

**Enrolled Memorandum of the Meeting
Study Session/Meeting (In person)
Thirtieth Town Council of Highland
Monday, January 12, 2026**

The Thirtieth Town Council of the Town of Highland, Lake County, Indiana met in a study session on **Monday, January 12, 2026**, immediately after the adjournment of the November 10, 2025 Plenary Meeting (7:15 O'clock P.M.), in the regular place, the Highland Municipal Building, 3333 Ridge Road, Highland, Indiana.

**Pursuant to Enrolled House Bill 1167, this meeting is convened as an in person meeting and live 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. If you are in the audience and unwilling to be recorded and live streamed, we ask you to depart the meeting now, otherwise your continued presence is your consent to be recorded and live streamed.

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

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

Officials Present: IT Director Ed Dabrowski, Redevelopment Director Maria Becerra were in person.

x. Discussion: Appointments.

Unless otherwise noted, all terms expire on the 1st Monday in January 2026 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

Home Rule Commissions or Boards

- 1. 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)*

2. **Tree Board.** (2) Appointments to be nominated by the Town Council but appointed by the Town Council President. (*Note: Currently held by James Colias and Ron Jackowski, term ending 1st Monday January 2026*) Term is for three (3) years James Colias; Ron Jackowski
 - 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. **Park and Recreation Board.** (2) appointments to be made by the Town Council. (*Note: Current appointee is Omar Torres (R), term ending 1st Monday January 2026*) Term is for four (4) years. Nick Russo (D), term ending 1st Monday January 2027). (*Current composition is 2 democrats and 2 republicans. Not more than 2 members may be of the same party.*)
2. **Town Board of Metropolitan Police Commissioners.** (1) appointment to be made by the Town Council. (*Note: Current appointee is Terry Krooswyk (D), term ending 1st Monday January 2026*). Term is for three (3) years. (*Current composition for these five citizen positions is three democrats and two republicans*)

• **Regional Statutory Appointments**

• **Home Rule Commissions or Boards**

1. **Main Street Bureau Board:** (17) appointments to be made by the Town Council. Term: Two years ending 1 Jan 2027. *Currently only 8 of 17 appointed.*
(*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: 2026 Appointments:

The Clerk-Treasurer passed out the list of the appointments coming due on the 1st of January 2026. With Councilor Turich being absent the Council decided to hold off until his return before setting up interviews.

Community Events Commission – 2 (appointed by the Park Board)
No party affiliation required

Applications received:

Jennifer Gooldy

Noel Zemaitis

Lake County Council Appointment – 1 (resignation of Dave Beanblossom)

Park Board – 1 – R, 1-D

Omar Torres (R) – 4 year term

Legislative Appointment

Nick Russo (D) – term expires 1st Monday in 2027

Legislative Appointment

Letter received for reappointment:

Omar Torres

Applications received:

Jennifer Gooldy – D

James Wedryk – D

Deborah Trevino – D

Noel Zemaitis – party not filled in

Police Commission – 1 – D – (3 year appointment)

Terry Krooswyk (D) – 3 year term

Legislative Appointment

Letter received for reappointment:

Terry Krooswyk

Applications received:

Michael Berry – D

Deborah Trevino – D

Noel Zemaitis – party not filled in

Letter received for reappointment:

Alex Robinson

Tree Board – 2 – No party affiliation required (3 year appointment)

James Colias

Executive Appointment

Ron Jackowski

Executive Appointment

Applications received:

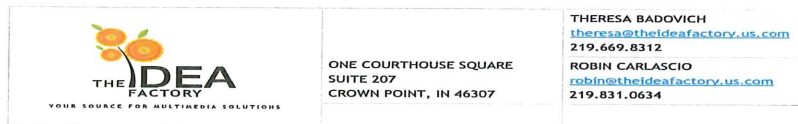
Noel Zemaitis

Teresa Lekan

David Taylor

- x. Discussion: Between The Idea Factory and the Town of Highland to perform Professional Communications and Media Design and Development services for the Municipality.

Theresa Badovich, a partner in the Idea Factory passed out the following hand out to the Council.



