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**MINUTES OF A REGULAR MEETING
HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION
OF THE CITY OF HIGHLAND PARK, ILLINOIS**

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MEETING DATE: Monday, November 13, 2025

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MEETING LOCATION: Council Chambers, City Hall, 1707 St. Johns Avenue, Highland Park, IL

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CALL TO ORDER

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At 6:31 p.m., Chairperson Pines called the meeting to order. This Commission meeting takes place on-site. Staff was asked to call the roll.

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ROLL CALL

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Commissioners Present: Chairperson Pines; Commissioners Ehrlich, Gonka, Greenbaum, Hartinger, Portman, & Weeder

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Councilmember Absent: Blumberg

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Student Council Absent: Koslow

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Staff declared that a quorum was present.

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Staff Present: Mayor Rotering, City Manager Neukirch, Director Fontane, Senior Planner Coleman, & Planner Markle

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Others Present: Hart Passman, Corporation Counsel/Elrod Friedman LLP
Gale Cerabona, Recorder

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APPROVAL OF MINUTES

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Special Meeting of the Historic Preservation Commission – September 29, 2025

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Commissioner Gonka moved to approve the special meeting minutes of September 29, 2025. Commissioner Weeder seconded the motion.

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On a voice vote

Voting Yea: Chairperson Pines; Commissioners Gonka, Greenbaum, Hartinger, Portman, & Weeder

Voting Nay: None

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Staff declared that the motion passed unanimously.

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SCHEDULED BUSINESS

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1. Certificate of Appropriateness/COA – 242 Linden Park Place

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Planner Markle offered a presentation:

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- Summary

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- Non-Contributing Structure – NC rating in the local Historic District
 - built in 1959 (formerly Ranch type in the Plain style)

1 Director Fontane suggested the HPC follow the discussion on encouraging/preserving historic presentation.
2 He explained fees, taxes, etc.

3
4 More HPC comments are:

- 5 • Commissioner Portman asked if all incentives are for existing homes and if this discussion is to
6 encourage others to landmark their homes. Planner Markle said the HPC could decide which homes
7 could/should be eligible for any potential preservation incentive.
- 8 • Commissioner Ehrlich thanked Staff as this information is very helpful. He would like to hear from
9 Mayor Rotering and City Manager Neukirch.

10
11 Mayor Rotering said she cannot speak on behalf of City Council. She shares the HPC's concerns and looks
12 forward to incentivizing homeowners to preserve historic gems in Highland Park. Every idea is open and a
13 starting point.

14
15 Continued HPC comments are:

- 16 • Commissioner Gonka said he is interested in taxing people who are not interested in preserving
17 historic homes. Properties are hurt due to high property tax rates. Mayor Rotering said this could be
18 prioritized.
- 19 • Commissioner Weeder suggested taxing teardowns. Mayor Rotering said this happens with the
20 demolition tax. She recommended that these issues be presented to City Council.
- 21 • Commissioner Greenbaum asked, and Mayor Rotering shared that her home is not landmarked. She
22 explained the windows are not great, and it may be landmarked in the future.

23
24 City Manager Neukirch discussed the process, and said City Council is looking for the HPC's feedback. She
25 suggested forming a list of supported recommendations – and complimented Planner Markle and Senior
26 Planner Coleman on the excellent presentation.

27
28 Commissioner Ehrlich asked, and Mayor Rotering advised if the code is being changed, a vote by City Council
29 is required. City Manager Neukirch stated corporate authorities can enact laws.

30
31 It was decided the HPC could review each category in the presentation and offer feedback.

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33 Historic Rehabilitation Grants

- 34 • Commissioner Gonka believes it is not a good use of public funds. He would like to de-incentivize
35 people from tearing down houses.
- 36 • Commissioner Greenbaum stated the amount needs to be significant.
- 37 • Commissioner Gonka believes this should be a six-figure fine or 20% of the sale price.
- 38 • Commissioner Greenbaum identified that sometimes the HPC enacts a demolition delay, then City
39 Council removes it.

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41 Mayor Rotering asked to differentiate between teardowns.

42
43 (continued)

- 44 • Commissioner Weeder said the whole City isn't surveyed yet.
- 45 • Commissioner Portman reminded that City Council is looking for feedback on incentives.
- 46 • Commissioner Ehrlich identified that incentives are layered in other cities/villages. He noted a best
47 approach could be to mirror other cities/villages (Hinsdale, etc.).

