



**HELENA TOWNSHIP
ADVOCACY GROUP, NFP**
Email: HTAG@Groupmail.com
Website: www.HTAGroup.org

Helena Township Planning Commission

REGULAR MEETING

June 4, 2026 @ 5:00 pm

HTAG RECAP

(The content contained herein was extracted directly from recordings of the above-referenced event and prepared as accurately as possible based on the room's conditions including number of people simultaneously conversing. At such times, comments are unrecognizable, it is so noted as such as being "(inaudible)."

Present

David Hunstad – Chair
Mike Robinson – Vice-Chair
Jim Gurr - Secretary
Fay Vandenberg
Darren Whipple
Jim Schilling – Board Liaison
Butch Peebles - Supervisor
Bob Logee - Zoning

Absent

Call to Order

Pledge of Allegiance

Roll Call

Mike Robinson, Jim Gurr, David Hunstad, Fay Vandenberg, Jim Schilling, Rachel Beswetherick.

Conflict of Interest

All Commission Members responded "no."

Communications

Hunstad stated the PC received (1) brief letter from a concerned citizen regarding someone using a storage trailer as a sign.

Agenda

Hunstad indicated "there is no agenda for today's meeting"; he was unaware he was to prepare it but will do so in the future.

Website

Hunstad asked Leffew how things were going. Leffew provided an overview of current status.

- 1) things are at a stall with the '.gov' migration; and
- 2) She is waiting for feedback from PC Members.
- 3) Once approved, the ".gov" emails will be created.

Citizen Planning Course (Facilitated by: MSU Extension)

Hunstad provided overview of the 6-week course. (3) PC members, along with several residents and members of Milton, Clearwater and Blue Lake Townships were represented. He felt it was well run and instructors addressed a lot of questions which he found worthwhile.

Hunstad also attended a "Planning and Zoning" course, 2 weeks ago in Harbor Springs which covered slightly different issues stating "hopefully, some of us are getting more up to speed with our knowledge based on this."

Leffew shared MSU is willing to conduct a 1-day training course for the PC which may benefit some who were unable to attend the 6-week course. The fee of \$875 could possibly be split with another township. She mentioned the idea of focusing on a specific ordinance (i.e., Fire Code which Peeples would like to work on); she mentioned September or October timeframe to MSU. This would be specifically for PC Members ONLY – not the ZBA.

Hunstad stated the "liability carriers" for the township would either reimburse for classes or offer reduced rates if it was shown the members attended the classes. Leffew was confused...

Leffew: "Our insurance carrier?"

Hunstad: "Do we have insurance?"

Leffew: "I hope we have insurance."

Hunstad: "Okay. Yes, we have."

Peeples: "\$46,000 a year. We better".

Leffew: "Yes, we have township insurance. We're even insuring things that we don't even have."

Hunstad: "So that might be a great question to ask. Maybe we'll get a little something back for the effort."

Peeples: "I wouldn't count on that."

Hunstad: "Well, it's worth asking."

PLANNING COMMISSION MEMBER CHANGES:

Hunstad: “I’ve got to ask you, where are we at with the personnel?”

Peeples: “Personnel?”

Hunstad: “Yeah, we’ve got Jim Gurr and Mike Robinson are expired.”

Peeples: “Oh, yeah. You want to cover that now?”

Gurr: “I hate the sound of that.”

Hunstad: I do, too. Since it's June.

Hunstad: “Butch I think you're up...before we get any further, technically, Jim Gurr and Mike Robinson need to be reappointed by you.”

Peeples: “Okay.”

Hunstad: If that's your decision.

Peeples: “I got a letter from both of them requesting to stay on. Jim Gurr, another year term. Mike Robinson, thanks for your service, but I think we're going to go a different route. We appreciate all the work that you have done over the years, but we’re going to go with somebody else. We appreciate it. Anything else you want to add to that?”

Peeples: “Yeah, and I haven't picked the replacement yet. I'll get back with you on that...it'll be a year term for them.”

Outside Consultant – Internal Processing Assessment

Leffew: Announced the Township hired an outside firm, Maynard Hortonson, to review internal processes and procedures followed by the Clerk, Supervisor, Treasurer and Zoning Administrator. The firm wants to meet with a representative from Parks & Rec and the Planning Commission. **The meeting is set for June 15, 2026.**

Leffew indicated the firm will ask questions about fees, fines, fee schedule, anything that might be related to finance. (e.g. how Parks & Rec handle donations).

VandenBerg: Asked if they would be covering administrative matters such as public postings, public notices, etc.

