

# GAZEBO EXPRESS

YOUR COMMUNITY NEWS AND EVENT SOURCE FOR THE TOWN OF HIGHLAND • SEPTEMBER 2023



A bittersweet moment ... Mike Pipta takes the oath of office to become Highland's next fire chief, two weeks after his longtime friend, Bill Timmer, died just hours after responding to a fire call.



Highland Clerk-Treasurer Mark Herak swears in Mike Pipta, Highland's fire chief effective August 14, during the town council's meeting at Town Hall.

## Town appoints 10th fire chief

A volunteer firefighter for nearly 42 years, newly appointed Highland Fire Chief Mike Pipta said it is only now that he and the 35 members of the volunteer department are grappling with the loss of longtime Fire Chief William "Bill" Timmer.

"After fighting the fire at Traditions Sunday morning without Bill, it's all starting to sink in," said Pipta, who served as Timmer's second-in-command for more than a decade. "I spent time with Bill every day. As the interim chief, I am going to do my best for the people of Highland as we all move forward to determine next steps for Highland Fire."

### **FALLEN HERO**

The name of William Timmer will be submitted for consideration to be added to the First Responders Memorial at Wicker Memorial Park. If the First Responders Committee agrees, Timmer will be the first Highland firefighter to have his name etched into the memorial at Ridge Road and Indianapolis Boulevard.

### **INSIDE**

Longtime Highland Fire Chief William "Bill" Timmer was celebrated August 19 in a ceremony punctuated by the pomp-and-circumstance fitting Highland's longest serving fire chief. See page 3.

## Playgrounds get upgraded all-abilities equipment

By the end of September, both Brantwood and Markley parks will have all-new, all-ability playgrounds installed and ready for use by the kid in all of us.

"We had an open house in February for both neighborhoods to view different designs and choose their favorites," Parks and Recreation Superintendent Alex Brown said.

The new equipment is expected to arrive after Labor Day. Each playground costs roughly \$60,000 and takes about a week to install.

With more than 20 playgrounds in the park system, Brown said, typically, there are a few slated for replacement every five years.

"We calculate the useful life of the equipment and build that into the budget," he said. "With each upgrade, we are on the lookout for new and improved safety features along with equipment that is accessible for children of all abilities."

### **[ WHAT'S NEXT? ]**

When bids for new pickleball courts came in higher than expected, Brown said the Parks and Recreation Board decided to put the project on hold in 2023.

They'll rebid the project in January in the hope of getting better pricing that fits the budget.

**[ FREE TREES ]**

The tree board will distribute trees from 8 a.m.-3 p.m. **September 16** at Public Works, 8001 N. Kennedy Ave.

Email Richard Underkofler at [runderkofler76@comcast.net](mailto:runderkofler76@comcast.net) to request a tree. Visit [highland.in.gov](http://highland.in.gov) for species and additional details.

**[ CRIME WATCH ]**

Join us 6:30 p.m. **September 13** for a crime watch meeting in the Community Room of the HPD, 3315 Ridge Road. **Questions?** Please email [jomalley@highland.in.gov](mailto:jomalley@highland.in.gov).

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**NEWS TIP? STORY IDEA?**

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## Scheeringa – Highland's new 5<sup>th</sup> Ward councilman – eager to be a voice for unity

There is a new face on the Highland Town Council: longtime resident Philip Scheeringa replaced Roger Sheeman Sept. 1 as the 5th Ward councilor.

Council President Tom Black welcomed Scheeringa to the group. "Phil is an active member of the community," Black said. "He brings real-world experience and a desire to move Highland forward. He will be a great asset to the council."

The father of three school-age children said he is ready to hit the ground running.

"Highland is a great community that enjoys the benefits of low taxes and low crime rates," Scheeringa said. "I look forward to working on initiatives – a plan for Highland focused on redevelopment and funding for additional amenities at our parks. Both will be value-added to our community.

"My first priority is being a voice for unity," he said. "No matter where we stand as individuals, we are here to work for what is best for the residents of Highland."

**[ ABOUT SCHEERINGA ]**

Town Councilman Philip Scheering and his wife, Amy, have called Highland home for 19 years. Together they have three children ages 15, 13 and nine.

The Scheeringas are active in the Highland Soccer Club and Highland Little League. Amy is involved in the Merkley Elementary School PTC and leads a Girl Scout troop Philip has a been a Hammond firefighter for 20 years and a fire inspector/investigator for the last four.

