

HELENA TOWNSHIP BOARD OF TRUSTEES

REGULAR MONTHLY MEETING MINUTES

Thursday, September 10, 2026 • 7:00 PM

Helena Township Community Center • 8751 Helena Road, Alden, MI 49612

DRAFT

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

2. Pledge of Allegiance: All present participated.

3. Roll Call:

Present: B. Peeples-Supervisor, O. Leffew-Clerk/ S. Savage-DepClerk, C. Rice-Treasurer, B. Bartz-Trustee, J. Schilling-Trustee.

Absent: None.

4. Approval of Agenda: Motion made Schilling and seconded by Leffew to approve the agenda. All in favor. Motion carried.

5. Conflicts of Interest: None declared.

6. Public Comment:

Residents commented on Helena Road and Southeast Torch Lake Drive traffic safety, speed limits, signage, crosswalks, and the passing zone near the park. A resident requested a veterans' grave flag and holder at Helena Township Cemetery; the Township Sexton B. Peeples reported that markers and holders had been ordered, and the request would be addressed when supplies were received.

7. Approval of Minutes: Motion made by J. Schilling and seconded by O. Leffew to approve August 13, 2026, regular meeting minutes. All in favor. Motion carried.

8. Treasurer Report:

August 2026 report:

Beginning Balance: \$1,244,491.21

Receipts (Deposits): \$32,758.65

Total Disbursements: \$82,783.40

Ending Bank Balance: \$1,194,466.46

Motion made by O. Leffew and seconded by B. Bartz to approve the Treasurer's Report. All in favor. Motion carried.

9. Presentation of Bills: August bills were reported at \$44,564.36. Payroll was also presented and included election-related payroll.

10. Fire Chief / Sheriff / County Commissioner / TAA Reports:

a. South Torch Lake Fire & Rescue: Reported 23 August calls, including 17 medical emergencies; year-to-date calls were 212 compared with 178 at the same time in 2025. September work includes trauma certification and CPR renewals. Equipment and vehicles were reported in good working order.

b. Antrim County Sheriff's Office: Sheriff Hoch was not present. Township materials included Sheriff's Office program information and a Helena Township activity report, including traffic-stop activity.

c. Antrim County Commissioner: Reported the Grass River boardwalk ribbon cutting, Public Safety Center bid work moving forward within the \$27 million budget, and continued work on the upper-chain dam project.

d. Township Ambulance Authority: Provided an update on the ambulance authority program and service area.

11. Speaker — Tom Comfort, Tennis Court Repairs:

Mr. Comfort reviewed and reported to the Board the condition of the Alden Tennis Courts and recommended routine fall crack sealing and spring cleaning to preserve the surface while longer-term plans are considered. A fall sealing quote of approximately \$1,092 was discussed, together with a spring 2027 cleaning/repair proposal not to exceed \$5,000.

Motion made by J. Schilling and seconded by O. Leffew to authorize approximately \$1,000 for immediate tennis-court maintenance/sealing. All in favor. Motion carried. The Board also discussed establishing a dedicated tennis-court budget line and longer-term maintenance planning.

12. Communications:

a. Lone Tree Point Sign: An unsigned resident communication requested additional public-access signage. The Board discussed that the suggested signage had not existed and the current street sign will suffice.

b. Lighthouse Benches: An resident communication asked about older metal benches and possible purchase/replacement. The Board discussed prior storm/ice damage and replacement benches that have been secured in place.

c. Village Center Rentals: The Township discussed adding the Village Center to the Township's rental webpage as a way to publicize availability while leaving facility management with the Village Center/Alden Volunteers.

13. Clerk / Administrative Updates:

a. Township Notary Service: Clerk O. Leffew reported that she is again commissioned as a notary and will offer notary service to Helena Township residents at no charge.

b. FOIA: The wage/compensation FOIA-2026-09 request was completed and responded to with the applicable wage resolutions.

c. Public Accuracy Test: The test is scheduled for October 15, 2026. The Clerk reported that the incorrect date was published in the newspaper as a September date and that a correction would be submitted.

d. Website / ADA: The Clerk reported ongoing work to convert website records into accessible text-based documents and improve ADA accessibility.

e. Election Administration: Early-voting election-inspector payroll must be submitted by the end of September. Staffing and leadership planning are underway for the November election, including Election Day, Early Voting, and absentee/AV operations. Residents were reminded that absentee ballots must be received by 8:00 PM on Election Day and may be returned to the Township drop box.

f. Workers' Compensation Audit: A five-year review is underway after the Clerk identified entities and contractors appearing on the Township's workers' compensation coverage that may have had separate coverage. Preliminary potential recovery was estimated at approximately \$20,000, subject to audit verification. Deputy Shayla is assisting with audit work.

g. Pension Audit: Annual pension review/audit work is underway as an additional financial control.

h. Statutory Financial Audit: The Township interviewed five firms. Gabridge & Company PLC was identified as being able to perform the two-year statutory audit at a cost not to exceed \$8,325.

