

# PENINSULA TOWNSHIP

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

1. **Call to Order** by Kroupa 2:00 PM
2. **Pledge**
3. **Roll Call**  
Present: Edmondson, Bramer, Heller, Kroupa, Hafeli, Gomez, Baldyga  
Excused absent: Hemming
4. **Approve Agenda**  
**Hafeli moved to approve the agenda as presented with a second by Edmondson. Motion passed by consensus**
5. **Citizen Comments: none**
6. **Conflict of Interest: none**
7. **Consent Agenda:**
  - a. Approve Meeting minutes: Agricultural Advisory Committee meeting, February 18, 2025
  - b. Approve sending Farms Signage Ordinance recommendations to Planning Commission  
**Hafeli moved to approve item A and move item B to business item one with a second by Baldyga. Motion passed by consensus**
8. **Business:**
  1. Approve sending Farms Signage Ordinance recommendations to Planning Commission  
**Heller:** sign size, 20 square foot sign, is too large. Distracts from rural character and scenic views. I think larger than six square feet is necessary. Addition of season placards is good, but in addition to 20 square feet is a lot of signs.  
**Baldyga:** does the planning commission [PC] want specific recommendations?  
**Beard:** when possible, most helpful. Any specific language will come through the planner.  
**Sanders:** For expeditiousness - work with the planner, keep a redline copy that is continuously updated so the history is there. The Planning Commission and [Township] Board will ask about the iterations and how [the document] came along.  
**Kroupa:** should we put together a subcommittee with the PC to work with the planner to make this language?  
**Beard:** I will discuss with the PC at the next meeting to work on sign language.  
**Edmondson:** The sign ordinance we are trying to amend is strictly for ag signage. I'm in favor of what we produced, and as a user it is something I should be able to conform to.  
**Edmondson moved to send sign ordinance recommendation to the planning commission as written with a second by Hafeli. Motion passed by majority**  
**Nay- Heller**

- Continued Discussion – Amendment 201, real world examples and recommendation for change - Farm Processing and Value-Added Agriculture

**[Discussion]**

**Kroupa:** We put together a document [pdf page 14 in the packet addition] to start with

**Edmondson:** John, is that the document that you sent? Erin sent another document.

**Hafeli:** I sent a comparison of 201 and 139. That is separate to what we are looking at here which is a proposed new document.

**Edmondson:** Amendment 139 was abolished along with the winery chateau ordinance, and we are now working with Amendment 201. I thought the new document was very good, and seems to accommodate the current situation and is applicable and functional to the [entire farming] community, whereas Amendment 201 is specific to this big operation which is out of scale for the peninsula.

**Baldyga:** This is the streamlined version of that “Bill of Rights” for what are the basic things that a farm processor might want, there are a lot of things that need to be added. If you have a farm and you want to make something or sell something there should be a use by right way to do it.

**Bramer:** I hear a lot of farmers asking for a use by right which was removed by 201, I don’t know if kitchens would be part of this farm processing? The 100-foot setbacks from facilities and crops seems like a long distance.

**Edmondson:** I spoke with Ryan Coffey Hoag with [MSU Extension] GAAMPS/Right to Farm and the acreage restrictions are not something that he feels is defensible.

**Bramer:** I included neighboring townships showing minimum active agriculture.

**Edmondson:** It is important to be consistent with other townships so we don’t have an imbalance.

**Kroupa:** The majority of the feedback I got on 201 weaknesses was size requirements; those size requirements are immediately limiting.

**Edmondson:** when you think about that threshold of 60 acres, that is way out of scale for Peninsula Township.

**Baldyga:** Setbacks provide quiet enjoyment of neighboring residential. Acreage requirements are very different. Do we need to grow anything on site or is that a form of valid agribusiness?

**Hafeli:** A processing ordinance that is agreeable to the majority of the community members is important to avoid the special use permit process for farmers.

**Kroupa:** That is often the comment about 201’s weakness, that the use by rights parts are taken out. Like the letter from John Wunsch, he supports use by right for small, innovative ideas and that’s it in a nutshell. It needs to be use by right, get away from the special use permit.

