

Helena Township Board Meeting Minutes

May 14, 2026, 7:00 PM

8751 Helena Road, Alden, MI 49612

Helena Township Minutes are posted at www.helenatownshipmichigan.gov

1. Call to Order: In the absence of Supervisor C. Peeples, Clerk O. Leffew presided and called the meeting to order at 7:00 PM.

2. Pledge of Allegiance: The Pledge of Allegiance was recited. All in attendance participated.

3. Roll Call:

Present: **O. Leffew (Clerk), C. Rice (Treasurer), J. Schilling (Trustee)**

Absent: **C. Peeples (Supervisor), B. Bartz (Trustee)**

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

5. Conflicts of Interest: None declared.

6. Public Comment (3-minute limit): No public comment was offered at the opening of the meeting.

7. Approval of Previous Minutes: Motion to approve April 9, 2026, Helena Township Board of Trustees Regular Meeting Minutes as presented. Motion by J. Schilling, seconded by C. Rice to approve minutes. All in favor. None opposed. Motion carried.

8. Treasurer Report:

Treasurer C. Rice presented the Treasurer's Report for April 2026:

- **Beginning Balance:** \$1,304,894.23
- **Total Receipts:** \$142,818.85
- **Total Disbursements:** \$70,497.56 (General Fund \$61,677.80; Cemetery \$608.48; Building \$8,211.28)
- **Bank Balance as of April 30, 2026:** \$1,377,215.52

Motion by J. Schilling, seconded by O. Leffew to accept the Treasurer's Report as presented. All in favor. None opposed. Motion carried.

9. Presentation of Bills: Total bills presented for payment: \$70,497.56 (April). May 1–May 14 disbursements to date: \$14,277.39.

10. Reports:

a. Fire Chief Report: Fire Chief reported that in April the Department responded to 20 calls for service, 13 of which were EMS-related. Automatic mutual-aid runs included three (3) responses to Bellaire structure fires and one response to a grass fire. One flood-related call was handled on Smiley/Valley Road during the heavy rains; the water receded without further action required. Construction at the fire station will continue after May 15 the existing retaining wall will be removed and the grade re-feathered away from the building. Interior walls will be framed in the basement to create sleeping quarters for EMS personnel.

b. Sheriff's Report: Sheriff Hoch reported 57 calls for service in Helena Township during April 2026 (compared to 34 calls in April 2025). Call categories included 2 911 hang-ups, 1 alarm, 2

animal control, 2 civil/non-criminal, 1 conservation/DNR, 1 driving complaint, 1 fire alarm, 1 fire system, 1 follow-up investigation, 3 fraud complaints, 3 general assist, 5 hazardous condition, 1 malicious destruction of property, 1 marine patrol complaint, 11 medical calls, 1 miscellaneous, 3 personal injury crashes, 1 property found/lost, 6 traffic stops, and 1 wellness check. Personnel: Two officers are scheduled to graduate from the Police Academy on Saturday, May 16, 2026. Two additional officers completed the refresher course and are in field training. The Department is at full strength with 23 sworn officers for Antrim County for the first time in roughly 20 years. Central Dispatch has hired a new dispatcher who will start in approximately three weeks. The Sheriff announced a new anonymous tip line; cards with the tip-line number were left at the Township Hall. The Sheriff confirmed that "Zeke" will attend a future Board meeting.

c. TAA (Township Ambulance Authority): TAA representative reported that the language for the renewal of the ambulance millage has been submitted to the County in time for the August 2026 ballot. No changes from the prior millage; it is a straight renewal.

11. Guest Speakers — Alden Days Kickoff Event Proposal:

Kerry Q. and Chanler M. of Harvey's Trading Co., representing DABA, presented a proposal to kick off Alden Days on Friday, July 24, 2026, with live music, food trucks, and a beer tent in collaboration with Short's Brewing Company.

The presenters outlined plans for operations, security, general and liquor liability insurance, MLCC special-event licensing, and the Township's food-truck application. Sheriff Hoch has committed one to two officers on-site for the duration of the event, and DABA will also retain a private security team. Attendance is projected at 150–200 in a 30×60 or 30×50 tent. The same tent will host the kickoff Friday evening and then be reconfigured overnight for Saturday's Alden Days events with the Fire Department, so that by Saturday morning no trace of the prior evening's beer tent remains.

Board and audience discussion covered three items: parking: the church lot is unavailable that weekend due to the Men's Club Rummage Sale, and alternative sites including the Mill House and the lot across from the Fire Department were proposed; the State 500-foot church-distance requirement for MLCC special-event licensure; the presenters will obtain a church sign-off at the Tuesday Administrative Council meeting; and the overlap with Saturday's parade.

