



**HELENA TOWNSHIP
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Helena Township Planning Commission

REGULAR MEETING

DECEMBER 4, 2025 @ 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

Mike Robinson
David Hunstad
Jim Gurr
Fay VandenBerg – Secretary
Darren Whipple
Jim Schilling – Board Liaison
Gordy Schafer
Butch Peeples - Supervisor
Bob Logee – Zoning
Oryana Leffew – Clerk

Absent

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE:

AGENDA:

VandenBerg requested an amendment to the agenda to include a discussion to clarify terminology of the following types of meetings as well as the requirements surrounding conducting them:

- Regular Meeting
- Special Meeting
- Public Hearing

Gurr: "Well, I think that's an important concern."

Whipple: "Yeah."

Schilling made a motion to accept the amended agenda; Schafer seconded. Motion passed

CONFLICT OF INTEREST:

Gurr: "This is a point where we ask ourselves, as a commission, whether there's any member in the field that might have a conflict of interest with items on the agenda?...I hear no response, so I assume there are none."
Hunstad requested a correction in a typo "by-monthly".

APPROVAL OF MINUTES (November 2, 2025):

Gurr asked for a motion to approve the minutes of the November 2, 2025 meeting. Hunstad made a motion; Whipple seconded. Motion passed.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES (November 18, 2025 (Cemetery request):

Gurr asked for a motion to approve the minutes of the November 18, 2025 meeting. Schafer made a motion; Hunstad seconded. Motion passed. Gurr added the matter will go before the Township Board for formal and last approval on December 11, 2025.

COMMUNICATIONS:

Gurr indicated he had not received anything in print but had not done a good job in “checking the box out there”. Asked the remaining PC members if there had been anything received for the planning commission’s consideration? VandenBerg indicated she had not received anything; Leffew mentioned the (2) letters regarding the cemetery request. Gurr mentioned they were dealt with as they were received after the meeting and the individuals were in attendance.

A resident (Wilcox) asked if they PC had received her letter of 11/13/25; VandenBerg said “I honestly can't say one way or the other, but I'll check. Um, I typically don't respond because I can't respond on behalf of the Planning Commission or the Board until they've seen a response and they just would agree. I can't initiate a response on my own.” Schafer stated “We're addressing this today, because I saw it.” (your email) and indicated VandenBerg forwarded it to him.

VandenBerg confirmed, **for now the general email address to which residents can send any inquiries planningcomm@helanatownship.com** but this will be changing when they change their domain name to a “.org” extension.

Gurr went on to state **“Communications to the planning commission. I mean, I pay more attention to all the legal hair-splitting than I do, but we're under no compunction to recognize every bit of communications that comes to the planning commission under communications. These are communications that are of general interest and important to, you know, the broader functioning of the planning commission, not specific issues.”** Citizen planning, I think. But anyways, any other public comment? Hearing none, we'll move to business.

***Note*:** The PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD was not formally announced or entered into; simply mentioned in an after-the fact question which attendees missed.

CITIZEN PLANNING SESSION:

Gurr talked about the opportunity to participate in an upcoming, IN-PERSON, Citizen Planning Session which will be offered through the County sometime in 2026 and encouraged PC members to attend; “its worth the trouble to go because you learn an awful lot.”

ZONING ADMINISTRATOR'S REPORT:

Logee provided his review. “In November, there were (5) permits issued. There was a new residence on Finch Creek, a new residence on East Torch Lake Drive, an addition and remodel on Cedar Street, and (2) demo permits, (1) on Franklin Street, (1) on Coy Street (the old house in front of the bank). The other one on Franklin Street is the one that's been issued and will go away...finally.” Logee mentioned residents in Alden Meadows are unhappy with the neighbor's debris and brush going over the property line.

ZONING ADMINISTRATOR'S REPORT (Cont'd):

Hunstad asked if the work had started on the Franklin Street demo yet? Schafer indicated had talked with the crew - "And they got soil erosion, they got the fence in, they got the trees that they're going to take down, and they're going to do it on the Wednesday of Thanksgiving." **This was odd as Thanksgiving has already passed.** He went on to state "They think they can get it done a day so, they've got the money, the people who own the property have the money, and they think they can have it done a day...that's going to be nice and clean."

