

Helena Township Parks & Recreation Committee

Meeting Minutes – February 4, 2026

Time: 6:01 PM

Location: Township Offices

Present: Jim Gurr, Rian Wanstreet, Oryana Leffew, Barry Snyder, Steve Dell, Brian Apley

Public Present: Gretchen Loss, Dorothy Clure, Greg Zak

1. Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at **6:01 PM**.

2. Approval of Minutes (01/07/2026)

Minutes from the January 7, 2026 meeting were reviewed and **approved as presented**.

3. Information from Monthly Helena Township Meeting

Jim and Rian attended the Township meeting and reported on a strategic shift: the committee will focus on the pickleball court project rather than the ballfield for 2026 work, grants, and fundraising.

Jim, Oryana, Rian, Barry, and Victoria have been working with Schwannecke Sports Courts to obtain a quote and pursue grants due April 1.

4. Public Comment

No public comment at this time. Public comments were taken during item 7.

OLD BUSINESS

5. Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) Updates

No new updates reported.

6. 2026–2030 Recreation & Natural Resource Conservation Plan (Five-Year Plan)

The township printer/collateral/binder can print the DNR plan on demand. One copy has been placed in the library.

7. DNR Grant Application – Sports Court Project

With the committee's shift in focus to the courts, Rian, Barry, Jim, and Oryana presented a plan and quote for replacement of the tennis courts. The project includes a pickleball court, tennis court, and basketball court.

Total project cost: \$245,600. The quote includes a project portfolio.

Rian provided a grant update: The grant application is due in April. First round decisions are expected in September, followed by an engineering study and bidding process. The committee can receive 20% reimbursement on engineering costs but will need to obtain two additional bids. Township approval is required for the 25% grant match, and a public meeting must be held.

Barry shared that the team will work on fundraising efforts.

Public Comment:

- **Dorothy Clure** appreciated the effort on the grant application. She asked about the cost of the green space and how long teardown would take (less than a week).
- **Gretchen Loss** appreciated the effort and suggested branding the facility as a "sports court" rather than any sport-specific designation.

Motion: Jim motioned to submit this plan and request the Township ask the public to submit comments. **Motion carried.**

8. Ball Park Project Update

Gordy is returning in Spring. Matching pledges are set up, and the team will apply to MEDC for grants. The goal is to complete the lakefront improvements.

It was asked if the committee had received an MOU from Sue Judson regarding the 50-foot natural features buffer, as her permission is required. Oryana sent Sue an MOU; Sue requested changes, which were made and sent back.

NEW BUSINESS

9. Story Walk for Library

Oryana provided a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) to the library to sign, which will avoid the need for future annual approvals.

10. Tennis Net and Pickleball Frame Replacement

Oryana sent Butch vendor information for replacement equipment. The old equipment was bent due to being left out during rentals.

11. Request from Nancy Brown – Torch Lake Conservation Center

Torch Lake Conservation Center requested authorization to distribute cleaning cloths and mussel education information at the park. **Request approved.**

12. Helena Township Pickleball Advisory Committee (HTPAC) – Proposed Rules

The Pickleball Committee's proposed rules were shared and discussed. There was discussion regarding the exclusion of renters from certain provisions.

Motion to approve the proposed rules passed 3–2.

Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned.