

Helena Township Board Meeting Minutes

July 9, 2026, 7:00 PM

8751 Helena Road, Alden, MI 49612

Helena Township Minutes are posted at www.helenatownshipmichigan.gov

1. Call to Order: Supervisor C. Peeples called the meeting to order at 7:00 PM.

2. Pledge of Allegiance: Recited.

3. Roll Call:

Present: C. Peeples, O. Leffew, C. Rice, B. Bartz, J. Schilling.

Absent: None.

4. Approval of Agenda: **Motion** by J. Schilling, seconded by C. Rice to approve the agenda as presented. All in favor. **Motion carried.**

5. Conflicts of Interest: None declared.

6. Public Comment (3-min limit):

- a. J. Houserman (Antrim County Equalization Director) addressed the Board during public comment regarding the BS&A cloud assessing and tax platform. In her comments, Ms. Houserman shared her view that the platform is still under active development, that additional training would benefit Township staff, and recommended the Board consider reversing or delaying the transition. Board members noted the Township's continued commitment to the BS&A cloud platform, ongoing coordination with BS&A on implementation, and the training and support already in place for the Township Treasurer and Township Assessor. The Board thanked Ms. Houserman for her input. No Board action was taken.
- b. D. Dewey (Paige Road) reported multiple safety and maintenance issues at the Paige Road Torch Lake access: loose railings and screws, splintered and missing boards, the last step into the lake washed out again this season, gravel washed down from the road, and no pet-waste bag dispenser. Ms. Dewey requested repairs and a dispenser similar to those at other access points.
- c. B. Wiedemeyer (Lakeside Drive) requested Board action on short-term rental (VRBO/Airbnb) regulations, citing loss of quiet enjoyment of adjacent property. Mr. Wiedemeyer also requested information regarding documents allegedly destroyed by a prior Township official. Supervisor Peeples offered to follow up personally.
- d. Additional public comment was offered regarding pet waste, wayfinding at other public accesses, and community events.

7. Approval of Minutes: One correction noted to Item 15.f (Library Lease Renewal) of June 11, 2026, minutes: the library rent was recorded with the decimal in the wrong location. The lease is not a per-square-foot amount; the correct monthly rent for the 2026–2027 lease year is \$1,464.71. **Motion** by J. Schilling, seconded by C. Rice to approve June 11, 2026, minutes as corrected. All in favor. **Motion carried.**

8. Treasurer Report:

Treasurer C. Rice presented the June 2026 report:

- Beginning Balance (6/1/2026): \$1,347,203.53
- Total Receipts: \$32,162.39
- Total Disbursements: \$57,764.41 (General \$45,841.41; Cemetery \$1,659.80; Building \$10,263.20)
- Ending Balance (6/30/2026): \$1,321,601.51

Motion by J. Schilling, seconded by C. Rice to accept the Treasurer's Report. All in favor. **Motion carried.**

9. Presentation of Bills: June 2026 disbursements: \$57,764.41.

10. Reports:

- a. **STLFR Fire Chief (J. Lane — new Fire Chief):** New Fire Chief Jesse Lane presented. South Torch Lake Fire & Rescue responded to twenty-eight (28) calls in June (YTD 134 vs. 123 in 2025) and twelve (12) hours of training. Twenty-four (24) calls since July 1. The retaining wall project begins next week. The Department has procured an enclosed trailer to serve as a special-operations trailer (water rescue, ballistic vests, traffic control, trauma supplies, search and rescue). VPro deployment scheduled July 22. The Board welcomed Chief Lane.
- b. **Sheriff's Office (Undersheriff Douglas):** Sheriff K. Hoch was not in attendance; Undersheriff Douglas presented. Seventy-one (71) incidents in Helena Township for June: 4 animal-control complaints, 1 breaking and entering, 3 cardiac, 5 hazardous conditions (weather-related), 5 marine stops, 8 medical assists, 2 noise complaints, 3 lost/found property, 6 traffic stops, 3 water rescues, and 3 wellness checks. Four (4) deputies are currently in field training. Torch Fest weekend was very busy; interagency cooperation with State Police, DNR, Fire, and EMS were commended. Undersheriff Douglas reported a case in which a Muskegon-area suspect misrepresented his age and identity online to a teenage victim; detectives identified the vehicle within minutes using license-plate recognition cameras and the suspect was arrested within hours. The Board thanked the Sheriff's Office for the additional patrol coverage at Safe Harbor during the Torch Fest / July 4 weekend, which made a noticeable difference.
- c. **County Commissioner (T. VanAlstine):** The County Public Safety Center is now in design development. Value-engineering has trimmed unneeded space and added data-drop capacity; project remains within budget.
- d. **Township Ambulance Authority (M. Robinson):** TAA is retaining long-term legal counsel and moving to monthly (from quarterly) financial reporting to the Board. Discussion under way regarding installing cameras to secure drug-box storage. Deputy Chief B. Slagle will step up to assist the TAA Director with human resources duties. A second ambulance rig was staged in Alden for the July 4 weekend and worked well. The Board thanked TAA for the extra support.

