

PENINSULA TOWNSHIP

13235 Center Road, Traverse City
MI 49686

www.peninsulatownship.com

Township Board Regular Meeting
March 10, 2026, 7:00 p.m.
Township Hall
Minutes

1. **Call to Order** by Sanders at 7:00 p.m.

2. **Pledge**

3. **Roll Call**

Present: Sanders, Clark, Milliken, Alexander, Wunsch, Sanger, Chown

4. **Governmental Updates:**

Brian Abbring, CPO: reported statistics for the month of February: one citation, four crashes, one arrest. With snow melt, speed signs will soon be going up.

Susie Shipman, 14735 Shipman Road: presented on behalf of the non-motorized transportation working group. Is requesting the board approve signing a contract with Elise Loud for facilitating next steps in bringing the plan to the community for public input. The contract cost would be covered by the existing project budget. She acknowledged the Michigan Health Endowment Fund and DALMAC Fund for making the project possible.

5. **Conflict of Interest:** none

6. **Consent Agenda:**

A. Invoices

B. Reports

i. Fire Department

ii. Peninsula Community Library

iii. Treasurer's Office

iv. 2025 Annual PDR Monitoring

v. Zoning Ordinance Rewrite Update

C. Minutes from February 10, 2026, Township Board Regular Meeting (Amended) and February 24, 2026, Township Board Special Meeting

D. GTRLC Monitoring Report for Meeker Addition to Pelizzari Natural Area

E. Article- "Michigan Townships Association Challenges Peninsula Township's \$49.2 Million Zoning Judgement"

F. Amicus Briefs in Support of Peninsula Township in WOMP's Federal Lawsuit from the Following Groups and Available on the Township Website at peninsulatownship.com:

i. International Municipal Lawyers Association

ii. Michigan Municipal League

iii. Government Law Section fo the State Bar of Michigan

- iv. American Farmland Trust
- v. Michigan Townships Association
- G. Order Denying Plaintiff's (WOMP's) Motion for Order to Show Cause
- H. Water Resource Development Act Submissions from Grand Traverse Commons/Munson Medical Center Flood Mitigation
- I. Meeting Notice from M-37 Byway Committee for May 7, 2026, 3:00 p.m. Meeting
- J. Mutual Aid Agreement: Mobile Medical Response, Inc. and Peninsula Township Fire Department
- K. Correspondence
 - i. Todd Wilson/Fred Woodruff
 - ii. Brad Niergarth
 - iii. Fred Woodruff
 - iv. Fred Woodruff
 - v. Fred Woodruff
 - vi. Fred Woodruff
 - vii. Lisa Bourassa
 - viii. Todd Braxton, the Office of Senator Elissa Slotkin (M)
 - ix. Louis Santucci, submitted letter by Amanda Danielson

Sanders: in the packet addition, page 19, additional correspondence, Paula Kelley's name is missing.
Chown amended item C, the minutes from February 24, correcting them to accurately attribute various statements to Sanger, not Milliken, who was absent.

Alexander moved to approve the consent agenda as amended with a second by Chown.

Roll call vote: yes – Milliken, Alexander, Wunsch, Sanger, Chown, Sanders, Clark **Passed unan**

7. Approve Agenda

Sanders asked to add a discussion of the Placecraft contract for facilitating the non-motorized transportation plan to the business agenda.

Wunsch moved to approve the agenda as amended with a second by Alexander. Motion passed by consensus

8. Brief Citizen Comments (for agenda items only):

Tom Barnhart, 10895 Peninsula Drive: I'm here to talk about the budget. First, I'm happy to see that the cash has been invested and is earning higher returns. I'm hopeful that will continue and exceed the budget estimates for this coming year, although I'm not predicting the markets.

I agree with a lot of the comments made by Ms. Kelley in the recent edition of the packet as it relates to the parks and Dougherty. Those have had, for several years, significant operating shortfalls that have been made up by the township through various cash moves within the pools. That may change at some point. We have great parks. Everybody supports them. I'm a regular user. It's been talked about by the members of the board before that we look at a millage. Great idea, giving steady consistent funding. Issues sometimes occur. It [would] eliminate a fairly significant part of the overall budget that the township has to deal with. I would be in support of a millage.

