

Call to Order: Chair B. Peeples called the meeting to order at 7:02 p.m. in the Governmental Meeting Room.

Pledge of Allegiance: All present participated.

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

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

Conflict of Interest: None declared.

Approval of January 08, 2026 - Helena Township Board Regular Meeting Minutes: Motion by J. Schilling, seconded by O. Leffew to approve motion to approve minutes. All in favor. None opposed. Motion carried.

Treasurer Report:

- \$907,606.76 - Beginning Balance
- \$230,655.15 - Receipts
- \$40,687.29 - Total Disbursements
- \$1,097,574.62 - Ending Bank Balance

Presentation of Bills – January Balance Sheet:

- No bills presented at this time

Antrim County Sheriff's Report: Report presented by Chairman Peeples:

- Helena Township reported 47 events in the month of January.
- Highest category of events were medical calls at 17 events for the month.

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

- Ambulance tires have been replaced.

Guest Speaker:

- Grass River Adaptive Management Plan Update Presentation by Emma Fitzgerald - Conservation Director.
- Emma will be delivering print material about Grass River for the town's gazebo and providing links for the Township website.

Communications:

- Yearly Junk Pick-up Event –Saturday, June 20, 2026. Discussed excluded items: Hazardous Chemicals, Tires, Paint, Oil, Household Trash, Liquids, Shingles, Bricks, Lumber that is over 5 feet in length.

Committee Reports-

Zoning: Reported by Chairman Peeples in absence of Zoning Administrator - Robert Logee:

- January 2026 zoning activities included 1 land use permit: Commercial building on lot N of Tennis Court-Spa/Salon/Airbnb, 6 public contacts, 1 Township Board meeting and 1 violation- building constructed without permit, violation resolution resolved.

Parks and Recreation: Report by Steve Dell:

- Torch Conservation Center requests the Township to allow their staff to distribute educational information during busy launch days at Alden Safe Harbor, including busy holidays. Material regarding Quagga and Zebra Mussel awareness will be the focus. Free chamois for boaters with the inscription *“Don’t Move a Mussel – Clean, Drain, and Dry”*.
- HTPACP’s New Pickleball Rules – Update (#1-15) – Effective March 1, 2026. Main rule change is that any Helena Tax Paying Resident qualify as a Captain. A copy of the rules may be found on the website or at the Township’s governmental meeting room.

Tennis Park Proposal – Presented by Barry Snyder:

- Barry Snyder presented a proposal to redevelop the North Lake Street basketball court area into a multi-use recreation park. The proposal includes construction of one basketball court, one tennis court, and four pickleball courts, with two of the pickleball courts designed to overlap the newly installed tennis court and existing basketball court. The plan also proposes installation of sound mitigation barriers to minimize neighborhood impact, development of approximately ten parking spaces, and removal of the upper Tennis Park tennis court, with that area to be restored to green space. Mr. Snyder noted the potential for future adjacent development, including the nearby salon, and discussed alternative uses for the current upper tennis court location, such as farmers markets, picnic space, exhibits, classes, and community gatherings. The Township Board agreed to allow further exploration of funding options and public input. A public meeting will be scheduled to gather community feedback before any formal action is considered.

Planning Commission: Report by Jim Gurr:

- A Regular meeting was held on February 05, 2026, where Gordy Schafer resigned as a Planning Commission member while Fay Vandenberg resigned as Planning Commission Secretary and assumed a member role.
- Jim Gurr stepped down as Chairman to assume the Secretary’s role, and David Hunstad accepted elevation to Chairman. Both assuming the roles until the organizational meeting in April 2026.
- Discussion about the newly installed driveway at a newly constructed home on S. East Torch Lake Drive. Planning Commission will take a role in discussion of a Fire Lane Access.
- Commission considering an RV language change in the current Zoning Ordinance. Public Hearing schedule to follow.
- Data Center definition discussion to be include in the Zoning Ordinance – Section 5.09 - Renewable Energy.
- Complaint Form will be determined at the next meeting. Committee members researching.
- Paul Sak, present by Zoom suggested ERCOL (Elk River Chain-of-Lakes Watershed Plan) with respect to provisions in the Ordinance update. Mr. Sak will forward informational packet to Clerk to be shared with Committee and recorded.

Roads Report: Reported by Chairman Peeples for absent board member - Butch Bartz:

- Road funding levels for the upcoming year have been published by Burt Thompson – Antrim County allocations to all Township’s in 2026 will be a total of \$350,000.00.
- Helena Township will receive \$14,000.00 of the 2026 road funding for township road repair.

Old Business:

- Waiting on Community Center painting schedule. The project should take 4-5 days.
- EPS is finishing the installation of LPR cameras at the Community Center. A Risk Reduction Grant is being pursued for reimbursement through MI PAR PLAN in the amount of \$4,398.45 + tax. Motion by O. Leffew and seconded by J. Schilling, motion declared adopted. Resolution #2026-2 was adopted with all present voting “yea” to pursue the grant.
- Loeb / Miller vs Helena Township. Township Attorney presented solutions. No further updates currently.

- Cemetery Project has requested survey quotes to survey and draw a map of the Cemetery.

New Business:

- Scheduling the Community Center restroom remodel project soon. We will be updating bathrooms with the new equipment currently in storage. One restroom will be closed off while the other room is under remodel. Pay close attention to signage when utilizing facilities.
- FIOA Policy will be revisited next month.
- Request for maintaining Green Street and Crystal Springs Access for fishing was denied. Other access points are present and maintained.
- MTA Principals of Governance Officials Pledge to include maintaining the highest standards and traditions of Michigan townships were signed by all members present. Pause for B. Bartz signature when present.
- Deputy Clerk Victoria Bruns should be added as a check signer to the ASB checking account with C. Rice, E. Rice and O. Leffew as co-signers. Motions made by J. Schilling to add Deputy Clerk V. Bruns to the Alden State Bank – Checking Account as an authorized check signer, seconded by C. Rice. Motion carried.
- Report on the townships dot.gov domain for email accounts and website, will be changing soon. Clerk will communicate when change occurs.
- BS&A Public Parcel Search application signed by Chair Peeples. The parcel search tool will be present on the township website and will allow residents to inquire about Helena parcel data online.
- Cyber Security Awareness – many local and nearby townships in Michigan are being targeted with phishing email scams and the potential risk of being negatively impacted by a cybercrime is heightened.

Announcements:

- Septic Tank Replacement Loan Program (SRLP) information through the EGLE and Michigan Saves was delivered to the township. If anyone needs septic tank assistance, the loan program may be an option. Find material posted at the Community Center or by calling the office to inquire.
- Antrim County Committee Service Opportunity – Victim Service’s Unit. Trained volunteers respond to accidents, house fires, and deaths in the home as support for the families and victims.

Public Comment:

- Jim Gurr spoke and thanked all the volunteers and those attending the meeting. He also thanked the board for their dedication and work that they do in their administration of all aspects of the township, and that we are all blessed to live in one of the most beautiful places in Michigan.

Motion to Pay Bills: Motion by J. Schilling, seconded by C. Rice. All in favor, none opposed, so carried.

Adjournment: Meeting was adjourned at 9:06 pm.

Submitted by-
Oryana Leffew
Helena Township Clerk
clerk@helenatownship.com
231 (331)-4643

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Supervisor Approval _____