Leffew indicated no, just financial matters – administrative topics would be covered by Mary Riely at MSU.

VandenBerg: Asked if the Planning Commission was doing minutes tonight and how do they get published? “Do you have a process you want us to follow?”

Leffew: “That's not part of this matter of course.”

VandenBerg: “No, but that's still a process that needs to be determined.”

Leffew: Yeah, that's a different discussion.

PUBLIC COMMENT

NOISE ORDINANCE / SHORT-TERM RENTALS

Peeples: Shared an Alden resident, Laurie Stone, asked if an ordinance for “quiet hours” existed; he couldn’t find one. The Township’s parks, accesses shut down at 11 o'clock.

Gurr: Stated even with some issues that have arisen over the years, the Township has never “felt the need to write ordinance language with respect to a general quiet time.”

Schilling: Added he has been asked about noise in the last few weeks at Short-Term Rental properties and “if there’s anything the Township can do when they’re out there in a campfire and partying and having a good time.”

VandenBerg: “We just need to make it generic enough that it applies across the board.”

Schilling: “...and that would apply to short-term rentals, correct?”

VandenBerg: “Yeah.”

Peeples: “Well, it should apply to anything in the township”.

Rachel: Stated the same concern exists on Torch Lake.

Gurr: “So, there's been a citizen query about whether there's quiet hours language...are these recent concerns people are addressing?”

Schilling: “Yes”.

Leffew: “I got one today, too, asking for the noise ordinance, what time is quiet hours.”

Peeples: “If you did it in short-term rentals, wouldn't you have to have it in your ordinance? How else are they going to know?”

Rachel: “Yeah. It would be easy just to do it for the township in general instead of being specific in the short-term rental because it's across the board.”

Leffew: “Is 11 o'clock too late for short-term rentals? If we want to keep everything the same across the board, parks and that sort of thing?”

Hunstad: “Well, I think we're jumping the gun. So, **the question is, do we have a zoning ordinance on noise at this point? And the answer is no....which begs the question, do we need one? And if so, then how should that be developed?**

Peeples: “Well, let's get some more information. Find out what it is. And are we having a lot of complaints with Airbnbs? And then that's probably a time to do something with it.”

Schilling: “Well, it's only a worry in the summertime. And it gets dark at 10:30 now. So, at half hour, before dark. He posed another concern about short-term rentals having so many cars

they park on the road and possibly block traffic and emergency vehicles (i.e. Alden Meadows subdivision).

A discussion then took place about the width of various streets/roads, and the impact Short-Term Rental guests (their vehicles) have on the ability for emergency vehicles to access those structures.

Rachel: “There should be, like, “NO PARKING” signs”.

Resident G. Mayes: Mentioned a previous concern on Wiscasset Lane due to people parking along the side of the road. It was brought to the attention of the Planning Commission, but nothing was ever done. The Township decided it would be the property owner's responsibility but, from a first responder's perspective, I think that's a little different issue.”

Leffew: When was that, 2012?

Mayes: “It would be between 2012-2015.

Agenda (actually “Minutes” of the 4/2/2026 meeting)

Gurr: Referred to the “Agenda” (actually “Minutes”) of the 4/2/26 PC Meeting and made a motion to approve the minutes as presented.

Hunstad: Seconded the motion.

All Commission Members: Aye

Motion passed.

Zoning Administrator's Report:

Logee: Provided a summary of activity for the month of May:

(5) permits being issued in May; (4) Storage Buildings; (1) Miscellaneous.

Logee He mentioned a “small spa...looks like a lap pool...”; he “dealt with about 15 people who called in.”

Hunstad: Asked Logee if the (5) permits, were approved?

Logee: “Yeah, they were issued.”

LAWN MOWING, NUISANCE, BLIGHT

Schilling: Asked if the grass at “Mama's House” (actually Grandma's Parlor) could get cut or if they could be sent a note?

Logee: I guess I could nudge them, but we don't have any language to demand mowing.

Schilling: We don't?

Logee: No. Okay. Unless it's a nuisance or something.

Schilling: Unless it's a blight.

Peeples: Which is on my list to ask about.

Hunstad: Mentioned the Alden Volunteers has a group of men who gather Monday mornings for ½ day, to edge sidewalks, hang flower baskets and those places “driving us crazy, because technically we are trespassing if we go in there to clean it up and make it look decent, and then we're enabling them to just not do anything also, so it's really, it's tough. Frustrating.”

OLD BUSINESS:

GRAVEL PIT RE-OPENING?

