

**MINUTES OF REGULAR SESSION
HIGHLAND CITY COUNCIL
TUESDAY, JANUARY 20, 2026**

Mayor Hemann called the Regular Session to order at 6:30pm at Highland City Hall. Council members Klaus, Sloan, Bellm, and Napper were present. Others in attendance were City Manager Conrad, City Attorney Trent Carriger, Directors Cook, Gillespie, Hubbard, and Widman, Chief Straub, City Treasurer Nicolaides, Deputy Clerk Chris Flake, City Clerk Bellm, and 21 citizens.

MINUTES

Councilwoman Bellm made a motion to approve the minutes of the January 5, 2026 Regular Session as attached. Motion seconded by Councilman Napper. Roll Call Vote: Councilmembers Klaus, Sloan, Bellm, and Napper voted aye, none nay. Motion carried.

PUBLIC FORUM

Citizens' Requests and Comments:

Rusty Rodz Car Club – Rusty Rodz Car Cruise – Russel Huelsmann, Representative, requested permission to use the streets around the downtown square for their car cruises the last Saturday of each month, May through October, 5pm-8pm. Councilwoman Bellm asked what time do we need to close off the streets. Mr. Huelsmann stated, normally, the cars start arriving first after 4pm. It depends on the weather and anticipated crowd. Councilman Napper made a motion to approve the request of Rusty Rodz Car Club to hold their 2026 cruise-ins on the downtown square, the last Saturday of each month, for the months of May through October per the Special Events Application. Motion seconded by Councilwoman Bellm. Councilwoman Bellm encouraged attendees to support all those businesses around the Square. The parking will be much improved. We have a parking lot west of the post office, by the library, and soon we will have expanded parking by the Weinheimer as well. Mr. Huelsmann suggested businesses around the Square run dinner specials to encourage people to come in or get carryout. Roll Call Vote: Councilmembers Klaus, Sloan, Bellm, and Napper voted aye, none nay. Motion carried.

Leaps of Love – 24 Hour Laps for Leaps – Special Event Application –Brady and Traci Reichmann, representatives were present. Brady stated we are here for approval of the Special Event Application for 24 Hour Laps for Leaps, September 25-26, 2026. We have the okay from Highland Speedway. Councilman Klaus made a motion to approve Special Event Application for 24 Hour Laps for Leaps as attached. Motion seconded by Councilwoman Sloan. Roll Call Vote: Councilmembers Klaus, Sloan, Bellm, and Napper voted aye, none nay. Motion carried.

David Todd noted on the last expenditure report there was payment to Madison County, which he assumes is for 911 dispatch services. City Manager Chris Conrad confirmed that is the quarterly payment for Madison County 911. Mr. Todd inquired how that is working out. Director Widman stated it is working out just fine.

Mary Ottis, Kingsbury Court, gave a big “thank you” to Director Cook and the electric department staff for working to get the power restored during the power outage this last week. She inquired when

Kingsbury Court is going to get fixed. The entrance is all busted up and the cul-de-sac is all gravel. City staff is just putting a little blacktop in here and there on the north side of Kingsbury Court. Mayor Hemann responded that we have a wish list. I believe staff prioritizes those that are safety issues first and works from there within the budget. Director Gillespie reported we do prioritize them. At the same time, we spread it out to touch some in each subdivision to get the worst of the worst in each. Mrs. Ottis expressed we pay enough taxes to have the street fixed. I had visitors in, at Halloween, and they said, 'It is a lovely subdivision, but what the hell is wrong that they are not fixing your street?' The cul-de-sac on the north end is gravel; no concrete left. Mayor Hemann ensured Mrs. Ottis staff would look at it again. He thanked her for her comments regarding the electric department.

Troy Hemann stated, to be clear from the beginning, my comments are not to disparage EMS staff. Tax funded ambulance services are to serve the community for emergencies, such as heart attacks, strokes, accident victims. Ambulances should be here in the community for those purposes. There is concerns about transfers. Transfers are for private services, because they can be scheduled. Response times for emergency services increase when ambulances are not available, because they are doing transports. Those going into this profession, do so to serve those in emergency situations. That is what they train for. They do not want to be forced to do transports. Putting them in these roles will lead to burnout and turnover. Police and fire services receive funding from grocery tax and public safety tax, yet the ambulance services are treated differently. Sales tax now also helps fund Building & Zoning's budget, yet ambulance service can be cut out at any time. Transfers do not fix the funding issues of ambulance services. It starts with a few transfers and then it becomes more. Ambulance services should be to serve the community. It is not to generate revenue.

John Kapp reported the Highland Shootout was the greatest ever. I was at Railshake that night, and it was packed. Great event for Highland. Then, last week, there was Business After Hours at the KC Hall. I did not know about this monthly opportunity for Chamber members to highlight their businesses and get together. I am going to that now.

