

Helena Township Board of Trustees - Regular Meeting Minutes
8751 Helena Road, Alden, Michigan 49612 – Governmental Meeting Room

CC Butch Peeples – Supervisor Oryana Leffew – Clerk Catherine Rice – Treasurer
Butch Bartz – Trustee Jim Schilling – Trustee
Deputy Clerk – Victoria Bruns Deputy Treasurer – Ernie Rice

Thursday, April 9, 2026 @ 7:00 pm

1. Call to Order: Chair B. Peeples called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. in the Governmental Meeting Room at the Helena Township Community Center.

2. Pledge of Allegiance: All present participated.

Roll Call: Present – B. Peeples, O. Leffew, C. Rice, B. Bartz, J. Schilling. Absent – None.

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

4. Conflicts of Interest: None declared.

5. Public Comment: A resident reported that the cemetery flag light had come down following a recent storm. The light was recovered and will be reinstalled; the fixture still functions. Board members noted that several trees on Township property also need attention following the spring storms.

6. Approval of Minutes – March 12, 2026 Helena Township Board Regular Meeting: Motion by J. Schilling, seconded by C. Rice to approve minutes. All in favor. None opposed. Motion carried.

7. Treasurer Report:

\$1,346,180.01 – Beginning Balance

\$28,530.36 – Receipts

\$69,816.14 – Total Disbursements

Motion by J. Schilling, seconded by C. Rice to approve the Treasurer Report. All in favor. None opposed. Motion carried.

8. Presentation of Bills:

March 2026 disbursements totaled \$44,247.34.

March 2026 Payroll disbursements: \$16,988.45.

April 1–9, 2026 expenditures presented totaling \$8,580.35.

9. Fire Chief / Sheriff / County Commissioner / TAA Reports-

- a. **South Torch Lake Fire & Rescue – Report by Fire Chief P. Fabiano:** 21 calls in March (14 EMS); YTD 62 (2026) vs 55 (2025). Mutual aid responses: structure fire and MVC (Clearwater Twp), possible ice rescue (Clearwater Twp), chimney fire (Bellaire Fire District). T. Shephard joined the department effective 04/01/2026. Antrim County will host a 4-month Firefighter I & II certification class in Sept/Oct 2026; both new hires (T. Shephard and S. Dunn) have expressed interest. Equipment and Vehicles: nothing new to report.
- b. **Antrim County Sheriff's Department:** Report to be provided at the next regular meeting. 54 total calls.
- c. **Antrim County Commissioner – Report by Commissioner T. VanAlstine:** County Board approved the use of 2% grant funds from the Grand Traverse Band for four (4) new FLOCK camera systems. Sheriff's Department is coordinating with the townships on placement locations. Meadowbrook Kids' Fish Day is scheduled for April 25, 2026. The Conservation Club fundraises purchasing fish (approximately \$6,000) following the loss of the prior free supply program. Antrim Conservation District: The Conservation District board voted at a special meeting to terminate Melissa Zelle's agreement. Mike Mouthaan-Weatherwax is serving as interim director while continuing his role as County Forester.

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Antrim County Public Safety Center: Project remains under the \$27 million cap (prior \$33M estimate from EMR is not anticipated). Christman Company will be hired as construction management firm in May. Soil borings have been completed; results pending. The existing jail will remain in place until the new facility is built, then demolished as part of the capital improvement plan.

- d. **Township Ambulance Authority (TAA) – Report by Mike Robinson:** Employee health insurance carrier has been changed. The annual audit is in-progress.

10. Speaker – Paul Delange (HTHS / Depot Museum):

P. Delange presented a proposal to begin replacing windows at the Helena Township Historical Depot Museum, one of the Township's oldest assets. Approximately 9 windows are rotted, primarily on the west side where sun and weather exposure is greatest. Estimated cost is approximately \$2,000 per installed window.

Two bids were received, both within the same range. The proposal is to complete the west-side windows this year and remaining windows in the future year to spread the expense.

Mr. Delange also presented a separate quote of approximately \$1,500 per side from a Traverse City canvas company for retractable clear roll-up panels covering the two portico openings (approx. 18 ft × 10 ft each).

Motion by O. Leffew, seconded by C. Rice to approve replacement of the Depot windows. All in favor. None opposed. Motion carried.

MOU follow-up: Supervisor B. Peeples and P. Delange agreed to meet the week of April 14 to discuss the HTHS – Depot Museum MOU.