Logee: Shared he's been talking with the folks who own the former gravel pit operation on Alden Highway. Advised the PC they may want to think about its use might be construed as commercial, which isn't allowed in the Ag Zone. He then mentioned the owners “might make the plea that it's a historical use.”

VandenBerg: “That's kind of what they're doing, isn't it?...Yeah...Because in their note, didn't it say it's in the same family? So, they're calling it like a family business?”

Logee: “No, they're not generating products there, but I think they may be selling pick-up loads or something.”

Gurr: “I know locals can get gravel there.”

Logee: “In the back of that site was a gas processing facility. They also talked to one of the Christmas tree growers about selling/leasing a part of it, which would fit the Ag use. So that's more info coming.”

Whipple: Asked Logee if the family wanted to make their property a gravel pit again?

Logee: “That doesn't seem to be the flavor of it, no.”

Whipple: Mentioned the family had emailed indicating “we have been doing a little bit of business here and there”; encouraged the Planning Commission to take a closer look.

Logee: The other term they threw out was agri-business.

Hunstad: “Agri-tourism”.

Peeples: “But soon as they open that thing back up and they start digging gravel out of it, that becomes a separate issue with the state of Michigan”.

Leffew: “Did I read something about them wanting to do some sort of campground?”

Peeples: “And that was another part of it.”

Logee: Do you think that is a correct response? Basically, what I told them is a defunct commercial operation, and therefore dump starting it would be contrary to the ordinance?”

Hunstad: “Correct”.

G. Mayes: “A quick question...that gravel pit, is that where the old concrete?”

Gurr: “Yeah, that's it”.

Peeples: It's a big piece of property there.

NEW Light Industrial Zone:

Gurr: Suggested the Planning Commission may want to create a light industrial district; a stretch of Class A highway to be used year-round as a gravel pit, a gas-seeding plant, a well driller, an instrument approach for the airport, an electrical substation, and formerly a light wire assembly factory that was Mike Crawford's property. Stated if there were any place in Helena Township that would be suitable for a light industrial district, that would be the best place.

Topics for Planning Commission to address in order of importance:

Hunstad: Shared he had sent to the Planning Commission a (very primitive) “To-Do” list of items he'd like the PC to keep in mind and rank them in order of importance, and what is needed, etc. He referred to VandenBerg to provide an overview.

VandenBerg: Shared an “action-item” plan listing topics needing attention for which the PC would name a “Team Leader” for each topic as follows:

- Ordinance Definitions – Are they current, clear and where are they found?
- Data Centers
- RVs
- Garages
- Accessory Structures which “go hand-in-hand with storage buildings” but then asked Logee **“How do you define garages and storage buildings? You've used them interchangeably here?”**

Logee: “I guess it's the flavor of the use...”

VandenBerg: Is there differences in the physical structure?

Logee: “Not in my mind”.

VandenBerg: Continued reading the “action item list”...

- Signs
- Fences
- Complaint Forms
- Fire Codes
- Noise
- Gravel Pit
- Light Industrial Districts
- Lawn Mowing
- Blight

Note: No mention of Short-Term Rentals which has been a topic of concern brought to the attention of the Planning Commission for many, many years and more recently over the past (3) years by many concerned residents.

VandenBerg: Shared an Excel Worksheet with the PC and the process to be followed as:

- Review the topics
- Give them priority; “PC will vote to determine order
- Do they align with the ordinance? Where?
- Do they align with the Master Plan? Where?
- Do they meet a federal, state, county, township regulation or ordinance?
- Is there a completion date?...If there is a regulatory compliance, there will be a hard due date. So that will be included.
- A Team Lead will be selected (from the Planning Commission).
- PC needs to review what it wants to do for team participants - a focus team so we can concentrate on that one thing and do it right the first time, so we don't go back and revisit it.
- Then the Team Lead will provide project updates.
- Once the PC thinks they have a final version, it would be discussed, in more depth, at an open meeting.
- Then, there would be a “wrap up document”.
- The PC will need to determine
 1. How it will be filed
 2. Where it will be kept so it meets all our records retention requirements.
 3. The date of completion
 4. When it will be implemented.

Rachel: Asked if, once all the steps are followed and approve an item as done, does it go to the board and then they vote on it?

VandenBerg: “It does go to the board, and I thought about adding that, but I wanted to put it on one sheet of paper.”

Rachel: Yeah, yeah, yeah. And then it still goes to the county, right?

VandenBerg: “No, they only do it for just a review. Okay. So yeah, there will be a column in here for township board.”

Gurr: “My reduced version talks about creating team leaders for finding direction for planning commission action, defining issues implementation of approach to deal with the issues and arriving at action.”

