

**Enrolled Memorandum of the Meeting
Study Session/Meeting (In person)
Thirtieth Town Council of Highland
Monday, March 10, 2025**

The Thirtieth Town Council of the Town of Highland, Lake County, Indiana met in a study session on **Monday, March 10, 2025**, immediately at the adjournment of the March 10, 2025 Plenary Meeting (7:20 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. All Councilors were simultaneously seen and heard. Councilor Georgeff, Councilor Turich, Councilor Robertson, Councilor Black and Councilor Philip Scheeringa all participated in person. .

Silent Roll Call: Councilors George Georgeff, Doug Turich, Alex Robertson, Tom Black, Philip Scheeringa, were present in person as indicated. The Clerk-Treasurer, Mark Herak was present to memorialize the proceedings. *A quorum was attained.*

Officials Present: IT Director Ed Dabrowski and Metropolitan Police Chief Ralph Potesta were in person.

x. Discussion: Appointments.

Unless otherwise noted, all terms expire on the 1st Monday in January 2025 and or until a successor is appointed or qualified, not exceeding ninety (90) days.

• Statutory Boards and Commissions

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

Regional Statutory Appointments.

- 1.. 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 Commissions or Boards

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.

Regional Statutory Appointments

6. **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 Home Rule Commissions
7. **Main Street Bureau Board:** (17) appointments to be made by the Town Council.
(Note: Current Appointees are: Diane Barr-Roumbus, James Roumbus, Sandy McKnight, Al Simmons, Sandy Ray, Ben Tomera and Desiree Biro, term ending 1st Monday January 2027). Term is for two (2) years.

x. **Discussion:** Interview:

7:15 pm – Mike Danko – confirmed.

The Council appointed Mr. Danko during the March 10, 2025 Plenary Meeting and this item was then removed from the study session agenda. It is a three (3) year appointment.

- x. **Discussion:** Proposed Ordinance No. 1808-D: An Ordinance to Amend Ordinance No. 1808 to Establish the Wage and Salary Rates of the Elected Officers, the Non-Elected Officers, and the Employees of the Town of Highland, Indiana particularly regarding the Creation of an Exempt, Full-Time, Police Social Worker position within the Metropolitan Police Department.

Metropolitan Police Chief Potesta explained to the Council, the rationale for creating the position of Police Social Worker. It would be an exempt, full-time position.

Councilor Scheeringa then gave a brief explanation to the Council. He said he has been discussing this with the police chief for a long-time. He said he was at his wife's work and there was a social worker at the school and she was telling him that she was paid through the opioid funds and fund raiser events. The Chief arranged a meeting with the social worker. Griffith actually has two (2) social workers. The purpose of the meeting was to hear first hand how the program worked and how it was funded and to see if it would be feasible in Highland. The Highland School Superintendent was at the meeting, as well as, a guidance counselor. They liked the idea and felt it would be beneficial. They were also told the School Town would have to contribute to the operating expenses. They did not commit to a dollar amount but did agree to contribute.

Chief Potesta then continued and said he believes Griffith to be the 1st department in the area to have this type of position. He added it has been very successful. He said Munster just sent out a job posting that they are now looking for a police social worker. It's kind of a new thing going on across the whole country. He said the schools are totally on board with the program and excited to get a program like this started. He said the social workers have resources that the police department don't have to provide help to the kids and their families. If we run into a family in need, Highland will call Griffith and the social workers will assist Highland. He said they're putting the funding together now but the first step is for the Council to adopt Ordinance No. 1808-D which creates the position and salary range.

Councilor Scheeringa said Hammond has a social worker to assist fire and police personnel when dealing with a crisis situation or the sights they see that affect each in a different way.

Chief Potesta related that he has been on calls of a domestic and the next day the children are getting in trouble in school as the information was not been relayed to anyone at the school who could have talked to the children. The social workers are educated on how to deal with those things and work with those kids and their families. He said in many of the cases, when they get called to those scenes, they don't have the time to follow-up with the children or their families and by having a social worker on staff, they can get reach out to the children and their families. He said it would be an exempt, full-time position based in the school during the school year, even though the school isn't paying that much. He said he feels that will be most beneficial to have the social worker work out of the school during the school year. The social worker will work out of the police station during the summer. However, if the social worker is needed by the police department during the school year, she/he will be able to respond. He did say that the social worker would be available on off-hours or call-out but he added much can be handled over the phone.

