

**Enrolled Memorandum of the Meeting
Study Session/Meeting (In person)
Thirtieth Town Council of Highland
Monday, March 9, 2026**

The Thirtieth Town Council of the Town of Highland, Lake County, Indiana met in a study session on **Monday, March 9, 2026**, after the adjournment of the March 9, 2026 Plenary Meeting (7:21 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 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. Deputy Clerk-Treasurer, Dawn Kovacich was present to memorialize the proceedings. *A quorum was attained.*

Officials Present: IT Director Ed Dabrowski, Redevelopment Director Maria Becerra, Metropolitan Police Chief Ralph Potesta, Public Works Director Mark Knesek and Fire Chief Glenn Schlessler were in person.

x. **Discussion:** Appointments. None
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

- **Legislative Appointments**
- **Regional Statutory Appointments**
- **Home Rule Commissions or Boards**

Place Holders should the Council decide to take up:

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:** Moving money in the 2026 Adopted Budget in the Public Safety Income Tax fund designated for various improvements to South Station to other capital needs within the Fire Department:

The Fire Chief began by saying that this topic was discussed briefly last Saturday and the Clerk-Treasurer said it would not be a problem to shift the money to other projects within the fire station. The Clerk-Treasurer said it would not require Council approval as long as the expenditure remained in the same series. The Fire Chief said he hopes to bring the list of projects to the next Council meeting. He said he would send it to the Council once he has everything put together. He said the money was originally designated for upgrades to the kitchen and bathrooms at South Station. He said he has longer term, larger plans for that facility. He wants to bring it out of the 60s so it can become not only the Town's training hub but hopefully a regional training hub. He said the quotes on updating the bathrooms range from \$70,000 to \$120,000. Some of the other works includes some door work, HVAC and energy efficiency things. The big point is we've got the funding allocated already. We're just trying to take care of all these big projects before potential SB1 impacts happen. Facility-wise we will be more energy efficient, trying to reduce those NIPSCO increases, the Chief said. He said a lot of the individual projects came in under \$25,000 so it won't require Council approval but others will require approval.

The Chief then brought up to the Council about having an executive session to discuss the ambulance contract. He said, per the contract, the Town has to notify Superior 180 days in advance if Highlands want to get out of the contract or make modifications.

- x. **Discussion: Proposed Ordinance No. 1845:** 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, particularly creating a Residency Stipend Provision in the Public Works Department (Agency) and the Parks and Recreation Department.

Councilor Robertson said they've had great conversation from his point. He said he doesn't know if we're ready to really discuss. He told the Council to let them draft their thoughts and will then share with the Council. He said that's been their difficulty, putting their thoughts into words and come out with what they want.

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)

- x. **Discussion: Proposed Ordinance No. 1842-A:** 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 Provision in the Parks and Recreation Department and the Public Works Department (Agency).

**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.

**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: Consent Agendas (used in Merrillville & Fishers): still requires a motion to adopt and seconded. Any Councilor can ask that any item on the Consent Agenda be removed from the Consent Agenda and placed on the regular agenda. A consent agenda groups routine, non-controversial items (like meeting minutes, standard reports, or routine appointments) into a single package, allowing them to be approved with one collective motion and vote.

The general consensus of the Council that there was no interest to take up the Consent Agenda at this time and to remove it from the agenda.

x. Discussion: Wheel Tax

Attorney Reed said the changes have been made and he is asking only to introduce at the next meeting, March 23, 2026. He would like the Council to review it one more time before adoption.

Councilor Black said he would like to offer another amendment and that is to exempt disability plates.

Attorney Reed said amendments can be made up to the point of adoption. He said the Wheel Tax won't take effect until the calendar year 2027.

x. Discussion: E-Bikes & Scooters

Chief Potesta said he and Patrol Commander Banasiak have had some good discussions with Attorney Reed and neighboring chiefs. He said they are making changes and leaning to rather than making a new code, he thinks they will modify or replace the current code section as it applies to motorized bikes.

x. Discussion: Food & Beverage Tax

Attorney Reed said the Ordinance for the Food & Beverage Tax is good to go. He said he and Councilor Robertson have had some discussions with folks downstate. In particular, he said no one is interested in creating a new tax but State Senator Dernulc said he would sponsor the bill. He said if it is passed in the assembly this year, it can be implemented next year. He said approval would have to come from the State Senate. He said the Council needs to figure out where the funds are going to be used for, either specifically or ambiguously before the senate will vote on it. He said the taxpayers will want to know where the money collected will be allocated to.

Councilor Robertson said he compiled an exhaustive list outlining what the collected money could be used for. He said there seems to be a lot more things that we could use it for, more than he originally thought. He said it doesn't have to be confined to parks and recreation or tourism. The uses are much broader. He said one of the categories is to make bond payments. He said you can bond against those funds.

x. Discussion: The Short Session ended on Friday with the only substantive change to SB1 is:

- HB 1210 delays the implementation of the new LIT system to 2029 (with adoption in 2028). All cities and towns now have the option to opt into the county-wide municipal services rate. The first LIT adoption lasts three years and is adopted annually thereafter, with a minimum rate adopted automatically to cover 125% of outstanding debt coverage requirements. There is also additional flexibility in the distribution of the Fire/EMS rate, as well as a new formula for distributing the county-wide municipal services rate, which guarantees each city and town in the formula a share of that rate equal to 150% of that unit's share of the county population.

- It also sets up Municipal Unit Strategic Taskforces (MUST) in each county, where county and city leaders will meet to plan their county-wide LIT strategy and send a non-binding report regarding distributions for each county to the General Assembly next year. This will provide a forum to discuss challenges and solutions for the new LIT system in each county and inform the conversation on further reforms next session.

The Council decided not to entertain budget cuts at this time but would wait to see if any further comes from SB1.

Plenary Business Meeting of Monday March 23, 2026

- Minutes of the Meeting of Monday, March 9, 2026.
- Accounts Payable Voucher
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