

**Enrolled Minutes of the Twenty-Seventh Regular Meeting or Special Meeting
For the Thirtieth Highland Town Council Regular Plenary
Business Meeting (In person) Monday, February 10, 2025**

The Thirtieth Town Council of the Town of Highland, Lake County, Indiana met in its regular plenary session on Monday, February 10, 2025 at 6:30 O'clock P.M. in the regular place, the Highland Municipal Building, 3333 Ridge Road, Highland, Indiana.

*This meeting was convened as an in person meeting and lived streamed to the Town of Highland Facebook. Facebook permits the public to observe and record the proceedings but allows no interaction between and among the Town Council and members of the public. The public is able to participate in person. Councilor Georgeff, Councilor Doug Turich, Councilor Alex Robertson, Councilor Tom Black all participated in person. Councilor Philip Scheeringa was absent.

Pursuant to HMC Section 2.05.130(A)(2), the Town Council considered and reviewed the agenda in an informal proceeding in the plenary meeting room before the president called the meeting to order.

The Town Council President George Georgeff presided over the meeting. The Town Clerk-Treasurer, Mark Herak, was present to memorialize the proceedings. The meeting was opened with Councilor Doug Turich reciting the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America and offering a prayer.

Roll Call: Present on roll call were Councilors George Georgeff, Doug Turich, Alex Robertson, Thomas Black were present as indicated. Councilor Philip Scheeringa was absent. Clerk-Treasurer, Mark Herak was also present. A quorum was attained.

Additional Officials Present: Metropolitan Police Chief Ralph Potesta; Redevelopment Director Maria Becerra; Mike Pipta, Fire Chief; Ed Dabrowski, Director of Information Technology, Kenneth J. Mika, Building Commissioner, Mark Knesek, Public Works Director, John Reed, Attorney with JPR Legal Services were present. Alex Brown, CPRP, Superintendent of Parks and Recreation was absent.

Guests: Theresa Badovich (remotely) and Robin Carlascio (remotely) of the Idea Factory were also present.

Minutes of the Previous Meetings: The minutes of the January 27, 2025 Plenary meeting were approved by general consent.

Special Orders: None

Comments from the Public or Visitors: none

Staff Reports: The following staff reports were received and filed.

Building Report January, 2025

PERMIT TYPE	#	Res.	Comm.	Est. Cost	Fee Collected
Commercial Buildings	0			\$ -	\$ -
Comm. Additions/Remodel	2		2	\$ 20,400.00	\$ 475.50
Signs	1		1	\$ 874.00	\$ 108.00
Single Family	0			\$ -	\$ -
Duplex/Condo	0			\$ -	\$ -
Residential Additions	0			\$ -	\$ -
Residential Remodeling	21	21		\$ 469,103.00	\$ 9,556.50
Concrete/Asphalt/Flatwork	1	1		\$ 35,800.00	\$ 685.50
Garages	0			\$ -	\$ -
Sheds	0			\$ -	\$ -
Decks & Porches	1	1		\$ 1,500.00	\$ 268.50
Fences	3	3		\$ 14,366.00	\$ 538.50
Above/In ground pools	0			\$ -	\$ -
Drain Tile/Waterproofing	3	2	1	\$ 46,794.00	\$ 1,066.50
Misc: Road Cut (1)	1	1		\$ -	\$ 148.50
Total Building Permits	33	29	4	\$ 588,837.00	\$ 12,847.50
Electrical Permits	11	8	3	\$ -	\$ 1,382.00
Mechanical Permits	22	20	2	\$ -	\$ 2,380.00
Plumbing Permits	13	12	1	\$ -	\$ 2,056.30
Water Meters	0			\$ -	\$ -
Water taps	0			\$ -	\$ -
Sewer/Storm Taps	1		1	\$ -	\$ 1,448.10
Total Plumbing Permits	14	12	2	\$ -	\$ 3,504.40

January 2025 Code Enforcement: 97 Investigations, 63 Warnings & 2 Citations were issued.
Inspections done for the month of January 2025 were as follows: 26 Building Inspections,
23 Plumbing Inspections, 7 HVAC and 20 Electrical Inspections. There was 1 Electrical Exam given.

