

PENINSULA TOWNSHIP

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Agricultural Advisory Committee Meeting February 18, 2025, 2:00 p.m. Township Hall Minutes

1. Call to Order by Kroupa 2:00 PM

2. Pledge

3. Roll Call

Present: Bramer, Hemming, Kroupa, Hafeli, Gomez, Edmondson

Absent: Heller, Baldyga

Kroupa: Lou Seibold has resigned from the committee.

4. Approve Agenda

Hafeli moved to approve the agenda as presented with a second by Kroupa. Motion passed by consensus

5. Citizen Comments:

Barb Wunsch, 17017 Peninsula Drive: here to read a letter for John Wunsch. "Agriculture advisory committee members. First, I want to thank you all for volunteering to serve. With no intent to advocate for any particular path forward, I want to provide two informational comments. One, I agree with Jed Hemming's point regarding the value of processing operations that do not necessarily grow product or hold significant acreage. Fortunately, amendment 201 did not remove that option. It still exists as section 8.5 "Food Processing Plants in A-1 Districts," which allows for processing on any agriculture parcel with no requirement to grow products and no minimum acreage required. Two, reference was made by a citizen comment that seemed to imply that one of the problems with amendment 201 is that it removes the small acreage option that was needed by and targeted by Devils Dive Vineyard so they could open a winery. Without knowledge of or comment upon the attended business plan of Devils Dive Vineyard, I think it's important for the public to know that before the 201 amendment, a vineyard had to be on a 20 acre, minimum size parcel, and also had to own or control a total of 40 acres. Again, without knowing the relevance to Devils Dive Vineyard, the public should know there was no option before 201 for a 10 acre vineyard. Thank you for your attention."

Susie Shipman, 14735 Shipman Road: review of the non-motorized transportation plan that has been discussed over the last three years. Start to pull in our agricultural community. Our goal is to complete a plan that is specific to the unique issues and concerns we have on Old Mission Peninsula. Our goals are:

- Increased safety on shared use roads, at key junctions and road sections with heavy cyclist and pedestrian activity.
- Development of side paths, buffered lanes, advisory lanes and bike lanes.
- Creation of connector trails between existing neighborhoods, public parks and township businesses for cyclists, pedestrians, recreation and commuter routes.

- Establishment of connections to existing and planned regional facilities, routes and trails such as those developed by TART, Cherry Capital Cycling Club, Travers City, and the Michigan Department of Transportation.

The goals of completing a planning project are to work with a consultant, to meet with the stakeholders, to have a robust public engagement process with multiple meetings. A plan that will address safety, accessibility and mobility. Complete the planning process with active and extensive engagement for our target population. We want to finalize a plan that will identify and prioritize meaningful and substantial improvements to the township, and we want those improvements to be achievable. Doing the plan allows us to apply for funding. The TART trail and what Leland Peninsula has [is not] achievable. We don't have a rail bed to work with. Formally reach out to members of the agricultural community to have some round tables. We want to hear early on what your concerns are, your input on this and how we can better accommodate our agricultural operators. Thank you.

6. Conflict of Interest:

Hafeli: I have as it relates to business item C, Right to Farm and GAAMPS. I have an open SUP amendment I am figuring my next path forward on and I want to participate as a citizen on that portion.

7. Consent Agenda:

- a. Approve Meeting minutes: Agricultural Advisory Committee meeting, January 21, 2025
- b. Adopt committee by-laws
- c. Adopt committee schedule for 2025

Kroupa: for the committee schedule, change what was in the packet. Take July and October off.

Hafeli moved to approve the consent agenda with a second by Hemming. Motion passed by consensus

8. Business:

1. Sign Ordinance: Continued Discussion, move to Planning Commission

- Off-Premises Signage:

Recommendation to amend the existing ordinance to allow off-premises signage for agricultural operations. Approval from the landowner should be a requirement. Signs should be of a similar size to on-premises signs and consistent with the season of operation. Permanent off-premises signage is preferred over temporary ones for ease of use and aesthetic.

- Temporary and Seasonal Signage

Allow for signage based on the seasonality of products. Signs should be removed when the product is no longer available. Suggestion to implement a moratorium on enforcement for harvest-related signs. Defined "temporary" as a sign displayed only during the season of operation.

- Agricultural Sign

Discussion on whether to integrate temporary signs into the existing ordinance or create a new section. Artistic signage, such as painted images, should be considered under temporary signage. Suggested signs should be permitted if they advertise an in-season product for purchase.

- Signage on Automobiles

General agreement to prohibit signage on vehicles to avoid complications.

- Sign Size and Placement

Discussion on increasing the current signage size from 9 to 20 square feet. Considerations for placement within scenic-designated areas and compliance with MDOT regulations. Dark sky compliance discussed for illuminated signs.