Seems like PDR issues the last year or two have gone down a lot. There was a \$50,000 future monitoring again this year. I'm hoping that can come down and be some savings. Regarding the item that was just added to the agenda about hiring a consultant, I heard the reasons, but I'm not sure, given all the other stuff that's going on, that it would be in the best interests of the township. There's a lot of talent here. I don't know if that's a necessary, appropriate expense at this time. Thank you.

John Wunsch, 17881 Center Road: I'm here to comment on item 9(e), the WOMP lawsuit. Before I do, I want to thank each and every one of you for the job you do. The detail you have to pay attention to, the meetings you go to, the time you commit, deserves thanks. The pressures you're under from various sides and the emotional stress...Thank you for serving. My comment is twofold. First, I think you're following the right path. You are open to the possibility of some reasonable compromise settlement, yet you're not ignoring the importance of an appeal. It's the right path to support your legal team to be ready for an appeal. I encourage you to be wide eyed to the new open field of information before you. The fact that five state and national organizations have joined you in defending our township is not just impressive—it's groundbreaking. It's saying this is bigger than Peninsula Township. We know how important it is to us, but there's more there. I encourage you to be bolstered by that.

On the other hand, you have this new information that this organization, the Old Mission Citizens Coalition, coordinates with WOMP. Has a professional messaging person, Kent Wood. Has a recognized spokesperson in Todd Anson. What that says is, the resistance that has been there, the criticism you receive, the pressures—they're not an organic evolution of people's thought. This is a well coordinated effort to build that resistance, to distort or add to other ways to look at the situation than those that are factual and out there. So I hope you will take that as an encouragement that actually is out there because it has deep meaning underlying what you've been going through. I hope you'll take it as an encouragement, as an opportunity to be renewed, perhaps be healed from some stress. In closing, you're on the right path. My thanks are not just from me but from many people I know. You are appreciated.

Garry Manor, 17368 Peninsula Drive: this is regarding 9(e), the winery lawsuit. In the latest township survey, the majority of citizens requested a quick solution to the winery lawsuit. It's my understanding that the wineries have presented in writing an offer to the township and requested a written response to the proposal. It is my understanding that the township has not sent the wineries a written response or counter offer. Maura [Sanders, township supervisor], I believe you're a realtor. Isn't that customary, to make an offer on a house in writing? And if the seller doesn't make a counter offer...Contract negotiation business requires written offers and counter offers as a rule. This allows negotiations to move forward towards a conclusion that works for both parties. Business negotiations that go to final signing have clear documentation on what offers and counter offers are agreed to so there's a clear understanding by both parties of what the final agreement entails. If I recall, the town fired and is suing their previous attorney for making an offer to the wineries. Was there a written directive from the town board in writing? If there was not, this is a great example of why offers and counter offers are put in writing. I hope the town board will work to come to agreeable terms with the wineries in the future. This would not affect the appeals process and would show good faith to the township residents and the judge who will sit over the appeals process. I also suspect that if the township worked in good faith, an appeal may not even be required, saving thousands of dollars in time. Thank you.

8. Business:

- A. First Public Hearing on Proposed Fire Fund Millage Rate for Fiscal Year 2026-2027 (Sanders)
Sanders opened the public hearing at 7:19 p.m.
No comment.
Sanders closed the public hearing at 7:20 p.m.

Chief Gilstorff reviewed the budget. Highlighted that 60 percent of the budget goes to employee costs. Key expenses include \$14,000 for turnout gear replacement, \$2,500 for a washer and dryer, \$8,500 for turnout gear extractor, \$645,000 towards new fire station 1. Other future plans budgeted for include a new engine for station 3, station maintenance, and training.

Nine percent of the budget increase is mostly driven by union employee salaries and benefits.