Motion by J. Schilling, seconded by C. Rice to approve the Alden Days Kickoff Event proposal and authorize DABA to move forward with planning and permitting. All in favor. None opposed. Motion carried.

12. Communications:

a. Memorial Day Parade: Update presented on the Memorial Day Parade scheduled for Sunday, May 25, 2026 at 1:00 AM, with line-up at the Community Center at 12:30 PM. Fourteen (14) entries are currently registered. Earl Page (Korean War veteran, oldest veteran in the community) and Darlene Page will be honored during the parade. The Board concurred with a proposal to honor Mr. Page with a plaque or similar recognition; V. Bruns (Deputy Clerk) will coordinate the design.

13. Committee Reports:

a. Zoning Report: Zoning Administrator reported on April permits, including a deck/patio drive at the lakeside, a sign for Legacy Water Sports at the former Outfitters location, and a Cedar Shores patio. Two (2) land divisions were processed in April. Approximately 12 general zoning inquiries (setbacks, allowable uses) were handled. The next Zoning Board of Appeals meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, June 4, 2026, with one garage setback variance request on the agenda. The Zoning Administrator confirmed intent to transition out of the position; an advertisement for a successor will be placed (letter of interest and resume to be submitted) with an approximate one-year transition window.

b. Parks & Recreation Report: S. Dell reported on May 6, 2026, community forum at Tennis Court Park regarding the three options for the tennis/pickleball courts. Approximately 40 of 55 chairs were filled; the forum was well attended and well received. S. Dell thanked Brian, Barry, Rian, and Oryana for their work organizing the event. Parks & Rec will meet on June 3, 2026, to review the public input; a recommendation will be brought to the Board in June. S. Dell noted that the current tennis surface is not safe to play tennis on, though it is acceptable for pickleball. Because the full Board was not present, no decision was made tonight; the Board discussed calling a special meeting once Supervisor C. Peeples and Trustee B. Bartz are available. T. Comfort has offered to clean and maintain the courts at no cost in the interim. Discussion also addressed pickleball usage and non-resident participation. The Pickleball Advisory Committee (seven members) will be convened to review the membership/pay-ahead reservation model.

c. Ballpark: No updates reported.

d. Planning Commission Report: Planning Commission Chair D. Hunstad reported on Commission activities. Three (3) Planning Commission members are enrolled in the six (6) week Citizen Planner education program hosted at the Township Hall. The Commission is also proposing a return to monthly meetings, an approved by-law update to follow. Other Commission priorities include updating zoning ordinance definitions; advancing positioning on data centers (a recent public open hearing was held). J. Gurr presented the current iteration of Section 5.02.02 (Waterfront/Shoreline Use), reflecting two changes recommended by Township Counsel since the March draft: removal of erroneous attorney attribution language and removal of specific property citations. The amended ordinance establishes a cap of boats per lake frontage, defines marinas (prohibited in residential districts on the shorelines), and adds definitions for shore stations, powered watercraft, mooring, private waterfront access, and shoreline protection area ("Greenbelt").

Motion by J. Schilling, seconded by C. Rice to approve the amended Section 5.02.02 Waterfront/Shoreline Use ordinance as presented. All in favor. None opposed. Motion carried.

e. Roads Report: Clerk Leffew reported on the recent Antrim County Road Commission meeting. Discussion topics included the marijuana excise tax revenue (which must replenish state-level funds before reaching municipalities), road grant programs, ongoing litigation, and the 2026–2028 paving schedule: 2026 includes Adams Road, C-42, with Alden Highway county-line to Crystal Springs in 2027 and Alden Highway and Comfort Road in 2028. Additional projects include 29 Old State Road and county-wide pavement marking.

14. Old Business:

a. Alden Depot Museum Windows: The Board continues to move forward with the purchase and installation of the Depot Museum windows. The west side is planned for installation this year, with the remaining side scheduled for 2027.

b. Loeb v. Helena Township: Clerk O. Leffew reported correspondence received from Township Counsel regarding the gazebo/deck reconstruction at the Loeb property. Counsel's review confirmed the platform was completely removed and rebuilt — not maintained on the original footprint as represented — and no permits were sought. Counsel recommended issuance of enforcement tickets. Clerk Leffew noted that our Township Zoning Ordinance is only as good as the enforcement, the Planning Commission Chair agreed with the Clerk's statement.

Motion by J. Schilling, seconded by C. Rice to direct Township staff and Counsel to enforce the zoning ordinance as written at the Loeb property: a letter of directive shall be sent requiring compliance within a stated period, after which weekly fines shall accrue, and the structure shall be removed or relocated to come into compliance with permitting requirements. Township Attorney fees and permit fees shall be the financial responsibility of the property owners. All in favor. None opposed. Motion carried.