Requests of Council:

Councilwoman Bellm noted the sign by entrance to Silver Lake Park is starting to look shabby. City Manager Conrad reported we have a contract with DigitalArtz to update the Welcome signs and some others. We may have missed that one.

Staff Reports:

City Manager Conrad reminded everyone that it will be the 25th Anniversary of the Korte Rec Center on February 6. He encouraged everyone to watch for details on the list of events.

NEW BUSINESS

Bill #26-03/RESOLUTION Regarding the Release of Executive Session Minutes – Councilwoman Sloan made a motion to table Bill #26-03 regarding the release of executive session minutes. Motion seconded by Councilman Klaus. Roll Call Vote: Councilmembers Klaus, Sloan, Bellm, and Napper voted aye, none nay. Motion carried and item tabled.

Bill #26-04/RESOLUTION Authorizing and Directing Application to the 2026 Surface Transportation Block Grant Program (STP) for the Purpose of Improving Broadway Street From Poplar Street to Swallow Lane – Councilwoman Bellm made a motion to approve Bill #26-04/RESOLUTION #26-01-3244 authorizing and directing application to the 2026 Surface Transportation Block Grant Program (STP) for the purpose of improving Broadway Street from Poplar Street to Swallow Lane as attached. Motion seconded by Councilman Napper. Councilwoman Bellm inquired this is what we have

done before. City Manager Conrad reported this is done annually for funding projects 3-4 years out. This project would be for widening of the roadway of Broadway, adding sidewalk along one side and bike/multipurpose trail on the north side. Roll Call Vote: Councilmembers Klaus, Sloan, Bellm, and Napper voted aye, none nay. Motion carried.

Bill #26-05/RESOLUTION Approving and Authorizing the City of Highland's Application To the Madison County Agency for Community Transit Community Action Grants Program for a Grant in the Amount of \$10,510.50 to Seal the Shared Use Paths Along Iberg Road From Koch Road to Broadway and Along Troxler Avenue From U.S. Hwy. 40 to State Route 160 in Highland, Illinois – Councilwoman Sloan made a motion to approve Bill #26-05/RESOLUTION #26-01-3245 approving and authorizing the City of Highland's application to the Madison County Agency for Community Transit Community Action Grants Program for a grant in the amount of \$10,510.50 to seal the shared use paths along Iberg Road from Koch Road to Broadway and along Troxler Avenue from U.S. Hwy. 40 to State Route 160 in Highland, Illinois as attached. Motion seconded by Councilman Klaus. Roll Call Vote: Councilmembers Klaus, Sloan, Bellm, and Napper voted aye, none nay. Motion carried.

Bill #26-06/RESOLUTION Approving Application and Awarding Certain Financial Incentives Under the City of Highland Façade Improvement Program to Daryn Riechmann for 1011 Washington Street, Highland, Illinois – Councilwoman Bellm made a motion to approve Bill #26-06/RESOLUTION #26-01-3246 approving application and awarding certain financial incentives under the City of Highland Façade Improvement Program to Daryn Riechmann for 1011 Washington Street, Highland, Illinois as attached. Motion seconded by Councilman Napper. Roll Call Vote: Councilmembers Klaus, Sloan, Bellm, and Napper voted aye, none nay. Motion carried.

Bill #26-07/RESOLUTION Authorizing the Sole Source Purchase of a 2022 FOUTS Mini Rescue Pumper From Worley Fire Protection District for \$250,000 and Waiving Customary Bidding Procedures – Councilwoman Sloan made a motion to approve Bill #26-07/RESOLUTION #26-01-3247 authorizing the sole source purchase of a 2022 FOUTS Mini Rescue Pumper from Worley Fire Protection District for \$250,000 and waiving customary bidding procedures as attached. Motion seconded by Councilman Napper. City Manager Conrad reported this is something we had budgeted outright next year, and was looking to build new. We recently found out we would be getting a 2026 chassis, but not receiving it until 2029. Worley Fire District had ordered this one, but consolidated with another district and had this for sale. We will borrow from reserves. Chief Straub noted a new was \$450,000. We received a walk-around video of this unit. This will meet the needs of our calls. It will reduce liability from the big truck that we have. Councilman Napper stated I spoke with City Manager Conrad about this. A small truck gives us better access in alleys and other places; and, since we are a volunteer department, we want something more user friendly. Roll Call Vote: Councilmembers Klaus, Sloan, Bellm, and Napper voted aye, none nay. Motion carried.

Bill #26-08/ORDINANCE Amending Chapter 14 – Animals, Article I – General, Sec. 14-11 – Keeping Dangerous Animals and Farm Animals – Councilwoman Bellm made a motion to approve Bill #26-08/ORDINANCE #3425 amending Chapter 14 – Animals, Article I – General, Sec. 14-11 – Keeping Dangerous Animals and Farm Animals as attached. Motion seconded by Councilwoman Sloan. City Manager Conrad clarified we are not authorizing chickens to be raised in town. This is amending code to allow chickens to be raised at the school for educational purposes. This is similar to what we did with the ground mount solar exception we did for the school district. Councilman Napper asked how many chickens. Claire Geiger, Ag Science Teacher, stated she is not sure yet. These will be used with the pre-veterinarian class to study feed efficiency and weight gain. They will be contained within greenhouse. Councilwoman Bellm asked what they will do with the eggs. Ms. Geiger responded this will be a short-term project for a few months. Roll Call Vote: Councilmembers Klaus, Sloan, Bellm, and Napper voted aye, none nay. Motion carried.

