

FEBRUARY 5, 2025
Huron County Planning Commission Minutes

A meeting of the Huron County Planning Commission was held on Wednesday, February 5, 2025, in the Huron County Meeting Room 305, 250 E. Huron Avenue, Bad Axe, MI 48413.

1. Call Meeting to Order

The meeting was called to order by Chairman Bill Renn at 7:01 p.m. with the Pledge to the United States of America. Secretary Richard Swartzendruber called the roll of members: Roll call – Members present: Deborah Knarian, George Lauinger, Richard Swartzendruber, Jeremy Polega, Bill Renn, and J. Dean Smith. Absent: Bernie Creguer, Todd Talaski, and James Leonard. Approximately nineteen guests were in attendance.

Member Lauinger made a motion and was seconded by Member Swartzendruber to amend the February 5, 2025, agenda by adding the following two PA 116 Enrollment Applications under 8A New Business:

A. PA 116 Enrollment Applications:

1. Richmond, Douglas & Michelle, Sec 8 Lincoln Twp, 56.3 acres (56.3 cultivated), 0 Bldgs., 80 yrs.
2. Siemen, Andrew & Mikaela, Sec 16 Rubicon Twp, 80 acres (70 cultivated) 3 bldgs., 50 yrs.

Member Smith made a motion and seconded by Member Polega to approve the amended agenda. Motion carried.

2. Approval of Minutes

Member Smith made a motion, seconded by Member Polega, to approve January 8, 2025, regular meeting minutes as presented. Motion carried.

3. Public Comment (Open Meeting Act.):

Luke Deming, Sheridan Township, would like to see the ordinance amended to state developers are responsible from day one of construction for damages, including housing and food for those affected by contamination from BESS, to hold them accountable.

Sandra Guza, Sigel Township, asked the PC to revisit the number of acres allowed to be developed. It is not wise or prudent to jump into something new. Instead of 15,000 acres reduce it to 5,000 acres.

Steve Guza, Sigel Township, stated if it were not for the money, people would not be interested in these projects. Joint project documentary between Australia and the U.S. that researched the renewable issue. This documentary stated that no matter how much renewable energy you have, you still need to have a 100% back up system. Cost is the other issue. Our electric bill continues to go up. Solar systems get hit by hailstorms and contaminate the soil & ground water.

Randy Miller, Emergency Services Director, sent Jeff Smith some news articles coming out of California with the wildfires and batteries. The EPA will be testing the air and soil.

Colby Guza, Bloomfield Township, would like the PC to be cautious and careful with the information. He does not know anyone that is pro-battery systems.

Sandra Guza, Sigel Township, we have had a change in leadership and some of this green energy funding is changing and not guaranteed.

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4. Public Hearing(s) (Open Meeting Act – 3 minutes per speaker): None

5. Communications:

- A. Village of Ubyly Parks and Recreation Master Plan 2025-2029 provided to Huron County by Spicer Group

6. Reports of Committees: Campground, Mobile Home Park, and RV Park committee.

Members discussed RV parks & Hybrid RV/mobile home parks.

7. Unfinished Business:

- A. Members to discuss U of M Planning & Zoning for Battery Energy Storage Systems Guide.

Member Knarian asked if run off, thermal run away, and toxic gas plumes are addressed in our current draft of the BESS and Solar ordinances under the fire response for site plan review?

Jeff Smith stated that he may need to seek guidance from EGLE on being more specific. EGLE is responsible for storm water runoff and air quality. Soil Erosion is inspected by our building inspectors. Our zoning ordinance contains provisions regarding storm water run-off/pollution control.

Randy Miller, EPA will do air quality testing if there is a fire.

Member Knarian asked if there is a periodic review throughout the project for the cost of decommissioning? What about repowering?

Jeff Smith will send an email to EGLE asking for additional information pertaining to stormwater runoff and/or air quality. If no additional language needs to be added, he will get the ordinance ready and submit it to the Board of Commissioners.

Members discussed new BESS projects.

8. New Business:

- A. PA 116 Enrollment Applications:
 1. Richmond, Douglas & Michelle, Sec 8 Lincoln Twp, 56.3 acres (56.3 cultivated), 0 bldgs., 80 yrs.
 2. Siemen, Andrew & Mikaela, Sec 16 Rubicon Twp, 80 acres (70 cultivated), 3 bldgs., 50 yrs.

Member Smith made a motion and seconded by Member Polega to recommend approval of the PA 116 enrollment applications. Motion carried.

9. Final Public Comment: Public input protocol (3 minutes per speaker):

Luke Deming, Sheridan Township, asked that when developer staff come to the Planning Commission meetings they identify themselves and the company they represent. Setbacks from bodies of water should be much more than 500 feet. There are 40 counties that have filed a lawsuit against the state of Michigan to retain local zoning.

Sarah Ingram, Rathmourne Dairy, Huron Township, was concerned about the infrastructure that would be coming into Huron County and decommissioning of that infrastructure. The cost for farmers and future land rent is a concern.

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Luke Deming, Sheridan Township, stated that fencing 15 to 20 acres will cause the deer to go elsewhere and that will affect the surrounding farms (crop damage).

Gary Rumpitz, Bingham Township, what happens to the discarded equipment?

Member Renn stated the equipment would be recycled. We have financial securities and decommissioning bonds to cover cleanup costs.

Member Knarian asked if we changed the bond review to every 3 to 5 years, if that is a concern?

Member Renn stated it will not vary that much. If we notice that there is a noticeable difference, it is something that they could revisit to determine if the financial assurances are enough to cover anticipated costs.

10. Final Planning Commission Comment:

Member Smith stated the Planning Commission did not go into Solar & BESS quickly. We discussed multiple issues and took a lot of time. We were not in a rush to push it through.

11. Adjournment:

Being there was no further business to come before the Planning Commission, Member Lauinger made a motion, seconded by Member Polega, to adjourn the meeting. Motion carried. Adjournment was at 8:16 p.m.

Notice of Upcoming Meetings:

- Next **Regular PC Meeting** scheduled for **Wednesday, March 5, 2025 @ 7:00 p.m., Location: Room 305.**

Bill Renn, Chairman

Richard Swartzendruber, Secretary

Date: _____

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