Councilor Scheeringa said the social worker at Griffith will assist Highland in the hiring process, as she trains others since Griffith was the 1st in the area. He also said they are very good at getting grants and will help Highland with getting grants and funding which is important because opioid money won't last forever. He said it is a great way to use that money to help people in our community because let's face it, domestics are going up, drug use is going up. You're seeing kids vaping in schools more often and this person is someone who can intervene.

Chief Potesta said the social worker presents a softer side than most police officers. They're they're a little bit more empathetic and I don't mean that in a bad way. He was not suggesting Highland Police Officers aren't empathetic. The social worker is gentler and kinder and are trained to handle those situations in a different way. He said Attorney Reed knows one of the social workers from Griffith.

Attorney Reed said the benefits outweigh the costs.

Councilor Turich said he thought it was a great idea and asked the Clerk-Treasurer if funding was available to sustain as he would hate for the program to start and the funds dried up and the program had to be discontinued.

The Clerk-Treasurer said he has talked with the Chief and Shawn Anderson about the funding mechanisms to sustain the program and felt confident the program could be sustained even if some form of SB1 passes. He said as Councilor Scheeringa said, money will be used from the opioid distribution but emphasized, opioid funds are shrinking each year, as well as, the schools will be kicking in. Other suggestions were not to fill the vacated position of the officer who just left for Schererville. He said as Councilor Scheeringa said, as these programs continue to gain in popularity, more funding will become available either by the state or in grants. And of- course fund raising is always an option.

Councilor Georgeff asked about call-outs. He was directed to look at page 2 of 5, where in the salary ordinance it has a provision of a two (2) hour minimum call-out pay for the social worker.

Councilor Scheeringa said this topic will be discussed at the next Police Commission meeting. As he said earlier, fund raising is a key to the Griffith program. He said in talking with the Griffith social workers, the program basically pays for itself. People are always willing to contribute. He felt this would be a huge benefit to the kids of this Town.

The Clerk-Treasurer explained that the range, which can be adjusted by the Council is from \$54,000, which is the state average low end to \$72,000 which is a little less than the state average high end. The two (2) social workers from Griffith make \$54,000 and \$60,000 respectively. He then explained the process once the Council approves the position. The job description has to be posted internally for five (5) business days. After which, if there are no internal candidates, the job description will be posted externally. While that is going on, once the interlocal is approved by the Town Attorney and Town Council, a copy will be sent to the School Town for their review and comments. Once both sides agree on a working document, a Works Board Order will be adopted authorizing the Interlocal. The Interlocal will then be uploaded into gateway. He then went into detail what was listed in the job description. (see below the actual job description)

Councilor Georgeff asked if this position could also be used by the parochial schools in Highland? (OLG, Highland Christian and the Baptist School on Orchard)

Chief Potesta said it would and the Clerk-Treasurer said he would reach out to all three (3) schools.

Councilor Black asked Chief Potesta if he felt one (1) social worker would be sufficient?

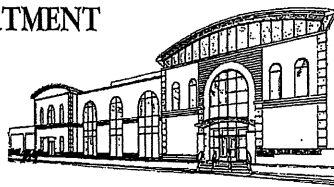
Chief Potesta said at this time they are coming to the Council only asking for one (1) position. If the need arises and funding is available, they may come to the Council for another position. He said, just having one social worker will put Highland ahead of the other communities in the area.



HIGHLAND POLICE DEPARTMENT

3315 RIDGE ROAD
HIGHLAND, IN 46322-2097
(219) 838-3184

RALPH J. POTESTA, CHIEF OF POLICE



Notice of Available Position

Department: Highland Police Department
Position: Police Social Worker (Full Time)
Position Reports to: Administrative Commander
Posted: Monday, March 10, 2025
Post Period Ends: Friday, March 14, 2025

The Highland Police Department is accepting applications for position of full-time Police Social Worker. All employees of the Town of Highland who possess the qualifications listed below are eligible to apply. Internal applications will be accepted beginning Monday, March 10, 2025 up unto the close of the business day on Friday, March 14, 2025.

Applicants shall possess the following qualifications:

- Master of Social Work (MSW) from an accredited college/university of social work with a minimum of 60 graduate semester hours.
- Association of Social Work Boards (ASWB) issued license to practice in the State of Indiana.
- Licensed Social Worker (LSW) or higher.
- Knowledge and skills for direct and indirect intervention including: crisis intervention on an individual, group or family basis.
- Consulting with administrators, teachers, parents, and other professionals about student problems and appropriate change strategies, and networking with school programs and community agencies to provide essential services for families and children.
- Proficient application and knowledge of the skills and processes for effective casework management, including knowledge of social and environmental conditions, cultural diversity, and family systems.
- Execution of duties with awareness of all district requirements and board policies.
- Two years of work experience related to the field of social work and criminal justice, including assessment of physical, mental, social and economic needs of a diverse population and basic knowledge of the court system.
- Ability to work independently, take initiative, and work collaboratively as part of a team.
- Possess strong evaluation, written and verbal communication skills, interpersonal skills, and active listening skills.
- Possess a valid state driver license and pass a criminal background investigation.