Hunstad: That sounds good.

COMPLAINT FORM

VandenBerg: Shared the PC had previously discussed a “Complaint Form” but wasn’t aware if anything had been done. Shared things which can be done in Excel and accessed on the Internet.

Hunstad: Asked if it could be given to the website developer to do?

Rachel: Yeah, they could put it together in a quick form, and then it would go back to a spreadsheet and basically sort anywhere we want.

Leffew: Reminded the PC they needed to decide if people could submit a complaint anonymously?

Rachel: Suggested asking for the person’s name although they may not provide it. Whenever you have any form on the Internet, you can put a period in the field and go on to the next section...there are ways around not putting names in forms . I do that every day.”

Hunstad: Agreed complaints should **not be anonymous**, but MTA says you cannot do that.

Leffew: Confirmed Hunstad was correct.

Leffew: Then asked the PC whether a complaint would be anonymous or not anonymous?”

Hunstad: “We’re not going to settle that tonight, but that’s a great discussion point, so we’re going to move ahead with other Old Business.”

VandenBerg: Then reviewed the Ordinance definitions which she had reviewed referring to the first page and the current definition of “Ambient”. Asked the PC if it needed to be deleted or updated? Is the term understood? She stated it’s currently used in (2) sections of the ordinance and this is something the PC will need to decide. **The Planning Commission will be looking for resident input and assistance with these focus teams to make sure we cover the entire subject and we’re inclusive.**

Leffew: Do an ad hoc meeting.

VandenBerg: Pardon me?

Leffew: Maybe do an ad hoc team. Yeah, a couple people from planning, a couple people from public.

VandenBerg: Right, yeah.

G. Mayes: “I presented years ago the idea of a working group, and there were some rules about if you’re in the working group, I can’t engage other people, let people know what’s going on, no decisions are made. I’ve had a draft of that, but I think it’s a good idea to have the rules. Those who are on the team, you’re not making decisions.”

VandenBerg: Right. Do you still have that? Can we share it? It'll be a starting point.

G. Mayes: Sure.

VandenBerg: I'll use what you have."

Section 5.02.02 – Boats & Docks Ordinance

Hunstad: "What I can say is that **5.02.02 is almost completely put to bed**. It was published May 28th in the Antrim Review. So, if we tack on (8) business days on top of that on June 9th, that will be approved by the board, and therefore (8) business days after publication that's enacted. So, June 9th is what the data document is. So that's 5.02.02."

Data Centers:

Hunstad: "We've got data centers, and we've got a definition for data centers that I sent out, and I've got it here in writing. I'm proposing that we accept this definition of data centers into our definitions in the ordinances."

Lori Mayes: Asked for the Definition to be read out loud.

Hunstad: "Sure... I thought I had more than enough."

DATA CENTER DEFINITION (Proposed)

"Data center - a facility group of buildings or a portion of a building whose primary function or principle permitted use is the housing, operation, and maintenance of computer servers, data storage systems, telecommunication equipment, and associated network components used for the processing, storage, or transmission of digital information."

Under this, two subheadings.

- 1) Included infrastructure.** Such facilities typically include, but are not limited to, specialized cooling systems, mechanical, hybrid, or closed-loop, backup power generation infrastructure, including electrical substations, industrial diesel generators and battery storage, liquid fuel storage, fire suppression systems, and high-security physical infrastructure.
- 2) Exclusions.** This term shall not include automated server rooms, network closets, or minor data processing facilities that are strictly accessory, incidental, and subordinate to an approved principle permitted use, such as those found within standard schools, offices, medical clinics, or retail establishments."

Gurr: Are you looking for a motion to approve that at tonight's meeting to be included as an amendment to the zoning ordinance?

Hunstad: Yes, sir.

Gurr: I'll make that motion.

Schilling: I'll second it.

Hunstad: Okay, so the motion's been made to approve the data center definition as I just read. It's been seconded. Any other discussion? Okay. Then I call a vote on the proposal to accept the data center definition. All those in favor say 'Aye.'

All Members: Aye.

Hunstad: "Those opposed? Okay. That's going to get tacked into our new definition. How about that? This will allow us to...the data center is a huge, huge issue. When we had the public hearing, I brought up, and I spoke quite well at length on all the negatives primarily, but also some of the positives that occur with the data centers, and they just become more and more of an issue, especially in the state and around the country. And what I'll say is that I was approached by a person here, and this person worked for a nonprofit, and there is a lot of money that's being put into opposing data centers. And the money's coming from China. It's coming from overseas. And so, I would encourage everybody to try to be very, very careful. There's so much negativity on data centers. I'm not a proponent of data centers, but I want everybody to at least have an open mind on data centers, should something like that be proposed in our area. Without wording on data centers, without anything in our ordinances, we're wide open to having the state come in and tell us what to do. Unfortunately, the state has changed our constitution in Michigan, and now they can still do that anyway, as they're doing in Saline. And so, I hope we never face those issues. So, I think this will help. I think this is a real plus. This will allow us to place this underneath the wording of alternate energy, because the data centers would fall under much of that wording, including noise issues, lighting, etc., without restating all of that verbiage again and creating another multiple pages into our ordinances where we can interleave that inch to the renewable energy area."

Gurr: Yeah, well, I made a motion at the last meeting that we do exactly that.

Hunstad: "Excellent. And this is where this action form will be so helpful so that people like me don't lose track of where we're headed and what's been done and what needs to get done. So, again, I think this is going to be very, very helpful."

G. Mayes: Yeah, just a comment, big question. One thing about the class, and I was listening to certain things.

Hunstad: Well, hold on, we're talking about data centers. Yes, Data centers, yes. Okay. Related to data centers is that I believe it's important for us to add data centers to our Master Plan. I think we need to have some sort of idea of how this fits into the overall Master Plan of our Township. I also think we need to visit, Jim said it, we need to look at our industrial zoning for that. I think it's real important that if we look at that zoning, how we can even fit something like that. The hyperscale data centers are crazy. That's what Saline's getting. I think we need to

spend some time looking at how we would zone for industrial for that type of thing. And I think, Jim, you were kind of alluding to that earlier.

G. Mayes: Again, voiced a concern he previous has raised – ***If the Township has an ordinance, anybody who meets all the criteria of that ordinance, you can't reject that.*** And so, it's not going to be a site plan. It's not going to be anything that's going to stop it. They're going to get what you have in that ordinance. My concern is -- are we absolutely sure with everything that's going on? There are Townships implementing all kinds of moratoriums – they are challenging the solar law.” Again, strongly encouraged PC to introduce the ordinance in time - Work on it with a Team and come up with something.

Hunstad: “And the idea is, you know, that even this definition, the wording in the ordinances is, everything in here is amenable to change. So, it's not written in stone. It's not forever. It's not one and done and we'll never change it again. But if we don't, as you know, when we talk about this, if we don't have something now or soon, we can really be in the bullseye for these guys. So, I appreciate your comment. Thank you....Other Old Business?”

Gurr: RVs.

VandenBerg: Well, that's all in there. That's in your action sheet.

Hunstad: My goodness, VandenBerge, isn't that great? It is here. Is there any action? Is there anything we're doing with the RVs at this point?

VandenBerg: “**No, I think we just need to maybe confirm that this, who's going to lead it. But even that can be done offline.**” If you guys look at this and something you're interested in, I'll update it and send out the spreadsheet to everybody with everything I've added tonight.

Hunstad: Let's do that.

VandenBerg: And then pick something you are interested in, and we'll go forward from there.

Hunstad: “And just so everyone knows we are, and I am absolutely committed to the Open Meetings Act. So, if I send out an email, there's no behind-the-scenes email meetings things going on. So, everything is up front and out for everybody to see. So, okay, with that being said.”

NEW BUSINESS:

Hunstad: Shared many items for discussion.

Oath of Office:

Hunstad asked that the Planning Commission members, who are appointed by the Supervisor (Peoples) take the office of office. PC Members are not elected and, therefore, not required to take the oath of office but it is strongly advised by the MTA to do so for several reasons.

1. One is the member swears the oath of office, which we all hopefully would agree with.

2. Puts down a timeline of exactly when that was done so that we have a record, going forward of when these people were brought into the Planning Commission.

Onboarding to Planning Commission:

Hunstad discussed an onboarding schedule he developed for new Planning Commission members. To help prevent mistakes like “having no agenda”.

He shared it is a multi-step, six-month process of what I think we should do for our new members.

- Day Zero - you need to get appointed.
- Day 1 - you take the oath of office and sign a conflict-of-interest form, receive a binder, containing the bylaws and ordinances.
- Then, before a member’s first meeting, the Member would meet with the Planning Commission Chairman and Zoning Administrator to review how things are run and what to expect.
- Month 1 – A member will come to their 1st meeting with an introduction, understanding the flow of the meetings and public comments, etc.
- Month 1-6 - I would hope the new PC Member would attend the Citizen Planner Program online, or even better, in person.
- Month 1-6 – Review the Michigan Planning Enabling Act, the Michigan Zoning Enabling Act, the Open Meetings Act, and the Freedom of Information Act.”
- Hunstad shared he felt doing these basic things would be very helpful to a new Member

Commission Members: Good, like it ... Makes sense....

Gurr: Makes sense to me.

Bylaw Amendment

Hunstad Stated he has reviewed the Bylaws and obvious changes are needed. He proposed the Bylaws be changed as follows:

- **Return to meeting monthly** – He indicated “it has been very difficult for the Planning Commission to get anything done, especially trying really hard to be 100% compliant with the Open Meetings Act.” “The Planning Commission had decided last fall to meet every other month, starting in February of 2026 when the PC thought they had “gotten to the end of the internet and fixed all the zoning, and all the ordinances were done, and we’d never have another issue.”
- **Change Time of PC Meetings** - The Planning Commission discussed challenges of having the meeting earlier in the day (currently at 5:00 pm). The idea of 5:30 pm and 6:00 pm were considered. The benefit of meeting at the same time as the Board and Parks & Recreation to keep it consistent and provide enough time for people returning home from work to attend seemed the most ideal.

The Planning Commission agreed to change the meeting time from 5:00 pm to 7:00 pm on the 1st Thursday of each month starting July 2, 2026.

Leffew: Agreed 7:00 pm would be less confusing and help with being transparent.

Rachel: Agreed it would help in getting the community involved.

Peeples: Agreed the Annual Budget Meeting (which i currently held at 10:00 am) should also be moved to 7:00 pm to allow people the opportunity to attend a very important meeting.

Leffew: We scheduled (the Budget Meeting) at 7 p.m. this year.

Gurr: Attempted to make a motion.

Hunstad: "Hold on, hold on. We're not quite there yet."

Gurr: But I'm going to say 7 and not 6 in my motion.

Hunstad: OK.

Schilling: I'll second the motion.

Hunstad: Hold on.

Gurr: We haven't made it yet.

Hunstad: We haven't made a motion yet. But that's, I love your idea."

Gurr: Mentioned the "Organizational Meeting" (the meeting during which the PC appoints the officers) which is currently held in June. Suggested that, perhaps July would be better although the 4th of July holiday could be a "possible stopper".

Hunstad: "What's an organizational meeting?"

Gurr: "When we elect who's the chair, vice-chair...We changed it from April to June.

Leffew: "Other way around, you changed it from June to April, but the April was not approved."

Gurr: Okay.

Leffew: That was not discussed with the Township Board.

Gurr: "It wasn't brought to their attention because they have to approve it. Well, I'm going to ask the Planning Commission their thoughts about when the PC's organizational meeting should take place? There are two 1-year appointments. There is always a possibility there may be (2) NEW members who should be included in the possibility of being nominated and elected to those positions...a later organizational meeting has benefits compared to an early one."

Gurr: "The Officers elected serve a 1-year term from the time they're appointed."

Leffew: I have a question. Are all the appointments done in June? Or are those staggered?

Hunstad: They're staggered in the year.

Leffew: That's right.

Gurr: They're staggered by the year.

Hunstad: The bylaws state in number four, terms shall expire June 30 of the term limit year.

Leffew: So, it's because of the years that are staggered?

Hunstad: Yeah. Commissioners should serve one-, two-, three-, or four-year terms.

Gurr: “We simply need to determine which month to have your organizational meeting. And what intent is served. It was always nice to have it earlier in the year because then everybody knew, right, and there would be possible replacements.”

Hunstad: Oh, I see what you’re saying.

Gurr: “There would be possible replacements; believe it or not, guys, historically it's been difficult to get people that want to do this.”

Leffew: Have you marketed it, though? Have you advertised it?

Hunstad: “Okay, hold on. So, the question is, right now, the bylaws say at the April meeting, that's...you're talking about this organizational meeting, right, that will elect the members, etc. Okay, so is there a reason to change it from April? Are you suggesting we change it from April? Is there a better time to do it?”

Gurr: “If it stays in April, because our recent change was not approved, it would just remain as it is currently if we decided it could be done in April.”

Hunstad: “Okay, but we still need to make, a motion needs to be made to go back to monthly meetings.”

Gurr: Yep, I'm ready to do that. Okay. Are we, so are you guys comfortable with an April organizational meeting?

Hunstad: Yes, sure.