Submitted By:


Kenneth J. Milka

Mark Herak

From: Denise Beck
Sent: Wednesday, February 5, 2025 2:28 PM
To: Mark Herak
Cc: Chad Kinley; Chief Michael Pipta
Subject: January Fire Department Stats

Good Afternoon,

January 2025 Stats

Types of Calls:	2025	YTD
General Alarms	14	14
Paid Still Alarms	32	32
Totals	46	46

Denise Beck

Administrative Assistant
Highland Fire Department
2901 Highway Ave.
Highland, IN 46322
(219)-923-9876

2025
TOWN OF HIGHLAND INJURIES FOR THE MONTH
JANUARY

CASE	DATE	DEPARTMENT	DESCRIPTION	Record Only No Med Treatment	OSHA Recordable	Not OSHA Recordable	Filed with WC Insurance
	OF INJURY						
RO-1	1/31/25	Public Works	While trying to pull a pump out of a hole, EE felt a pop that ran down his leg from his back.	X		X	X

RO = Record Only

DEPT	2025		2024	2025			
	INJURIES	YEAR TO		RESTRICTED	LOST DAYS	RESTRICTED	LOST DAYS
	THIS MONTH	DATE		DAYS THIS YEAR	THIS YEAR	DAYS 2024	2024
PARK & REC			1	4	56	4	56
FIRE			1				
POLICE			7		17	0	17
STREET	1	1	1				
WATER			1				
SEWER							
CT			1				
REDV			1				
TOTALS	1	1	13	4	73	4	73

Effective January 1, 2002 OSHA changed the recordkeeping guidelines. We now count the number of days lost from the day after the injury until the employee returns to work. Weekends, holidays, vacation days or other days scheduled off are included in the lost days count to a maximum of 180 days

Communications:

Police Commission & Water Board Meetings – February 13 at 6:30
Town Hall and Offices will be closed Monday- February 17 in honor of President's Day.
Tuesday's Garbage and Recycling will not be affected by Monday's holiday and pick-up will be as normal.
Sanitary Board – Tuesday – February 18 at 6:30
Plan Commission – Wednesday- February 19 at 6:30
Park Board – Thursday- February 20 at 6:30
Restaurant Crawl February 25th
South Shore Convention - 2025 Restaurant Weeks – February 17 to March 2nd
All on-street parking is banned when there is more the 2 inches of snow

Appointments:

• **Statutory Boards and Commissions**

Executive Appointments (May be made in meeting or at another time)

Regional Statutory Commissions or Boards

1. **Economic Development Commission.** (1) Appointment to be made by the municipal executive, but requiring nomination from the Town Council. *(Currently held by Blane Roberts, term ending 1st Monday February 2025 and up to 90 days after term expires if no action)*
2. **Lake County Convention and Visitors Bureau Board of Directors.** (1) Appointment by Town Council President. (NOT DUE UNTIL JUNE 30 2025) *(Currently serving Christine Cash) Appointing authority must give sole consideration to individuals who are knowledgeable about or employed as executives or managers in Hotel, Motel, Banking, Real Estate and hospitality. Cannot hold an elected or appointed political office*

Home Rule Boards and Commissions

3. **Main Street Bureau Board of Directors.** Town Council President appointment. (1) Appointment. Town Council Representative must be a member of the Town Council. *Term co-extensive with term of appointee. (Note: Currently serving is Alex Robertson)*
4. **Tree Board.** (2) Appointments to be nominated by the Town Council but appointed by the
Town Council President. *(Note: Currently held by Richard Underkofler and Blane Roberts, term ending 1st Monday January 2025). Term is for three (3) years Richard Underkofler; Blane Roberts)*

- a. Nomination by the Town Council. *(The council would pass a motion to nominate.)*
 - b. Appointment by executive. *(If nominee is acceptable, the Town Council President may appoint.)*
- **Tree Board Chairperson.** The Town Council President also appoints the Chairperson to be selected from the membership of the board. (See HMC Section 8.25.030 (C)) *(Currently held by James Colias.)*

Legislative Appointments

1. **Advisory Board of Zoning Appeals:** (1) appointment to be made by Fiscal Body. *(Note: Currently held by David Helms, term ending 1st Monday January 2025). Term is for three (3) years.*

Toya Smith (appointed by the Plan Commission to the Advisory Board of Zoning Appeals) (Term co-extensive with her Plan Commission term – 1st Monday in January 2025)