NEW BUSINESS:

ORDINANCE LANGUAGE DEVELOPMENT - RVs and Trailers:

Gurr introduced next item on agenda - "Overview of Recreational Vehicle and Potential Improvement Opportunities" and referred to Bob Logee and Darren Whipple for an update.

Whipple provided the following overview: "Yeah, we have been looking at things. Obviously, that particular Section, 4.04.01, is very vague about recreational vehicles and trailers, and they may be used on a temporary basis. So, Bob has come up with something as far as different options that he has thought we've come together. I also just basically made up for myself the questions that I would have about what needs to be corrected on that. Um...**I don't know, basically, what's considered permanent residence because in that section it says someone must have a permanent residence to be able to use an RV. So, it doesn't say resident, it says residence. So that's something we have to look into. A residence is a permanent home - Not necessarily that they're seasonal or all the time, but there's something in the ground...is that fair?...um that kind of keeps people from just putting an RV on an empty lot.**

Gurr: "Right."

Whipple went on to say: "Obviously, the biggest one is what is a **temporary basis**? I've come up with, you know, a time that we all feel is reasonable because temporary basis is too wide open. Um, it doesn't...it says that a "recreational vehicle or trailer", so we want to make sure, is it just one? So, we need to specify that. Only a couple more here... Um, the location of the RV when being used on a temporary basis, RV or trailer. Like how far from the ya know, neighbor, the water, all that kind of thing. It doesn't say anything about that. Then there is uh...where can it be stored when not in use and that basically is, you know, someone doesn't store right in the front yard, in the middle of everything – as an eyesore. Um...there's a line in there that says that it can't be used as a rental, the RV while it's there on a temporary basis. We also thought about adding something possibly, this one's on the way bottom, is you can't live in your RV to rent your house. So, um...and the last one is just what action would the township take if the land and township resident who is in violation chooses not to correct their violation."

Schafer shared the following: "Darren and I have a neighbor with a trailer that we think he's taking advantage of. So, he and I have been talking, and I also talked about, we're wide open right now. Right now, you can put any amount of trailers anywhere you want – we need to fix that. And so, we we've picked a number and so we're going to do it, and I think Dave started it, is we're pulling every other township's trailer rules because sometimes that saves time. We need definitions, we need numbers, penalties. You pulled Torch Lake Township's - I pulled Milton's.

ORDINANCE LANGUAGE DEVELOPMENT - RVs and Trailers (Cont'd):

Schafer: "Okay, then I made all these notes on it, left it out. So...um...and she said, if you come up with better definitions, let us know and leave them to ours. On the boat one, we used their definitions, and that saved us a lot of time about describing boats and problems and all that. So first, the process, I think, is we canvass the other Townships and then we take the best of the best and then make ours better. **But definitely only one on the waterfront - max, has to be a... and then the other thing I wrote in my notes was, I think there should be penalties because...uh...like a \$200-a-day fine, if they leave it longer than what we decide, and they should pay the legal fees. But I don't know if it's who should pay anyway.**"

Schafer: (asking Logee): "How does the work with legal fees on that building..."...being taken down."

Logee: "We have not determined yet."

Schafer: "So usually the loser pays in America."

Logee: "Usually."

Schafer: "But we should have, because if we don't have some kind of punitive...punitive action, they can just say, heck with it."

VandenBerg: "Right."

Schafer: "I got more money than you, see you later, bye."

Gurr: "Keep in mind we'll have plenty of time to discuss all this. To me this is a repeat discussion that we've had several times over the course of the life of a zoning ordinance."

Whipple: "Right."

Schafer: "...The goal with the trailers that I kind of discussed with Dave and Darren was to have it all in place by the April meeting. Because that's before spring the trailers start showing up

The Planning Commission went on to agree it is time an RV and Trailer Ordinance is developed "in a more inclusive way" and asked for the public's input, ideas, concerns, etc., to be sent to the Planning Commission to be included in the information they will be reviewing. VandenBerg referred to her "binder" filled with previously submitted information which "doesn't get discarded. VandenBerg then (confused) mentioned there will "probably be a Public Hearing sometime in January" but she was confusing this with the Public Hearing the PC was scheduling to RE-DO the Boats & Docks Ordinance due to improper notice.

CONFUSION ENSUES REGARDING UPCOMING TOPICS, REGULAR MEETING vs. PUBLIC HEARING, etc.:

A resident indicated the agenda reflected a Public Hearing set for February 5, 2026.

VandenBerg stated February 5 2026, was their Regular Meeting but then went on to say...**"If we have a public hearing on RVs, which has not been decided yet, it would probably be sometime in January."**

**Note*: This was an incorrect statement to which Schafer agreed).*

**Note*: Attendees pointed out many residents (snowbirds) would be here in January, February or March to attend or participate in these very important topics.*

VandenBerg: "But if we have a public...if there's a need for a Public Hearing..."

Logee: "Not on the trailers..."

VandenBerg: "Yes."

Schafer: "Trailers we haven't decided..."

VandenBerg: "Are we doing....We haven't decided..."

Schafer: "We are talking about the RE-DO with the boats."

CONFUSION ENSUES REGARDING UPCOMING TOPICS, REGULAR MEETING vs. PUBLIC HEARING, etc.:

VandenBerg: "Okay, let's do that one first."

Schafer: "And then that'll give us four months to get the trailers right and give us plenty of time for notice. And with a target date."

Resident (L. Mayes) stated she was completely confused and asked the PC to start all over again.

ORDINANCE LANGUAGE DEVELOPMENT - RVs and Trailers (Cont'd):

Whipple stated "It's not time to think about a public hearing (*for the RVs and Trailers*) at this point – we're putting the cart before the horse a little bit... **If there's a need for one, we'll let you know...We'll let you know when it is, but I don't think we're going to have that at this point.**"

Whipple: "And I would like to also...I want something on record that my neighbor and Gordy's neighbor is not part of this particular thing we're working with right now. So, it's not a conflict of interest. He has a trailer that's been there for two years. We're trying to make sure that someone in the future doesn't have it for more than 30 days."

L. Mayes: "So, it's going to be...he'll be grandfathered in?"

Whipple: "Right."

Schafer: "I sold him the land with the deed restriction. And I...we...never dreamed that..."

Whipple: "Whoah...whoah...whoah."

Schafer: "...and so we're looking for the deed restriction.

Whipple: "That will be another...it's not what this is about.

Schafer: "This is about the rest of the township."

Whipple: "I didn't want anybody to feel like there would be a conflict of interest because it's my neighbor. That has nothing to do with that."

The PC confirmed they would not be discussing the development of this ordinance language outside of open, public meetings unless they schedule a Special Meeting. The public was again encouraged to send in their thoughts and ideas.

Resident (L. Mayes) emphasized the importance understanding where everybody in our community is coming from because the Planning Commission is the "keeper of the knowledge".

Schafer: "Sure...That would be not a public meeting but just a normal board meeting..."

VandenBerg: "Well, we could even put it...ya know...consider looking at something on the web where you can go out and we can scan documents in."

Schafer: "Or it's on the agenda."

ORDINANCE LANGUAGE DEVELOPMENT - RVs and Trailers (Cont'd):

VandenBerg: "Yeah. I mean, we're trying to be as transparent as we can be without...something out on the web. Like, right now we know our website is not great and, Oryana is working 180% on trying to update it and working with developers and how are we going to get all our webpages to sort of look-alike? And that's one thing we can consider is for more information on this ordinance background."

L. Mayes: "And as long as you know that we want to be involved..."

VandenBerg: "Sure!"

L. Mayes: "...and understand where you're coming from...it saves time during the meeting sometimes."

VandenBerg: "Absolutely, yes."

Schafer: "Send...send emails to Fay with your thoughts cuz...this...this is the information stage."

L. Mayes: "This is the gathering stage."

Schafer: "...and privately, by the April meeting, we want the trailers (*ordinance*) in place. It's kind of the three of us...because it is before the trailers come in and have the new laws in place."

L. Mayes: "That'll give us one...meeting...beforehand...unless you do a Special Meetings, correct?"

Schafer: "Yes, exactly. But that February...February...there should be some information to talk about trailers...(looking at the PC Members)...you give your information. You gather. And then...and then...the decisions are made. Then we do a special meeting and boom... in March."

Schafer: "That's why this two-month thing is really nice because it gives us time."

Wilcox: "But then nobody's going to be here in March?"

