

Joint Meeting
Highland Township Board of Trustees
Highland Township Planning Commission
Highland Township Zoning Board of Appeals
Highland Downtown Development Authority
Record of the 1440th Meeting of the Planning Commission
Highland Township Auditorium
February 11, 2026

Roll Call:

Rick Hamill, Supervisor	Dave Gerathy, ZBA Chairman
Tami Flowers, Clerk	Michael Borg
Jennifer Frederick, Treasurer	Gary Childs
Grant Charlick, Trustee	Peter Eichinger
Brian Howe, Trustee	Robert Hoffman
Beth Lewis, Trustee	Anthony Raimondo
Joseph Salvia, Trustee	Chuck Benke
	Jacob Probe
Kevin Curtis, PC Chairman	
Roscoe Smith, Secretary	Michael Zurek (absent)
Chris Heyn	Christina Hamill
Mike O’Leary	Taylor DeHaan
Scott Temple (absent)	Cassie Blascyk
Russ Tierney (absent)	Andy West
Guy York	Dale Feigley
Michael Zeolla	Daniel Walker
Mary Ray (pending for 2026-29 term)	

Also Present:

Elizabeth J. Corwin, PE, AICP – Planning Director
Kariline Littlebear, Zoning Administrator
Samantha George Assistant Zoning Administrator

Visitors: 5

Supervisor Rick Hamill called the meeting to order at 7:30 pm. He thanked everyone for participating in the meeting, which was an opportunity to draw the active boards and commissions together to share progress and discuss the future.

Clerk Tami Flowers provided an overview of the Open Meetings Act based on a summary document prepared by the Michigan Townships Association. She cautioned attendees about the “meeting after the meeting” when members mill about and rehash the discussions of the agenda that has just concluded. She emphasized the importance of avoiding even the appearance of non-compliance. Ms. Flowers also touched on the proper use of email (never to be used to discuss pending decisions) and explained how the Freedom of Information Act could impact the attendees.

Cassie Blascyk reported that the Highland Downtown Development Authority has made significant progress in drafting a new Project Plan to guide their future efforts. The HDDA has also made significant progress in completing projects identified in the original plan adopted in 2004. They have retained the services of Jill Bahm and Todd Krear who were involved in earlier planning efforts to update the plan. The HDDA is facing the pending renewal of the TIF agreement with Oakland County which runs through 2029.

Ms. Blascyk highlighted many of the accomplishments and awards of the HDDA, including a Project of the Year for 2025 for the boardwalk project. She noted that one of the chief priorities for the coming years is to complete pedestrian connections from the Boardwalk to the Huron Valley School District campus at Watkins Boulevard. Ms. Blascyk thanked Artisan Contractors for their innovative engineering efforts. Mr. Hamill note partnerships with local contractors enable the community to accomplish more within our means, and that the Tax Increment Financing allows us to keep the dollars in our community rather than send the money to the county for regional priorities.

Kevin Curtis and Grant Charlick described proposed changes to the Zoning Ordinance currently under study. The Planning Commission has discussed the potential for detached accessory dwelling units (guest houses) but has decided the time is not right. The concern is that this could create an underground short-term rental market, and noted the potential is limited to the large acreage properties due to the requirements for septic systems. Accessory dwelling units are permitted under certain conditions when incorporated into the primary residence. The Planning Commission will focus energies on developing a mixed use Planned Unit Development ordinance instead, which might allow for a greater mix of housing types such as duplexes recently proposed for Highland Hills Golf Course.

Other ordinances under consideration would expand opportunities for parking commercial and recreational vehicles in residential districts, allow the storage of some recreational vehicles on vacant lots adjacent to a property owner's home, and some technical amendments to address some errors. Mr. Charlick reminded the other attendees that the Planning Commission is always open to hearing ideas from other boards.

Anthony Raimondo suggested that the Planning Commission should study Data Centers, which have created stir in other communities because of the energy demands and other possible impacts. Hyper Data Centers have been proposed in eleven Michigan counties, with the nearest in Howell Township. Mr. Charlick noted that one of the biggest concerns he has heard from conversations with utility representatives is the water demand.

Supervisor Hamill explained his thoughts about the future of the parks. The main focus for the Township maintenance crew is to finish up the Chill at the Mill Park and Veterans Park. He shared a sketch illustrating proposed changes at Veterans Park. With the help of local contractors including Grant Charlick and Kevin Curtis, there has been significant progress in installing the "Depot Shelter" moved from the corner of Highland Road and Milford Road and a concrete floor to create a stage for the Summer Concert series and other events. He noted that he had spoken to the volunteers that had developed the existing flag display

and sculpture and received their “blessing” on the reconfiguration. He will be moving the flags to the corner, where they are more visible and do not interfere with gatherings in the park.

At Duck Lake Pines Park, the plan is to chipseal the parking lot. The maintenance crew has installed a 12’ by 60’ patio at the new pickleball courts from bricks salvaged from the former Gateway Park. Another lower priority project is addressing the outdoor skating rink, which has never effectively held water. He has tried repeatedly to find community partners to volunteer to correct the deficiencies. An alternative approach to repairing the rink is to tear out the pavement and convert it to a remote control (RC) vehicle arena, where participants can operate their RC vehicles.

Supervisor Hamill noted that he also has plans to complete the landscaping at Township Hall in the coming year.

Mr. Raimondo asked if any plans were in the works for development of South Hickory Ridge Park. Supervisor Hamill said for now the access is limited because the Township continues to lease the land for farming. The grant prospects for the developing the park seem slim, and the plan is to keep this park as passive recreation. Development is on the back burner.

Supervisor Hamill noted that the Board of Trustees is carefully watching trends from Lansing. There is a movement “Axe my Tax” that has the potential to totally upend the way we cover the cost of government in Michigan. Townships that are prudent in their spending will be better positioned to handle any disruption that might happen if this group is successful.

Ms. Corwin explained that the Township staff and officials have developed a draft 6-year horizon Capital Improvements Plan as is required by state law because we own a water system. The legislation assigns the task of conducting a public hearing to the Planning Commission, although it is the Board of Trustees that approves the plan. The plan is a rough guide of investment grade projects—not day to day operations and communicates to taxpayers where we envision spending our resources and the source of the funding, such as grants, millages, in kind donations and the like. The draft will be published to the website in March with a public hearing in April.

Supervisor Hamill called for public comment. No one addressed the joint boards. Ms. Flowers invited everyone to the next Talk of the Town, which is scheduled for Tuesday, April 21st at 6:00pm in the Township auditorium

The meeting was adjourned at 8:30 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
A. Roscoe Smith, Secretary
ARS/ejc