

PENINSULA TOWNSHIP

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AGRICULTURAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Regular Meeting Minutes

February 17, 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, Beard

Absent: Edmonson, Coggon

4. **Brief Citizen Comments (for agenda items only)**

Fred Swaffer, 1045 Gray Rd: Expressed strong support for the proposed small-scale agriculture ordinance, emphasizing its importance to the overall agricultural framework. They cited research indicating that communities with supportive agricultural zoning and land-use policies are more successful at preserving farmland, strengthening farm profitability, reducing land-use conflicts, and encouraging local economic development. The speaker noted that farms between 5 and 39 acres have historically been overlooked under current regulations, which have primarily supported large, commodity-based production agriculture. They highlighted a shift toward vertical integration, allowing smaller farmers to retain more revenue locally rather than relying on intermediaries. Concerns were also raised about an aging farmer population and the need to make farming more accessible and economically viable for new and younger farmers. The speaker stated that including small and mid-sized farms in the ordinance would promote diversification, strengthen the local agricultural economy, and help limit development pressure on farmland.

Heller and Kroupa: Discussion occurred regarding newly introduced short-term rental language. It was explained as an informational concept to potentially add value to farmland, related to the farm stay proposal. Some concern was expressed that the term "short-term rental" was too strong, suggesting it be framed more specifically as farm stays. The language was noted to be adapted from another township's ordinance and not a formal recommendation.

5. **Approve Agenda**

Motion by Gomez to approve as written with a second by Heller.

Motion Passes

6. **Conflict of Interest: none**
7. **Consent Agenda**

A. Approve meeting minutes:

- **Agricultural Advisory Committee Regular Meeting January 20, 2026**

A request was made by Heller to add the names of subcommittee members who generated referenced documents to the minutes for transparency. Staff agreed to include the names in the corrected minutes.

Motion by Gomez to approve consent agenda once names are added with second by Kroupa. Motion Passes

8. **Business:**

A. Planning Commission Updates

Farm signage recommendations and Amendment 201 are scheduled for consideration at the March 5 Planning Commission meeting. The Planning Commission has moved to a first-Thursday monthly meeting schedule, and the Rewrite Subcommittee will meet March 3 and continue meeting on the first Tuesday of each month from 1:00–3:00 PM. Committee input on signage, including permit requirements and setbacks, has been forwarded to the consultant, and a revised draft is anticipated for the March 5 meeting.

Staff are currently evaluating how many parcels may be affected by the proposed Amendment 201 acreage minimums; that analysis is not yet complete. Agritourism, small-acreage, and processing topics remain on hold while higher-priority zoning rewrite items move forward, and Planning Commission discussion of those items is not expected before April. Discussion of acreage minimums focused on the practical limits of new agricultural development. It was noted that reduced acreage thresholds would not result in activity on every eligible parcel due to market conditions, startup costs, and long-term profitability challenges. Members also emphasized the importance of evaluating agricultural impacts in the context of potential residential buildout. Under current zoning, the township may already have capacity for approximately 1,000 additional homes, depending on land division and development scenarios. The previously referenced county estimate did not account for master plan goals or existing zoning constraints, making that level of development unlikely under current policy. The group supported avoiding worst-case scenario planning and instead maintaining a balanced approach that preserves agricultural land while accommodating reasonable residential growth. Strengthening land division standards and supporting active agriculture were identified as primary tools for long-term preservation.

B. Town Board Update

No new agenda items have come before the Town Board since the previous meeting. Work related to lakeshore and dock regulations is ongoing and continues to generate significant public input, which has extended the review timeline.

C. Continued Discussion – Small-Acreage Subcommittee Draft Ordinance

The committee continued its review of the draft ordinance, beginning with building and signage provisions. Members supported using Generally Accepted Agriculture and Management Practices (GAAMPs) definitions without modification and agreed that existing nonconforming structures remain an important resource for farm operations and should not be subject to removal or replacement. Language suggesting that the presence of an existing structure could limit future construction was considered unclear and potentially restrictive and will be revised or removed to preserve operational flexibility.