L. Mayes: "This seems to be a summer thing...ya know, we talked about this before, is that we want to do things for the community when most people are available.

VandenBerg: "Yep."

Zooming Meetings:

L. Mayes: "...If this is happening then, is there a way of Zooming this so people can call in and listen...?"

Schafer: "Special meetings are Zoomed."

VandenBerg: "And Public Hearings."

Gurr: "Public Hearings..."

Schafer: "Public hearings, yeah, are Zoomed"

Whipple: "For them to comment."

Gurr: "Public Hearings."

L. Mayes: "Ok, just so that people can be informed and not surprised in April."

VandenBerg: "Yep."

Schafer: "They're going to be surprised if they can't put as much stuff out."

Zooming Meetings:

Gurr: "I would advise against trying...to...ya know...create some kind of an abstract calendar for trying to get all these things in place. I've been admonishing the Planning Commission for the last half a year to, you know...we always...we ran into a lot of static in our attempts to try to meet deadlines and make sure we're still getting things accomplished. And it ended up not satisfying anybody. And so, for the last half a year, I've been saying, we might as well consider it...it's going to take two months after our final deliberations to get all those notifications met, done, everything fits into place, so everybody's satisfied that there's been adequate time. We're not trying to shoehorn something in...in an unacceptable manner. And when I mentioned that at the County Planning Commission, I said I've been telling them it's going to take two months. One of our members on the Planning Commission said, I tell people 90 days. It's going to take 90 days to make sure that everything is met. But, ya know, that's unfortunate because that really drags the timeline out, I think, unnecessarily but, ya know...what we've done all these years has resulted in where we live...ya know...from a planning and zoning perspective.

It's pretty nice living there. Okay...So, we know now that we've got an overview accomplished of RV considerations coming up and some kind of rough idea of how it's going to go forward?"

Whipple: "Bob, do you want to talk about what you kinda put together or..."

Logee: "Uh....no."

Whipple: "Ok."

Schafer: "Let's wait a bit."

Logee: "But I want to make sure that you got my email?"

VandenBerg: "Yes!"

Logee: "I don't think that they did get it."

Hunstad: "Nope."

VandenBerg: "No, I forwarded it."

Logee: "It wasn't on mine."

VandenBerg: "I know..."

Hunstad: "I can go back and look""

VandenBerg: "No, I'll just resend it; you got my email the other...last night too?"

Hunstad: "I did."

Logee: "But did the rest of the board...cause..."

Schafer: "I got it...I got it."

Logee: "Cause I got it set up where I hit one..."

Gurr: "I saw it...I saw a document."

Logee: "...button and it goes to the whole board supposedly."

Leffew: "I'll resend it."

Hunstad: "OK, thank you."

Leffew: "Have Dave stop by your office before he leaves to make sure it's his email?"

VandenBerg: "Ok."

Concern with Planning Commission Inefficiencies

Whipple: "I guess...I have to ask because it may show my ignorance but that's okay. How are we ever going to get anything done? I don't quite understand that, as a planning commission, we talk about the things that are on the...we sit up here...you (*looking at attendees*) have the opportunity to and I'm not upset with you (*again, looking at the attendees*) but...a comment is a comment, right? It's not a question or why did you do this, or I want it this way...If we decide something and we meet next February, your comment, you say, I don't think I necessarily like that...we take that into consideration...It's not that we don't want to hear a comment. But it shouldn't hold up the whole process. You know what I mean? And I could be all wrong. I don't get how this all works. But we have an hour meeting and we spend a half an hour dealing with this kind of stuff. And then we're going to meet again. We never get anywhere. **And that's frustrating to me...that's why I sit up here because it used to be that people talk for half-hour...hour.** That's why I sat up here...cuz that was...we were here for two and half hours and not get anything done. Now, we get an hour and we're not...I'm not upset with you...I'm asking how is it that we're going to...you can't...meet outside...you can't communicate...I mean, so do we see as in February when we meet again, we're going to have a plan is what we want and you'll have public comment to say it? And if we choose to change something, we do because that's not...then it's sent out farther (?) correct?"

Note: The delay in the meeting's proceedings was caused by the PC's unfamiliarity with the difference between a Regular Meeting, Special Meeting and Public Hearing, confusion about whether they were talking about the Boats & Docks Ordinance (RE-DO 3X) or the Funneling Ordinance RE-DO (2X) and PC members having issues with receiving emails from one another – not by the general public's presence or desire to help clarify things for them.