Gurr: “Okay, so I'm going to make a motion that we're going to amend our bylaws. We're going to amend our bylaws to go back to monthly meetings, and we're going to initiate, we're going to start our meetings at 7 o'clock, uniformly, and I'm making that motion, and we are to make sure that we notify the Township Board at their meeting of a week from now that we've amended our bylaws .”

Peeples: On the 1st Thursday?

Gurr: We're not just changing that, just going back to monthly and to 7 o'clock.”

VandenBerg: Who’s going to take this before the board next week?

Schilling: I will.

Leffew: So, the last time it came to the board, it was just talked about, can we get something physical printed or electronic version? Because that's how April got this.

Gurr: I'll make sure, I'll make sure when I write the minutes, I'll make those separate.

Leffew: Or a copy of your bylaws would do.

Hunstad: Okay. So, we got a copy of your bylaws. So, we've got a motion on the floor to change the meetings for the Planning Commission to every month at a start time of 7 p.m. Is there a second?

Schilling: I'll second.

Hunstad: Any further discussion? Okay, I'll bring to the floor then that we shall vote that on the motion, which is to change the meetings to every month and change the bylaws, so the meetings are every month and starting at 7 p.m. All those in favor say 'Aye.'

All Members: Aye.

Hunstad: Any opposed? Passes.

Meeting Conducted by Robert's Rules

Hunstad: "And the second item on the bylaws is that number seven, the chairman shall conduct all meetings according to MTA rules of order. Now I look hard and fast, and I went up to our, the MTA person from Michigan State on this and we couldn't find that at all. Well, it turns out, I look back historically and it's a typo. It used to say MTA's rules of order. Well, the Michigan Township Association really doesn't have rules of order, so there are really primarily what's used are Robert's Rules of Order. So, I'm going to, I would like to have a motion made that we change bylaws number seven to restate that, to read that the chairman shall conduct all meetings according to Robert's Rules of Order.

VandenBerg: I'll make that motion.

Hunstad: Okay, VandenBerg has made that motion.

Schilling: I'll second it.

Hunstad: Jim's second. Any further discussion? Okay, so bring to the floor the vote on that the chairman shall, number seven, will change the bylaws to say number seven, **the chairman shall conduct all meetings according to Robert's rules of order. All in favor?**

All Members: Aye.

L. Mayes: Asked when the monthly meetings at 7:00 pm would go into effect?

Gurr: Indicated starting in July - Thursday, the 4th of July is a Saturday. We're good.

Planning Commission with Zoning Authority

Hunstad: Mentioned an article he saw in the Antrim review where the Village of Central Lake is establishing a Planning Commission with Zoning Authority. I called them, and the very interesting, as we learned in our meetings, that 9 of 16 townships in Antrim County are zoned, the rest are not – Central Lake is not zoned. The village will be with other separate entities. Central Lake also has property on Torch Lake. So, there are a lot of townships that aren't zoned and fall under the zoning by Antrim County.

Gurr: Added “No, the county tried to pass county-wide zoning by resolution. They were challenged, and it went to public referendum, and not only were they defeated, they were instructed they were not to create county-wide zoning by resolution. It failed in a public referendum. The only township which approved county-wide zoning was Forest Home Township. It failed everywhere else. The townships were under the impression at that point if they wanted to have zoning authority over private property, they had to do it at the township level. And that's what we've lived with ever since, and that was from the early 70's. It went to public referendum.”

Hunstad: “I stand corrected. Thank you.”

Fire Code:

Peeples: Mentioned a Fire Code Ordinance which came up because of the new house built down across from the ballpark high up on a hill. “We have been consulting with two different lawyers who have written certified letters to the owners which they have not returned. The biggest problem is the Fire Dept. cannot get a fire truck up there and, if it were possible, the engine couldn't be turned around. The Township does not want to put a million-dollar truck in jeopardy just to save one house that's worth half of that money – And, it's just too dangerous to put anybody up there, even fight the fire.”

Peeples: The attorneys for the fire department and Chris Bzdok (Township Atty) have highly recommended a Fire Code is put into place. “There's got to be some around that we can probably copy off of.”

Peeples: It's a fire code, basically. What's it called, Mike?

Robinson: “You can get a fire truck up there in that house, but you're going to be so close to it, you're going to lose your (truck) and then to get up there, you need all your hose, all your equipment. You're going to kill your fire truck. They (Fire personnel) will be dead by the time they get to the top of this thing. So, ask the attorney, Butch, because I've talked to some other people on this, and if you have, say, an ordinance or something in there that says it's recommended, I guess is how I've been hearing it from other places, it's recommended that your driveway may be X, Y, and you've got certain parameters for your emergency.... That

goes for an ambulance, too. For your emergency personnel to be able to access your home. Because there's been some instances where, if fire EMS can't get to my house, then it's a lawsuit. A resident can sue the fire department, the ambulance service, and the township. It's not law. It says you have to do it. These are recommendations for fire and EMS accessibility. And if they choose not to do that, then there's no liability on fire, EMS, and the township. I mean, something along those lines.