## Highland 6th hottest residential market in U.S.

If you've noticed "For Sale" signs are coming down within days of going up, you're not alone. It turns out: One-time strangers are becoming neighbors at an increasing rate right here in 46322.

The website, [realtor.com](http://realtor.com), took note: ranking Highland as the sixth hottest residential market in the country.

Redevelopment Director Maria Becerra says Highland is one of a dwindling number of communities that still has that small-town feel, but is close to everything.

"It's minutes from Lake Michigan and will soon be minutes from the new commuter rail station to Chicago," she said.

**[ DID YOU KNOW? ]**

According to [realtor.com](http://realtor.com), homes for sale in Highland are viewed three times more often than homes for sale in the United States as a whole, as well as:

**19:** The average number of days a house is on the market.

**\$269,000:** The median price of a home listed in Highland.

"People looking to invest in a new home do their homework," Becerra said. "They see that our crime rates are low and quality of life is high."

{ WILLIAM "BILL" TIMMER | 1955 – 2023 }



[Josh Carlascio photos]

**HUNDREDS MOURN LOSS OF LONGTIME FIRE CHIEF**

Fire Chief William "Bill" Timmer was celebrated August 19 at the place where he spent most of his waking hours over the last three decades – from the cavernous bays at Fire Station 1. It was a ceremony punctuated by the pomp-and-circumstance befitting Highland's longest serving fire chief. He died August 14.

"We've lost a true leader," Cedar Lake Fire Chief Todd Wilkening said.

"Our town is better because of him," Council President Tom Black said.

Visit [highland.in.gov](http://highland.in.gov) to learn more about Timmer's legacy, the lives he touched as well as additional photos and videos.



**[ MIDWEEK MUSIC ]**

Grab a comfy lawn chair and head to Main Square Park for live entertainment **September 13**. LeAnn Stutler (Country) will get things started from 4:30-5:30 p.m. and Jessi & Fizz (Dance/Pop) will perform from 5:45-8 p.m.

**INFO:** (219) 838-0114 | highlandparks.org.

**[ INFLATABLE CHALLENGE ]****NEW**

Join us as we set up a challenge course with some of the best inflatables in the area. Participants – ages 11-13 – will climb, duck, jump and run to make it to the end! Food and drink will be available.

**WHEN:** 6-9 p.m. **September 22**

**WHERE:** Lincoln Center Fieldhouse.

**FEE:** \$25 (Highland residents only).

**INFO:** (219) 838-0114 | highlandparks.org.

**[ LET'S PLAY IT! ]****NEW**

Students – ages 5-10 – learn the value of exercise, teamwork and sportsmanship and gain agility, balance and self-confidence while working up a sweat!

**WHEN:** 5-6 p.m. Thursdays,  
**September 21-November 2**

**WHERE:** Lincoln Community Center

**FEE:** \$148 resident | \$158 nonresident

**INFO:** (219) 838-0114 | highlandparks.org.

**[ INTRO TO ACTING ]****NEW**

This class will teach students – ages 12-17 – the basics of acting, including; teamwork, improvisation, memorization, how to find/prepare for auditions and character development.

**WHEN:** 10-11 a.m. Saturdays,  
**September 30-October 28**

**WHERE:** Lincoln Community Center

**FEE:** \$50 resident | \$55 nonresident

**INFO:** (219) 838-0114 | highlandparks.org.

Highland Main Street presents ...

**MAKERS' MARKET**

FOOD TRUCKS

SUPPORT DOWNTOWN

**10 a.m. – 4 p.m.**  
Live entertainment begins at 12:30 p.m.

**SATURDAY, OCTOBER 7**

On Jewett Street between Kennedy & 4th

Support Local Artisans in your Community

**sidewalk sale**

While downtown enjoying the market, be sure to check out the sidewalk sale! This is a great time to start your Christmas shopping and snag deeply discounted items!

**for more information & updates**

Visit the Highland Main Street Facebook page  
or the town website – [highland.in.gov](http://highland.in.gov) – for vendor application.

**[ PREPARING YOUR TREES AND SHRUBS FOR WINTER ]**

A professional arborist will show you how to prepare your trees and shrubs for winter from 6:30-8 p.m. **September 27** at the Highland Library. This free event is sponsored by the Highland Tree Board and the Public Library.

**INFO:** Register online at [lcpin.org/events](http://lcpin.org/events) or call (219) 838-2394.