Motion made by J. Schilling and seconded by O. Leffew to engage Gabridge & Company, PLC for the statutory audit at a cost not to exceed \$8,325. All in favor. Motion carried.

i. ACH Vendor Payments: The Clerk introduced development of a formal ACH vendor-payment program. The Board discussed vendor authorization forms, bank verification, W-9 documentation, separate ACH controls, and reporting. No final policy or resolution was adopted at this meeting.

14. Committee / Department Reports:

a. Zoning — J. Petersen: Reported approximately eight permits in process. Zoning permit applications are now available as fillable forms online. Credit/debit card and electronic payment options are being implemented. A nuisance-abatement ordinance draft is being circulated for review.

b. Parks & Recreation / Pickleball: The Helena Township Pickleball Advisory Committee (HTPAC) has prepared rules and applications. A lottery will be used to fill available winter court slots, with taxpayer/resident demand handled before non-taxpayer openings. Monthly captain billing and online/card payment options are being developed. Lottery scheduled for September 18, 2026 at 1:00 PM at the Community Center. Seasonal dock removal was being arranged for September 18; the remaining west-side docks were to be removed for resurfacing, while the boat-launch dock would remain as long as conditions allowed.

c. Planning Commission: The Commission paused advancement of data-center language to consolidate and refine the draft and existing Township site-plan/special-use standards. The Commission expects to continue working at its next meeting.

d. Roads: Chip seal work on Lake Street, McPherson Road, and Paige Road was reported complete. The Board discussed next year's road planning, striping, and downtown curb/gutter work.

15. Old Business:

a. BS&A Cloud Implementation: BS&A is scheduled to be on site beginning October 5, 2026. The Township is moving General Ledger, Payroll, and Accounts Payable into BS&A Cloud modules. Vendor records are being cleaned before migration. Because QuickBooks cleanup remains underway, BS&A will begin with clean opening balances that can later be adjusted as the historical work is completed. Township systems were reported backed up and under IT management.

b. Community Center Bathroom Remodel: Remodel work is underway. A temporary portable restroom was ordered while work proceeds, with the second restroom to follow.

c. Historical Society Window Replacement: Windows have been ordered and the project deposit/payment is in place; related trim/covering work is also progressing.

d. Ball Park Project: The Board reviewed an attachment to the previously approved Ball Park project expanding the scope to include erosion control, shoreline stabilization, and beach restoration. A \$15,000 contribution was acknowledged, with a Township match not to exceed \$15,000 for this phase. A member of the public reminded the Board that the Ball Park Project was intended to be funded by donated funds only. **Motion by** B. Bartz, seconded by J. Schilling, to approve the project attachment and Township contribution not to exceed \$15,000. Roll call: five yes, zero no. Motion carried.

e. Budget Corrections: The Clerk reported that the requested budget correction had been completed with the Treasurer and would be submitted to the newspaper together with the Public Accuracy Test correction.

f. Downtown Sidewalk / Curb & Gutter Project: The Board discussed ownership responsibilities, existing curb/gutter deterioration, drainage issues, and coordination with upcoming road paving. An engineering proposal is required before bidding construction work. **Motion made** by O. Leffew and seconded by C. Rice to approve the engineering proposal and proceed with design/bid preparation. Motion carried.

16. New Business / Board Action:

a. Mileage Reimbursement Resolution: The Board considered reimbursement for authorized use of privately owned vehicles for official Township business at the current IRS standard business mileage rate, with claims submitted on an expense report. **Motion made** by J. Schilling and seconded by O. Leffew to adopt the mileage reimbursement resolution. Roll call: five yes, zero no. Resolution adopted.

b. Board Room Chairs: The Township reported that replacement Board-room chairs had been ordered because several existing chairs were damaged. No additional Board action was recorded.

c. Township Printer Replacement: The Board discussed ongoing reliability problems and high ink costs with the current printers. Alternative business-class/tank-style printers were discussed.

17. Announcements:

Public Accuracy Test: October 15, 2026 at 11:00 AM. The Township will publish a correction to the previously printed date. The next regular Township Board meeting is October 8, 2026 at 7:00 PM. Additional community announcements included a military/first-responder appreciation event and a September 18 blood drive at the fire station.

18. Public Comment on Above Items:

Public comment included support for the Township's audit and financial-control work and encouragement to implement ACH controls promptly.

19. Motion to Pay Bills: Motion made by C. Rice and seconded by J. Schilling to pay the bills. Motion carried.

20. Adjournment: Peeples called the meeting to adjournment at 9:14 PM.

Respectfully recorded & submitted,

/s/ Oryana Leffew

Oryana Leffew, Helena Township Clerk

Subject to approval by the Helena Township Board of Trustees