Police Social Worker Job Description

The Police Social Worker will primarily focus on addressing student behavioral issues, mental health concerns, and family challenges through social work interventions. The Police Social Worker will work in conjunction with school administrators and guidance counselors to provide support and connect students with needed resources. The Police Social Worker will counsel those grieving for a lost loved one and develop programs for at-risk youth. The Police Social Worker will assist our first responders to help negotiate with those individuals in crisis and will provide support for domestic violence and substance abuse victims. The Police Social Worker will also be available to help our first responders in dealing with a crisis situation whether on the job or personal.

This description is not intended to contain every function/responsibility that may be required to be performed by the Police Social Worker.



**ORDINANCE No. 1808-D of the
TOWN of HIGHLAND, INDIANA**

AN ORDINANCE to AMEND ORDINANCE No. 1808 to Establish the Wage and Salary Rates of the Elected Officers, the Non-Elected Officers, and the Employees of the Town of Highland, Indiana particularly regarding a change to the Staffing Authority of the Highland Metropolitan Police Department Creating the Position of Police Social Worker and the Associated Pay Provision within the Metropolitan Police Department.

WHEREAS, Title 36, Article 1 Chapter 4 of the Indiana Code confers certain general corporate powers on the several units of government in Indiana;

WHEREAS, Section fifteen of that chapter specifically provides that a unit of government may fix the level of compensation of its officers and employees;

WHEREAS, I.C. 36-5-3-2 provides in pertinent part that the town legislative body shall provide reasonable compensation for the other town officers and employees;

WHEREAS, I.C. 36-5-3-2(b), further provides that the Town Legislative body shall, by ordinance fix the compensation of its own members and the Town Clerk-Treasurer;

WHEREAS, I.C. 36-5-3-2(c) still further provides that the compensation of an elected town officer may not be changed in the year for which it is fixed, nor may it be reduced below the amount fixed for the previous year;

WHEREAS, The Town Council of the Town of Highland, as the Town Legislative body, now desires to amend the ordinance that was adopted to fix the compensation of its elected officers, appointed officers and employees of the Town for the year 2024 and thereafter as amended;

WHEREAS, The Town Council of the Town of Highland, as the town legislative body, has been advised that it is necessary create the position in the Metropolitan Police Department of: **POLICE SOCIAL WORKER**; and

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT HEREBY ORDAINED by the Town Council of the Town of Highland, Lake County, Indiana, that the Staffing Authority of the Metropolitan Police Department is modified and fixed, pursuant to the provisions indicated herein and as follows:

Section 1. That Section 10 of Ordinance No. 1808 be amended by adding the position of and pay provision for a Police Social Worker position which shall be numbered as Section 10 (F)(7) and read as follows:

Section 10. *Metropolitan Police Department.* That subject to the provisions of this ordinance, the salary and wages for the non-elected officers and employees of the Town of Highland are hereby fixed for its **Metropolitan Police Department** as follows:

(7) Police Social Worker	(1)	\$2,192.00 -	\$2,769.00
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Section 2. That Section 10 of Ordinance No. 1808 be amended by adding the position of Police Social Worker position to Section 10 (F)(6) and read as follows:

Section 10. *Metropolitan Police Department.* That subject to the provisions of this ordinance, the salary and wages for the non-elected officers and employees of the Town of Highland are hereby fixed for its **Metropolitan Police Department** as follows:

Matron or Clerk Duty or Police Social Worker (call-out) hourly rate - 2 hour minimum

Section 3. That all portions of ordinances in conflict with this ordinance are hereby repealed and are of no further force nor effect;

Section 4. That a job description be on file for any position created and authorized by this ordinance and maintained on file with the Metropolitan Police Department and the Office of the Clerk-Treasurer;

Section 5. That except where otherwise noted herein, other compensation and benefits matters not expressly provided herein for salaried and hourly employees and the Clerk-Treasurer shall be as set forth in the Compensation and Benefits Ordinance, commonly called the Employee Handbook as amended from time to time;

Section 6. (A) This Ordinance shall become effective and shall remain in full force and effect beginning *after its passage and adoption* pursuant to any constraints currently in force in Ordinance No. 1808 and until its repeal or amendment by subsequent enactment;

(B) That the Clerk-Treasurer shall have authority to implement the provisions of this ordinance pursuant to the authority expressly set forth in IC 36-5-6-6 (a) (3) & (4).