- Commissioner Portman would like to decide which incentives are appropriate or not.

Director Fontane asked the HPC to look at the scope of the program; prioritize; how to encourage people to landmark their homes; public good of private preservation. He noted there are 77 voluntarily landmarked homes in Highland Park. Director Fontane stressed that the HPC not delve into the surveys, as they aren't all completed.

(continued)

- Commissioner Greenbaum asked Mayor Rotering what it would take for her to landmark her home. Mayor Rotering said she doesn't know, and wonders what's to be gained. She stated education is key. Her home has been in the family and is a Tudor Eclectic style.
- Commissioner Ehrlich said the HPC should learn what people are doing to their homes. Incentives should be provided. There are a lot of Contributing Structures that haven't been landmarked. Mayor Rotering said preserving landscaping is another avenue.
- Commissioner Hartinger said the age of a home is a factor. People move here for the school system; may not be able to afford a \$2 million home. Homes built in the 1950s could be flagged to be historic homes.
- Commissioner Gonka asked, and Planner Markle replied there is no age (of a house noted) in the code to landmark a home. Senior Planner Coleman clarified that the 50 year cut-off is for Highland Park architectural surveys.

Mayor Rotering mentioned the Boy Built homes should be landmarked.

(continued)

- Commissioner Ehrlich said there are homes built in the 1980s that should be landmarked. He noted a landmarked home could be eligible for a grant.
- Commissioner Portman said educating people about a grant program is key. He referred to the model Elgin has for income eligibility, and noted a test of this would be appropriate.
- Commissioner Gonka said the burden is on the homeowner to present a COA to the HPC when someone wants to make a change to their house. He suggested a grant threshold could be a home with 85 year-old windows, etc.
- Commissioner Weeder said rehabilitation is so costly.
- Commissioner Greenbaum suggested seniors with a limited budget who own a landmarked home would be good candidates for a grant.

Local Property Tax Abatement

- Commissioner Gonka said this should be time-based for a property owner, not run with the land. He would like to see the abatement be honored only if funds are put back in the property.
- Commissioner Portman asked, and Director Fontane said this is for the local level (what Highland Park would enact) – not an assessment freeze. Property tax could be considered.
- Commissioner Hartinger asked, and Director Fontane said City Council would have to approve this.
- Commissioner Ehrlich said other taxpayers are paying the difference. He noted this is why a layered approach would work. People's income could change. Actual home examples (addresses) were discussed on what could have been – other than a teardown.

Mayor Rotering advised that Highland Park's portion is 7.7%. She shared her home was not maintained prior to purchasing it.

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(continued)

- Commissioner Gonka said abatements can be given to maintain the house. There could be a sliding scale based on income.
- Commissioner Portman said this would be helpful for the preservation tool box.
- Commissioner Gonka said money should be given back through preservation.
- Commissioner Greenbaum said the HPC wishes to preserve, and homeowners should benefit. She stated those who don't preserve should be fined.

Planner Markle advised tax abatement is a way to encourage people to landmark homes.

- Commissioner Gonka asked why a homeowner wouldn't go through the state program if they are going through the local program. He shared that his house is not locally landmarked, but he uses the state program. There was no benefit locally, as there was more red tape.

Director Fontane said the historic preservation program is a benefit. This is voluntary. There is a public good in private preservation; public value. Education on local landmarks is a value for the community. Local landmarks don't expire.

Chairperson Pines asked if anyone from the audience wishes to speak. The following came forward:

- Tom Hiller advised he lives in a Tudor Revival house. He said they crossed the 25% mark (of the state program) and shared that it was explained (by a representative from the state) that he should obtain a local landmark first.

Commissioner Gonka said a state landmarking could be attained without local landmarking.

Mr. Hiller concurs with Director Fontane.

Back to.....

Local Property Tax Abatement

- Commissioner Hartinger believes all categories/an armory should be provided. The end result is to retain the home; charge as much as is legally possible if someone wants to tear down the house. This would help developers think about homes rather than dollar amounts. No matter the income, most people would take free money. He wonders what the number would be to trigger people.