- B. Public Hearing on Proposed General Fund and Special Funds Budget for Fiscal Year 2026-2027 (Sanders)

Sanders opened the public hearing at 7:33 p.m.

No comment.

Sanders closed the public hearing at 7:33 p.m.

Milliken: reviewed plans to develop a quarterly report of township expenses, legal fees, and transference of funds for clear communication to the public.

Board reviewed budget costs, noting the need for additional support in the zoning department. Reviewed the progress and funding status of the Kelley Park boat launch project.

Chown: reminded the board that she and Wunsch presented a request to the Grand Traverse County Board of Commissioners several years ago asking for a five-year commitment to help fund our township parks, which are used by many county residents. The county agreed to a grant of \$25,000 per year for five years, all of which was subsequently committed to the boat launch costs. Those funds, combined with the remaining ARPA funds, will complete our end of the contract.

Clark: added that the DNR via the Waterways Grant Program will not reimburse the township for its 50 percent of the boat launch costs until the project is complete. That's why the parks budget looks lopsided right now.

Sanger: requested looking at raising permit applications for large events and building permits to support more staff in the zoning department to improve permit approval times.

- C. Resolution 2026-03-10 #1, to Adopt Uniform Sewer Use Ordinance of 1994 as Amended 2026 (Sanders)

Noah Karberg, DPW Grand Traverse: reviewed the sewer use ordinance as adopted by surrounding townships after town board review.

Wunsch moved to adopt Resolution 2026-03-10 #1 to Adopt Uniform Sewer Use Ordinance of 1994 as Amended 2026 with a second by Milliken.

Roll call vote: yes – Alexander, Wunsch, Sanger, Chown, Sanders, Clark, Milliken **Passed unan**

- D. RFPs/Bids for FY 2026-2029 Peninsula Township Municipal Sites for Lawn Care and General Maintenance and Toilet Cleaning in Peninsula Township Parks

Board expressed appreciation for the quality and savings in the bid from Bob Wilkinson.

Sanger moved to accept Bob Wilkinson's bids for township park maintenance and toilet cleaning with a second by Chown.

Chown: expressed appreciation for the other bids submitted by BARC and KLM.

Roll call vote: yes – Wunsch, Sanger, Chown, Sanders, Clark, Milliken, Alexander **Passed unan**

- E. Winery Lawsuit Update Including Opinion and Order Granting Defendants Motion to Stay Enforcement and Waive Bond on Appeal

Sanders reviewed the opinion from legal counsel. Motion to stay the enforcement was granted. Damages will not be added to the summer 2026 tax bill. Judge Maloney issued an opinion denying WOMP's motion to show cause regarding an alleged failure to produce an EMC policy,

concluding WOMP suffered no prejudice as a result of the failure with no adequate reason to sanction either the township or counsel.

Amicus briefs from the International Municipal Lawyers Association, Michigan Municipal League, State Bar Michigan Government and Law section, Michigan Township Association, and the American Farmland Trust are updated and on the township website under WOMP filings.

WOMP's request for an extension to file its principal brief to April 17 was granted. Its request for a higher word count for its brief was not granted. The township will have until May 18 to file its reply. Oral argument are expected by November.

- F. Possible Closed Session under MCL 15.268(d) to Consider the Purchase or Lease of Real Property up to the Time and Option to Purchase or Lease that Real Property Is Obtained.

Chown moved to go into closed session under MCL 15.268(d) to Consider the Purchase or Lease of Real Property up to the Time and Option to Purchase or Lease that Real Property Is Obtained at 8:05 p.m. with a second by Alexander.

Roll call vote: yes – Sanger, Chown, Sanders, Clark, Milliken, Alexander, Wunsch Passed unan
Alexander moved to return from closed session at 9:11 p.m. with a second by Sanger.

Roll call vote: yes – Chown, Sanders, Clark, Milliken, Alexander, Wunsch, Sanger Passed unan
Wunsch moved to authorize the township supervisor to discuss the price ranges and options discussed in closed session with the seller with a second by Alexander.

