

Helena Township Planning Commission Public Hearing Minutes
Thursday, January 15, 2026 at 5:00pm
8751 Helena Road, Alden, Michigan 49612

Call to Order and Pledge of Alliance: Chair, Jim Gurr called the meeting to order at 5:09pm.

Roll Call: Present – J. Gurr, D. Hunstad, M. Robinson, F. VandenBerg and D. Whipple
Absent – G. Schafer, J. Schilling

Township Officials Present: V. Bishop, O. Leffew, B. Logee

Approval of Agenda: Motion to approve by F. VandenBerg and 2nd by D. Hunstad

Conflict of Interest: None

Approval of December 4th, 2025 Minutes: Motion by D. Hunstad and 2nd by D. Whipple.

Communication: Information about the 2026 Citizen Planner training was provided (D. Whipple volunteered to work on arrangements with O. Leffew). Additional information is available on the Helena Township website.

Public Comments: None

Public input related to Ordinance 5.02.02 was open to residents at 5:15pm:

1. Lori and Gary Mayes, 6451 Crystal Springs Road (joined via Zoom), inquired about the rationale for development of the ordinance.
2. Carol Fricke, 9566 Fowler Lane NW, inquired about enforcement guidance and issuance of penalties. Carol expressed concern about resident understanding of lake degradation.
3. Trish Narwold, 8214 SE Torch Lake Drive, acknowledged that the Planning Commission members are the ‘visionaries’ for balancing all the needs of township residents. Trish expressed concerns for the scientific and environmental understanding of the land and water interface with the increased property development and the loss of water wildlife (“Shifting the Baseline Syndrome”). Trish is strongly against portions of the ordinance.
4. Dan Packer, 9430 Torch Bridge Court, inquired about monitoring the possibility of rental boats and docks as his township is currently addressing the same ordinance topic.
5. Laura Wilcox, 7197 Crystal Springs Road, inquired about the decision to have maximum of four (4) powered watercraft versus the two (2) previously discussed; and a potential compromise of three (3) powered watercraft. Laura inquired about having this Public Hearing in January versus waiting until summer.
6. Megan Raphael, 6693 Crystal Springs Road urged the Planning Commission to vote no on Ordinance Chapter 5, Section 5.02.02. in an email read at the meeting.

January 15th, 2026 meeting minutes continued:

- Meeting closed for Finding of Fact, Motion and Voting at 5:40pm.
- Planning Commission members reviewed comments, and roll call vote for language was completed. Motion to approve made by D. Hunstad and 2nd by F. VandenBerg. (All present voted for approval.)
- Meeting reopened at 5:53pm.

Announcements:

- (1) Next Helena Township Planning Commission meeting is Thursday, February 5th at 5pm.
- (2) FEMA and Floodplain map information may be found on the Helena Township website.

Question from Linda Wayne regarding Spencer Creek and Floodplain map; Oryana requested that Linda see her after the meeting.

Question from Laura Wilcox regarding December meeting synopsis published in the Antrim Review.

Adjourn: F. VandenBerg motioned to adjourn, meeting adjourned at 5:58pm.

Respectfully Submitted,

Fay VandenBerg, Helena Township Planning Commission and Zoning Secretary.

Note:

- Complete ordinance language, Chapter 5, Section 5.02.02 may be found at: www.helenatownship.com website under Government, Planning Commission – Public Hearing Notice.