

Committee of the Whole Meeting
City Hall
1707 St Johns Avenue,
Highland Park, IL 60035
February 23, 2026
5:30 PM
Agenda

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I. Call to Order

II. Roll Call

III. Approval of Minutes

- A. Approval of the Minutes of the Regular Meeting of the Committee of the Whole Held on February 9, 2026

IV. Scheduled Business

- A. Considerations Pertaining to the Permanent Place of Remembrance
- B. Discussion Related to Short Term Rental Regulations

V. Other Matters

VI. Closed Session

VII. Adjournment

Staff Report



Meeting Date: February 23, 2026

Staff Contact: Megan Cherry, Management Analyst

Department: City Manager's Office

Title: Approval of the Minutes of the Regular Meeting of the Committee of the Whole Held on February 9, 2026

Recommendation:

For the City Council's approval are the minutes of the Regular Meeting of the Committee of the Whole held on February 9, 2026.

Attachments:

1. MIN COTW 2-9-2026

**MINUTES OF A OF THE COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE OF THE CITY OF
HIGHLAND PARK**

MEETING DATE: February 9, 2026

MEETING LOCATION: City Hall 1707 St Johns Avenue, Highland Park, IL 60035

I. Call to Order

At 5:30 PM, Mayor Rotering called the meeting to order and asked for a roll call:

II. Roll Call

Present: Mayor Rotering, Councilmembers Center, Bruckman, Tapia, Lidawer

Absent: Councilmembers Ross, Blumberg

Staff Present: City Manager Neukirch, Director of Public Works Bannon, Community Development Director Fontane, Assistant City Manager Jason, Police Chief Jogmen, Finance Director McCaulou, Fire Chief Schrage, Assistant City Manager Taub, Communications Manager Bennett, Commander Curran, Assistant to the City Manager Palbitska, Business Development Manager Elder, Building Division Manager Mohanchandra

Also Present: Corporation Counsel Elrod, Assistant Corporation Counsel Martinez

III. Approval of Minutes

A. Approval of the Minutes of the Regular Meeting of the Committee of the Whole Held on January 12, 2026

B. Approval of the Minutes of the Closed Session of the Regular Meeting of the Committee of the Whole held on January 12, 2026

Councilmember Lidawer moved to approve the Minutes of the Regular Meeting of the Committee of the Whole Held on January 12, 2026 and the Minutes of the Closed Session of the Regular Meeting of the Committee of the Whole Held on January 12, 2026. Councilmember Center seconded the motion. Upon a voice vote, the Mayor declared the motion Passed (5 - 0).

MOVER:	Councilmember Lidawer
SECONDER:	Councilmember Center
AYES:	Mayor Rotering, Councilmembers Center, Bruckman, Tapia, Lidawer
NAYS:	None
ABSENT:	Councilmembers Ross, Blumberg

IV. Scheduled Business

A. Pedestrian Bridge Design & Reconstruction Options

City Manager Neukirch provided introductory comments related to the presentation for the Pedestrian Bridge Design and Reconstruction Options. She noted that staff is seeking feedback from the Council but no final determinations will be made tonight.

She introduced Duane O'Laughlin, Chief Operation Officer for Ciorba Group, and Public Works Director Ron Bannon as subject matter experts for this project. O'Laughlin presented an overview of the Pedestrian Bridge project, including updates on engineering design options, new construction timelines, and options for rehabilitation or reconstruction.

The Council, Mr. O'Laughlin and staff discussed options and costs related to either reconstruction or rehabilitation of the bridge. They discussed the impact the ITEP funds would have on the cost of a new bridge, the outcome of a review of all grant opportunities, allowance for both bike and pedestrian traffic with the new bridge design, how rehabilitation would not be ADA compliant and therefore would not qualify for the ITEP funds, maintenance cost and life expectancy timelines that could affect rehabilitation versus new build, and the riding and/or walking surface of the bridge. They discussed the bridge being a gateway into the community and how a new bridge could add to the vibrancy of Highland Park as well as keep branding cohesive across the City. They discussed potential conversations with Lake County.

City Manager Neukirch noted that the total cost for a rehab or new bridge construction will be added to the discussion regarding the Capital Improvement Plan ("CIP") that is slated for the March 30, 2026, Committee of the Whole meeting. She noted that it is important to review the 10-year CIP to understand the impact of the bridge on other projects and impact to the City's budget and long-term financial outlook.

B. Building Code Update

Community Development Director Fontane presented information on a comprehensive amendment package related to building and property maintenance codes. He noted that formal policy consideration of the amendments will be placed on the next Council agenda for formal consideration.

The Council voiced their appreciation for the comprehensive presentation.

The Council, Corporation Counsel Elrod, and staff discussed a "grandfathered" provision and how that would apply going forward, quality of the codes that are updated and created through the process, assessment of ensuring green sustainability codes are maintained within the updated information, processes for choosing the codes for recommendation, and code versus regulation and enforcement procedures. They discussed whether it could be possible to offer an incentive to homeowners to update their homes based on the updated codes and that the better option would be to educate homeowners before offering an incentive to make changes. They discussed the frequency of review of the codes in order to make recommendations for updates

and how all municipalities work to keep their codes updated. Director Fontane clarified that Highland Park does not rely specifically on timelines of other municipalities adoptions but more on staying in line with ISO and allowing time for staff and design professionals to understand the updates that are made.