11. Communications:

Agenda Request Deadline: Agenda requests are now due on the second Tuesday by 5:00 PM. Board members and presenters are asked to submit items for the agenda no later than the Tuesday prior to each meeting, to Supervisor Peeples for placement on the agenda.

12. Committee Reports:

Zoning – R. Logee: Zoning Administrator submitted his report. A new business (Legacy Sports) is preparing to occupy the former sports shop building adjacent to the old bank and has advertised wakeboats, tri-hull pontoons, and rental services. Concerns were raised regarding boat storage, launching, and dock placement. Rental boats will not be permitted to use Township docks; the operator has indicated they will use alternate launches (e.g., Gilroy's). The Board will continue to monitor compliance with applicable zoning and water-use ordinances.

Parks and Recreation – S. Dell: A Community Engagement Meeting is scheduled for May 6, 2026 at 7:00 PM in the Community Center to receive public input on the future of Tennis Court Park and the proposal to relocate the tennis and pickleball courts to the lower level.

S. Dell presented a proposal from Tennis Courts Unlimited for resurfacing the existing tennis courts at \$26,900, with an additional contingency of \$3,500 if needed once on-site evaluation occurs.

An alternative full redevelopment estimate from Schwannecke Sport Courts totals approximately \$245,600 for two new pickleball courts, a new tennis court, and a refinished basketball court (with an option to add a third pickleball court for an additional \$10,800).

The Board agreed to postpone a decision until after the May 6, 2026 community engagement meeting to allow for public input and exploration of potential donations or grant funding.

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Planning Commission – J. Gurr: The Planning Commission continues work on zoning language of data centers within the existing renewable energy and battery storage language.

Citizen Planner Program: Helena Township will host the 2026 MSU Extension Citizen Planner training course. 28 participants are enrolled. Course begins April 14, 2026.

Roads – B. Bartz: Burt Thompson, P.E., has retired from the Antrim County Road Commission as Engineer-Manager; Allen Musall has been appointed as the new Engineer-Manager. A meeting for all township officials is scheduled at the Antrim County Road Commission on May 7, 2026 at 7:00 PM; Senator John Damoose and other officials are expected to attend.

Tar and chip projects authorized last year are scheduled to be completed in June 2026.

Additional roads recommended for evaluation include sections of Crystal Springs Road, Porchlight Drive, and Lake Street (South of Helena). Concerns were raised regarding curb work along the church property when the main road is resurfaced.

13. Old Business:

Miller vs. Helena Township Agreement: A written agreement has been executed through both parties' attorneys. The Millers will be relocating the disputed fence (placed approximately 7 feet onto Township property at the south end of the Depot) back to the proper property line, at their expense, weather permitting in May 2026.

Cemetery Project – Drone Scheduled 4/23–4/24: TriMedia drone survey scheduled for April 23–24, 2026. Work will include perimeter survey, ground penetrating radar (GPR), and mapping. Target completion is end of summer 2026, with a QR-code lookup system planned for public use.

Public Access / Alleyway Surveys – Researching: Research is underway with Ferrier Surveying and the Chamberlain firm to locate proper survey records. Issues have arisen on Terrace Street where rental/Airbnb users were parking and placing furniture and fire pits in the public alley.

Scheduling Bathroom Remodel – Partitions: Materials (tiles) are on-site. Work will proceed with one bathroom at a time, with the second bathroom converted to unisex use during construction to minimize disruption.

BS&A Migration: Following multiple demonstrations and negotiations, the migration process will begin immediately. BS&A (.net) currently handles the Township's tax assessing and collection; the migration would bring cloud based accounts payable, payroll, and reporting onto the BS&A cloud platform, replacing the existing QuickBooks-based workflow. Fiscal year-end (June) is the target conversion period; full go-live is approximately 11–12 months following contracting. Motion by J. Schilling, seconded by C. Rice to approve the BS&A migration. All in favor. None opposed. Motion carried.

14. New Business:

Rental Rules and Fee Schedule Update: A revised Rental Rules and Fee Schedule was presented covering the Community Center, Depot Park, Tennis Court Park Pavilion, and Ball Park. Resident pricing remains unchanged; non-resident pricing is increased by 25%. The Board confirmed that residency may be established by Township property ownership (taxpayer) or by lawful residence within the Township (including renters with a Helena Township address on driver's license). Board members decided to review rental rules and fee schedule and discuss further.

