

Helena Township Planning Commission Meeting Minutes

July 2, 2026, 7:00 PM
8751 Helena Road, Alden, MI 49612
Governmental Meeting Room

Helena Township Minutes are posted at www.helenatownshipmichigan.gov

Meeting called to order at 7:00 p.m., followed by the Pledge of Allegiance. A quorum was present.

Members present: D. Hunstad, J. Gurr, R. Byron, J. Schilling. One seat remains vacant pending appointment.

Absent: D. Whipple, and F. VandenBerg

Conflict of Interest: None declared.

Oath of Office: Deferred — Supervisor Peebles was not present to administer the oath to the incoming member.

Approval of Agenda: Motion to amend the agenda to add “Quiet Hours” under Old Business; supported and approved. Agenda approved as amended.

Approval of Minutes (June 4, 2026): Approved as corrected, with the following amendments: (1) a reference to the “July” Board of Trustees meeting corrected to “June”; (2) the effective date of Zoning Ordinance 5.02.02 (shoreline/boats & docks) corrected from June 19, 2026, to June 5, 2026 (published May 28, 2026; effective 8 business days after publication per the affidavit); and (3) clarification that the website was not experiencing a “glitch”, the .gov migration is active.

Communications: (1) The Michigan Association of Planning distributed a special replacement edition, “What You Need to Know About Data Centers,” copies provided to each member. (2) Notice that the City of Traverse City will hold a meeting on July 8, 2026, at 7:00 p.m. regarding a possible data center in the southwest area near Gordon/Green Lake.

Public Comment: Residents discussed the proposed “quiet hours.” Points raised: park/public-access hours already end at 11:00 p.m., so a consistent 11:00 p.m. standard may be simplest; a separate quiet time for short-term rentals vs. downtown/other areas would be hard to apply fairly; and the Commission was encouraged to consider a broader nuisance ordinance (addressing noise and light / dark-sky) rather than only a quiet-time provision.

Zoning Administrator Report (Bob Logee, absent — written report): For June: 9 land use permits, 5 field checks, 1 attorney contact, 1 Planning Commission meeting, 15 contacts with the public/landowners, and 2 ZBA/Township Board meetings.

Old Business

Definitions: Ongoing cleanup of ordinance definitions continues; R. Byron is working with F. VandenBerg on the review.

Data Centers: The data-center definition was approved at the June meeting. MAP materials were distributed. The recommended approach is to fold data centers into the existing renewable-energy section (approx. §509 / 5.09) wherever applicable — using the same setbacks, decommissioning and review conditions — rather than drafting a wholly new section. Draft language (from the May public hearing packet) needs updating and is not ready to forward; the Commission intends to send the Board one combined package. Members to review the highlighted draft and MAP edition and bring suggestions back.

Website / .gov Email: The Township website is active and the new .gov domain went live on/about July 1. Old and new addresses will run in parallel, with auto-forwarding; the prior .gov must be returned to the federal

government by mid-August, and the .com will phase out. Consensus: publish a public notice of the transition but do NOT publish individual email addresses in the newspaper (phishing/spam concern); contact is via hidden web forms on the site.

Complaint / Concern Form: Test submissions were completed successfully; the form logs activity with the recorder and routes to the party responsible. Moving forward for deployment on the website.

Onboarding: Left on the agenda pending appointment of the seventh member; the Commission is currently operating with six members (risking 3–3 ties).

Quiet Hours: Discussed (see Public Comment). No ordinance action taken. Direction: maintain consistency with the 6 a.m.–11 p.m. public-access hours; the Chair will follow up with Supervisor Peeples on whether further complaints warrant action.

New Business

New Member: No appointment yet; awaiting Supervisor Peeples' selection.

Fire / Emergency-Access Ordinance: Raised previously by Supervisor Peeples regarding a home the fire department cannot physically reach. The Chair met with (retiring) Fire Chief Paul Fabiano, who provided a fire-access ordinance from Bloomfield Township, MI as a possible model. Incoming Fire Chief Jesse Lane will be consulted for input before proceeding.

Blight / Enforcement: The Township's 1998 nuisance ordinance is reportedly unenforceable. The Township attorney (Bzdok) has drafted a municipal civil-infracton ordinance to be sent to the Planning Commission for review; the civil-infracton enforcement process is already part of the ordinance. The item will be reviewed and reported at the next meeting.

Staggered Term Schedule: A Planning Commission staggered-term schedule (tracing membership back to J. Swan) and supporting documents were distributed. Going forward, new appointees will be slotted so that term-expiration dates (June 30) remain fixed, and each appointment will be recorded in the minutes by name, date, and term. A document-scanning project is underway (office assistant A. Stewart) to make resolutions and ordinances searchable on the website.

Announcements

Concert: Marshall [band] will perform at the Village Center on July 14, 2026, 7:00–9:00 p.m.

Next Regular Meeting: Thursday, August 6, 2026, at 7:00 p.m.

Adjournment: The Chair adjourned the meeting at 7:43 p.m.

Helena Township Planning Commission Secretary, J. Gurr

Helena Township Recording Secretary Oryana Leffew

Helena Township Planning Commission Meeting Minutes Approved on 8/06/2026 OL