

Helena Township Planning Commission Minutes of February 05, 2026 Meeting

Chairman Gurr called meeting to order at 5:03

Pledge of Allegiance was made by all in attendance.

Roll call---Before Roll Call was made chairman used the prerogative of the chair to address special concerns for the meeting, calling for a motion to amend the agenda. The motion to amend the presented agenda was made to ensure progress could be made under special circumstances. The motion to amend, in the below described manner, was made by member VandenBerg and seconded by member Schilling. Motion passed unanimously. Initially, the following special concern was addressed and recommendations made:

---Chair presented resignation letter of PC member Gordy Schaffer, turned discussion of status to township Supervisor Peeples, who was present as member of the public, Supervisor Peeples introduced his appointed replacement—Rachel Ann Beswetherick.

Having a full commission, body turned temporarily to the now amended agenda.

No conflicts of interest were indicated.

Update was made of communications respecting the upcoming MSU Extension Citizen Planner series at the township Community Center and invitations extended.

There were no public comments made at first opportunity.

---At this point Chairman Gurr turned to second concern in the revised agenda under special consideration---the need for designating a new PC secretary. Chairman thanked PC member VandenBerg for her steadfast service as secretary through a very taxing two and a half years of service and expressed his appreciation for her remaining on the commission as a regularly attending member. The Chairman suggested two paths toward satisfying the pressing need for meeting the secretary's role. The first option was to accept the Chairman's willingness to serve in both roles until the April organizational meeting. The second--more preferred--option was to accept the current chairman's willingness to step down as chairman to assume secretarial role, while elevating PC member Dave Hundstad to Chairmanship. The motion was made by member Schilling, seconded by member Whipple to accept the interim transfer of authority as so described. The decision was unanimous.

At 5:21 p.m. Chairman Dave Hunstad took control of the meeting, and events returned to a more normal progression. Secretary Gurr asked for forbearance regarding his expectation that he provide advisory suggestions to the new Chairman.

--- agenda amended to include, under New Business, concern of Fire Chief Paul Fabinano, expressed through Supervisor Peeples, that the commission make note of the severity of the angle of a new driveway at a newly constructed residence. Question was made whether the PC could take a role going forward as consideration of Fire Lane Access—answer affirmative.

Approval of the minutes of the January 15, 2026 Public Hearing. Motion to approve made by member Schilling, seconded by member Whipple, approved unanimously.

There was no Old Business.

New Business as follows:

---Recreational Vehicles and trailers---Members have been reviewing examples of ordinance language from surrounding municipalities. Member Whipple cited treatments of RV's and trailers from surrounding townships and feels the PC needs to develop new language. Chairman Hunstad provided a concisely defined description to be further considered. PC expects to be able make definitive decisions at next regularly scheduled meeting. Member Whipple expressed concern PC could not reach consensus at this evening's meeting.

Community member Paul Sak was recognized by chair from Zoom at 5:32. Mr. Sak felt there were important concerns to be addressed in further discussion---question of number of RV's, length of temporary status—duration of usage, emphasis upon no rentals of RV's, and enforcement—need for personnel?

Community member Lori Mayes—via Zoom—felt the appropriate section for language should fall under Section 4.04.01. of current ordinance.

Point made by community member in attendance—described his situation as an RV owner who occupies his RV for 9-12 weeks annually in the summer while renting his primary residence and has a “grandfathering” concern feeling his situation is currently allowable.

Community member Sak—via Zoom—expressed, “he just told us it's a business—it's not permitted.”

---Adding Data Centers to Renewable Energy section of ordinance---Member Gurr expressed he felt the potentially contentious subject of future Data Centers could be managed at this point in time by amending current ordinance by providing solid definition of Data Center in glossary of definitions and inclusion of the term “Data Centers” in each ZO provision of consideration under the Renewable Energy and Battery Storage provisions of the current ordinance—Section 5.09.

Motion to do so was made at 6:09 p.m. by member Schilling, seconded by Member VandenBerg,during further discussion member Robinson expressed his support citing dire need to manage such applications. Motion approved unanimously. Notifications will be made to the adjacent municipalities and appropriate agencies and a Public Hearing on the proposed amendments will be scheduled at the earliest possible convenience.

---Complaint Form---Members have been examining administrative handling forms for alleged violations. A need has been expressed for a updated Complaint Form and a statewide search was commenced. Members will be prepared to determine the updated form at the next meeting

A Zoom participant suggested that the PC contact ERCOL-WPIT (Elk River Watershed Implementation Team) for pertinent information with respect to provisions in the ordinance.

Chairman Hunstad thanked those attending the meeting which was adjourned at 6:04.

Respectfully submitted, Jim Gurr Secretary-Helena Township Planning Commission