Land Use Incentive

- Commissioner Hartinger said people may not buy if they cannot add on. Offering options would be amazing.
- Commissioner Ehrlich stated other cities/villages already have a footprint. Working off of these is a start. These have worked for at least some villages. Highland Park could make this widely available.

Director Fontane said there's been a lot of feedback.

Chairperson Pines suggested this be studied, absorbed, and this discussion can be continued. It was stated the remaining categories would be discussed at a future meeting. He asked, and Director Fontane advised feedback would be provided to City Council.

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2 (continued)
3 • Commissioner Hartinger said if a demolition is granted, the code has to apply for new construction.
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5 Director Fontane concluded these are incentives for historic properties; to encourage preservation – not to
6 discourage, penalize; a different approach policy-wise.
7
8 Chairperson Pines thanked Planner Markle for the information.
9
10 Mayor Rotering thanked the HPC.
11
12 Commissioner Greenbaum said she would like to discuss the negative approach; change people’s minds to
13 not tear down.
14
15 Commissioner Gonka said neighbors who protest encourage negative behavior. Having a big burden on the
16 homeowner, if demolishing, is an incentive; maintaining current properties benefits the community. He
17 noted City Staff/City Council do not want to discourage development.
18
19 City Manager Neukirch asked for all of the HPC’s ideas. She stated they will be compiled in a report. The
20 dialogue can be continued at the next meeting. Staff and Legal Counsel will present same to City Council.
21 City Manager Neukirch stressed that everything is on the table.
22
23 Everyone thanked the Mayor, City Manager Neukirch, etc. for attending tonight’s meeting.
24

25 **BUSINESS FROM THE PUBLIC**

26 There was no Business from the Public.

27
28 Senior Planner Coleman departed the meeting at 8:26 p.m.
29

30 **OTHER BUSINESS**

31 **1. Commissioner/Open Meetings Act Training**

32 Mr. Hart Passman, Corporation Counsel, offered a presentation:

- 33 • Agenda
- 34 • Statutory & Legal Authority
- 35 • City Code Provisions
- 36 • Specific HPC Duties & Responsibilities
- 37 • Landmark Criteria
- 38 • What is “Integrity”?
- 39 • Demolition of Dwellings
 - 40 ○ New Code Provisions
 - 41 ○ Common Questions
- 42 • Establishing a Landmark
- 43 • Establishing a Historic District
- 44 • Certificate of Appropriateness
- 45 • Certificate of Economic Hardship
- 46 • Burden for Satisfying Standards
- 47 • Common Questions & Problems

- 1 • Procedure – Open Meetings Act
- 2 • Open Meetings Act: Email & Online Communication
- 3 • Public Forums & Social Media
- 4 • Open Meetings Act
 - 5 ○ Openness
 - 6 ○ Enforcement
- 7 • Commissioner Attendance Requirements
- 8 • Freedom Of Information Act/FOIA
 - 9 ○ General Rule
 - 10 ○ Private Email & Text Messages
- 11 • Robert’s Rules of Order
- 12 • Procedure – Robert’s Rules of Order
- 13 • Motions
- 14 • Procedure
 - 15 ○ Public Hearings
 - 16 ○ Public Comment

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18 Commissioner Greenbaum departed the meeting at 10:01 p.m.

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20 (continued)

- 21 • Ethics
 - 22 ○ City Guidelines
 - 23 ○ Guidelines
 - 24 ○ Enforcement

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26 **2. Next Regular Meeting is Scheduled for December 11, 2025**

27 It was noted the next regular HPC Meeting is scheduled for December 11, 2025.

28
29 **STAFF REPORT**

30 Planner Markle advised that an article was written in The Highlander and has generated interest in
31 landmarking homes.

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33 Planner Markle asked if the date of May 7, 2026, is okay for the Preservation Awards event.

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35 **ADJOURNMENT**

36 Commissioner Hartinger moved to adjourn at 10:16 p.m. Commissioner Weeder seconded the motion.

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38 On a voice vote
39 Voting Yea Chairperson Pines; Commissioners Ehrlich, Gonka, Hartinger, Portman, & Weeder
40 Voting Nay: None

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42 Staff declared that the motion passed unanimously.

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44 Respectfully Submitted,

45
46 Gale Cerabona, Recorder

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1 MINUTES OF SEPTEMBER 29, 2025, WERE APPROVED WITHOUT CORRECTIONS.