

# PENINSULA TOWNSHIP

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## AGRICULTURAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE

### **CORRECTED** Regular Meeting Minutes

January 20, 2026

2:00 p.m.

1. **Call to Order** by Kroupa at 2:00 p.m.
2. **Pledge**
3. **Roll Call**

**Present:** Kroupa, Hemming, Heller, Bramer, Baldyga, Johnson, Gomez; **Township Supervisor:** Sanders

**Absent:** Edmonson, Coggon

4. **Brief Citizen Comments (for agenda items only):** none
5. **Approve Agenda**

**Motion by Heller to approve as written with a second by Hemming.**

**Motion Passes**

6. **Conflict of Interest:** none

7. **Consent Agenda**

- A. **Approve meeting minutes:**

- **Agricultural Advisory Committee Regular Meeting November 18, 2025**

**Motion by Baldyga to approve consent agenda with second by Hemming.**

**Motion Passes**

8. **Business:**

- A. **Committee Organization**

- **Select Officers**

Members discussed committee organization and the selection or reaffirmation of officers. Kroupa indicated his willingness to continue serving as Chair, and Jed agreed to continue as Vice Chair. Committee discussed filling the Secretary position, noting that the role is limited in scope and supported by administrative staff. After discussion, Raul agreed to serve as Secretary.

**Motion by Heller to reaffirm the committee officers with Kroupa as Chair, Hemming as Vice Chair, and Gomez as Secretary with second by Baldyga.**

**Motion Passes**

- **Confirm Calendar**

Committee reviewed the proposed 2026–2027 regular meeting calendar, which mirrors the current schedule. Meetings will continue to be held on the third Tuesday of each month at 2:00 p.m., excluding July and October.

**Motion made by Heller to approve the 2026-2027 regular meeting calendar with second by Hemming.**

**Motion Passes**

- B. **Introduction of Small Processor Draft Ordinance**

The Small Grower Subcommittee (Molly Stretton and Amy Shaw presented and acknowledged members of the Old Mission Citizens Coalition and their hired planning consultant Doug Mansfield of Mansfield Land Use Consultants. The subcommittee also includes Jed Hemming, Chris Baldyga, Amanda Danielson, Don Coe, and Jen Bramer) presents proposed ordinance language intended to modernize and clarify agricultural land use regulations within the Ag District. Proposal is not a full ordinance rewrite but is designed to establish a clear, legally defensible framework centered on agricultural activity, with an emphasis on supporting small and emerging farms while remaining scalable to larger operations. Non-ag uses were intentionally excluded, as they

will be addressed through the broader zoning rewrite process. Proposal is grounded in the Michigan Right to Farm Act, GAAMPs, the Michigan Agricultural Processing Act, MDARD guidance, and a review of ordinances from other ag-focused communities. Goal: reducing regulatory barriers, improving clarity and predictability, and aligning local regulations with state law. Key discussion: updated and expanded agricultural definitions; clarification of uses permitted by right; revisions to farm market provisions; a tiered agritourism framework distinguishing low-intensity uses permitted by right from higher-intensity activities requiring administrative review; and significant revisions to on-farm processing provisions. Changes to on-farm processing remove prior treatment that reclassified GAAMPs-compliant farms as separate processing facilities and instead align local regulation more closely with state law for small- and mid-scale producers. Proposal also introduces a 2% percentage-based review trigger for public-facing agricultural buildings, intended to scale review appropriately, not prohibit GAAMPs-compliant farm markets, and allow reuse of existing buildings where feasible. Discussion on whether the proposal should move forward as a comprehensive package or be divided into smaller components, with some members advocating prioritization of on-farm processing and farm markets for near-term action to avoid delays, while others emphasized the importance of advancing an integrated framework reflective of modern agricultural practices. AAC agrees additional review and refinement are needed prior to forwarding recommendations and support holding a posted working session to further evaluate draft language, provide redlined comments, identify priority sections, and determine an appropriate path forward to the zoning rewrite committee.

### **C. Planning Commission Updates**

#### **• Farm Signage Recommendations**

No formal PC updates due to Beard's absence. Discussion focuses on farm signage provisions under review as part of the zoning rewrite, particularly concerns with the proposed 15-foot setback. AAC acknowledges that some setback may be appropriate but note that adding 15 feet beyond the existing right-of-way would push signs too far from the road, reduce visibility, and potentially create safety and practicality issues by necessitating larger signs. Notes that the existing right-of-way already places signs approximately 33 feet from the road centerline, making an additional setback unnecessary. Suggests that AAC representation at zoning rewrite meetings, especially by those with direct farm market experience, could help clarify concerns and streamline discussion. Agrees feedback on the sign setback issue should be communicated through written comments or participation in upcoming rewrite committee meetings, with several members expressing willingness to assist.

