

OCTOBER 1, 2025
Huron County Planning Commission Minutes

A meeting of the Huron County Planning Commission was held on Wednesday, October 1, 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 7:03 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, Richard Swartzendruber, Bill Renn, J. Dean Smith, and Kim Rosenthal. Absent: Bernie Creguer, Julie Epperson, and Jeremy Polega. Approximately nineteen guests were in attendance.

Election of Officer

Member Smith made a motion and seconded by Member Swartzendruber to nominate Member Creguer as Vice-Chair. Member Smith made a motion and was seconded by Member Swartzendruber to close nominations and cast a unanimous ballot. Motion carried.

Member Smith made a motion and seconded by Member Swartzendruber to approve the agenda as presented. Motion carried.

2. Approval of Minutes

Member Smith made a motion, seconded by Member Swartzendruber, to approve September 3, 2025, regular meeting minutes as presented. Motion carried.

3. Public Comment (Open Meeting Act.):

Robert Gafke, Bloomfield Township, concerned that there is a breach of duty and conflict of interest by past and current Board of Commissioners and Planning Commissioners. The master plan must be followed. He passed out an evidence/informational packet to the Planning Commissioners.

Luke Deming, Sheridan Township, concerned about the number of acres that could be developed in the solar ordinance and suggested starting at one thousand acres. Also concerned about the training for the local fire departments throughout the county.

Colby Guza, Bloomfield Township, agrees with Robert and Luke on the issues of wind, solar, and battery and suggested starting out with a small number of acres and, if necessary, increasing the number of acres later. The language needs to be strong on soil testing and must be done before any development. If receiving compensation from wind, solar, or battery, commissioners should not be voting on the issue.

Jan Wessels, Colfax Township, the new battery storage facility is right next to her house and there is a solar facility going in across from her son's house. Jan is concerned about the training of the fire departments and groundwater issues. Take into consideration the number of acres for these projects and the placement of these projects.

Sandi Guza, Sigel Township, public hearings are held too late in the process of amending the zoning ordinance. Went from the Governor is mandating to, offering up way more land than is necessary. We are a farming community, and we want to keep it that way.

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

5. Communications:

- A. University of Michigan Center for EmPowering Communities, and MSU Extension August 2025 notification that the Planning & Zoning For Solar Energy Systems - A Guide for Michigan Local Governments, 2025 Edition, is now available.
- B. Email from Mary Reilly, AICP with MSU Extension, dated September 9, 2025, notably Section 3. Courts providing a summary of two important court cases, Mockridge v. Harvey and Wineries of Old Mission Peninsula v. Peninsula Township.

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

Jeff Smith reported that he received an email from EGLE that they now have a draft of proposed regulations and are seeking feedback by October 15, 2025. If draft changes are approved, they are looking to adopt the new regulations before the end of the year or early 2026.

7. Unfinished Business: None

8. New Business:

- A. Huron County Board of Commissioners Legislative Committee motion from September 23, 2025, BOC meeting: Move to request the Planning Commission to consider reducing the number of county zoned acres allowed for solar energy development and to consider implementing language requiring host community agreements consistent with PA 233 of 2023.

Jeff Smith provided an overview of the items in the commission packet relating to the master plan and agricultural land. He also gave an overview of PA 233 of 2023.

Members discussed the master plan and the different ways to calculate the maximum number of acres allowed for solar development.

Randy Miller, Emergency Services Manager, is still looking to have the EPA give a presentation on their findings on the California wildfire and the battery energy storage facility that burned. The Huron County fire departments are working on getting the proper training needed for the battery facilities.

Jeff Smith stated that the Legislative Committee suggested that whatever number the Planning Commission comes up with for the total number of acres for solar developments, that there is some documentation as to how that number was determined. Corporation Counsel suggested trying to get the process of a public hearing for the text amendment done in a brief time, suggesting within three months.

Members discussed the text amendment process.

Member Knarian made a motion to reduce the number of County zoned acres allowed for solar development to 1500 acres. There was no support for the motion. Motion died.

Members continued to discuss the number of acres.

