

**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 statue 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