11. Speaker: No speaker.

12. Communications:

- a. **Election Update — August 4, 2026 Primary (Clerk O. Leffew):** Ballots received from County; 317 absent voter ballots mailed on June 6. Total registered voters in Helena Township: 958. Public Accuracy Test scheduled for July 16, 2026 at 11:00 AM; Election Inspector training the same day 2:00–4:00 PM. Fourteen (14) election inspectors have been scheduled to cover early-voting shifts.
- b. **Early Voting — July 25 through August 2, 2026:** Nine consecutive days. Hours: 7/25–7/26 and 7/30–8/2, 10 AM – 7 PM; 7/27–7/29, 8 AM – 4 PM. Because early voting overlaps with Alden Days on the opening weekend, the Clerk will relocate voting operations to the interior back room to accommodate the Quilt Show. Signage will direct voters to the rear entrance.
- c. **Alden Days — Run / Parade:** J. Gurr has offered use of his farm as staging and parking for the Alden Days Run to reduce congestion downtown.
- d. **TAA Membership / Public Notice (raised in discussion):** Concern was raised that residents were not informed of the TAA ballot language and their membership program (\$75 annual membership to avoid per-call charges). The Clerk will post sample ballot information on the

Township website and, if possible, post a link to the TAA membership signup form. TAA representative M. Robinson agreed to bring resident questions back to the TAA Board.

13. Committee Reports:

- a. **Zoning (R. Logee):** Nine (9) permits issued in June: one (1) new residence, a couple of pole buildings, and temporary signs. Zoning Administrator Logee also introduced incoming Zoning Administrator J. Petersen (see Item 15.e) and asked that the Board reconsider the BS&A Cloud migration.
- b. **2026 Assessing Audit Results:** The Township passed the 2026 State assessing audit; some data-format items remain outstanding relative to State reporting expectations with County support.
- c. **Parks & Recreation:** No P&R meeting held in June — no quorum. S. Dell has resigned as Chair; B. Apley has also resigned. Two volunteer openings remain. Ball Park work continues (see Item 14.c); Tennis Court Park under review.
- d. **Planning Commission (D. Hunstad):** Planning Commission has returned to a monthly schedule and moved its meetings to 7:00 PM for accessibility. Currently seated with six (6) members; one open seat pending appointment. Ongoing work: definitions update; data-center ordinance section (public hearing already held); complaint/concern form; short-term rental / fire ordinance review, using a Bloomfield Township model provided by a resident. Current quiet-hours reference remains 6 AM – 11 PM.
- e. **Roads (B. Peeples for B. Bartz):** Three tar-and-chip road projects previously scheduled with the Antrim County Road Commission remain on the ACRC list for completion this season. Three additional road bids reviewed in June are deferred to FY2027 planning. Sidewalks and curbs are the abutting property owner's responsibility, not the Road Commission. Trees along the Alden Days Run route will be trimmed for runner safety

14. Old Business:

- a. **Municipal Civil Infractions Ordinance Adoption:** Ordinance draft was distributed by Township Clerk, approved by C. Bzdok two months ago. J. Petersen comments identified an amendment required at page 5 (Bureau of Municipal Civil Infractions supervision to be assigned to the Zoning Administrator and Supervisor).
Motion by J. Schilling, seconded by C. Rice to table the Municipal Civil Infractions Ordinance for amendment and to post the working draft on the Township website for public comment prior to the August 13, 2026 meeting. All in favor. Motion carried.
- b. **Speed Signage Programming Update (J. Schilling):** Programmable message icons reviewed; "thumbs up" icon selected for standard operation. Traffic-count and speed data will be posted to the Township website once enough data is collected. Traffic Logix (SaaS subscription vendor) has proposed a multi-year renewal. Current sign renewal date is November 1, 2026, with a 3-month extension available to February 1, 2027. Item carried forward for a future decision.
- c. **Ball Park Update:** Final fencing (North property line, south side) work is underway. Erosion control and boulder placement are pending delivery of the large stone. Recent rain will require additional dirt work before placement. Ball Park project invoices were received in the Clerk's office on the date of the meeting (July 9, 2026); payment to those vendors will be late due to a break in process that is being addressed. Supervisor Peeples offered to contact the vendors directly to advise them of the payment delay.
- d. **MOU — Historical Society Update:** The Historical Society has proposed additional changes to the draft MOU. The Clerk has redistributed the revised draft for Board review. Item carried forward.