To:
Highland Clerk-Treasurer Mark Herak
Highland IT Director Ed Dabrowski
Highland Town Council

From: The Idea Factory

Subject: 2026 Contract

**No raise in price from our 2025 contract.
Includes bimonthly newsletter with 6 issues:**

Gazebo Express newsletter: \$2,600 per issue or \$650 per page
Stock images: \$53.56 per image or illustration
Custom graphics/photography: \$107.12 per image or illustration

Website maintenance/updates: \$195 per week
Web hosting: \$26.77 a month
Web security: \$133.90 a month

Pricing for monthly newsletter with 12 issues:

Gazebo Express newsletter: \$2,000 per issue or \$500 per page
Stock images: \$53.56 per image or illustration
Custom graphics/photography: \$107.12 per image or illustration

Website maintenance/updates: \$195 per week
Web hosting: \$26.77 a month
Web security: \$133.90 a month

Please note: If additional work is required, it will be carried out with mutually agreeable terms and conditions.

Councilor Robertson said the decision was to switch the Gazebo to bi-monthly. He said it has been hard on him and on the Idea Factory, trying to get all this information together at once to cover two months. He said it would be easier if we went to back to month by month.

Councilor Black said he thought one of the reasons we made the switch was that they were having trouble getting enough information every month which is why we went bi-monthly.

Councilor Robertson said he thought it was more of a savings. I thought it was more, a savings?

Councilor Georgeff said he thought the reason was because it was difficult to everything approved in time to meet the printing deadlines? .

Theresa said it was a little bit of a problem getting everything approved in time to go to print. She added by going back to bi-monthly, it could be easier for the department heads as they won't be under pressure to come up with topics two (2) months out. She also said with the bi-monthly, events are ever changing, especially during the summertime and with bi-monthly, some events are missed. She gave the example of the 4th of July when the HCCE didn't get the dates and times until after the Gazebo went to print. Another issue would have solved the problem.

Councilor Georgeff said we might want to have an additional one or two during the summertime, especially for the 4th of July. He said we may want to have issues in May and June.

Theresa said if the Town goes back to monthly, because of the greater frequency, the price per page would drop. She said because the January-February issue is already complete, it would only be ten (10) issues this year. She said monthly would begin in March. She said, what normally happens is they condense copy for the gazebo and then expand it for the website. Other examples of condensed copy was when Alex Brown retired. They did a nice spread with John Bach retired but with Alex there wasn't the room but the full copy appeared on the website.

Councilor Georgeff said it costs approximately \$2,000 per issue so that would be another six (6) issues or \$12,000.

Councilor Robertson said why don't we go back to monthly but eliminate print. He said, lets rip off the band-aid and put a QR code on the water bill. The residents are still getting the gazebo monthly but not in print. Everyone has a cell phone anyway.

Councilor Scheeringa said a lot of our residents, especially the seniors like to receive a physical copy.

Councilor Georgeff agreed with Councilor Scheeringa. He likes the physical copy.

It was suggested adding three (3) additional copies for the months of May, June and July. It was then brought up about August or fall as we are going to have to put out the leaf pickup schedule and the fall festival.

Councilor Robertson recapped the discussion on printing monthly issues in May, June and July and then strictly digital the remainder of the year.

Councilor Scheeringa reiterated that not all of our citizens are tech-savvy.

Theresa said when you get into November and December, the bi-monthly issue is jam-packed as you have the Pumpkin Plod, the tree lightings, Santa's March and then the fire-works on New Year's Eve and the 12th night tree burning. .

Councilor Georgeff wondered if there's a way we could put a QR on a physical issue, sort of like a test to see how many people are using it. Maybe we could keep track and that would give us an idea of how many people are using it that way. Maybe put a little blurb in the Gazebo that the Council is exploring avenues to reach more of the community and reduce costs. He said if we get enough participation, we can eliminate the printed version and save printing costs.

Recapping, the gazebo will be printed monthly during the months of May, June and July. March and April would be a combined edition. A QR code with an explaining blurb will be in the May, June and July issues, which be tracked. The Council will review the data and make a decision.

Theresa said the nice thing about the QR code, is it is always being updated and changed, unlike a hard copy that is in print. As events change, the QR code is updated. She said people will get used to it.

- x. Discussion: Deferred Ordinances from the January 12, 2025 Meeting (Ordinance No. 1845 and Ordinance No. 1842-A).