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B. PA 116 Enrollment Applications:

1. Ricker, Matthew & Kari, Sec 36 Brookfield Twp., 39.242 acres (30.5 cultivated) 0 bldgs., 90 yrs.
2. Ricker, Matthew & Kari, Sec 36 Brookfield Twp., 56.3 acres (54 cultivated) 0 bldgs., 90 yrs.
3. Leavine, David & Danielle, Sec 5 Dwight Twp., 84.36 acres (78 cultivated) 0 bldgs., 90 yrs.
4. Leavine, David & Danielle, Sec 11 Dwight Twp., 12.5 acres (12 cultivated) 1 bldg., 90 yrs.
5. Leavine, David & Danielle, Sec 14 Dwight Twp., 80 acres (68 cultivated) 0 bldgs., 90 yrs.
6. Tait, John & Shirley; Braun, Clint, Sec 1 Caseville Twp., 83 acres (83 cultivated) 0 bldgs., 10 yrs.
7. Koroleski, Steven & Mitzi, Sec 22 Meade Twp., 16.58 acres (16.58 cultivated) 0 bldgs., 10 yrs.
8. Koroleski, Steven & Mitzi, Sec 22 Meade Twp., 27.42 acres (27.42 cultivated) 0 bldgs., 10 yrs.
9. Volmering Family Dairy Inc., Sec 24 Sherman Twp., 63.44 acres (63.44 cultivated) 0 bldgs., 10 yrs.
10. Volmering, Matthew, Sec 7 Sherman Twp., 38.82 acres (38.82 cultivated) 0 bldgs., 10 yrs.
11. Volmering, Matthew, Sec 19 Sherman Twp., 44.32 acres (42.32 cultivated) 0 bldgs., 10 yrs.
12. Volmering, Matthew, Sec 20 Sherman Twp., 21 acres (21 cultivated) 0 bldgs., 10 yrs.

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

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

Sandi Guza, Sigel Township, it is obvious what the citizens want and if there are conflicts, they need to be disclosed. If anyone serving on the Planning Commission is of the mindset that the state is going to approve it anyway, they should resign from the commission because that's not the mentality we need. Your job is to represent the citizens of Huron County, not the energy company and not the state.

Colby Guza, Bloomfield Township, stated that Bloomfield Township, along with a handful of other townships, were in a multi-year legal dispute with DTE over tax revenue on the windmills, which is what can happen when these developers come in. So, prudence and limiting the acres would be wise. There are some landowners that want solar – why are they not at these meetings? The best leaders know how to get things done without getting caught up in the red tape.

Jesse Klaska, City of Bad Axe, stated he has studied the laws in great depth and PA 233 regulates solar projects that are 50 megawatts or greater, wind energy projects that are 100 megawatts or greater, and battery energy storage projects that are 50 to 200 megawatts or more, and are based on capacity, not land area. PA 233 does not regulate the maximum number of acres per project. Any limited number of acres disqualifies the ordinance as a CREO.

Jan Wessels, Colfax Township, felt there has been secrecy at all levels, even in her own family. Let us lead by example and do what is right.

Luke Deming, Sheridan Township, felt the chairman was promoting DTE tonight instead of standing up for the people of this county. It is not our job to make sure that DTE makes their goal for renewables by 2030.

Robert Gaffke, Bloomfield Township, if DTE is such a good neighbor, why did we spend \$1.5M in litigation? He agreed with Debb Knarian, excellent points made, and Sandi Guza, talked about DTE's energy shortage. There is a conflict of interest on the planning commission and the board of commissioners, and it will be addressed, and they will be held accountable.

There were no comments from those attendees on Zoom.

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10. Final Planning Commission Comment:

Member Rosenthal reminded everyone that Greg Alexander will be at the Bad Axe Airport at 9am on the last Friday of the month.

Jeff Smith stated that he understands the residents' concerns. The Planning Commission bylaws address conflict of interest and there are standards to be met for handling conflicts. Per the By-laws, the planning commission must review each situation and determine whether the commission member has in fact a conflict of interest.

Adjournment:

Being there was no further business to come before the Planning Commission, Member Smith made a motion, seconded by Member Swartzendruber, to adjourn the meeting. Motion carried. Adjournment was at 9:08 p.m.

Notice of Upcoming Meetings:

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

Bill Renn, Chairman

Richard Swartzendruber, Secretary

Date: _____

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