Clerk O. Leffew will coordinate with the Zoning Administrator and legal counsel on enforcement follow-through.

c. Cemetery Project Update: Clerk O. Leffew reported following a conversation with Ken. (Trimedia) earlier in the day: the drone flight is complete, and the aerial photo is processed; ground-penetrating radar is complete with all locations captured by GPS; QC of the GPR data is in progress. Pink flags have been left on the ground at locations of potential unmarked burials for visual reference and may be removed at the Township's discretion (all coordinates are recorded). Remaining work includes integrating the GPR data into the mapping, digitizing the map, and integrating cemetery records. Final results will be published on the Township website.

15. New Business:

a. Resolution #05142026A — FOIA Coordinator Designation: Clerk O. Leffew explained that Freedom of Information Act coordination is not a statutory duty of the Clerk, and that to bill requesters and recover costs properly the Township must formally designate a FOIA Coordinator. The proposed resolution designates the Township Clerk as the FOIA Coordinator for Helena Township and the Deputy Clerk as the alternate FOIA Coordinator to act in the Clerk's absence. The fee schedule will be updated and re-posted.

Motion by J. Schilling, seconded by C. Rice to adopt Resolution #05142026A designating the Township Clerk as Helena Township's FOIA Coordinator and the Deputy Clerk as alternate FOIA Coordinator.

Roll-call vote:

C. Peeples (Supervisor) ABSENT
O. Leffew (Clerk) Yes
C. Rice (Treasurer) Yes
J. Schilling (Trustee) Yes
B. Bartz (Trustee) ABSENT

Vote: 3 ayes, 0 nays, 0 abstaining, 2 absent. Resolution #05142026A is adopted.

b. Resolution #05142026B — Private Road Name "Walking Wilbur Way": D. Whipple requested approval of the private road name "Walking Wilbur Way" to serve Parcel No. 05-08-033-020-51. Antrim County 911 and Antrim County Administration have approved the name. The Resolution provides that the Helena Township Board of Trustees approves the private road name "Walking Wilbur Way" and that the resolution takes effect immediately.

Motion by C. Rice, seconded by J. Schilling to adopt Resolution #05142026B approving the private road name "Walking Wilbur Way" for Parcel No. 05-08-033-020-51.

Roll-call vote:

C. Peeples (Supervisor) ABSENT
O. Leffew (Clerk) Yes
C. Rice (Treasurer) Yes
J. Schilling (Trustee) Yes
B. Bartz (Trustee) ABSENT

Vote: 3 ayes, 0 nays, 0 abstaining, 2 absent. Resolution #05142026B is adopted. Clerk O. Leffew will forward the resolution to Antrim County Equalization.

c. Temporary Office Assistant: Clerk O. Leffew requested authorization to advertise and hire a temporary office assistant to support digitization, scanning, and research of historical resolutions, ordinances, and Township records — a continuation of the gap-filling work begun by the previous

administration and reiterated with the web developer. Proposed terms: approximately four (4) months in duration, 25–30 hours per week, at \$20–\$25 per hour, charged to the Clerk's line in the General Fund. Board consensus has been reached to advertise the position. Advertisements will be placed in the Antrim Review.

16. Announcements:

a.: Au Sable Institute will host a native species gardening event with the Rapid City Elementary students at the Alden Depot Museum on May 27, 2026.

b.: Non-Profit Links Page: O. Leffew is compiling a non-profit links page for the Township website. Approximately 51 non-profits serving the greater Alden area have been identified so far. Volunteer commitment language will be added to encourage one-time/short-term volunteers.

c.: Community Engagement Meeting Results: Top three issues identified via comment cards were (1) zoning and land use, (2) short-term rentals, and (3) water quality.

d.: Antrim County Firefighters Association Pancake Breakfast Fundraiser, Saturday, May 23, 2026, 8:00 AM–12:00 PM.

17. Motion to Pay Bills: Motion to pay the bills in the amount of \$70,497.56 (April) plus current May expenditures through May 14 of \$14,277.39. Motion by J. Schilling, seconded by C. Rice to approve payment of the bills. All in favor. None opposed. Motion carried.

18. Adjournment: Motion by O. Leffew to adjourn. Meeting adjourned at 8:37 PM.

Recorded & Submitted by: Oryana Leffew, Helena Township Clerk

8751 Helena Road, Alden, MI 49612 | clerk@helenatownshipmichigan.gov

Posted on Township website: _____

Posted on Township bulletin board: _____

Submitted to Antrim Review (synopsis): _____

Supervisor Approval: _____ Date: _____