

**MINUTES OF REGULAR SESSION
HIGHLAND CITY COUNCIL
MONDAY, OCTOBER 5, 2026**

Mayor Hemann called the Regular Session to order at 6:30pm. Council members Klaus, Sloan, Bellm and Napper were present. Others in attendance were City Manager Conrad, City Attorney Michael McGinley, Directors Cook, Gillespie, Heimbürger, Koehnemann, Wilken, and Widman, Fire Chief Straub, City Staff Jordan Bauer and Mike Russell, City Clerk Bellm, Treasurer Nicolaides, and 18 citizens.

MINUTES

Councilman Klaus made a motion to approve the minutes of the September 21, 2026 Regular Session as attached. Motion seconded by Councilwoman Bellm. Roll Call Vote: Councilmembers Klaus, Sloan, Bellm, and Napper voted aye, none nay. Motion carried.

Councilman Klaus made a motion to approve the minutes of the September 21, 2026 Executive Session as attached. Motion seconded by Councilwoman Bellm. Roll Call Vote: Councilmembers Klaus, Sloan, Bellm, and Napper voted aye, none nay. Motion carried.

PROCLAMATION

Mayor Hemann read a document commemorating Highland Hope United Methodist Church for its 30th anniversary.

PUBLIC FORUM

Citizens' Requests and Comments:

Annual Lighted Christmas Ceremony – Special Event Application – Laura Wilken, Director of Recreation & Special Events, requested permission for the annual lighted Christmas ceremony on the Square, which follows the lighted Christmas parade each year. Councilwoman Sloan made a motion to approve use of the Square and gazebo on Friday, November 27, 2026 for annual lighted Christmas ceremony as per Special Event Application as attached. Motion seconded by Councilman Klaus. Roll Call Vote: Councilmembers Klaus, Sloan, Bellm, and Napper voted aye, none nay. Motion carried.

Peppermint Preschool Laps For Learning – Special Event Application – Elaine Fenton, Representative, requested approval of Special Event Application for Peppermint Preschool to Fun Run for Saturday, November 14, 2026 to raise funds for the Peppermint Preschool program. As of November 1, we are non-for-profit and no longer under EvUCC. Councilwoman Bellm made a motion to approve Special Event Application for Peppermint Preschool to hold Laps for Learning

3K/5K Runs on Saturday, November 14, 2026 as attached. Motion seconded by Councilman Napper. Roll Call Vote: Councilmembers Klaus, Sloan, Bellm, and Napper voted aye, none nay. Motion carried.

Byron Barker stated as a fourth-generation family in Highland, they have always loved going to Silver Lake Park and walking the trail. In particular, we always enjoyed the willow tree at the back loop. Last year, was the first time I took my granddaughter. I have participated in cleaning up at the park. A few years ago, I volunteered to tend to the trees along the trail. It was devastating to see the changes made to the trail. Now I understand these paths were put in as response to a tragic event that took place last year. However, our country has many parks and hiking trails. Taking out trees and clearing for what may or may not again happen out there, seems excessive. Maintaining those trails is going to require a lot of time and resources. The posts with all the signage have taken the beauty and serenity away. The trail has been changed from a peaceful tranquil path to a reminder of tragedy. I have told my story of my family walking the trail and visiting the willow tree as a way to encourage others to get out and exercise.

Ms. Schmitt came forward and stated we took a walk on the trail, also. I was devastated to see what has happened on the trail. I understand the need for a means to provide rescue on the trail. However, the signage is just so glaring. I understand maybe coming up from the lake. But all the signs were just so “in your face”. There was a tree that was taken out. The fort tree at the loop was our favorite part of trail. It was the longest trail in the area. I would like to see some sort of compromise.

Comments & Requests of Council:

No comments or requests presented.

Staff Reports:

Silver Lake Park Trail – Director of Public Safety Carole Widman stated we are here to address some of the issues. We need to protect the people that use the trail. It is about safety. There are young people that go out on the trail. People on bicycles that wreck. This past year, we had two young girls that were visiting. The girls were young, unprepared, and got overheated. The one girl, we could not get to her from any direction, because of the terrain and the overgrowth. Our officers had to run the length of trail. An officer carried her 75 yards and got her to a boat. If it was me, or my husband, it would not have happened. Upon review and assessment of the trail, we found trees and brush that others had cut down. There was exposed rebar, deteriorating bridges, a separate trail, and overgrown vegetation. We chose to make decisions to preserve the trail, but providing emergency access, by removing invasive vegetation while planting new friendly vegetation. City parks and national parks operate on different guidelines. We have to be able to reach people in emergency situations. We have a responsibility.

Director of Parks Brad Koehnemann explained a lot of people did not realize that the loop, at the back end, is private property. The previous owner did not have an issue with people on the trail walking it. However, that is not the case with the current owner. I reached out. The property owner said it can be used for emergency access only. Eagle Scouts have reached out in past and have replaced or built bridges on the trail. We are in communication with the scouts,

presently, to get things repaired. A lot of the growth will come back. Mayor Hemann inquired, with the vegetation growth, is it a matter of let nature take its course. Chief Widman replied, yes, by doing this now, it allows nature to do its thing. Things will grow without letting invasive honeysuckle growth to return like it was. There is a back portion of the loop, which invades private property. We have to be respectful of that new landowner. We have to give it time to let the vegetation grown in on some of the trails. Once those trails are grown in, we can take some of those signs down. Councilwoman Sloan stated several of us took the trails. I fell several times. The signs provide a reference should some need to call for help, as to where they are at. Chief Widman stated I was out on the trail this morning, in plain clothes. I spoke with a man, from Marine, who was walking it. I asked the man how he liked it. He said he likes it. Chief Widman asked everyone to be patient. Allow the natural foliage to grow again.