**Hafeli:** we should also be aware of the process looks like in advance. I think we can talk about how something is “subordinate to” based on a lot of different qualitative and quantitative factors but I don’t think that gross sales should be part of that. The more as a community we can incentivize farmers to derive income from cashflow it will help to preserve farmland long term.

**Baldyga:** GAAMPS has language regarding 50% grown on site, 50% retail space, or business plan language so there are a lot of things that are spelled out. Are you saying there should be no restrictions on revenue?

**Hafeli:** suspend disbelief, say you had a farmer who is growing a [farm product] and they find out it is a cure for cancer. They process it, and someone is going to pay \$100,000, and you do it one time a year. The density of use is very light, it's a quiet use – it's one person. Who cares if the farmer made \$100,000? It's their farm product. It's an innovative use of farm products. It's un-American to say you shouldn't be able to charge what you can charge for that.

**Heller:** It's a slippery slope the "use by right." We need guidelines, including lot coverage. We're an ag advisory committee but we need to remember our residential property owners and these businesses established next to them. We are a democracy and residential outnumbers agriculture. I don't have a problem with people trying to make a living, but we need to provide the process.

**Baldyga:** this is a rough framework, all of that needs to be added. Land use permit needs to be included.

**Bramer:** we received a land use permit; the main issue that took so long was that we wanted to know the rules and there weren't clear rules. We are trying to come up with the rules so we have something to follow.

**Gomez:** I think the idea of a processing facility with zero acreage wouldn't fit. We need guidelines for agritourism to tie sales to your agriculture production business.

**Edmondson:** I believe the majority of people on Old Mission support agriculture to a high percentage, and think they would be in favor of more opportunities for sales. We're not as incompatible as we may think. PDR is a perfect example of how people support agriculture. If we come up with concepts to reduce the degree of difficulty to get to the roadside for retail, I think we will be pleasantly surprised by how happily our community will support it.

**Heller:** Preservation of rural character [is important], in developing these things we need to retain the rural character.

**Sanders:** the Town Board is getting ready to do the survey, agricultural themes are important for the survey.

**Hafeli:** we need to also consider the WOMP lawsuit and impact on all farmers, as things will change one way or another.

**Baldyga:** the judge said regardless of the results, guidelines will still need to be developed.

**Hafeli:** the WOMP lawsuit was stated outwardly as a reason why my use permit had financial restrictions imposed on it.

**Heller:** I agree that the [WOMP] misinformation out there will impact this process.

**Baldyga:** the lawsuit should not impact the work product that we make and put forward.

**Heller:** there is no definition of agritourism.

**Kroupa:** whether we have a definition or not, we know what we need to survive and need to educate people.

**Heller:** if you include agritourism for what you want, you need to come up with an explanation because there is no definition.

**Baldyga:** I will pull Michigan Department of Ag and cut and paste them in the [document].

**Kroupa:** our committee is not designed to get into the definition, we should leave that to the PC and the Town Board, the planner, and the professionals. We should do big ticket items. Minimalist, a place to start. We have 3 pages as a framework.

**Baldyga:** How do we bridge that gap, do we go through this as a starting point or take this month and add on what we think it needs for next meeting?

**Gomez:** Kevin, [can] you provide bullet points on what to look at?

**Beard:** off the top of my head, you might 1) react to what's in 201 or how 201 Amended the code as the code has been codified, or 2) come up with a "wish list" of the things needed to survive. Where do you need consideration? Not worry about where it fits in the code right now.

**Baldyga:** this is the "wish list" approach. The danger of starting at 201 is that it's so far off the mark, we're starting at such a high point that wherever we land will not be a midpoint. I don't think it's a great starting point.

**Edmondson:** what's really relevant is access to the market. Access to the market today seems to be getting by the road to sell your product. That seems simple to me. Farm families did not support Amendment 201 but it flew through PC and the Board, that scares me. We need to be focused on market. How can we get to the market? I hope that's what we're trying to achieve here. I'm concerned whether our effort is going to be enough?

**Kroupa:** we need to go at it with an honest effort, and it falls flat we can say we tried.

**Gomez:** to Nancy's point, we need to educate and bring it to the community. Before I came to this committee today, I sat through a grower's meeting with a processor. They are understanding that it's not a good deal. They said they are not buying tart cherries from up north Michigan, if you're lucky maybe you'll sell your sweets. The market is no longer here, there needs to be something for us to do.