Councilor Robertson asked that both of these ordinances be deferred to the study session as he wanted additional clarification. I know that we added in the Park Department Employees when we amended the salary ordinance. At that time, it was discussed that there would be one current employee eligible and now we come to learn it is closer to ten (10). He said he was concern that the residency stipend isn't being used as it's intended purpose. He said it is to incentivize employees that we want living in town who are responding to issues in town in order to decrease their response time and this is a way to incentivize them to move into town or to remain in Town. I feel like if we start to blanket all of these departments, it loses its integrity as far as mechanism for what it's intended to do. He wanted some clarification on the Parks Department side. Is it for every staff member? Is it for certain staff members coming in and responding to snowfall, emergencies and stuff like that? If we are giving it to everyone, it is starting to feel like a salary increase. We gave a 2% raise across the board and now we're giving them an additional raise via a residency stipend. Councilor Robertson said he wanted to make sure we're not expanding the residency stipend too much and then realizing maybe we expanded too much and have to reel it back int. It's harder to reel it back in after you give it out. If it is given out in blanket, depending upon the position, it amounts to a salary increase. This is on top of what is already given

Councilor Scheeringa said the whole reason we gave it to the police officers, is you want your cops living in your Town. You want to see the vehicles on the street in your Town.

He said in the case of firefighters and police officers, yes technically it is a raise but it is not adding to their pensions. The Town avoids having to pay into their pensions. The same with Town employees as they are not required to pay an additional 7% out of their pay check. He said it was also a way to retain officers as we were having problems retaining police officers. He said that was one of the reasons for the take home car policy. We were forced to give higher raises to the police officers to be competitive with neighboring towns. Even with these changes we are still losing officers but not as the rate that we were. He said he is fine either way as long as the department heads can support it in their budgets.

Councilor Robertson asked what if it applied to supervisors instead of every person? He said when asked, the Public Works Director said he had the money in his budget. The Park Department Director agreed but that was after Councilor Turich said it was only one (1) employee, when in fact it turned out to be ten (10). This adds up quickly. He said he understands the idea behind it, to encourage employees to move into Town but it should be more of an encouragement to employees who we want to be close to work, respond to emergencies, especially during off hours so they can get to the emergency quicker. He said it made sense for public works employees as they are plowing or fixing water breaks and stuff like that so they can jump on those emergencies quickly and respond efficiently. We should also exert caution in public works because the way it is written it applies to everyone. He said he would rather be conservative in the roll-out. As he said earlier, it is harder to pull back once you rolled it out versus being conservative upfront. He said he felt it was critical to take a look and see who are we trying to incentivize in all the departments and have the residency stipend apply to them. He said think about the Fire Chief position. The Council changed it so the Fire Chief doesn't have to live in Town.

The Council decided to have the various liaisons to talk to the different department heads and find out which of their employees they want to incentivize and offer the residency stipend. They will bring the information back and discuss.

ORDINANCE No. 1845
of the
TOWN of HIGHLAND, INDIANA

AN ORDINANCE TO AMEND THE COMPENSATION, BENEFITS AND PERSONNEL PROGRAM OF THE MUNICIPALITY, TO BE KNOWN AS THE COMPENSATION AND BENEFITS ORDINANCE COMMONLY KNOWN AS THE EMPLOYEE HANDBOOK, PURSUANT TO IC 36-1-3 AND OTHER RELEVANT STATUTES, AND AMENDING SOME PORTIONS OF WAGE AND SALARY ORDINANCE.

WHEREAS, Title 36, Article 1, Chapter 5 of the Indiana Code provides that the legislative body of a unit shall codify, revise, rearrange, or compile the ordinances of the unit into a complete, simplified code excluding formal parts of the ordinances;

WHEREAS, The legislative body of this unit, the Town of Highland, is the Town Council, pursuant to IC 36-1-2-9(5) and IC 36-5-2-2;

WHEREAS, The present general and permanent ordinances of the Town of Highland, formally codified in 2012, are in need of technical and substantive modifications not confined to any particular Title, Article or Chapter but nevertheless desirable to further improve and perfect the Code; and,

WHEREAS, The Town Council, is persuaded that it is necessary and desirable to adopt the several technical and substantive modifications necessary to carry out this requirement and to further improve and perfect the Code,

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

Section 1. That the Highland Municipal Employee Handbook of the Compensation and Benefit Ordinance, that Section 4.03.13 is hereby amended by adding section 4.03.131, and shall read as follows:

4.03.131 Residency Stipend pay for Full-Time Employees of the Highland Parks and Recreation Department and Full-Time Employees of the Highland Public Works Department (Agency) residing in the Town of Highland.