Peeples: Yeah, and that's exactly what it is. It's a liability issue for the township and the fire department.

Robinson: Yep.

Peeples: And the ambulance service.

Robinson: And the ambulance service.

Hunstad: I've got an interesting question. Can that person get home insurance?

Robinson: That would probably be up to their insurance company, I would imagine. I mean, I don't know how that works.

Peeples: "If the insurance people talk to the fire department, and the fire department says there's no way in hell we're going up that driveway, then it's probably going to double our insurance at any point."

Whipple: Okay. Maybe make it emergency, not just fire. Yeah, correct. Emergency vehicles, not just fire.

Gurr: That's a good idea. Thank you.

Whipple: And on that note, as a homeowner that now has a steep driveway, I guess we'd have to know what the parameters are going to be. Is it going to be a grade issue, a width issue? You know what I mean? Mine is at the same level.

Hunstad: You've probably got an interest in putting your name right on that. Okay. Anything further on that issue?

Peeples: No.

Hunstad: Or other things you've got in mind?

Oath of Office:

Peeples: Asked Hunstad if he wanted to start doing it – as there are a couple members who didn't want to take an oath.

Gurr: Because they already had, and they felt that their sincerity in taking it initially kind of improved.

Hunstad: “Yeah, and I'm not going to... my feeling is you shouldn't force anybody to do anything they don't want to.”

Peeples: Right.

Hunstad: “I'm very willing to take the oath of office because I feel I want to do the best thing for our community and for the people who live here. So, I'm very willing to do that. If you're not willing to do that, then perhaps maybe there should be somebody else who would fill your spot that would be more responsive to our township.”

Peeples: But it is, like you said, it is a voluntary thing.

Hunstad: Correct.

Peeples: Yes. But we can do it if you request it.

Hunstad: “Yeah. So that's a good point. So as far as onboarding, it would be, I guess, it would be an optional oath of office.”

Peeples: I think it would be a good idea, especially onboarding somebody brand new and do its oath of office, especially if they've never worked for a township.

Hunstad: Yes.

Peeples: Or been affiliated with a township.

Leffew: There's, I think, payroll part should be included in that onboarding because of any W-9s and some other...

Hunstad: Oh, yeah, there's a thing to include.

Leffew: Oh, yes. Okay. So, I'll get my stuff together.

Leffew: We should have, yeah, we should have, like, emergency contacts and all that kind of proper... Okay. Like, we're a real business.

Hunstad: Great. Good. I'm not quite done.

Gurr: Are you thinking that the oath of office should end up in the bylaws or just to be kind of a general understanding that it's expected... You want to see it in the Bylaws?

Hunstad: No, I think we just leave it under the onboarding process and not make it a mandatory or permanent part of the bylaws.

Peeples: Okay. If you want to take the oath of office, just come to me and I can give it to you. Okay.

Officer Appointment – Vice-Chair:

Hunstad: “Okay. And my last item I have is with Mike Robinson, if you're not being reappointed, then the Vice Chairman position's open. I would suggest VandenBerg be voted in at that point.

Gurr: I'll nominate VandenBerg as Vice Chair.

Schilling: I second.

Hunstad: Okay. Any further discussion? Well, let me ask, is that okay VandenBerg?

VandenBerg: Okay.

Gurr: The nominations for Vice Chair are closed and VandenBerg has been nominated and elected.

Hunstad: And so, I call the vote that VandenBerg as of now becomes our vice-chairman of the planning committee. All in favor signify by saying ‘Aye.’

All Members: Aye.

Hunstad: All those opposed.

Schilling: I just have a couple of points of information.

(Downtown Alden):

Schilling: Shared updates on the following:

- **Speed limit signs** posts will hopefully be installed by June 8th.
- **The bridge down by the boat ramp that's going along.**
- **250th anniversary banners** will be put up down by the waterfront. And those four poles down there for our 250th anniversary.

Hunstad: OK. If there's no further business, then I will call the meeting concluded at, we'll call it 6:29pm.

Next Regular Meeting:

Thursday, July 2, 2026

7:00 pm

Provided by,
Helena Township Advocacy Group (HTAG)

HTAG@Groupmail.com

www.HTAGroup.org