IT Firm Bid Packet Summary: Three vendors were evaluated. Current provider 186 Communications (Rapid City) at \$180/month presents security and infrastructure-control concerns. BlackRock Technologies

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(Ann Arbor) was not recommended due to a \$1,250/month rate, \$3,500 setup, and a 3-year lock-in. Anavon Technology Group (Traverse City) is recommended at \$185/month with a one-time setup of \$2,417.89 (hardware, installation, and first month), month-to-month terms, full security suite (firewall, antivirus, ransomware protection, cloud backup), and BS&A script compatibility for a clean handoff. Anavon will also assist with the Township's .gov domain setup. Motion by J. Schilling, seconded by C. Rice to approve Anavon Technology Group as Helena Township's managed IT provider, approve a \$185.00/month operating budget line item, and authorize the one-time setup expenditure of \$2,417.89. All in favor. None opposed. Motion carried.

Internal Process Reviews – Maner Costerisan: An engagement with Maner Costerisan was presented for internal process review, segregation of duties, internal controls, and a Chart of Accounts restructure aligned with the State of Michigan Uniform Chart of Accounts. Estimated cost is approximately \$25,000 at \$205–\$440 per hour. The engagement is referenced by the Michigan Townships Association as a recommended provider. Motion by J. Schilling, seconded by C. Rice to approve the Maner Costerisan internal process review engagement. All in favor. None opposed. Motion carried.

ARPA, Audit Prep, Budget Prep, Restructure COA: Total ARPA funds received total \$103,409, of which approximately \$76,000 remains unallocated as of this meeting. Audit preparation, FY budget preparation, and the Chart of Accounts restructure are being coordinated with the Maner Costerisan.

GLE Co-op Franchise Resolution # 04092026: A 30-year franchise resolution for Great Lakes Energy Cooperative was presented, authorizing GLE to cross Township-owned property when running utility lines. Motion by J. Schilling, seconded by C. Rice to approve the GLE Co-op 30-Year Franchise Resolution. All in favor. None opposed. Motion carried. **Resolution # 04092026**

Parking Lot Striping – State Grant: Two quotes have been received for striping the Community Center parking lot, including ADA-accessible spaces. Approximate cost is \$2,000 which will be submitted to the State of Michigan as a qualifying ADA expense for reimbursement under the state ADA grant program.

Doors – Warranty & Quotes – ADA Grant: Bids are pending for ADA-accessible upgrades to the Community Center front doors, including emergency push bars and ADA push-button entry. The gym doors continue to experience closure issues and have been temporarily repaired. Upgrades will be submitted for ADA grant reimbursement.

PTAF Resolution #040926 # 040926.1 was presented terminating the prior practice of paying a portion of the Property Tax Administration Fee (PTAF) as personal compensation to the Township Treasurer. Under the resolution, the affected percentage shall instead be deposited into the Township's tax assessment and collection account to support expenses related to tax notices and collection operations and shall not be distributed to any individual. Motion by B. Peeples, seconded by O. Leffew to approve Resolution #040926.1. Roll call vote: B. Peeples – Yes, O. Leffew – Yes, C. Rice – Yes, J. Schilling – Yes, B. Bartz – Yes, 5 Aye, 0 Nay. **Resolution # 040926 # 040926.1** adopted.

ARPA Funds Allocation: Final allocation of remaining ARPA funds must be reported to the Department of Treasury by the end of April, with all funds spent by year-end. Remaining funds (~\$76,000) were allocated to: (1) BS&A migration, (2) IT infrastructure (~\$2,000), (3) Anavon Technology Group IT engagement, (4) Community Center ADA-compliant door upgrades, and (5) Maner Costerisan internal process review. Motion by J. Schilling, seconded by C. Rice to approve the ARPA funds allocation as presented. All in favor. None opposed. Motion carried.

15. Announcements:

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Community Engagement Gathering: April 22, 2026 at 7:00 PM at the Helena Township Community Center. Local organizations, businesses, and community leaders are invited to share plans for summer 2026 and beyond.

MSU Course Starts: April 14, 2026; Tuesdays, 6:00–9:00 PM. MSU Extension Citizen Planner training course.

FBI Active Shooter Training: April 29, 2026 at 10:00 AM at Helena Township Community Center. Open to invited participants including township officials, election workers, local churches, the Village Market, and the bank.

16. Public Comment: A resident inquired about the upcoming TAA contract renewal cycle. The Board confirmed the current TAA contract status will be reviewed and reported at a future meeting.

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

18. Adjournment: Meeting was adjourned at approximately 8:41 p.m.

Recorded and submitted by:
Oryana Leffew – Helena Township Clerk
clerk@helenatownship.com

Supervisor Approval _____
Published on Township website _____
Posted on Township Bulletin Board _____
Published in Antrim Review _____

Clerk Seal