Roll call vote: yes – Sanders, Milliken, Alexander, Wunsch, Sanger, Chown

No – Clark

Motion passed by majority

- G. Governmental Offices Safety Update (Sanders)

Sanders updated the board on a visit from the Grand Traverse County Emergency Officer to review township operations. He will be returning to help establish plans for township buildings.

- H. Memorial Tree Program Update from Old Mission Peninsula Historical Society (Paul Hinchcliff and Dave Taylor)

No member present for presentation [due to a communications glitch; OMPHS will present its update and proposal to the parks committee on March 25; the parks committee will then make a recommendation to the township board].

- I. Non-motorized Transportation Plan Contract with Placecraft

Chown: explained that the packet includes the budget for the non-motorized plan, which is covered by grants that are exclusively for the project and cannot be allocated to other operations in the township. Chown, a member of the committee, supports the contract with Elise Loud and reminded the board that the grant money can only be spent on the non-motorized plan, not on other township needs.

Clark: reminded the board that \$8,000 was committed by the board to the project that has yet to be allocated. Board agreed to review again at its next regularly scheduled board meeting.

9. Citizen Comments:

Garry Manor, 17368 Peninsula Drive: one of the board members, on two occasions, has made comments about failed politicians and attacks. We don't want politicians on this damn board. We want representatives. Isaiah [Wunsch], I've known Bern Kroupa for over 35 years. Bern has always spoken highly of your father. I have not heard him complain about you or make any disparaging remarks about you. I have read the memo Fred Woodruff sent out. Nowhere in the memo does it say that Bern has attacked you for fraud or caused you to lose contracts. I have no idea where your outburst against Bern Kroupa came from or if it was based in facts. I have seen you try to undermine

others with negative public accusations. I feel these attacks are uncalled for, unprofessional, and do not show confidence or leadership.

Part two, professionalism of township representatives. I am concerned that our township representatives, not politicians, often do not show professionalism. I have watched many town board and planning commission meetings. There are a few representatives who have shown true leadership by keeping an open mind and clear direction in meetings. We need everyone in the town board to look at this through an objective lens where they are not bringing their personal bias into discussions. There are times when board members should abstain from discussions and voting when they have conflicts of interest. To abstain and walk away is the right thing to do. Example, through Barb Wunsch's sworn deposition where she stated she is a member of PTP, she clearly states that she is against the wineries because, in her belief, wineries cause an increase in land value. Barb states that they want to keep land values low so the Wunsch family can buy more land at low cost. As Isaiah is an heir apparent to the Wunsch operation, as stated by Barb in her sworn deposition, and an operating officer of the Wunsch operation, he should abstain from votes and negotiations with the wineries to avoid a conflict of interest. It's as simple as that. Not a problem to have a conflict of interest, but then get the hell out of negotiations. I understand that all members are Old Mission citizens, and we still have our personal beliefs on how we would like to see the peninsula going into the future. As elected and appointed officials, true, unbiased representation is what we need and hope for. That's what we're looking for in this township. If you look at the survey, it pretty much states that. There was a planning commission person who stepped away. He said, "I have a conflict of interest." The rest of the planning commission said, "We don't see that." He goes, "No, I represent this person." [Three minute timer reached] Last thing is, I will submit the Barb Wunsch sworn deposition at the next meeting, if requested by anyone. Thank you.

10. Board Comments:

Sanger: citizens are asking for an update on the PDR committee. Questioned the remaining ARPA funds. Requested a review at the next board meeting.

Sanders: the board of review is finishing up at the assessor's office tonight. The assessor is planning a public information education session to present on state law and take additional questions from the public. Scheduled possibly in May.

The Peter Dougherty Society donated two American chestnut tree saplings that Sanders presented to the tribal counsel in Peshawbestown. The counsel is considering a tribal retreat in Old Mission.

11. Adjournment

Chown moved to adjourn at 9:27 p.m. with a second by Sanger.

Passed by consensus