2. **Park and Recreation Board.** (1) appointment to be made by the Town Council. *(Note: Current appointee is Carlos Aburto (D), term ending 1st Monday January 2025) Term is for four (4) years. (Current composition is 2 democrats and 2 republicans. Not more than 2 members may be of the same party.)*
3. **Town Board of Metropolitan Police Commissioners.** (2) appointments to be made by the Town Council. *(Note: Current appointees are Mike Danko (R) and Larry Moses (R), term ending 1st Monday January 2025). Term is for three (3) years. (Current composition for these five citizen positions is three democrats and two republicans)*

Regional Statutory Commissions or Boards

4. **Lake County Solid Waste Management District Board of Directors.** (1) No action necessary unless a change is desired. *(Note: Currently serving Tom Black) Must be a member of the Town Council. Term is co-extensive with term on council unless legislative body acts otherwise.*

Home Rule Commissions

5. **Main Street Bureau Board:** (17) appointments to be made by the Town Council. Term: Two years ending 1 Jan 2025. *Currently serving are Renee Reinhart, Alex Robertson, Diane Barr-Roumbus, James Roumbus Sandy McKnight, Al Simmons, Ben Reinhart, Sandy Ray, Ben Tomera, Laura Pilewski and Desiree Biro.*

General Orders and Unfinished Business: None

New Business:

- 1. Proposed Ordinance No. 1814:** An Ordinance to Clarify Section 5.11.02 of the Highland Compensation and Benefit Ordinance, commonly known at the Employees Handbook, particularly the Provisions Special Administrative Leave under Extreme and Unexpected Circumstances concerning National Emergency, All Pursuant to I.C. 36-1-3 ET SEQ.

Councilor Black introduced and moved the consideration of Ordinance No. 1814 at the same meeting of introduction. Councilor Robertson seconded. Upon a roll call vote, a unanimous vote being necessary to consider the Ordinance on the same night of introduction, there were four (4) affirmatives and no negatives. The motion passed. The Ordinance could be considered at the same meeting of its introduction.

Councilor Black moved the passage and adoption of Ordinance No. 1814 at the same meeting of its introduction. Councilor Robertson seconded. Upon a roll call vote, a two-thirds vote being necessary, there were four (4) affirmative votes and no negatives. The motion passed. Ordinance No. 1814 was passed and adopted upon the signature of the municipal executive at the same meeting of its introduction.

**Ordinance No. 1814
of the
TOWN of HIGHLAND, INDIANA**

AN ORDINANCE to CLARIFY SECTION 5.11.02 OF the HIGHLAND COMPENSATION AND BENEFITS ORDINANCE, PARTICULARLY THE PROVISIONS REGARDING SPECIAL ADMINISTRATIVE LEAVE UNDER EXTREME AND UNEXPECTED CIRCUMSTANCES CONCERNING NATIONAL EMERGENCIES

WHEREAS, IC 36-8-1 et.seq, and particularly IC 36-8-2-4 confer upon all local units, except Townships, the powers to "regulate conduct, or use or possession of property, that might endanger the public health, safety, or welfare.";

Whereas, On March 13, 2020, the President of the United States of America declared a National Emergency concerning the novel coroavirus, now more specifically known as COVID-19, and the State of Indiana, though its Governor and other authorities have proposed guidelines, bans, and various edicts concerning the conduct of society in light of the National Emergency;

Whereas, On March 23, 2020 the Town Council passed Ordinance No. 1715, creating Section 5.11.02 of the Highland Compensation and Benefits Ordinance, labeled Special Administrative Leave, granting administrative leave with pay and continuation of benefits during the novel coroavirus, more specifically known as Covid-19, to lessen the hardship of exempt and non-exempt employees of the Town of Highland affected by the novel coroavirus;

Whereas, On April 10, 2023, the President of the United States of America signed into law declaring that the National Emergency and Public Health Emergency concerning the novel coronavirus, now more specifically known as COVID-19, would be ending on May 11, 2023;

Whereas, the Town Council determined that it is in the best interests of the Town to make clarifying modifications to be necessary and desirable in the administration of the municipality and of benefit to the Town of Highland, its employees and the public.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT HEREBY ORDAINED BY the Town Council of the Town of Highland, Lake County, Indiana, as follows:

Section 1. The President of the United States of America declared the novel coronavirus, more specifically known as COVID-19, ended on May 11, 2023;

Section 2. That the Highland Compensation and Benefits Ordinance be clarified as to Section 5.11.02, "Special Administrative Leave" as it applies to the novel coronavirus, now more specifically known as COVID-19;

Section 3. That the Highland Compensation and Benefits Ordinance Section 5.11.02, "Special Administrative Leave" will no longer apply to exempt and non-exempt employees of the Town of Highland affected by the novel coronavirus, now more specifically known as COVID-19;

Section 4. The Town of Highland provides other generous Employment Benefits to provide wage continuation for exempt and non-exempt employees who may become ill because of the novel coronavirus, now more specifically known as COVID-19;

Section 5. The Town of Highland treats the novel coronavirus, now more specifically known as COVID-19, like any other illness under the Town's regular sick leave policy;

Section 6. An employee, absent from work and who is affected by the novel coronavirus, now more specifically known as COVID-19, will be required to use their personal or vacation days for PTO to provide wage continuation or the employee's absence will be treated as Unscheduled PTO.

Section 7. That an emergency exists for the immediate taking effect of this Ordinance, which, subject to the provisions of this ordinance, shall become effective and shall remain in full force and effect from and *after the date of its passage and adoption* pursuant to any constraints currently in force and until its repeal or amendment by subsequent enactment;

Introduced and Filed on the 10th Day of February 2025. Consideration on the same day or at same meeting of introduction sustained a vote of 4 in favor and 0 opposed, pursuant to IC 36-5-2-9.8.

DULY ORDAINED AND ADOPTED this 10th Day of February 2025, by the Town Council of the Town of Highland, Lake County, Indiana, having been passed by a vote of 4 in favor and 0 opposed.

**TOWN COUNCIL of the TOWN of
HIGHLAND, INDIANA**

George Georgeff, President (IC 36-5-2-10)

Attest:

Mark Herak
Clerk-Treasurer (IC 33-42-4-1; IC 36-5-6-5)

- **Councilor Doug Turich:** *Park and Recreation Board Liaison • Liaison and Plan Commission Member • Advisory Board of Zoning Appeals Liaison • Redevelopment Commission Member • Liaison to Building & Inspection Department*

Councilor Turich acknowledged Building Commissioner Ken Mika who gave the following report:

2/10/25 TOWN COUNCIL MEETING BUILDING AND INSPECTION REPORT

- BZA / PLAN COMMISSION No Report.
- A Building Permit has been released for an Interior Bulldout of an open occupancy at 2213 Main Street / Cardinal Campus for what will be an Edward Jones financial consultant's office.
- Currently reviewing a Building Permit application and drawings for the bulldout of the space at 2625 Main St. (Grimmers) for a medical supply and distributor ACU Medical.
- In light of the snow we are forecasted to receive this Wednesday the public is reminded that all vehicles need to be removed from the streets when the snowfall exceeds 2 inches. Cars left on the Street may be cited for violation of the ordinance.

Ken Mika
Town of Highland
Building Commissioner / Zoning Administrator

Councilor Turich said he had spoken to Park Superintendent Alex Brown, who was absent from tonight's meeting and Alex Brown said he had no report.

- **Councilor Alex Robertson:** • *Redevelopment Commission Member* • *Fire Department Liaison*
• *Public Works Liaison* • *Liaison to Main Street Bureau* • *Liaison to the Tree Board*
• *Liaison to the Highland Neighbor for Sustainability.*

Councilor Alex Robertson acknowledged Fire Chief Mike Pipta. Chief Pipta reviewed the report found under Staff Reports earlier in the agenda for the month of January. He added that they are looking to start a more training this year and attain some State certifications.

Council Robertson acknowledged Public Works Director Mark Knesek and asked him if he was ready for the heavy snow predicted on Wednesday. He acknowledged that they were ready. He said as hopes it is not like last Friday night's that was freezing rain. The public works crews had to continue to drive around to find slick spots and salt. He had crews out to 3 o'clock a.m. in the morning. He reminded the Council that public works crews are working twelve (12) hour shifts during the winter. He said weather permitting, the Suburban Forestry Group is supposed to be starting our tree inventory. He said they will be walking every block in Town. They will measure the width of the trunks and mark down the species and give an assessment on the trees condition. He said he is seeing a lot more failing Silver Maples.