Introduced on the 24th day of March 2025. Consideration on same day or at same meeting of introduction sustained a vote of in favor and opposed, pursuant to IC 36-5-2-9.8.

DULY ORDAINED and ADOPTED this 24th Day of March 2025, by the Town Council of the Town of Highland, Lake County, Indiana, having been passed by a vote of in favor and 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; IC 36-5-2-10.2)

X. DISCUSSION: INTERLOCAL AGREEMENT

This is a place holder appraising the Council of what the next step should they approve the proposed of Police Social Worker position.

- x. Discussion: Resolution No. 2025-06:** A Resolution Approving an Interlocal Cooperation Agreement between the Incorporated Town of Highland and the School Town of Highland for the Police Social Worker Program Services for 2025-2026.

This is a place holder appraising the Council of what the next step should they approve the proposed of Police Social Worker position.

- x. Discussion: Proposed Ordinance No. 1815:** An Ordinance to Amend Chapter 12.15 of the Highland Municipal Code By Amending Solid Waste Service Fees Set Forth in Subdivision (F) of Section 12.15.090 of the Municipal Code Pursuant to IC 36-9-25 Et Sequitur and Modifying or Amending Certain Other Provisions for Technical Clarity and Correctness.

The Council adopted Ordinance No. 1815 on the March 10, 2025 Plenary Meeting on the same night as introduction and this item was removed from the study session agenda.

- x. Discussion:** Request from a Jackie Perez-Villicana, asking if the Town of Highland would be willing to share a post on their social media page(s) and possibly to their employees during MS week, which is March 9 through March 15. She said she would provide all information/photos. MS Awareness Week is March 9-15 this year as she is looking to get awareness out as much as she can including the MS local Walk in Highland in May.

The Council President read the Executive Proclamation Declaring the week of March 9th through the 15th, MS Awareness Week during the March 10, 2025 plenary meeting. The Council asked the IT Director to change the lighting downtown from white to

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orange during the MS Awareness Week as requested by Ms. Perez-Villicana. Mr. Dabrowski said he would change the lights after the meeting as he is able to do it from his phone. . The Council agreed to place on the Town's website, literature provided by Ms. Perez-Villicana regarding MS.

Good Evening Highland Town Council,

My name is Jacklyn and I am a board member for the Indiana, Kentucky, Tennessee Chapter of the National Multiple Sclerosis Society. I am a life long Lake County resident and I am trying to bring more awareness about MS to our county. I was diagnosed with MS in 2017 at the height of my teaching career in East Chicago. When I was diagnosed I didn't know where to start and then I found the NMSS. Since 2017 I have participated in our local Walk MS event in Highland and also joined the board to work with people in surrounding states to bring more awareness of what MS is. Last year I created the event, Light Your Government Building Orange for MS during MS awareness week where I was able to get a few cities/towns in Lake County to light their buildings orange one day during the week. This year, due to my own health, I won't be able to distribute lights but I still want to try to bring more awareness to our area.

I would like to ask if the Town of Highland would be willing to share a post on their social media page(s) and possibly to their employees during MS week? I will provide all information/photos. MS Awareness Week is March 9-15 this year and I am looking to still get awareness out as much as I can as well as about our local Walk in Highland in May where I will be "hosting" by giving the opening remarks. 😊 If you would like to participate just let me know who to send the information to and I will have all of the materials sent next week. Thank you for your time!

Jackie Perez-Villicana

The Clerk-Treasurer explained that the next three (3) items will be on March 24, 2025 Plenary Meeting on behalf of the Redevelopment Director who was absent because of the loss of her Mother. The Council must approve each year, those businesses currently receiving a tax abatement in order for the tax abatement to be in force for the next year. The determination is based upon the CF-1 and the recommendation of the Redevelopment Director, that they are in compliance and the rebatement would be in force for another year.