- Additional Considerations:

Seasonal placards could be allowed in addition to permitted sign, hung under the 20 square feet sign limit. Suggested allowing one main entrance sign, with additional seasonal signs. Discussed restrictions on certain types of materials and lighting for signage. Noted that sandwich boards should be categorized under temporary signage, with mixed opinions on their aesthetics.

- Next Steps:

Summarize and consolidate notes, referencing neighboring jurisdictions and ordinances. Circulate the revised draft for final agreement. Present recommendations to the planning commission. Identify a representative to attend the planning commission meeting for discussion.

2. Review results of survey and prioritize next topic of discussion

The survey included 19 topics ranked by participants as high, medium, or low priority. Results were presented in a packet showing exact percentages. Topics were initially ranked based on the percentage of high-priority responses. These ranking did not align exactly with an optimized success-based approach generated by Chat GPT. Open to discussion on whether to use a different prioritization method.

- Next Steps for Determining Order of Operations

Discussion on whether to stick with the current ranking or adjust priorities. Open to alternative methods such as the Nominal Group Technique. Agreement that re-sending surveys is not preferred for efficiency.

3. Right to Farm and GAAMPS integration and Ag land diverse uses- Discussion

- Discussion

Kroupa noted this was a high-priority issue and suggested addressing agricultural land use separately if needed. Hafeli wanted to split farm market GAAMPS integration from diverse land uses, as she felt she could remain impartial on the latter.

- Agriculture as a Business & the Need for Market Access:

Hemming stressed that agriculture is inherently commercial and that without the ability to sell products, farming cannot survive. He criticized the township for restricting sales and land use. Edmondson agreed, highlighting the economic reality that farmers need direct sales opportunities. He argued that small farms should be able to create and sell value-added products (e.g., turning grapes into wine) without excessive restrictions. Bramer supported expanding roadside stand regulations and increasing permitted uses beyond GAAMPS to help small farmers compete.

- Ordinance 201 & Township Restrictions:

Kroupa suggested that rather than outright removing Ordinance 201, they should analyze and document how specific sections negatively impact farmers. Edmondson felt the ordinance had been imposed without farmer support and questioned whether the township would be receptive to change. Beard recommended focusing on amending the most problematic parts of 201 rather than trying to overturn it entirely.

- SUP (Special Use Permits) & Appeals:

Hafeli raised concerns about the lack of an appeal process for denied SUPs. If a farmer's SUP is denied or granted with unfavorable conditions, they must either start over or litigate. She suggested allowing appeals or mediation to encourage innovation. Sanders confirmed that under current rules, farmers cannot easily modify an SUP once denied. Bramer questioned whether tying GAAMPS compliance to land use rights was legally enforceable, citing past discussions with state officials.

- Changing Attitudes Toward Agriculture:

Hemming argued that the township's restrictive mindset was the real issue, saying the attitude should shift toward supporting agricultural innovation instead of restricting it. Gomez suggested

that rather than demanding full deregulation, they should present case studies of real hardships faced by farmers under the current rules. Kroupa agreed that real-world examples would help the township understand the impacts of the restrictions and proposed using 201 as an educational tool rather than simply opposing it.

- **Next Steps Proposed:**

Identify and document the specific barriers within Ordinance 201 that prevent agricultural businesses from succeeding. Provide real-world examples of how the restrictions negatively impact farmers. Explore options for appealing or modifying SUP conditions to allow more flexibility. Work on changing the township's perception of agriculture as strictly non-commercial.

9. Citizen Comments:

Susie Shipman, 14735 Shipman Road: the amendment of SUP process. Missed in that discussion is, if we get to the town board level and there isn't a smooth path forward, can get kicked back to the planning commission [PC]. In the middle of the process, that can happen as an option.

Kroupa: if the townboard has already voted it can't get kicked back. If they hadn't approved it, but presented the conditions, could it then go back?

Shipman: with other SUP's that we've had, the PC has a committee to work on issues to have a smoother path forward. There have been times where it's gone through the PC, gone on to the town board, and they're finding issues. They send it back to the PC. Not one way that it always happens the same.

Kevin Beard, PC representative: with issues raised at the board level, possibility the PC might reconsider some of the terms and conditions that were proposed on the SUP. But there's no guarantee that anything will change.

10. Board Comments:

Hafeli: wanted to speak as citizen, but was told by Sanders as this was not a public hearing, could not speak from audience. Wants to look at by-laws to better inform speaking when dealing with conflict of interest.

Hemming: everyone on the board has conflict of interest with these subjects.

Beard: conflict of interest only when voting on something that directly affects.

Bramer: doesn't this all affect our properties?

Beard: not directly, voting on your own SUP would be a conflict. Making recommendations on ordinance changes that may have an effect down the road is ok.

11. Adjournment

Gomez moved to adjourn with a second by Hemming.

Motion approved by consensus

Adjourned at 3:32 p.m.