Review of definitions confirmed that the existing language for farm, farm operation, farm market, and cottage food operation is consistent with state law. Members supported broadening language related to agriculturally related products to reflect modern sales practices that occur through multiple venues. For breweries and distilleries, reliance on Michigan Liquor Control Commission definitions was preferred, and additional local language that could unnecessarily restrict tasting rooms was viewed as redundant given existing state oversight.

The need for a clear definition of “farm operator” was discussed, particularly for situations in which farmland is leased. As noted by Hemming, distinguishing the operator from the property owner reflects current agricultural practice and provides administrative clarity. Leasing was widely recognized as a common and necessary pathway for new and expanding farm operations, and related discussion included long-term farmland preservation strategies that would keep land in active agricultural use.

In reviewing standards for the sale of agricultural products, members expressed concern that limiting sales to items produced on a single parcel would be overly restrictive and could exclude products from leased or affiliated farms. Referencing GAAMPs for value-added products and direct sales was supported as a clear and enforceable approach that aligns with state standards.

Farm market setbacks were discussed, and the GAAMPs standard of 165 feet from non-farm residences was supported. Retail space thresholds were also reviewed. Requiring site plan review when finished retail space exceeds 2% of the parcel was viewed as an appropriate method for evaluating potential impacts such as parking, safety, and utilities. Because this percentage could allow very large structures on large parcels, the possibility of combining the percentage

threshold with a fixed maximum square-foot cap was discussed; planning input will be requested before establishing specific numeric limits.

With respect to activities, signage, and sound, the committee determined that the township's existing noise ordinance provides an adequate enforcement mechanism. Seasonal and after-dark agricultural activities, including fall events and holiday displays, were recognized as typical and not compatible with daylight-only limitations. After considering operational realities and seasonal variations, the committee reached consensus to recommend operating hours of 5:00 AM to 10:00 PM to the Planning Commission. Signage standards will reference the township's existing sign ordinance rather than creating separate requirements.

Small-scale processing was identified as a priority item. Separating processing regulations from the broader ordinance was viewed as the most efficient way to allow small producers to proceed without delay. Addressing parcels under 39 acres independently was considered feasible because this work is not affected by unrelated ordinance litigation. Treating small-scale processing as a use by right—when all ordinance standards are met—was supported, with the understanding that full compliance with building, fire, health, and environmental regulations will still be required. Potential impacts on neighboring properties, including noise, traffic, and odors, were discussed; however, most processing is expected to occur indoors and remain subject to existing regulatory controls. Historical processing operations were cited as an essential component of the township's agricultural economy.

A model farm stay framework based on another township's ordinance was introduced. The approach limits farm stays to agricultural parcels of five acres or more and includes operational standards intended to reduce impacts on neighboring properties while providing supplemental farm income. Further discussion of this matter was deferred.

D. Introduction to Short-Term Rental Language

This item was postponed until the next meeting.

9. Citizen Comments

Fred Swaffer commented that many newer residents are unfamiliar with normal agricultural practices, which can lead to conflicts over activities such as spraying and seasonal processing that must occur within limited timeframes. Increased township-led education and outreach were recommended to improve understanding and long-term support for agriculture.

10. Board Comments

Shoreline regulations remain under Planning Commission review, with a special meeting scheduled and a vote anticipated following extended deliberation. The draft ordinance was described as an effort to create a clear and predictable path for agricultural operations while maintaining fairness for neighboring property owners. Baldyga referenced the Right to Farm Act as the foundation for protecting agricultural activity as residential development expands, while Heller emphasized the need for a balanced approach. Hemming reiterated that continued public education and communication between farm and non-farm communities will be essential to long-term success.

Adjournment

Motion by Kroupa to adjourn, seconded by Baldyga.

Motion Passes

Meeting adjourned at 4:25 p.m.