#### **• Amendment 201 Acreage Minimum Recommendation**

Introduction and initial review by the Planning Commission. Commissioner Shanafelt requests a table showing how many parcels of 40 acres or more would qualify if the minimum acreage is reduced from 60 to 40 acres. As Shanafelt is not present, discussion is limited, but members note PC caution around lowering the threshold and will continue to evaluate potential impacts, particularly related to the intensity of full-service processing facilities. AAC expresses disagreement with using acreage as the primary limiting factor, noting that reducing the requirement to 40 acres could improve farm viability, protect agricultural land, and support diversified revenue without significantly increasing processing facilities, which are costly and high-risk. Notes the PC appears to be interpreting the data as requiring a single contiguous 40-acre parcel, while the committee's intent is to allow a combined total of 40 acres, contiguous or not. Clarifying this distinction is identified as important, as parcel configurations change over time and restricting eligibility to existing contiguous parcels may be misleading. Overall, AAC supports allowing a total of 40 acres to qualify, consistent with the goal of preserving farmland through active agricultural use rather than parcel configuration.

#### **• Agritourism Memo sent September 18<sup>th</sup>**

The Agritourism Memo sent in September is still pending further review and development. No specific timeline is available, but it is expected to move forward once higher-priority items are addressed.

### **D. Town Board Updates**

No additional updates or questions raised. AAC is waiting for items to formally come forward. While signage and the potential change from 60 to 40 acres have been introduced and discussed at the PC level, the Board has not yet reviewed them. Procedurally, the items must go through a public hearing process before moving forward, including an additional public hearing at the appropriate stage.

## 9. Citizen Comments

**Fred Swaffer, 1045 Gray Rd:** Thanks AAC for its work, particularly on small farm processing, and emphasizes the importance of preserving farmland and rural character. Supports allowing flexibility in acreage requirements (such as combining smaller parcels to reach 40 acres) so smaller farms are not excluded from processing opportunities. Encourages moving the small farm processing work forward promptly given the upcoming growing season. Expresses support for agritourism, farm stays, and related uses as important supplemental income for farmers, noting these concepts align with the master plan and could be managed thoughtfully to address concerns like traffic and buffering.

**Fred Woodruff, 4824 Forest Ave:** Emphasizes the need for an education process to help the community better understand the township's history. Notes that historical postcards being cataloged at the local library show that the area once included several tourist attractions, reinforcing that change and visitor activity are not new. Encourages making this information accessible to the public and thanks committee for its work, acknowledging the difficulty of the task.

**Sanders:** notes that, in addition to the existing B&B ordinance, the PC is also looking at accessory dwelling units (ADUs). She explained that ADUs—such as a small apartment over a garage or a separate dwelling on the same property—could help support or facilitate farm-stay-type uses, though they are generally intended for long-term rentals or family care, not short-term rentals like Airbnb. Notes that restrictive HOAs may limit where ADUs are allowed.

## 10. Board Comments

**Heller:** Urges the AAC to concentrate narrowly on small farm processing in order to move quickly and stay ahead of the upcoming season.

**Baldyga:** Notes that common agritourism activities are not clearly permitted under current regulations and are difficult to approve due to ambiguity. Emphasizes the need to codify incidental farm uses with clear by-right or permit pathways and stresses urgency before the next season, while acknowledging some provisions will require further group discussion.

**Hemming:** Observes a shift toward permissive zoning, where uses must be explicitly listed to be allowed, and expresses concern that this approach places an unreasonable burden on landowners. Suggests reconsidering whether farms and private property should be subject to such restrictive enumeration.

**Bramer:** Shares experience operating a corn maze under Right to Farm protections despite township pushback and questions whether similar activities would be easier or harder to approve today. Also notes that the absence of clear processing standards significantly delays a prior project, highlighting the need for clearer regulations.

**Heller:** Adds that project timelines are influenced not only by township approvals but also by other non-township permitting requirements that should be considered.

**Gomez:** Thanks AA and emphasizes that collaborative work produces stronger, clearer ordinance language. Stresses the importance of quickly finalizing a narrowly defined small-scale processing ordinance before the upcoming season and cautions that expanding the scope to agritourism or farm markets could complicate approval, delay progress, and raise public concern.

**Woodruff, from audience:** Argues that permissive zoning is allowed but not required and noted there are multiple zoning approaches available. Cautions that zoning terminology and definitions can be complex, suggesting alternative constructs could be considered. Asserts that changes do not require action by the state legislature and could be addressed at the local level.

## 11. Adjournment

**Motion** by Hemming to adjourn, seconded by Baldyga.

**Motion Passes**

**Meeting adjourned at 3:52 p.m.**