Gurr: "Darren, and keep that deliberative frame of mind going forward because that, that type of thinking is something that we, we do need to embrace so that we become more efficient in all of our decision-making. So that's helpful. I'm encouraged to hear that...encouraged to see members, new members with new interests and new perspectives on how things work and I just urge a little bit of patience, a little forbearance as we go forward. We will get these things done."

Clarification of Terminology:

VandenBerg discussed paperwork provided to her by Resident L. Mayes outlining specific definitions of "Regular Meetings", "Special Meetings" per MTA (Michigan Township Association). The info did not include "Public Hearings" but VandenBerg said she would add it in and then post in on the Township's website so the community knows how they can contribute.

BOATS & DOCKS ORDINANCE & PUBLIC HEARING (RE-DO 3X)

Logee noticed under NEW BUSINESS a Public Hearing was Scheduled for February 5 and asked the PC to clarify if this was to clean up the Boats & Docks Ordinance RE-DO?

VandenBerg: "Well that was, yeah, just sort of a question mark..."

Gurr: "Well then it should have been a question mark."

Schafer deferred to Hunstad to provide an overview but stating "We were 10 hours off, right?"

Hunstad: "Right."

VandenBerg: "We did not meet their timeline."

BOATS & DOCKS ORDINANCE & PUBLIC HEARING (RE-DO 3X)

Hunstad: "Yeah. So, we're concerned and I've raised the issue several times on these timing issues with being hundred percent proper and transparent and clear that we're doing the right thing and doing it correctly. So, there's, there's some confusion and within a 10 hours' time span. So, we're going to unwind, or start over completely the boat situation that we've already discussed at length and we will go through the whole process all over again starting..."

***Note*: This is not correct; the Planning Commission failed to provide the required 15-day notice; only provided 7 – which is 8 DAYs short – not 10 hours.**

Whipple then stated, "we're not RE-DOing any of the verbiage."

Hunstad: "No, no but the meetings and any public comments and communications with such all that will take place again...We'll repeat the whole process again."

Gurr: "So, it's going to be an ordinance amendment."

Hunstad: "Correct. So that the timeline is correct and satisfactory."

Schafer: "Same language just..."

Hunstad: "...the process."

Schafer: "We're done...we don't want someone to challenge."

Hunstad: "Over 10 hours' notice."

VandenBerg: "So again, there will be more information coming on this (laughs). And again, when you brought up the summer people, this really impacts them so, we're going to try to give them as much notice as we can. It's just coming out - **I will actually put that in the minutes, that these are future topics they will be hearing about.**"

L. Mayes: "So, that doesn't mean February?"

VandenBerg: "**It may not, you know, it depends on the collection process** and if anything else comes up between

Then....immediately after this statement

Schafer: "I'm with Dave and the rest of...my thoughts are what are...Put our public notice in December...right?"

VandenBerg: "Public Hearing Notice."

Schafer: "Yeah, yeah..."

VandenBerg: "For...?"

Schafer: "The Boats!, Boats!"

VandenBerg: "Okay."

Schafer: "We want to get the boats right....Okay?...in December...got plenty of time now that we don't have a meeting every month and then...after proper notice... then schedule...have the public hearing in January with the Zoom...Okay..? Then you can vote on it at the Regular February meeting for it and it goes to the township board in February, and I think that should be out, **should be done and put to bed because we're not going to change the language or the amounts or anything. We're just making sure we have proper notice.**"

BOATS & DOCKS ORDINANCE & PUBLIC HEARING (RE-DO 3X)

Whipple: "I mean it's unfortunate we have to do this over 10 hours, but that's the world we live in..."

Gurr: "So let's do it."

Schafer: "I make a motion for that timeline...or do I have to make a motion, Jim...do we can we vote on it?"

Gurr: "We don't have to make a motion. We just schedule it in our upcoming activities."

Schafer: "So, public notice December anytime cuz you got the whole month...then after public notice and schedule public hearing with Zoom January....So there'll be notice of it..."

Hunstad: "That'll be a Special Meeting."

PC Member: "Yeah."

VandenBerg: "It'll be a Public Hearing."

