

**Enrolled Minutes of the Thirtieth Regular or Special Meeting
Special Meeting
Thirtieth Town Council of Highland
Saturday, February 6, 2026**

The Thirtieth Town Council of the Town of Highland, Lake County, Indiana met in a Special Meeting on **Saturday, February 6, 2026**, at 8:30 o'clock a.m., in the Community Room of the Highland Police Station, 3315 Ridge Road, Highland, Indiana.

*All Councilors were simultaneously seen and heard. Councilor George Georgeff, Councilor Doug Turich; Councilor Alex Robertson, Councilor Tom Black and Councilor Philip Scheeringa all participated in person.

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

Special Orders:

Interviews of prospective appointees

1. *Omar Torres*
2. *Debbie Trevino*
3. *Terry Krooswyk*
4. *Jeff Minard*
5. *Noel Zemantis*
6. *Michael Berry*
7. *David Taylor*
8. *Matt Hanft*

1. The Town Council conducted an interview with **Mr. Omar Torres** (R), 2120 44th Street, Highland, who expressed interest in being re-appointed to the Park & Recreation Board.

Mr. Torres offered a brief narrative regarding his work background. Mr. Torres responded to questions regarding his interest in the Park & Recreation Board.

February 7, 2026

Dear Town of Highland,

I am writing to respectfully request reappointment to the Highland Parks & Recreation Board. I have been honored to serve on the board for the past five years, and it has been a rewarding experience to support programs and initiatives that benefit our community.

I have great respect for the role Parks & Recreation plays in enhancing the quality of life in the Town of Highland. My wife and I are very involved and active in the community, and our three children participate in local sports programs, giving our family firsthand experience with and appreciation for the importance of strong parks and recreation offerings. This personal connection further strengthens my commitment to serving the Town of Highland and contributing to the continued maintenance, growth, and improvement of our parks and recreational opportunities.

Thank you for your time and consideration. I would be grateful for the opportunity to continue serving on the Highland Parks & Recreation Board and to further support its mission.

Sincerely,



Omar A. Torres

Omar A. Torres

Omar Torres is a longtime Highland resident of 13 years and is currently serving as Vice President of the Parks and Recreation Board. He holds a Bachelor's degree in Business Management from Purdue University and has over 20 years of experience in the financial industry, along with a background in property development and management.

Omar is a dedicated health and wellness enthusiast who believes strongly in the role parks, recreation, and youth programs play in building a healthy and connected community. He brings more than a decade of coaching experience in youth sports, including active involvement with the Highland Soccer Club and Highland Pop Warner, giving him firsthand insight into the needs of local families and young athletes.

He has been married to his wife, Patty, for 14 years and is the proud father of four children: Jay (16), Alex (14), Jackie (10), and Pete (8). Omar is passionate about continuing to serve the Highland community and contributing his professional experience, leadership, and community involvement to the ongoing success of the Parks and Recreation Department.

2. The Town Council conducted an interview with **Mrs. Debbie Trevino (D)**, 3012 Lakeside Drive, Highland, who expressed interest in being appointed to the Park & Recreation Board or the Highland Police Commission.

Mrs. Trevino offered a brief narrative regarding his work background. Mrs. Trevino responded to questions regarding his interest in the Park & Recreation Board or the Highland Police Commission.

Deborah Trevino – Professional Biography

My name is Deborah Trevino, and I am a dedicated community leader and experienced administrative professional with more than 30 years of service in public education, civic engagement, and neighborhood advocacy. I currently work for the School City of Hammond at the Hammond Area Career Center ensuring accuracy, compliance, and confidentiality with staff, students, parents and the community.

Throughout my career, I have demonstrated exceptional organizational, leadership, and communication skills. I am highly respected for my ability to collaborate with students, families, educators, administrators, and community partners to support student success, institutional accountability, and public trust. My work includes preparing and reporting State data, supporting grant initiatives, and providing critical administrative support to academic and counseling teams.

I have a strong record of community leadership and public service. I currently serve as a Precinct Committeeperson (HL-9), actively engaging residents in civic participation, voter outreach, and local governance. In this role, I work closely with community members to promote informed involvement and responsible citizenship.