Effective January 1, 2026, a member of the Highland Public Works Department who is a resident of the Town of Highland will receive \$200.00 a month for each complete month that they are a resident of the Town of Highland or a maximum of \$2400.00 in a calendar year. In order to qualify for this stipend, the Employee needs to provide a copy of his/her Homestead Exemption or a copy of their current lease accompanied by a sworn statement of residency. Employees will be paid in one (1) lump sum, up to \$2400.00, in January of the following year regardless of whether they still reside in Highland or are employed by the Town of Highland.

Section 2. The provisions of this Ordinance shall be retroactively effective from and after January 1, 2026.

Section 3. That this ordinance shall be effective from and after its passage and adoption, as evidenced by the signature of the Town Council President and attested thereto by the Clerk-Treasurer, all pursuant to IC 36-5-2-10 and IC 36-5-2-10.2.

Introduced and Filed on 12th day of January 2026. 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 12th Day of January 2026, 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)

**ORDINANCE No. 1842-A
of the
TOWN of HIGHLAND, INDIANA**

AN ORDINANCE to AMEND ORDINANCE No. 1842 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 CREATING A RESIDENCY STIPEND PROVISION IN THE HIGHLAND PUBLIC WORKS DEPARTMENT (AGENCY) and the HIGHLAND PARKS AND RECREATION 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 2026 and thereafter as amended;

WHEREAS, The Town Council of the Town of Highland, as the Town Legislative body, has been advised that to encourage residency in Highland, it is desirable to offer a Residency Stipend to the full-time employees of the Highland Public Works Department (Agency) and the Highland Parks and Recreation Department in the amount of \$200 per month, not to exceed the per year sum of \$2,400, for every month they reside in Town, to be paid in one (1) lump sum; and

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT HEREBY ORDAINED by the Town Council of the Town of Highland, Lake County, Indiana, that the Wages, Salaries, and special detail levels of the Officers and Employees of the Town of Highland, are hereby established, modified and fixed, pursuant to the provisions indicated herein and as follows:

Section 1. That in Section 11 of Ordinance No. 1842 be amended by adding a successor subdivision, to be styled as Section 11 subdivision (F) which shall read as follows:

Section 11. *Parks and Recreation 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 **Highland Parks and Recreation Department** as follows:

(F) Residency Stipend Provision:

Residency Stipend Provision. Effective January 1, 2026, a member of the Highland Park and Recreation Department who is a resident of the Town of Highland will receive \$200.00 a month for each complete month that they are a resident of the Town of Highland or a maximum of \$2400.00 in a calendar year. In order to qualify for this stipend, the Employee needs to provide a copy of his/her Homestead Exemption or a copy of their current lease accompanied by a sworn statement of residency. Employees will be paid in one (1) lump sum, up to \$2400.00, in January of the following year regardless of whether they still reside in Highland or are employed by the Town of Highland.

Section 2. That in Section 9 of Ordinance No. 1842 be amended by adding a successor subdivision, to be styled as Section 9 subdivision (F) which shall read as follows:

Section 9. *Public Works Department (Agency).* 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 **Public Works Department (Agency)** as follows:

(F) Residency Stipend Provision:

Residency Stipend Provision. Effective January 1, 2026, a member of the Highland Public Works Department who is a resident of the Town of Highland will receive \$200.00 a month for each complete month that they are a resident of the Town of Highland or a maximum of \$2400.00 in a calendar year. In order to qualify for this stipend, the Employee needs to provide a copy of his/her Homestead Exemption or a copy of their current lease accompanied by a sworn statement of residency. Employees will be paid in one (1) lump sum, up to \$2400.00, in January of the following year regardless of whether they still reside in Highland or are employed by the Town of Highland.

Section 3. That if any part of this ordinance shall be held invalid, such part shall be deemed severable and the invalidity thereof shall not affect the remaining parts of this ordinance;

Section 4. Any and all such ordinances in conflict with this ordinance are hereby repealed and are of no further force nor effect;

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. This ordinance shall become and be in full force and effect *from January 1, 2026*, and after its passage and adoption upon its signature by the executive in the manner prescribed by IC 36-5-2-10(a).

Section 7. 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 and Filed on 12th day of January 2026. 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 12th Day of January 2026, by the Town Council of the Town of Highland, Lake County, Indiana, having been passed by a vote of in favor and opposed.

Memorandum of Meeting
Monday, January 12, 2026

**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)

Plenary Business Meeting of Monday January 26, 2026

- Minutes of the Meeting of Monday, January 12, 2026.
- Additional Appropriation – Legacy Foundation Grant
- Accounts Payable Voucher
-