Schafer: "Public Hearing"

Hunstad: "Correct."

Schafer: "Okay?...with Zoom and then...then after...you vote after that Public Hearing...and then February you vote for it and send it to the Township."

Schafer: "So, then, notice is going to be in the paper in December. We'll have plenty of time, 14 days before the meeting or whatever."

VandenBerg: "Fifteen."

Schafer: "And then you guys will pick January. I'll be on vacation...but the Zoom and put a notice...And then that leaves your normal February meeting. Done. Put to bed...And then send to the Township Board again."

***Note*:** The Planning Commission then agreed to hold a Public Hearing on the Boats & Docks (RE-DO 3X) on January 15, 2026, when a majority of residents will be unable to attend and have already planned to not make any changes to the previously, heavily disputed ordinance language.

Schafer: "Then does it have to go to the township, the county board, before it goes to the township board, Jim, or After?"

Gurr: "No, it has to go before."

Logee: "Before?"

Gurr: "Learned that last night."

VandenBerg: "It has to go to the County before it comes to the...Board."

Gurr: "The county wants to see the final language with an enactment clause, a date to be set, right?... that Helena Township...the planning commission is recommending to the township board for their approval the language that they will look at that night. It has to...it should be done beforehand. We were chastised last night for my misunderstanding of the directive to make sure it came as an ordinance. It says, no, no, it doesn't have to be an ordinance, it has to be in proper ordinance form. During the course of the summer, we've had several months where there were no meetings and I've asked the planning commission, the county planning commission, let us please have a meeting where we can learn all of these things and the rest of the commissioners chose not to do that. So now we know."

The PC once again covered the proper notice timeline requirements

BOATS & DOCKS ORDINANCE & PUBLIC HEARING (RE-DO 3X)

VandenBerg: "So, if we put it in the paper for January, **yes, we'll have the special hearing** and then in February we can review it..."

Schafer: "Yes."

VandenBerg: "...and finalize it."

Schafer: "Yeah."

Whipple: "So if we go with January 15th, that's 15 days in January. As long as that notice is in the paper in the month of December, it'll work out."

Schafer: "We've got a six-week notice." (Uh....no.)...Four-week notice." (Uh...no.)

Whipple: "Whatever notice it is...as long as it's not too short of a time."

VandenBerg: "No...correct."

Logee: "The county's already gone over that language."

Gurr: "They've approved the existing language. They've seen it many times."

Logee: "It's not changing..."

Schafer: "Correct."

Logee: "...presumably, so they don't have to get involved again. They have to be involved again."

Leffew: "Tell them Logee said."

(laughter)

Gurr: "We're gonna do an ordinance amendment, they will have to be involved."

Whipple: "So for us here right now, tonight, in Helena Township, we're gonna have it in the paper in the month of December...the meeting will be on January 15th."

Gurr: "Yep."

Whipple: "Okay."

Schafer: "Good."

Whipple: "Everybody got that written down?"

Schafer: "Proper notice, nobody can come back and throw a bunch of boats down and say you didn't do it right....I don't want that to happen."

Gurr: "And we're inside my advice for two months. I'll keep Brian's advice in the back of my head about 90 days. As it all shapes up. And again, please don't think my kibitzing here on detail is any kind of criticism of this new initiative to make things become proper. I really appreciate your earnestness in making things happen."

FUNNELING ORDINANCE (5.02.01 – RE-DO (2X):

Gurr then stated: "The County Planning Commission, found no incompatibilities with our most recent language that we'd already sent to the board, other than they found it a little bit difficult to read, we had misidentified bullets by letters instead of numbers. There was nothing in the substance of the language that they found to be incompatible and so, they recommended approval of the language that we approved last time around."

Schafer: "Okay, great."

NEW BUSINESS:

Gurr confirmed the next Regular Meeting is February 5th. Everybody's now aware. Regular meeting. Schafer: "I have new business."

Zoning Ordinance Violation Complaint Form:

Schafer: "Okay, I've wanted this for a long time, but in America, you have the right to face your accuser. In the past, what's happened in the last two years while I've been on this board, is people have come here and made false accusations or turned in false statements about people. And, but it's anonymous. And I feel that we should have a Complaint Form or if someone feels strong enough about this, they have to fill out a form, and it's given to the person they're complaining about, Okay? And let them see, because many, many times, they, um...many, many times, they're just picking and you can weaponize zoning. Someone can come and sit on one end of the township and complain about everybody on Torch Lake and nobody on Torch Lake's complaining. So, there's got to be more clarity on it...What do you call that?"