- **Councilor Thomas (Tom) Black:** *Redevelopment Commission Liaison and Member* • *Member of the Lake County Solid Waste Management District Board* • *Member of the Northwestern Indiana Regional Planning Commission (NIPRC)* • *Shared Ethics Representative* • *Liaison Traffic Safety*

Councilor Black began by saying the Environmental Committee of NIRPC was supposed to meet last week but the meeting was canceled due to the icy conditions. He said the Traffic Safety Committee met last week and they approved installing signs prohibiting backing into the parking spots along Highway Avenue. He said he and Councilor Georgeff had the opportunity to sit down with State Senator Dernulc and express the impact on the Town if SB1 is adopted as currently written. He said he has been receiving a lot of calls regarding that bill and HB1461 requiring a wheel tax. Hopefully, Senator Dernulc will take our concerns to his fellow colleagues

- **Councilor Philip Scheeringa:** *Redevelopment Commission Member* • *Information Communications and Technology Department Liaison* • *Metropolitan Police Commissioners Liaison.*

Councilor Scheeringa was absent from the meeting due to a work commitment. .

- **Councilor George Georgeff:** *Town Executive (I.C. 36-1-2-5-(4); I.C. 36-5-2-2; I.C. 36-5-2-7); • Board of Trustees of the Police Pension Fund, Chair (By Law) • Budget Committee Chairman • Redevelopment Commission Member • Liaison to the Board of Water Works • Liaison to the Sanitary Board*

Councilor Georgeff acknowledged Metropolitan Police Chief Ralph Potesta who went over crime statistics, comparing the 2024 Patrol Divisions Stats to those of 2023 statistics:

Town Council Meeting notes for 02/10/2025 – Police Department

2024 Patrol Division Stats (compared to 2023):

	2024	2023	
Total Arrests	668	361	(+307)
Total Citations	4,773	4,402	(+371)
Total Warnings	5,257	5,123	(+134)
Call Handled	10,727	9,572	(+1155)
Accidents Handled	1,082	1,084	(-2)
Fatal Accidents	0	2	(-2)
DUI's	147	88	(+59)
Homicides	0	0	
Robberies	7	6	(+1)
Forcible Sex Offenses	6	11	(-4)
Residential Burglaries	7	18	(-11)
Non Residential	7	4	(+3)
Assaults	108	108	
Thefts	353	331	(+22)
Stolen Autos	15	17	(-2)

Shooting update: All parties involved knew each other. Stemmed from an argument they were all in the previous night. Charges are still pending as the Prosecutors Office is requesting some phone forensics be completed. This takes some time. Our main suspect lived in town in the involved apartment with his sister. Both have already vacated the apartment per the landlord.

Early yesterday morning, SWAT Officers Jim Mullins and Corey Anderson assisted Lake Station with a subject who was barricaded in a residence with a small child. Subject was eventually taken into custody and child was uninjured.

Friday January 31st – Overnight burglary to a business in Highland Grove Mall. No forced entry. Investigation revealed numerous former employees have keys. CID investigating.

Thursday January 30th 8:20am - Armed Robbery at the Citgo Gas station next to the town hall. Highland resident robbed in the parking lot by a subject who approached him and asked for gas money. When our resident pulled out his wallet and opened it, the suspect grabbed it and ran to his car. Suspect was identified as a 22 year old male out of Gary. CIU Detectives Kowal and Durocher identified him and he has been charged.

Animal Control 4-Cats dealt with....Brought to the Humane Society and fixed....Then released.
Getting dogs adopted in a hurry. Pound is empty as of now.

Councilor George Georgeff then acknowledged IT Director Ed Dabrowski who said he had no report.

Councilor Georgeff then acknowledged Redevelopment Director Maria Becerra who gave the following report:

Town Council Meeting 2-10-2025 Maria Becerra

Redevelopment Report

Tax Abatement CF-1 reminders sent out, they are due back 2-28-25

Working with 2 applicants for the Commercial Grant

Safe Streets for All draft is in and circulated to Stake Holders
Final Plan to be ready by month end.

