

**Committee of the Whole Meeting
Regularly Rescheduled Consolidated Meeting
Public Services Building
1150 Half Day Road
and
City Hall
1707 St Johns Avenue,
Highland Park, IL 60035
March 30, 2026
4:30 PM
Agenda**

Individuals with questions or feedback about an agenda item can address the City in the following ways:

- 1. Emails with Unlimited Information.** Individuals may email the City an unlimited number of words at cityhp@cityhpil.com. Emails will be forwarded to the City Council if requested. All emails received will be acknowledged.
- 2. Telephone.** Individuals with no access to email may leave a message with the City Manager's Office at 847.926.1000.
- 3. Live Comments.** Individuals are able to address the Council during the City Council meeting. Questions/comments should be limited to three minutes or less.

Committee of the Whole and City Council meetings are broadcast live on the City's Facebook page and on the City's website. Meetings can be watched after the meeting from a video link on the City's website.

The City encourages individuals to sign-up for its enews for important information from the City. To sign-up for the enews, visit www.cityhpil.com.

I. Call to Order

Meeting will be called to order at the Public Services Building, 1150 Half Day Road

II. Roll Call

III. Tour of Public Services Center and Fire Station #34

The Meeting will recess after the tour and will reconvene at City Hall, 1707 St. Johns Avenue at 6:30 PM

IV. Approval of Minutes

- A. Approval of the Minutes of the Regular Meeting of the Committee of the Whole Held on February 23, 2026
- B. Approval of the Minutes of the Joint Special Meeting of the Committee of the Whole

V. Scheduled Business

- A. Review of the Capital Improvement Plan, with emphasis on the Public Services Center/Fire Station #34 Project and associated budget and financing options.

VI. Other Matters

VII. Closed Session

VIII. Adjournment

Staff Report



Meeting Date: March 30, 2026

Staff Contact: Ashley Palbitska, Assistant to the City Manager/Deputy City Clerk

Department: City Manager's Office

Title: Approval of the Minutes of the Regular Meeting of the Committee of the Whole Held on February 23, 2026

Recommendation:

For the City Council's approval are the minutes of the Regular Meeting of the Committee of the Whole held on February 23, 2026.

Attachments:

1. MIN COTW 2-23-2026

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

MEETING DATE: February 23, 2026

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

I. Call to Order

At 5:31 PM, Mayor Rotering called the meeting to order and asked for a roll call:

II. Roll Call

Present: Mayor Rotering, Councilmembers Center, Bruckman, Ross, Tapia, Lidawer (Remote)

Absent: Councilmember Blumberg

Staff Present: City Manager Neukirch, Director of Public Works Bannon, Community Development Director Fontane, Police Chief Jogmen, Finance Director McCaulou, Fire Chief Schrage, Assistant City Manager Taub, Commander Curran, Communications Manager Bennett, Assistant to the City Manager Palbitska, Social Services Specialist Alejandro

Also Present: Corporation Counsel Elrod, Assistant Corporation Counsel Martinez, All Together (Kristian Gist), SWA (Ben Waldo, Olivia Pinner)

III. Approval of Minutes

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

Councilmember Tapia moved to approve the Minutes of the Regular Meeting of the Committee of the Whole Held on February 9, 2026. Councilmember Center seconded the motion. Upon a voice vote, the Mayor declared the motion passed (6 - 0).

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

IV. Scheduled Business

A. Considerations Pertaining to the Permanent Place of Remembrance

Assistant City Manager Taub introduced the discussion regarding considerations pertaining to the permanent Place of Remembrance.

Kristian Gist, All Together, provided information as to where the project is on the timeline. She noted that tonight's discussion will include a listening session, where the Council will be asked questions and she will document the responses to those questions. She explained that the answers provided during the listening session will be used by SWA to start constructing the elements of the Place of Remembrance.

The Council and Ms. Gist discussed the questions and answers as they related to the Place of Remembrance.

Ben Waldo and Oliva Pinner, SWA, presented draft designs for the Place of Remembrance.

The Council, Mr. Waldo and Ms. Pinner discussed the draft designs.

City Manager Neukirch noted this is the first of many conversations. She reminded the Council that there was email communication sent to the Council to schedule one on one conversations with the consultant team as they obtain feedback before preparing schematic designs for consideration. She noted that victim feedback and community feedback is an integral part of the project. She explained that the final design will come before the Council for review and approval.

Assistant City Manager Taub provided information as to the historic landmark considerations and next steps as it pertains to the Rose Garden.

The Council, Corporation Counsel Elrod, Mr. Waldo and staff discussed the original intent of the Rose Garden and how the design of the project was not completed. They discussed the importance of continuing to recognize the individuals that were to be memorialized as part of the original concept and opined on how they can be memorialized in other areas around the City. They discussed incorporating the Rose Garden into the design of the Place of Remembrance and the impact that inclusion may have on final design. They discussed the question of what is being preserved through the Rose Garden and what could be protected through the designation of a local landmark. They discussed the importance of collaborating with the Historic Preservation Commission in regards to a determination of the preservation of the property.