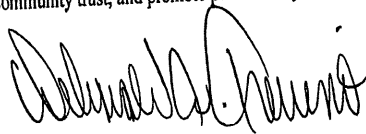
As the former President of the Lakeside Homeowners Association, I played a key role in maintaining neighborhood safety, cleanliness, and quality of life. I worked closely with residents and local officials to ensure compliance with Town of Highland ordinances, address safety concerns, and promote respectful community standards. My leadership helped strengthen communication between residents and municipal departments, contributing to a safer and more orderly neighborhood environment.

I am also active as community volunteer, including service at the annual Fourth of July Festival in Highland. Through these efforts, I demonstrated my ongoing commitment to community engagement, public safety, and civic pride.

In addition to my public service, I serve on the Hammond Teachers Federation Executive Board of the Hammond School Clerical Organization where I represent more than 80 clerical staff members. I have led contract negotiations, promoted professional development, and advanced workplace accountability and professionalism. I was also a small business owner, having managed Cordially Yours Wedding Shop, where I gained valuable experience in financial management, customer relations, and personnel supervision.

I am a commissioned Notary Public for the State of Indiana and known for my integrity, discretion, and commitment to ethical standards. I am highly proficient in Microsoft Office, student information systems, and data management tools, and am recognized for my attention to detail, reliability, and strong work ethic.

With my extensive experience in public administration, neighborhood leadership, civic service, and community safety advocacy, I bring a thoughtful, balanced, and community-centered perspective to public service. My commitment to transparency, accountability, and collaboration makes me especially well-suited for service on the Town of Highland Police Board, where I seek to support effective law enforcement, strengthen community trust, and promote public safety for all residents.



1. 60-Second Introduction (Opening Statement)

“Good morning, and thank you for this opportunity. My name is Deborah Trevino, and I’ve lived in Highland for many years. I currently serve as Lead Registrar for the School City of Hammond, where I’ve worked for over 20 years managing confidential records, compliance reporting, and public accountability.

I’m also a Precinct Committeeperson and former President of the Lakeside Homeowners Association, where I worked closely with residents and town officials to keep our neighborhood safe, clean, and in compliance with local ordinances.

Through my professional work, community leadership, and volunteer service, I’ve learned the importance of fairness, transparency, and trust. I’m applying for the Police Board because I care deeply about public safety and community relations, and I want to help ensure our department continues serving Highland with professionalism and integrity.”

2. Common Police Board Interview Questions + Strong Answers

Q1: Why do you want to serve on the Police Board?

Answer:

“Public safety affects every family in our community. Through my work in education and neighborhood leadership, I’ve seen how important it is for residents to feel safe and heard. I want to serve on the Police Board to help strengthen trust between the department and the community, support our officers, and ensure policies are fair, consistent, and transparent.”

Q2: What experience do you bring to this role?

Answer:

“For over 20 years, I’ve worked in a role that requires confidentiality, accuracy, and compliance with state and federal regulations. As President of HSCOP and the Lakeside Homeowners Association, I’ve handled conflict resolution, policy enforcement, and community concerns. As a Precinct Committeeperson, I work directly with residents. All of this prepares me to serve responsibly on the Police Board.”

Q3: How would you handle a complaint against an officer?

Answer:

“I believe every complaint deserves to be taken seriously and reviewed fairly. My approach would be to follow established procedures, review all facts objectively, respect due process, and ensure both the community and the officer are treated with dignity. Fairness and transparency are essential to maintaining public trust.”

Q4: How do you view the relationship between police and the community?

Answer:

“It should be built on mutual respect, communication, and accountability. When residents trust their police department, cooperation improves and safety increases. As a board member, I would encourage community engagement, outreach, and open dialogue.”

3. The Town Council conducted an interview with **Mr. Terry Krooswyk (D)**, 3625 38th Street, Highland, who expressed interest in being re-appointed to the Highland Police Commission.

Mr. Krooswyk offered a brief narrative regarding his work background. Mr. Krooswyk responded to questions regarding his interest in the Highland Police Commission.

Mark Herak

From: terry <terry@indianasalt.com>
Sent: Wednesday, January 28, 2026 6:50 PM
To: Mark Herak
Subject: RE: Interviews - Saturday, February 7, 2026, beginning at 8:30 o'clock a.m. in the Community Room of the Police Station, 3315 Ridge Road

955 please. I Have been a resident of our town my whole life. Led the leadership council for 13 years which came out of community policing initiative under Chief Larry Woods. I have been a volunteer with Vips since its inception. I have been pro police my entire life along with my entire family. I strive to better our town in every aspect and subscribe to the broken window theory. I respect our town council and understand that we serve at there pleasure. We have a great department and we have challenges as every department does but I appreciate that we strive to always do better. Thank you for your consideration.