- x. **Discussion:** Consideration of the Compliance with the Statement of Benefits as filed and represented by People's Bank S.B. 3915, 3919 & 3927 Ridge Road, Highland. At its meeting of September 14, 2015, the Highland Town Council passed Resolution No. 2015-37 approving this application and its terms for property tax abatement upon the increase in assessed value of \$667,800 as well as a new job and retention of five existing jobs all in consequence of construction of a new building, a People's Bank SB Branch at 3915, 3919 and 3927 Ridge Road, for a period of time not to exceed ten (10) calendar years, according to the schedule in IC 6-1.1-12.1-4(d)(10), subject to continuing compliance with the statement of benefits, IC 6-1.1-12.1 et seq., and terms of the approving resolution. The Town Council conducted its first review at its meeting of November 13, 2017, its second at the Town Council meeting of 26 February 2018 and its third review at its meeting of 25 February 2019 and its fourth review at its meeting of 9 March 2020 and its fifth review at its meeting of 8 March 2021 and its sixth one at its meeting of 28 March 2022 and its seventh review at its meeting of 27 March 2023 and its eighth review on 13 May 2024. The Town Council found the applicant in compliance at each meeting. This is the ninth review for compliance by the petitioner of its terms in the application but the seventh one that applies after filing with the Lake County Auditor. This review is for Taxing period 2025 pay 2026. If approved, two (2) years remain on the 10 year abatement.

- x. **Discussion:** Consideration of the Compliance with the Statement of Benefits as filed and represented by Demand Real Results, LLC, dba SAFETY TRAINING SERVICES, INC., 8516 Henry Street, Highland. At its meeting of September 8, 2014, the Highland Town Council approved this application for property tax abatement upon the **increase in** assessed value in consequence of conversion of existing vacant building located at 8516 Henry Street, Highland, for a period of time not to exceed ten (10) calendar years, according to the schedule in IC 6-1.1-12.1-4(d)(10), subject to continuing compliance with the statement of benefits, IC 6-1.1-12.1 et seq., and terms of the approving resolution. The Town Council conducted its first review at its meeting of February 8, 2016, its second at its meeting of February 27, 2017, its third review at its meeting of 26 February 2018, its fourth review at its meeting 25 February 2019, its fifth review at its 9 March 2020, its sixth review at its 8 March 2021, with the Town Council finding that Demand Results, LLC abatement was not in compliance per (1) property owner did not substantially comply with its statement of benefits and that the failure to substantially comply was not caused by factors beyond the control of the

property owner. Pursuant to I.C. 6-1.1-12.1-5.9, notice in the form of a letter was sent including the following:

- (a) (i) The current number of employees is less than what was originally estimated. Actual number of employees is 27. Estimated number of employees is 34.
- (ii) Number of employees retained is less than what was originally estimated. Actual number of employees retained is 25. Estimated number of employees retained is 34.
- (iii) Number of additional employees is less than what was originally estimated. Actual number of additional employees is 2. Estimated number of additional employees over three years is 16.

On April 12, 2021, the Town Council conducted a hearing to further consider the property owner's compliance with the statement of benefits and whether any failure to substantially comply was caused by factors beyond the control of the property owner.

The re-review was conducted on the 12 April 2021, the Council found Demand Results, LLC to be in compliance, its seventh review at its meeting of 28 March 2022, its eighth review at its meeting of 27 March 2023, its ninth review at its meeting of 13 May 2024. This represents the tenth review of compliance for this property and the tenth one that applies after the filing with the Lake County Auditor. This review is for Taxing period 2025 pay 2026. If approved, no years remain on the 10 year abatement.

x. Discussion: Consideration of the Compliance with the Statement of Benefits as filed and represented by Indiana Land Trust Company TR#120086, dba Webb Hyundai, LLC 9236 Indianapolis Blvd, Highland. At its meeting of August 9, 2021, the Highland Town Council passed resolution 2021-39 and approved this application for property tax abatement upon the increase in assessed value in consequence of the remodeling of the existing building Webb Hyundai, LLC 9236 Indianapolis Blvd, Highland, for a period of time not to exceed five (5) calendar years, according to the schedule in IC 6-1.1-12.1-4(d)(10), subject to continuing compliance with the statement of benefits, IC 6-1.1-12.1 et seq., and terms of the approving resolution. The Town Council conducted its first review at its meeting of 28 March 2022 and its second review at its meeting of 27 March 2023 and its third review at its meeting of 13 May 2024. The Town Council found the applicant in compliance at each meeting. This represents the fourth review of compliance for this property and the fourth one that applies after filing with the Lake County Auditor. This review is for Taxing period 2025 pay 2026. If approved, there are one (1) year remaining on the on the 5-year abatement.

Councilor Georgeff asked if there were any additional agenda items. Hearing none, he adjourned the meeting at 8:20 p.m.