Hunstad: "Accountability."

Schafer: "Accountability." And also, if someone keeps doing false statements and false things that are absolutely not true in a public meeting, it makes them liable. And also, when encouraged, maybe the neighbors just talk to each other. Okay? But right now, it can be used as a weapon on neighboring disputes. It can be, so many ways, it can be abused. Zoning can be abused. And so, and we pulled up Milton's (*Township*) Dave did...Milton's...they have these. Ours is going to be more thorough and work with Bob. I would like to know your opinion if you guys are for or against it, just to kind of roll call, complaint form."

Hunstad: "Absolutely Gordy, yep."

Schafer: "Alright. Complaint Form...people have to sign it if they want to bitch about somebody...it's okay...can I use the word "Bitch" cuz if you've got a problem with them, they're "I'm gonna call Zoning, I'm going and grief." And if they're legit, if it's legit, they'll get taken care of, but you don't get to do it behind your back. That's over in our township."

Gurr mentioned the benefit of people understanding when someone has a problem and talking about it beforehand before it becomes a public, inflamed issue."

Whipple: "Right...neighborly."

Gurr: "...and not use the Township as a "foil" between contested parties and "would certainly expect that before we get to that point, we've talked to our legal counsel about it, whether that's a slope we want to take a ride down."

Schafer stated it would be good for Bob Logee to review the Complaint form so he could make it work for him so he can "resolve stuff...but then you don't get to be anonymous anymore...that's over!"

Zoning Ordinance Violation Complaint Form (Cont'd):

Schafer: "A good example, a good example is when Bruce Cotton had (4) trailers just before he got on zoning. He's a retired police officer...he put (4) trailers down on his empty lot on...on Crystal Springs, and someone complained, okay? I know who the complainer was, Bob knows, but Bruce Cotton didn't know who it was, so he went after Craig, Fay's husband, and got in his face and got right in his face, screaming at him about it. Craig had no clue. He got blamed for what this other person did, and that's bullshit. You got that on the camera? (looking at Resident L. Wilcox) Okay, it's bullshit. And we know who it is."

Gurr: "Gordy, I think we understand the point you're trying to make."

Schafer: "Okay, I'm just emotional because I heard the story from Craig, and I'm done with it."

Gurr: "I've been involved in township governance for a long time, and nothing rankles me more than to go to meeting after meeting after meeting where there was nobody, or very few people, interested parties, and you'd see the same interests parties all the time, until some kind of an issue would come up, and then the place gets filled, there's a lot of acrimony, people feel bad, end up going away, feeling bad. And I got to the point where I started saying, I'm going to end every public meeting, and I'm going to say thank you, one and all, for being here, trying to make a difference in this wonderful place where we're, whatever circumstances brought you here..."

Schafer: "But you still have to tell the truth."

Gurr: "Be grateful. And, you know, do everything that's inside of your power to make it a better place to be. And, you know, planning and zoning can be one of those ingredients, you know, but you have to steadfastly resist using it as a hammer to clobber somebody over the head. Okay? And, you know, so my advice to everybody is be gracious and as kind as you can possibly be, and wake up tomorrow morning, you know, feeling good about where you are and who your neighbors are..." I'm out of line to expect that from my neighbors, but that's the way I am, so that's the way it is."

Ordinance Language Development Process (Re-addressed):

Whipple: "Hey, Jim, I got a question for you. I don't want to interrupt you, but it's on my mind. So, these questions that I've generated (*referring to the RVs and Campers Ordinance*), the way that everybody could take the questions and then have their time by themselves to come up with and maybe answer the question, and then when we meet the next time, we collaborate together with all those, and then we finalize."

Schafer: "Yeah."

Gurr: "Yep. Deliberation like that can take place. Keep in mind that when you send communiqes between, those can all be subpoenaed, and some of them can be requested under FOIA. So, you know..."

Whipple: "What's the best way to avoid that?"

Gurr: "No, it wouldn't avoid it."

VandenBerg: "Our email."