V. Adjournment

Councilmember Lidawer moved to adjourn the Committee of the Whole meeting. Councilmember Bruckman seconded the motion. Upon a voice vote, Mayor Rotering declared the motion passed unanimously.

The Committee of the Whole adjourned its meeting at 7:01 PM

Respectfully Submitted,

Ashley Palbitska
Assistant to the City Manager/Deputy City Clerk

Staff Report



Meeting Date: February 23, 2026

Staff Contact: Emily Taub, Assistant City Manager
Jazmin Alejandro, Social Services Specialist
Amanda Bennett, Communications Manager

Department: City Manager's Office

Title: Considerations Pertaining to the Permanent Place of Remembrance

Recommendation:

City staff, SWA and All Together will provide information about the public engagement and other next steps that will be undertaken pertaining to the permanent Place of Remembrance. The consultants will also facilitate a listening session to obtain feedback from the Mayor and City Council regarding the permanent Place of Remembrance focusing on reflecting on safety, the meaning of the place of remembrance, and design ideas.

Policy Consideration:

Background

In 2023, the City Council established a Working Group to guide the planning process for the permanent place of remembrance for the Highland Park shooting. The place of remembrance will have three primary objectives:

- Create an accessible public place for reflection, remembrance, and solace;
- Pay tribute to the memories of Katie Goldstein, Irina McCarthy, Kevin Michael McCarthy, Jacki Lovi Sundheim, Stephen Straus, Nicolas Toledo, and Eduardo Uvaldo;
- Honor the community's resiliency, especially those who were injured.

The Working Group has been meeting regularly since November of 2023. The Working Group, with input from the public and notably victims, brainstormed a list of possible locations and issued a Request for Proposals (RFP) for a consultant to assist in gathering community feedback in keeping with the commitment to public engagement in the process. In conjunction with the working group's feedback, the City entered into an agreement to work with Do Tank. Following extensive community engagement, Do Tank's Location Feedback Report recommended a prominent, primary location in the Rose Garden adjacent to City Hall and a subtle, secondary

location in Port Clinton Plaza. The location feedback report is available at hpremembrance.org.

Following the location recommendation, the City issued a Request For Qualifications (RFQ) from experienced architects, artists, designers, and design teams to create these meaningful and lasting places of remembrance. The Working Group and City Council evaluated the RFQ responses, interview responses, concept designs, incorporation of trauma-informed community engagement, and feedback from the public, including victims. After careful review and consideration of all submittals and interviews with the top candidates, the City Council supported the working group recommendation to enter into an agreement with SWA Group (SWA) as the design firm on this project. The City entered into an agreement with SWA in January of 2026. The project kicked off in January 2026 and is expected to run through December of 2026.

The project will be divided into two phases as follows:

Phase 1

- Project Administration
- Listening, Discovery, and Community Engagement
- Schematic Design

Phase 2

- Design Development
- Construction Documentation
- Construction Administration

The construction timeline will be developed after the final design is determined.

Project Update

SWA and engagement partner All Together will provide an update to City Council on the project and engagement timeline.

Discussion

SWA and All Together will facilitate a discussion between Council members regarding the permanent Place of Remembrance focusing on reflecting on safety, the meaning of the place of remembrance, and design ideas.

Next Steps

An update will be provided on the next steps related to the use of the Rose Garden for the permanent Place of Remembrance.

Core Priorities:

Fiscal Stability

The engagement with Do Tank was \$45,000. The cost of the Phase 1 Professional Services

Agreement with SWA is \$262,500 plus up to \$21,000 in reimbursable expenses (8% of the cost). The estimate provided by SWA is \$700,000 – \$1,250,000 for Phase 2 costs. The final determination on Phase 2 costs will be made after a design is approved.

The City Council supported a preliminary budget of \$2 million dollars for construction of the place of remembrance.

Infrastructure Investment

The permanent place of remembrance will incorporate a primary installation at the Rose Garden, and a subtle secondary installation at Port Clinton Plaza, each a significant infrastructure undertaking given the presence of existing structures at or adjacent to the site. The Working Group and staff will work with the project managers from SWA Group to define the scope of each installation. SWA Group will take the City's commitment to environmentally sustainable practices into consideration as the project is undertaken.

Attachments:

None

Staff Report



Meeting Date: February 23, 2026
Staff Contact: Joel Fontane, Director of Community Development
Department: Community Development Department

Title: Discussion Related to Short Term Rental Regulations

Recommendation:

Staff request feedback on the City's Short Term Rental policy.

Policy Consideration:

Recommendation.

Staff seek feedback related to the City's Short-Term Rental policy, specifically related to the number of short term rentals within a geographic area, enforcement mechanisms, and the possible purchase of industry data to aid enforcement efforts.

Background.