4. The Town Council conducted an interview with **Mr. Jeff Minard (R)**, 9334 Farmer Drive, Highland, who expressed interest in being appointed to the Park & Recreation Board.

Mr. Minard offered a brief narrative regarding his work background. Mr. Minard responded to questions regarding his interest in the Park & Recreation Board.

Application for Highland Park & Recreation Board

Highland Town Council
3333 Ridge Road
Highland, IN 46322
February 7, 2026

Dear Members of the Highland Town Council,

I am writing to respectfully submit my application for a position on the Highland Park & Recreation Board. It is with genuine enthusiasm and a deep commitment to our community that I seek this opportunity to help shape and enhance the future of Highland's parks and recreational spaces.

I was born and raised in Highland, an experience that instilled in me a strong sense of pride and belonging. As a teenager, I moved away and have since lived in eight different states, allowing me to observe and appreciate a diverse array of park systems and community recreation programs. My academic background includes degrees in Electronics and Computer Science, and I have had the privilege of working with the Schererville Park Board, where I contributed to the planning and execution of various initiatives.

My interest in joining the Highland Park & Recreation Board stems from my lasting appreciation for the current Board's dedication and the positive impact it has made on our town. Having seen how other communities manage their parks, I am motivated to bring fresh perspectives and innovative strategies to Highland. I am particularly passionate about fostering inclusive, accessible, and engaging recreational spaces that benefit residents of all ages. My technical expertise, experience in board collaboration, and familiarity with both local and national park systems uniquely position me to contribute meaningfully to Highland's continued growth.

If entrusted with this role, I would focus on increasing connectivity to the Erie-Lackawanna trail, creating clearer directions and signage for the annual Pumpkin Plod event, and supporting the completion of a continuous path around the Rookery. Additionally, I believe more public information about the Rookery and organizing seasonal walks would enhance community engagement and awareness of this natural asset. My experience in electronics and technology could be leveraged to improve communications and information systems within the department, making park resources more accessible to the public.

I am confident that my diverse background, professional skills, and passion for community service make me well-qualified to serve on the Highland Park & Recreation Board. I look forward to the possibility of working alongside the Council and current Board members to build upon Highland's proud tradition of excellent parks and recreation.

Thank you for considering my application. I appreciate your time and the opportunity to contribute to our town's future. I am available to discuss my qualifications further at your convenience.

Sincerely,

Jeff Minard

9334 Farmer Drive

336-392-9579

jeffreyscottminard@gmail.com

5. The Town Council conducted an interview with **Mr. Noel Zemaitis (I)**, 8224 Johnston, Highland, who expressed interest in being appointed to several Boards and Commissions.

Mr. Zemaitis offered a brief narrative regarding his work background. Mr. Zemaitis responded to questions regarding his interest in the various Boards and Commissions.

6. The Town Council conducted an interview with **Mr. Michael Berry (D)**, 9344 Saric Drive, Highland, who expressed interest in being appointed to the Highland Police Commission.

Mr. Berry offered a brief narrative regarding his work background. Mr. Berry responded to questions regarding his interest in the Highland Police Commission.

My name is Michael Berry, Sr. and I am a seasoned business and operations professional with extensive experience in leadership, client service, and organizational management. Throughout my career, I have worked closely with diverse teams, managed high-accountability environments, and helped organizations operate efficiently while maintaining professionalism, transparency, and integrity. I have consistently been trusted with responsibilities that require sound judgment, discretion, and the ability to balance the needs of stakeholders with established policies and procedures. I have lived in the wonderful Town of Highland since 2014 and am married to DeeAnna Berry and the father of my daughter Hope Berry and my son Michael Berry, Jr.

My interest in serving on the Police Commission stems from a strong desire to give back to the community and contribute to effective, accountable public service. I believe civilian oversight plays a critical role in strengthening trust between the Police Department and the community it serves. The opportunity to help ensure fairness, professionalism, and transparency within the department motivated me to apply for this position.

I would bring a balanced, objective, and process-driven approach to the Police Commission. My professional background has required me to evaluate performance, address complex issues, and make decisions that are fair, well-reasoned, and aligned with organizational goals. I am comfortable reviewing policies, asking thoughtful questions, and working collaboratively to resolve challenges while maintaining accountability.

