Present – B. Peeples, O. Leffew, C. Rice, B. Bartz. Absent – J. Schilling

Approval of Agenda: Motion by B. Bartz, seconded by C. Rice to approve current agenda. All in favor. None opposed. Motion carried.

Conflict of Interest: None declared.

Public Comment made to ask what a conflict of interest is.

Approval of November 13, 2025, Helena Township Board Regular Meeting Minutes: Motion by B. Bartz, seconded by C. Rice to approve motion. All in favor. None opposed. Motion carried.

Treasurer Report:

- \$761,437.66 - Beginning Balance
- \$232,831.87 - Receipts
- \$86,662.67 - Total Disbursements
- \$907,606.76 - Ending Bank Balance

Presentation of Bills – December Balance Sheet:

- December Disbursements - \$86,662.77
- January to date disbursements - \$65,483.43

Antrim County Commissioner Report: Terry VanAlstine reported the Antrim County Parks & Rec. Public Hearing taking place on Thursday, January 15, 2026, at 6:00pm. The plan can be found on the website.

Antrim County Sheriff's Report: Report presented by Sheriff Kevin Hoch:

- Safety Center Project update. Determined to keep the costs as projected, ground break intended for end of 2026.
- Helena Total Calls for Service: 66 reported for December 2025.
- Helena Annual Calls for Service Report:
 - 810 calls for service in 2025
 - 818 calls for service in 2024
 - 944 calls for service in 2020
- Staffing:
 - Conditional offers have been extended to Police Academy Candidates, which will bring the department total to 23 sworn officers, including the Sheriff and Undersheriff.
 - Central Dispatch remains in an "emergency state" due to staffing shortages.

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8751 Helena Road, Alden, Michigan 49612

Township Ambulance Authority (TAA) Report: Report presented by Mike Robinson:

- All is well

Guest Speaker: None

Communications:

- Yearly Junk Pick-up Event –Saturday, June 20, 2026.
- Community Center recycling challenges appear to be due to a storm and ice causing delayed services combined with unbroken down boxes over filling the dumpsters. Dumpsters are emptied weekly.

Committee Reports:

Zoning: Report by Robert Logee:

- December 2025 zoning activities included 2 land use permits, 2 field checks, 3 public contacts, 2 meetings and 0 violations.
- Franklin House has been removed
- Private Property Cemetery Request reviewed and discussed. Applicant completed steps with Antrim County, the Local Health Department of Northwest Michigan and the Helena Township Planning Commission. Helena Township retains authority to require a cement vault for burial. C. Rice made the motion to approve the private property burial with all the requirements met. B. Bartz seconded the motion. B. Peeples and O. Leffew opposed resulted in a 2-2 tie, causing the motion to fail.
- The Township Board reappointed Scott Wagoneer and Bob Clore to the Board of Review and approved one new appointment, Brad McCarter.

Parks and Recreation: Report by Barry Snyder:

- Discussion held regarding improvements to the Helena Township Tennis Park, including rebuilding versus upgrading the existing court. Concerns regarding long-term maintenance and sports trends were noted. The current court is at the end of its useful life. No decisions were made. The Board will review detailed plans and costs at a future meeting.

Planning Commission: Report by Jim Gurr:

- Planning Commission completed a rewrite of its bylaws and will now meet every other month. No January regular meeting will be held. Next regular meeting is February 05, 2026.
- The Planning Commission determined that they had fallen out of the proper notification window for public notice. In order to err on the side of caution and ensure full compliance with notice requirements, the public hearing will be re-noticed and reheard. A Public Hearing is scheduled for January 15, 2026, at 5:00pm to discuss and vote on the Zoning Ordinance language for 5.02.02.
- Gurr encouraged Planning Commission members and interested individuals to consider enrolling in the MSU Extension Citizen Planner course, noting that it is a valuable training opportunity and recommending participation, particularly for those involved in planning and zoning matters. MSU will conduct the hybrid course at Helena Township starting in April 2026.

Roads Report: Report by Butch Bartz:

- Reported that road funding levels for the upcoming year are not yet finalized.
- Indicated the Township may receive slightly more funding than last year, though some increases may be

offset elsewhere

- It was stated that the Township has an established priority list and is prepared to proceed once final allocations are confirmed.

Old Business:

- Garage door damage was addressed following an incident involving a vehicle. The individual responsible was identified, and the matter was reported to the Sheriff. No charges are being pursued. The Township expects to receive reimbursement in the amount of \$3,047 to cover the repair costs. Once payment is finalized, the issue will be considered resolved.
- Absentee Voter Drop Box has been installed outside of the Township building. A security camera has been ordered. Installation meets state requirements and is funded by State reimbursement.
- Alden Days and Early Voting at the end of July will cross paths for three days. Parking may be a concern. Plans will continue to develop as we get closer.

New Business:

- Resolution – Poverty Exemption Act presented per State requirements. Motion to approve the Poverty Exemption Resolution was made by C. Rice, seconded by O. Leffew, and approved by the Board.
- Annual Township Insurance Renewal. Prices have increased and a review on coverages is underway. Payment was made to prevent lapse in coverage. Township is looking into other municipal insurance providers.
- TriMedia Cemetery Mapping – Survey, LiDAR, plot mapping and digitizing quote for \$44,625. Motion made by C. Rice, seconded by O. Leffew to approve cemetery mapping project using cemetery millage funds. All in favor. Motion passed.
- Community Center ceiling painting project, to include Community Room, Gym, TAAG Room and the Meeting Room for \$28,436. Asbestos testing returned negative. Library or kitchen are not included. Motioned made by O. Leffew, seconded by B. Bartz and approved by the Board.
- The Board discussed updating its key policy due to recent keys not being returned and the cost associated with re-keying the building.

Announcements: None

Public Comment:

- C. Rice comment: I made the motion for approval of the private burial on personal property because that was how it was presented on the agenda...as a voting item. But it doesn't require a vote of approval by the township board because the property owner had met with all the steps required by the state and was therefore already approved. My concern was that the taxes on the property are not current at this time, but that is not a township issue.
- Paul Sak questioned whether Township tax dollars could be better utilized for items such as roads and lake access sites. B. Peeples responded by explaining the differences between grants, donations, and restricted funding sources. C. Rice provided examples of road and cemetery millage funding. Rian explained that recreation grants through the State of Michigan typically require a 25%-in-kind match.
- Jim Gurr thanked everyone and wished all a Happy New Year.

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Motion to Pay Bills: Motion by C. Rice, seconded by B. Bartz. Motion passed. All in favor, none opposed, so carried.

Adjournment: Meeting was adjourned at 8:22pm.

Oryana Leffew – Helena Township Clerk

clerk@helenatownship.com

231 (331)-4643

Supervisor Approval _____

DRAFT