Regulation of Short Term Rentals (STRs) is an important issue for municipalities throughout the country. STRs are typically associated with services or property owners that rent one or more room(s) in their homes, or an entire home, for short periods of time and typically less than 30 days. STRs have become popular on various on-line services with 12 such rentals currently registered in Highland Park. This use of a home may present a nuisance^[1] to abutters, particularly in single-family residential neighborhoods and therefore present regulatory challenges for municipalities. However, the City's Code is intended to allow reasonable use of residential properties as STRs provided it is the property owner's primary residence. The STR Ordinance addressed a need by some in the community to be able to rent their homes on a short-term basis while they were away for vacation, the winter, or some other period, due to other circumstances including a pending sale of property, etc. The City has not received a large number of complaints; however, there are a number of concerns that the City has received throughout the community. Council feedback is requested if short term rentals should continue to be available, and if so, it is recommended that a number of policy considerations be discussed.

Proposed Amendment.

The City's current regulations specifically require registration of certain rental units and regulates STRs through the provisions of the Zoning Code [Sec. 150.430](#). Since adopting these regulations in Nov. 2020, the City has identified the need for additional information to aid its

enforcement efforts. Staff recommend:

1. Amending [Chapter 154](#) regarding Rental Registration to require additional information from applicants to demonstrate that the property used for STRs is, in fact, their primary residence as required by [Sec. 150.430](#); and amend Chapter 150 Definitions to specify what Primary Residence means (see **Attachment A**).
2. Purchasing STR rental data from data brokers to aid the City's enforcement efforts by providing the number of days rented, etc. by address for several of the leading STR services.

Amending the Code, and purchasing STR data will greatly improve the City's ability to enforce the City's Code for STRs.[\[2\]](#)

Other Policy Approaches.

- When the City adopted its STR regulations in 2020 there were few communities that allowed STRs. The City could choose to prohibit STRs in certain Zoning Districts or completely throughout the City. As part of our suggested next steps, the City will survey other communities about their regulation of STRs. It is important to note that regardless of whether STRs are continued to be allowed, additional information recommended above are needed to enable efficient and effective enforcement of STR regulations.
- Another policy that may be of interest to the Council is limiting the number of STRs within a certain distance of each other. This would require a Zoning text amendment.
- Council may want to consider licensing STRs rather than merely registering STRs to improve enforcement tools.

Next Steps.

- Formal consideration of amendments to Chapter 150 and Chapter 154 to require applicants to demonstrate that an STR is their Primary Residence as defined.
- Conduct a survey of communities related to whether they allow STRs, or limit the number by proximity to other STRs. Present to Council for discussion and feedback.
- Research and purchase of data broker services to gain access to STR data by address within Highland Park; and begin using this data for STR enforcement purposes.

[\[1\]](#) These include parking, noise and increased garbage, etc. Note Regulations in Chapter 95 related to Nuisances also apply.

[\[2\]](#) Note that should the Council prohibit STRs the City's enforcement efforts would still benefit from better information about which properties are rented as STRs, therefore staff's recommendation would not change regarding the purchase of data.

Core Priorities:

Vibrancy - Regulation of short term rentals balances quality of life concerns with property rights to allow for the reasonable use of property while protecting neighbors from nuisance.

Attachments:

1. Attachment A - Proposed Amendments to Chapter 154 & Chapter 150 related to Short Term Rental Regulation

Proposed Amendments to [Chapter 154](#) and Chapter 150 related to Short Term Rental Regulation.

Staff propose amending the Zoning Code to include a definition for Principal / Primary Residence based on the definitional standard used by the Internal Revenue Service. That one can only have a single principal / primary residence. For those who maintain more than one residence (“snow birds” for example) and divide their time between those residences, the dwelling in which they spend more time would be considered their primary / principal residence.

1. **Amend Sec. 150.202 of the Zoning Code to include the following definition (see further below) and capitalize the term “Primary Residence” in 150.430(C)(2) and amend as follows:**

“(2) The short-term rental property must be occupied by the property owner, or a tenant with a written lease for the property, as their ~~p~~**P**Primary ~~r~~**R**esidence. ~~for at least 30 consecutive days in each calendar year in which the property is used as a short-term rental.~~”

2. **Amend Sec. 154.001 – Definitions to include:**

“Primary / Principal Residence: A single Dwelling Unit that is used, owned, or leased as a place to live for most of the previous calendar year as demonstrated by a least **two** of the following documents issued to the name of the person who claims said Dwelling Unit as their Primary / Principal Residence, and that includes the complete street address of said Dwelling Unit:

- 1) A valid State of Illinois issued driver’s license, or identification card;
- 2) A valid Voter Registration card;
- 3) A valid State of Illinois Motor Vehicle Registration; or
- 4) A valid State of Illinois tax return(s) for the most recent tax year.”

3. **Amend Sec. 154.005: insert a new 154.005(4) and renumber existing provisions (4) to (5) and (5) to (6) accordingly.**

154.005(4) – “For Regulated Rental Dwellings used as a Short Term Rental, the documents required to demonstrate that the Regulated Rental Dwelling is a Primary / Principal Residence.”