We are in communication with the Ultra property owner for updates on the Redevelopment of that parcel

The acres that are owned by Redevelopment south of the Old Coach USA have be published for bids due 2-14-25

Main St. had its first meeting and elected their officers. The approved HNS to manage the Community Garden.

That concluded comments from the Council and President Georgeff then turned it over to comments from visitor's or residents, reminding them to limit their comments to 2 minutes.

Comments from Visitors or Residents:

Larry Kondrat, Highland, began by saying he Councilor Georgeff's name in the paper. He said you guys are going into study session and considering changing the rules regarding officers who have moved out of Highland before the end of the year and wouldn't receive a stipend. The ordinance was in place and the officer knew the rules. He said the first officer who complains to you and you immediately fold and want to change the ordinance. The ordinance states you are supposed to live in Highland. The ordinance is in place to attract officers to relocate and stay here and now you are going to blow it off. Your gonna discuss allowing the fire chief to live out of town, yet the Police Commission required the Police Chief to move back and live in Town. The Building Commissioner is required to live in Town, as well as, the part-time electrical inspector. The Director of Parks and Public Works Director choose to live in Town but you are not going to require the Fire Chief to live in Town. This is on top of the Council wanting to spend over \$1 million to expand the Central Fire Station and provide sleeping quarters or bedrooms and a \$80,000 kitchen. You are talking about spending \$1 million on a fence around Main Square and raising the garbage rates. This comes after the Council had a discussion about implementing a wheel tax. Guys, its got to end. Your putting a burden on the taxpayers who are getting older and are on fixed incomes. .

Councilor Georgeff asked if there were any other comments. Hearing none, he closed comments from the public and brought it back to the Council. He then asked for a motion to pay claims.

Payment of Accounts Payable Vouchers. There being no further comments from visitors or residents, Councilor Robertson moved to allow the vendors accounts payable vouchers as filed on the pending accounts payable docket, covering the period December 25, 2024 through January 14, 2025. Councilor Black seconded. Upon a roll call vote, there were four (4) affirmatives and no negatives. The motion passed. The accounts payable vouchers for the vendor docket were allowed, payments allowed in advance were ratified, the payroll dockets listed were ratified and for all remaining invoices, the Clerk-Treasurer was authorized to make payment.

Accounts payable vouchers December 25, 2024- January 14, 2025 in the amount of **\$1,306,765.45**.

General Fund, \$529,923.09 MVH Fund, \$46,420.00.; LAW Enforcement Continuing Education Training and Supply Fund, \$1,018.00; Donation, \$1,045.34; Special Events \$8,621.67; Corporation Bond-Exempt, \$367,500.00; MCCD, \$18,455.20; Information and Communications Technology Fund, \$19,542.33; Gasoline Fund, \$21,876.40; Police Pension, \$66,341.54; Insurance Premium \$226,031.88;

Payroll Docket for payday of December 27, 2024, by fund:

General, \$315,049.23

Payroll Docket for payday of December 27, 2024:

Office of Clerk-Treasurer, \$16,770.56; Building and Inspection Department, \$9,075.34; Metropolitan Police Department, \$150,284.73; Public Works Department (Agency), \$80,662.98; Fire Department, \$1,911.68 and Information and Technology Department, \$4,205.45; Total Payroll: \$262,910.74

Payroll Docket for payday of December 31, 2024 by fund:

Total Payroll by fund: \$78,111.50;

Payroll Docket for payday of December 31, 2024:

Boards & Commissions. \$11,033.62; Police Pension, \$66,233.89;

Total Payroll: \$77,267.51.

Payroll Docket for payday of January 10, 2025, by fund:

General, \$373,950.02

Payroll Docket for payday of January 10, 2025:

Office of Clerk-Treasurer, \$16,678.52; Building and Inspection Department, \$10,137.78; Metropolitan Police Department, \$172,280.33; Public Works Department (Agency), \$75,530.80; Fire Department, \$1,900.76; and Information and Technology Department, \$4,205.45;
Total Payroll: \$ 280,733.64

Adjournment of Plenary Meeting. There being no further business on the agenda, the Town Council President declared the regular plenary meeting of the Town Council of Monday, February 10, 2025, adjourned at 6:55 o'clock p.m.

Mark Herak
Clerk-Treasurer

Approved by the Town Council at its meeting of February 17, 2025.