Councilman Napper expressed I like what you are doing. Director Koehnemann stated we've had three serious episodes in the last ten months. In last 30 years, we did not see those incidents. All we did was widen the trail that exists to allow for the ability to get people off the trail. I apologize to the people that had issue with it; however, I want to have people use the parks, but still be safe.

Ms. Schmitt stated we are from Pennsylvania. Bikes are allowed on the trails. Is there a plan to keep recreational vehicles from going on the trail? Chief Widman stated they are not allowed. They would only be on there for emergency rescue purposes. Director Koehnemann added adjacent landowners cannot access the trails from their own points, either. Mr. Barker inquired, as far as what was cut, would you have cut all that if you could have gotten in with a side-by-side. Chief Widman stated we are not going to go in and keep it flatten like it is now, no. But we do not want the honeysuckle and other evasive plants that we had to grow back. Mr. Barker stated the city's arborist is very professional. Chief Widman expressed we are asking you to be very patient and allow the foliage to grow back. Public safety and the safety of those on the trail is my first priority. Mayor Hemann encouraged anyone with questions or concerns to email the chief, or after the meeting we can address them.

City Manager Chris Conrad reported the transports with the second ambulance will start this week. We had an unprecedented number of watermain breaks in a line, this past weekend, which Director Joe Gillespie will address. Public Works Director Joe Gillespie reported that around 9:30pm on Thursday, we had a break a main at Sun Court, which effected Sun Ct., Sundew, Sunfish, and Keeven. We had another break on that same main, about fifteen feet over, on Friday and then again on Saturday morning. We expect to have results back from the lab tomorrow morning. City Manager Conrad stated that is very unusual, but we hope to lift the boil order tomorrow morning.

NEW BUSINESS

Approve Notice of Municipal Letting, Bid # PW-09-26, for Water Treatment Plant Filter Media Change – Councilwoman Bellm made a motion to approve Notice of Municipal Letting, Bid # PW-09-26, for Water Treatment Plant Filter Media Change as attached. Motion seconded by Councilman Klaus. Roll Call Vote: Councilmembers Klaus, Sloan, Bellm, and Napper voted aye, none nay. Motion carried.

Bill #26-115/RESOLUTION Amending Chapter 50 – Peddlers and Solicitors, Article II – Canvassers and Solicitors, Division 2 – Registration, Adding Section 50-42 and Amending Chapter 50 – Peddlers and Solicitors, Article IV – Hawkers and Peddlers, Section 50-87 – License Application Fee – Councilwoman Sloan made a motion to approve Bill #26-115/RESOLUTION #26-10-3312 amending Chapter 50 – Peddlers and Solicitors, Article II – Canvassers and Solicitors, Division 2 – Registration, adding Section 50-42 and amending Chapter 50 – Peddlers and Solicitors, Article IV – Hawkers and Peddlers, Section 50-87 – License Application Fee as attached. Motion seconded by Councilman Klaus. Roll Call Vote: Councilmembers Klaus, Sloan, Bellm, and Napper voted aye, none nay. Motion carried.

Bill #26-116/RESOLUTION Accepting Blue Cross Blue Shield of Illinois for Medical Insurance, Delta Dental for Dental Insurance and VSP for Vision Insurance for 2027-2028 - Councilwoman Bellm made a motion to approve Bill #26-116/RESOLUTION #26-10-3313 accepting Blue Cross Blue Shield of Illinois for medical insurance, Delta Dental for dental insurance and VSP for vision insurance for 2027-2028 as attached. Motion seconded by Councilman Napper. Roll Call Vote: Councilmembers Klaus, Sloan, Bellm, and Napper voted aye, none nay. Motion carried.

Bill #26-117/ORDINANCE Declaring Personal Property of the City of Highland, Illinois, Surplus and Authorizing Its Sale and/or Disposal, Including Police Department Kenwood Radios – Councilman Napper made a motion to approve Bill #26-117/ORDINANCE #3469 declaring personal property of the City of Highland, Illinois, surplus and authorizing its sale and/or disposal, including Police Department Kenwood Radios as attached. Motion seconded by Councilwoman Bellm. Roll Call Vote: Councilmembers Klaus, Sloan, Bellm, and Napper voted aye, none nay. Motion carried.

REPORTS

Accepting Expenditures Report #1323 for Sept. 19, 2026 through Oct. 2, 2026 – Councilman Klaus made a motion to accept Expenditures Report #1323 for September 19, 2026 through October 2, 2026 as attached. Motion seconded by Councilwoman Bellm. 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. Roll Call Vote: Councilmembers Klaus, Sloan, Bellm, and Napper voted aye, none nay. Motion carried. Meeting adjourned at 7:11pm.

Kevin B. Heman, Mayor

Barbara Bellm, City Clerk