The Council was in consensus to schedule a Special Meeting with the Historic Preservation in order to continue the conversation regarding the local landmark and its purpose.

B. Discussion Related to Short Term Rental Regulations
Community Development Director Fontane presented information as it relates to Short-Term Rental Regulations.

The Council, Corporation Counsel Elrod and staff discussed the current number of registered short-term rentals within the City. They discussed concerns that have been noted by the neighbors within certain neighborhoods based on the number of rentals currently registered. They discussed conversations at previous Plan and Design meetings where it was important to allow for short-term rentals to allow Highland Park to be competitive with neighboring communities. They discussed the ability to impose a tax similar to the City's hotel tax and allowing for limitations through licensing.

A majority of the Council was in consensus to move forward with staff's recommendations and obtain more information from neighboring communities as to how they are currently regulating short-term rentals.

V. Adjournment

Councilmember Center 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 7:05 PM

Respectfully Submitted,

Ashley Palbitska
Assistant to the City Manager/Deputy City Clerk

Staff Report



Meeting Date: March 30, 2026

Staff Contact: Ashley Palbitska, Assistant to the City Manager/Deputy City Clerk

Department: City Manager's Office

Title: Approval of the Minutes of the Joint Special Meeting of the Committee of the Whole and Historic Preservation Commission Held on March 9, 2026

Recommendation:

For the City Council's approval are the minutes of the Joint Special Meeting of the Committee of the Whole and Historic Preservation Commission Held on March 9, 2026.

Attachments:

1. MIN COTW 3-9-2026_Joint

**MINUTES OF A JOINT SPECIAL MEETING OF THE COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE AND THE
HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION OF THE CITY OF HIGHLAND PARK**

MEETING DATE: March 9, 2026

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

I. Call to Order

At 6:31 PM, Mayor Rotering called the meeting to order and asked for a roll call:

II. Roll Call

Present: Mayor Rotering, Councilmembers Center, Bruckman, Ross, Tapia, Lidawer, Blumberg (remote)

Absent: None

Staff Present: City Manager Neukirch, Community Development Director Fontane, Police Chief Jogmen, Assistant City Manager Taub, Sergeant Curran, Communications Manager Bennett, Senior Planner Coleman, Assistant to the City Manager Palbitska, Planner Markle, Social Services Specialist Alejandro

Also Present: Corporation Counsel Elrod, Historic Preservation Commission Chair Weeder, Historic Preservation Commissioners Hartinger, Ehrlich, Pines, Gonka, Portman

III. Scheduled Business

A. Considerations Pertaining to the Permanent Place of Remembrance

Mayor Rotering provided opening remarks as it relates to the discussion for considerations pertaining to the permanent Place of Remembrance.

Assistant City Manager Taub presented information for discussion of considerations pertaining to the permanent Place of Remembrance.

Mayor Rotering explained the importance of the opportunity to discuss this process and formulate decisions with the Historic Preservation Commission ("HPC").

City Manager Neukirch provided information as to where the City is at in the process with SWA and the importance of obtaining the feedback from the HPC. She noted that there are no schematic drawings at this time, but the conversation tonight will be brought to SWA and will provide context for next steps.

Chair Weeder discussed some historical information regarding the Rose Garden. She noted that this area has been a place of solace for her and her husband, as well as many others in the community. She opined on the significance of the area for the community.

The Council, HPC and staff discussed:

- Simplicity of the area and the need to keep the design small
- Maintaining the Rose Garden structure and incorporating it into the Place of Remembrance design

- Requests to think of history as past, present and future
- The need for this to be a place where people can opt into and are not forced to see it if they do not choose to; not be visible from the right-of-way
- The need for a holistic approach
- The idea of protecting what is currently in this space but not needing to build what was not built
- The incorporation of the sun dial bench and the relocation of the Antelope statue, with support not to return the Antelope statute to the Rose Garden
- The purpose of landmarking the site in 1992
- The possibility of those who were to be memorialized historically at this site could be honored in another location within the City
- Possibility of not changing the design elements but updating the site with what the three individuals were known for
- Request to overlay a design that incorporates what is currently at the site
- The importance of creativity needed to accommodate both the historical elements and the Place of Remembrance
- Non-existent proposed structures should not be considered as part of the landmark
- Understanding that the entire site has been dedicated as the Place of Remembrance and the Rose Garden should be incorporated into the design
- A Certificate of Appropriateness should be considered when a plan is developed for consideration
- The Rose Garden would be a good entryway into the Place of Remembrance
- The hope is to be able to meld the history of the past with current history to create a place that will last for the foreseeable future
- The need for a plaque to describe what individuals will be experiencing, as there is no plaque currently in place for the Rose Garden
- A slippery slope if history is to be erased
- A second chance to improve upon the original landmark designation while being able to incorporate a second historical event
- Request to ensure that part of the design will pay respect to all first responders that were involved
- The level of design that will go into this project will need to match the intent of what is being proposed

Mayor Rotering thanked everyone for the in-depth conversation and noted that there was interest in keeping the local landmark, the importance of incorporating the past, present and future into the design, prioritization of the site as the Place of Remembrance and continued review of the feedback that is obtained from the community.