I believe I am a strong candidate because I combine leadership experience with a commitment to ethical decision-making and community service. I understand the importance of maintaining public trust while also supporting officers in performing their duties effectively. My ability to listen, analyze information objectively, and communicate clearly would allow me to contribute meaningfully to the Commission's work.

If appointed, I would focus on opportunities that strengthen transparency, communication, and community engagement. This includes supporting clear policies, consistent training standards, and open dialogue between the department, the Commission, and the public. I am particularly interested in initiatives that promote trust, such as regular review of procedures, data-driven performance evaluation, and continued emphasis on professionalism and accountability.

Additionally, I would support efforts that ensure officers have the resources and training necessary to perform their roles safely and effectively, while also ensuring that community concerns are heard and addressed in a fair and timely manner.

At this time, I do not have any personal or professional relationships with current Police Commission members or employees of the Police Department. I believe this allows me to approach the role with independence and objectivity, should I be selected to serve.

7. The Town Council conducted an interview with **Mr. David Taylor**, 9512 Hook Street, Highland, who expressed interest in being appointed to the Highland Tree Board.

Mr. Taylor offered a brief narrative regarding his work background. Mr. Taylor responded to questions regarding his interest in the Highland Tree Board.

Town of Highland Tree Board

David A Taylor moved to Highland in 1964, seen many changes as the town grew and expanded. Attended Highland High School class of 1969, worked as a journeyman machinist for Inland Steel Co. Retired and worked part time at The Home Depot in Schererville in the garden center and hardware. THD paid for my Purdue Master Garden classes and I'm a full certified Master Gardener class of 2006.

In my upbringing my father taught my brother and me all about trees and shrubbery, how to care for, transplanting, and removal. My father worked for the CCC camps in 30s&40s where they built and planted many parks in Indiana.

A have a great library about trees and plants that I use often, my last home on 44th street I had 20 different varieties of trees and in the fall I had students that would come and gather leaves for their collections and I would lecture them.

I would like to see our town with many varieties of trees and colors and possibly publish a handout and map so residents could drive and walk about to learn about varieties that may help them in planting trees in their yards.

That would help insure our Town is a Tree City.

Thank You

Dave Taylor

9512 Hook St

retiredtaylor@gmail.com

2197433092



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UNIVERSITY

Purdue University
Cooperative Extension

This is to certify that *David Taylor* has completed the required continuing education and volunteer service to earn the rights, privileges and honors that come with the title

Master Gardener

on this 24th day of October 2007.

Alley Witkowski

Master Gardener County Coordinator

Paul C. [Signature]

Director of Extension

B. Rosie Jensen

Master Gardener State Coordinator

8. The Town Council conducted an interview with **Mr. Matt Hanft (D)**, 8434 Delaware Street, Highland, who expressed interest in being appointed to the Park & Recreation Board.

Mr. Hanft offered a brief narrative regarding his work background. Mr. Hanft responded to questions regarding his interest in the Park & Recreation Board.

Mark Herak

From: Matt Hanft <chevydog395@gmail.com>
Sent: Friday, February 6, 2026 9:10 PM
To: Mark Herak
Subject: Re: Interviews - Saturday, February 7, 2026, beginning at 8:30 o'clock a.m. in the Community Room of the Police Station, 3315 Ridge Road

My name is Matt Hanft and I am 38 years of age. I have decided to apply for the Highland Parks and Recreation Board, for the simple fact that I enjoy our community events in our parks and Lincoln Center. I also spend some of my free time in our parks with my family playing and enjoying them as well as our bike trails in town. The Lincoln Center is also a familiar place that we utilize and support. I truly care about our towns shared spaces and how they are designed and maintained.

I have been a resident to Highland all my life, other than a year and a half stint. That my wife and I thought we would like moving a little south. But that did not last and we came right back to Highland. Since we now have two kids that are active in Highland sport's and activities. I believe I could bring some knowledge from what parents alike would like to see in our community to better it. I also have a strong voice and will use it when needed. I have been a Union Ironworker for 20 years and have ran several different jobs. With my knowledge and background in mechanical situation's. I think I can help our parks and recreation become better. I would enjoy being apart of making our parks and recreation in Highland the best we can. With the funds available to better them all. Also keep the Lincoln Center bringing in the revenue it's capable of for our town.

There being no further interviews, the special meeting of the Town Council, of Saturday, February 7, 2026, was adjourned at 12:10 o'clock p.m.

Mark Herak
Clerk-Treasurer