- e. **Wage Resolutions:** Special Budget Hearing 6/25/2026: Separate resolutions were presented for each elected and appointed position for FY beginning July 1, 2026 through June 30, 2027, based on the budget adopted at the June 25, 2026 Special Budget Hearing.

Motion by J. Schilling, seconded by C. Rice to adopt resolutions granting a 3% wage increase for the Township Clerk, Township Treasurer, Township Supervisor, Township Sexton, Township Trustees, Zoning Administrator, and Township Assessor for FY2026–2027. All in favor. **Motion carried.**

Motion by C. Rice, seconded by J. Schilling to approve compensation for the Deputy Clerk at \$25.00 per hour. All in favor. **Motion carried.**

Motion by J. Schilling, seconded by C. Rice to approve a 3% wage increase for the Deputy Treasurer. All in favor. **Motion carried.**

Discussion followed regarding an additional proposed resolution for the Treasurer covering compensation for summer tax collection responsibilities performed by the Township under contract with the school district (with reimbursement partially through the school-district contract and partially from tax interest and penalty account revenue). The Treasurer characterized this work as State-mandated; the Supervisor and other Board members disagreed with that characterization, noting that summer tax collection is performed by the Township under an optional intergovernmental contract, not by statutory mandate. The additional compensation resolution was not approved at this meeting.

15. New Business:

- a. **Bridge / Walkway - Marina Area:** A privately donated pedestrian bridge and small park (near the boulder-stone area at the Marina) is being constructed adjacent to the existing traffic bridge. Township expenses required: modify the sidewalk approach to angle into the bridge, add guard-railing extensions using Township welder labor, and place drainage rock along both sides of the sidewalk for stormwater filtration before it reaches the creek. ADA-approach considerations noted (step-up alternatives). Piling installation is scheduled for next week. Discussion only; no motion required at this meeting.
- b. **Tennis Park: Locust Tree Removal:** Two approximately 80-foot leaning locust trees adjacent to the tennis park present a safety hazard; one has already fallen into an adjacent tree. Bid received from Northern Tree, Bellaire: \$2,500.
Motion by C. Peeples, seconded by J. Schilling to approve removal of the leaning locust trees by Northern Tree, Bellaire, at a cost of \$2,500. All in favor. **Motion carried.**
- c. **Parks & Recreation - Resignations & Openings:** Resignations of Chair S. Dell and Committee member B. Apley received. The Board will advertise two open Parks & Recreation Committee positions.
- d. **Planning Commission — New Member Appointment:** Appointment is by direct Supervisor decision. Supervisor Peeples has a candidate in mind; appointment will be made at the next regular Board meeting.
- e. **Zoning Administrator — New Staff Member:** Jackie Petersen has been hired as the new Zoning Administrator. Onboarding is complete; start date July 20, 2026. Ms. Petersen will share office space with retiring Administrator R. Logee during a training/overlap period through his retirement date. A new laptop and an office A/C unit will be procured.
- f. **Anavon IT — Starlink Rewire:** Anavon completed on-site rewiring earlier today (July 9). The Township is now operating on Starlink at 100%; the prior 186 line has been disconnected. Two Wi-Fi accounts have been provisioned (an internal officials' account and a guest network). Bandwidth-management is noted for concurrent Zoom and phone use. Security posture continues to improve, voting equipment is secured and office has been rekeyed, restricting to current employees only.
- g. **New Purchase Policy — DRAFT:** Clerk presented a six-page draft Purchase Policy. The draft will be routed to Township Counsel and to the process-review consultant for review before

Board consideration. Discussion included the need for structured purchasing controls after prior invoices arrived without documentation of authorization or documentation for proper payment/reimbursement. Item carried forward to the August 13, 2026, regular meeting.

16. Announcements:

- Tuesday, July 14, 2026 — Free concert at the Town Center (first concert at this location).

17. Public Comment - On Above Items (3-min limit):

TriMedia provided a Cemetery Project status update: drone flight, ground-penetrating radar, and headstone GPS location work are complete; a paper map has been digitized into GIS with lot numbers integrated; QR-code look-up for gravesites will be published to the Township website. TriMedia will be on-site the week of July 20, 2026, and available to meet with residents. A small number of QC items remain to be photographed. Some spreadsheet data provided by the Township still requires quality-control review.

No further public comment.

18. Motion to Pay Bills: Motion by B. Bartz, seconded by J. Schilling to pay the bills. All in favor.
Motion carried.

19. Adjournment: Meeting adjourned at 8:55 PM.