Bill #26-09/ORDINANCE Amending Chapter 18 – Buildings, Building Regulations, and Municipal Codes, Article XIII – Building Permit Fees and Fines, Sec. 18-13-1(1)(C) – Councilwoman Sloan made a motion to approve Bill #26-09/ORDINANCE #3426 amending Chapter 18 – Buildings, Building Regulations, and Municipal Codes, Article XIII – Building Permit Fees and Fines, Sec. 18-13-1(1)(C) as attached. Motion seconded by Councilman Klaus. Councilman Napper asked for an explanation. City Manager Conrad explained you may remember we took our plumbing inspections and turned them over to the State. We are reversing that. Chris Straub reported since we have plumbing inspections. We have to do them because state is so overwhelmed. We are working with our inspectors to get things caught up. Roll Call Vote: Councilmembers Klaus, Sloan, Bellm, and Napper voted aye, none nay. Motion carried.

Bill #26-10/RESOLUTION Approving and Authorizing Execution of an Ambulance Service and Lease Agreement, with St. Joseph’s Hospital, and Other Actions Related Thereto – Councilwoman Bellm made a motion to approve Bill #26-10/RESOLUTION #26-01-3248 approving and authorizing execution of an ambulance service and lease agreement, with St. Joseph’s Hospital, and other actions related thereto as attached. Motion seconded by Councilman Napper. City Manager Conrad reported the agreement we have worked out with HSHS St. Joseph Hospital – Highland is to staff an ambulance for the purposes of transfers 40 hours per week. This will be in addition to our primary ambulance, which will be used for emergency response. The mission of the primary ambulance will not change. We have a set reimbursement schedule with HSHS for operating costs and maintenance. City Manager Conrad pointed out it will not be a huge moneymaker, but it is not about generating revenue. We will do this for one year to see how it works out. Ambulance service is a very tenuous. Medicare and Medicaid pay fifty-cents on the dollar. When eighty-percent of calls are Medicare and Medicaid, it becomes hard to sustain. EMS is a hybrid service funded by property taxes and the general administrative fund. Again, we are entering into this tentatively with a one-year trial. When not in use doing transfers, this unit will be able to provide backup for emergencies. Mayor Hemann expressed it is good to service our local hospital. Councilman Klaus inquired this is not for profit. City Manager Conrad responded it is setup to be revenue neutral. As the Mayor said, we look at this as serving members of our community with these transfers. This is set to start March 1. Mayor Hemann stated we would like periodic updates on how it is working out, once started. Councilwoman Bellm agreed. City Manager Conrad stated we should know in the first six months if it is working. Roll Call Vote: Councilmembers Klaus, Sloan, Bellm, and Napper voted aye, none nay. Motion carried.

REPORTS

Accepting Expenditures Report #1306 for January 3, 2026 through January 16, 2026 – Councilwoman Bellm made a motion to accept Expenditures Report #1306 for January 3, 2026 through January 16, 2026 as attached. Motion seconded by Councilman Klaus. Roll Call Vote: Councilmembers Klaus, Sloan, Bellm, and Napper voted aye, none nay. Motion carried.

Councilwoman Bellm made a motion to temporarily adjourn this regular session to enter into executive session under the Illinois Open Meetings Act under the following exemption: 5 ILCS 120/2(c)(21) to discuss closed meeting minutes. Motion seconded by Councilman Napper. Roll Call Vote: Councilmembers Klaus, Sloan, Bellm, and Napper voted aye, none nay. Motion carried. Open Meeting temporarily adjourned at 7:10pm.

Mayor Hemann reconvened the Regular Session at 7:42 pm. Council members Klaus, Sloan, Bellm and Napper were present. Others in attendance were City Attorney Carriger, City Manager Conrad, Director Widman, Deputy City Clerk Flake, and City Clerk Bellm.

Bill #26-03/RESOLUTION Regarding the Release of Executive Session Minutes – Councilwoman Bellm made a motion to approve Bill #26-03/RESOLUTION #26-01-3249 regarding the release of executive session minutes as attached. Motion seconded by Councilman Napper. Roll Call Vote: Councilmembers Klaus, Sloan, Bellm, and Napper voted aye, none nay. Motion carried.

Councilwoman Bellm made a motion to adjourn. Motion seconded by Councilman Klaus. All aye, none nay. Motion carried. Meeting adjourned at 7:42 pm.

Kevin B. Hemann, Mayor

Barbara Bellm, City Clerk