Whipple: "I understand, but I'm not saying that about email...You take this home, and the next time I see you, you have your ideas, and then we all talk together. I'm not saying I meet you outside, then we email back or forth..."

VandenBerg: "Okay."

Whipple: "This is your homework."

VandenBerg: "Okay."

Whipple: "Come back next meeting."

Ordinance Language Development Process (Readdressed):

Gurr: "It's constructive to do so, and I would encourage any one of our members who has developed some thinking along the lines for any subject that falls under planning and zoning to share it with one another. Okay? Just always keep in mind that we are an official body. We don't get to make the final disposition, but we do make recommendations, and consequently, we are a public body, and as a public body, our proceedings are under scrutiny, and all of the applicable sunshine requirements apply."

Whipple: "Understood."

Gurr: "Okay?"

PC Member: "Okay."

G. Mayes: "Jim?"

Gurr: "Yes, Gary."

G. Mayes: "I really appreciate what you just said there, because I've gone to different...planning commission meetings. That's pretty much how it works, is that you'll put your thoughts down...everyone will kind of do their research and bring it down to the table and give it to all the members prior to the meeting, and then they go through it, and they read them, and then they discuss them at the next meeting, and you highlight them."

Say, oh, I like this. I like this language. I like this part. That's the way I've seen it work. I've gone to several meetings, and it works excellent, because there's nobody in the public that can say you did it behind your back because you did it right in front of it. Now, your ideas have got to come...You can't come up with the ideas here. You can come up with the ideas at your home and submit those and then deliberate here. Soo, I like what you just said, and I think it's the perfect way to do it."

Gurr: "And that's nice to hear because my expectation is that that's what's going to happen going forward, and we're determined to do it."

Whipple: "I just feel like in the past we discussed a little bit tonight, and then there's not more than we did the next meeting, or we go this much farther."

G. Mayes: "Yes, it's discouraging....at the end of the meeting, the ones that have come up, they pretty much come up with language, and then the person who would...it would probably be Fay, would put it all together, and then they would present that in a final format, and then you vote on it. It's all good."

Whipple: "And your public comment is just a comment. It doesn't necessarily mean we have to say why we made that decision or that you don't like that decision. If you bring something that's valid to the board, you're like, oh, you know what...we did miss that. He's right. That's not a problem."

Gurr: "Ya know, one of the important things to keep in mind is the process...at this point, we're doing a little bit of catch-up, and it seems cumbersome, more cumbersome than it needs to be."

Gurr then provided an overview of the work the PC did for the Alternative Energy Ordinance which went smoothly but then mentioned "I think we need to amend it to also say something about artificial intelligence data centers....Because we've already talked about solar alternative energy, we've talked about battery storage and data centers. But we can get ahead of the whole discussion that is riling the state right now because we have that language already. And it's going to be easy enough to make an addition that makes it possible to feel that we've done our duty to our solar council.

Schafer: "State house ordered last week to scrap the rules...so everything, all that work got, because that was a, so it's all back to the way we get to control our own time. But the way it always should have been....so, that's scrapped Jim..."

Gurr: "No, Gretchen Whitmer still has to sign it. She never will."

Schafer: "I think she will...with bi-partisan...with bi-partisan."

(laughter)

Gurr: "Yeah...Good luck with that one."

G. Mayes: "But it's going in the right direction."

Schafer: "Yes. I didn't like to think about what that stuff. I have so many farms."

Whipple (*looking at the agenda*): "...what do we need next?"

Gurr: "We're ready to adjourn."

DOWNTOWN ALDEN CHRISTMAS CELEBRATION:

Schilling shared about Alden's Christmas celebration – "We had about 375 people show up. We raised \$11,776 for the Food Bank."

(clapping)

Schilling: "The Food Bank really needed it they were very appreciative...they got their checks today and people had a lot of fun."

Whipple: "Alright, let's make a motion."

Gurr: "Let's go home....at

Schafer: "Do we need a second?"

Gurr: "No, we don't need a second amendment or motion to adjourn at 5:59...say 6 o'clock."

VandenBerg: "Okay."

Schafer: "We got a lot done tonight."

NEXT REGULAR MEETING:

Thursday, February 5, 2026, at 5:00 p.m.

Provided by,

Helena Township Advocacy Group (HTAG)

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www.HTAGroup.org