B. Historic Preservation Incentives

Community Development Director Fontane presented information on Historic Preservation Incentives.

Mayor Rotering noted that there have been several historical homes that have been demolished and even more recently. She opined on the importance of maintaining historical structures within the City.

The Council, the Historic Preservation Commission (“HPC”), Corporation Counsel Elrod and staff discussed what the impact may be on the City as it relates to the waiver of permit fees and possible abatement of property taxes. They discussed background information in regards to the number of homes needed for a historic district and what the overall intent is in a reduction of that number. They opined on the holistic nature of what has been recommended by HPC. They discussed the need to encourage landmarking and doing so in a positive manner. They discussed the process for obtaining a Certificate of Appropriateness and how that process is not very difficult to meet; a property only needs to meet two criteria. They discussed the need to discourage demolitions and the proposed penalties that could be developed to deter that action. They discussed variances and how they can ultimately be denied as they are not a right. They discussed the importance of encouraging landmarking and making it so attractive that more homeowners are applying for this prestigious status within their neighborhood. They discussed further review of the incentives in order to make them more enticing for homeowners. They discussed the idea of a restrictive covenant and how that could be applied to the property.

Corporation Counsel Elrod provided information as to the next steps.

City Manager Neukirch asked if there was final direction from the Council.

Mayor Rotering stated that there seems to be interest in what has been presented, but more discussion is needed at a future Committee of the Whole meeting before final documents should be drafted.

IV. Adjournment

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

The Committee of the Whole adjourned its meeting at 8:31 PM.

Respectfully Submitted,

Ashley Palbitska
Assistant to the City Manager/Deputy City Clerk

Staff Report



Meeting Date: March 30, 2026
Staff Contact: Ghida Neukirch, City Manager
Kristi McCaulou, Finance Director
Ron Bannon, Director of Public Works
Department: City Manager's Office

Title: Review of the Capital Improvement Plan, with emphasis on the Public Services Center/Fire Station #34 Project and associated budget and financing options.

Recommendation:

City Manager Neukirch, Public Works Director Bannon and Finance Director McCaulou will present the following information as part of a planning and budget workshop:

- Highlights of the City’s Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) with emphasis on projects in 2026-2028;
- Other projects discussed in recent years which are not reflected in the CIP;
- Review of the City’s debt plan, fund reserves and long term liability trend;
- Preliminary needs assessment pertaining to the Public Services Center and Fire Station #34 project, scheduled in the CIP for planning in 2025/2026 and construction in 2027;
- Associated funding and financing strategy for the PSC/FS Project.

Policy Consideration:

The City’s Fiscal Year 2026 budget can be found here: [FY2026 Adopted Budget.pdf](#)

The City’s 10-year Capital Improvement Program (CIP) is updated annually and adopted as part of the budget process. The City’s Financial and Budgetary Policies serve as the foundation under which the CIP is prepared. The CIP sets forth initiatives to upgrade, rehabilitate, and replace existing infrastructure systems, facilities, and equipment. The CIP’s secondary purpose is to plan funding for future significant capacity increases or new infrastructure systems, facilities, and equipment. The CIP can be found beginning on page 199 of the adopted budget.

Although the budget reflects a conceptual dollar value in 2027 for construction of the PSC/FS project, this figure has been reported regularly to the City Council that it was not based on any

project planning, although it was important to reflect that the project was planned in the 10-year CIP. In late 2025, the City retained the services of Williams Architects to begin a needs assessment which will lead to a preliminary budget estimate for the important public facility project. Thereafter, the budget estimate will be included in the FY2027 budget and associated CIP.

Core Priorities:

Fiscal Stability

The City uses a variety of budgeting and financing methods in order to minimize costs, reduce the tax impact on the public, and to operate most fiscally responsible.

Public Safety

The City's PSC/FS projects houses three of the City's emergency response operations including the Fire Department, Public Works and Community Development. The Fire Station operates 24/7/365 providing fire and emergency medical services to the communities of Highland Park and Highwood. The Public Works Department is the largest operating department responsible for 11 divisions; employees respond 24/7/365 to public works needs such as snow and ice operations and watermain repairs.

Economic Development

The Community Development Department also provides critical public safety operations as well as work in the area of the City's ED priority given that CD houses the Planning and Building Divisions. They are responsible for regularity, planning and program management services related to land use, real estate development and housing.

Infrastructure Investment - The City's FY2026 budget includes approximately \$40M in infrastructure investment in the primary areas of water, streets, sewer and facilities.

Attachments:

None