**Heller:** diversify.

**Gomez:** diversify, or use by right language that doesn't scare people. Understanding that we are just trying to survive at this point.

**Edmondson:** we can't squelch creativity. The processing community is not there, we need to be able to create our own market.

**Heller:** positive creates positive, we need to move forward. I don't feel the community at large understands how critical our business is now.

**Kroupa:** Are we at a spot to look at this [new] document as a framework, put ideas and thoughts together and come back in April with all of our wish list items? It is going to evolve over months.

#### **[Summary]**

Concern of Ordinance 201's restrictive requirements. Expressed need for use-by-right processing facilities, through reducing acreage and setback restrictions. Look for consistency with neighboring townships.

- Economic Challenges for Farmers

Declining local processing options, highlights the importance of market access. Need for diversification of agricultural income.

- Land Use Permit and Special Use Permit Process

Simplifying application procedures. Massive financial barriers to the small grower. Need to create clear guidelines and definition for agricultural businesses.

- Right to Farm and GAAMP Regulations

Incorporating state agricultural management practices and ensuring flexibility in regulatory framework. Should be referencing existing agricultural standards.

- Community Support and Rural Character

Balancing agricultural development with preservation of peninsula's agricultural heritage. Importance of educating the public about farmers' economic realities.

- Future Action Items

Developing a collaborative ordinance document. Start with reviewing and refining proposed agricultural policy. Prepare possible questions for upcoming community survey.

Work on wish list for what would help farmers. Broad concepts and specific to amend the zoning ordinance. Find the points of contention in 201 to discuss next month.

#### 9. Citizen Comments:

**Bern Kroupa, 3183 Shore Wood Drive:** on the topic of 201. Didn't have the same kind of input when we did 139, 25 years ago. Hard fought battle for about nine months. Concluded with a packed house standing as one in favor. 201, I don't think it intended to derail all those parcels that were assembled 25 years ago, carving out parcels that were going to shed their development rights, but were going to stand for farm processing. Did one or two with the Regional Land Conservancy to make sure we did it right so that we acquired these parcels, shed most of the development rights but kept alive necessary room for farm processing. I'm hoping we get that back, because we did a lot of work on what was necessary and what wasn't necessary for size back then. I hope we emerge with something that looks like 139. If the lawsuit was to just go away today, 201 would not function very well with the existing wineries. It hasn't given rise to any new farm processing facilities. Incorporating a special use permit is very difficult with such lead time that we have in farming in general. The lead time, and then to have everything in place, and then have to have one more public hearing. We know the results of that doesn't work. On the topic of GAAMPS and so forth. The Right to Farm Act was signed in 1980, it was a beautiful bill, one page. The then secretary of agriculture said, "Don't rest on your laurels, folks, because there will be people shooting at that." Which gave rise to the GAAMPS. I hate to see GAAMPS be decided township by township.

**Susie Shipman, 14735 Shipman Road:** non-motorized transportation planning. Appreciate feedback from you I can filter through our consultants. Between Archie Park and where Pyatt Lake property joins Peninsula Drive, there are about 40 points of interest in our community. One of our initiatives has been, how do we connect these points of interest? What are the methods of connecting? Wanted to express to our agricultural community in particular, that if there are agricultural operators or wineries that have interest in being a part of a route in whatever form that might take, please get in touch with me.

PC does support GAAMPS. Concern is how to prevent an accessory use from becoming a main use and from farming then becoming an accessory use to other activities.

#### 10. Board Comments:

**Sanders:** need to appoint another alternate. If you need to have additional special meetings, I set a budget to account for. Many things for you to work on, such as a possible farm market on the

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Laura Martin, Recording Secretary

peninsula, and avenues for education.

**Bramer:** for the alternate, consider the two other applicants to the committee that didn't get appointed.

**Edmondson:** recommend Bern [Kroupa].

**Gomez:** for education, what is the format for that?

**Sanders:** have experts give presentations on high level issues.

**Bramer:** like Ryan Coffey Hoag?

**Sanders:** yes, MSU extension, whoever you want to have.

**Heller:** have bullet points. Northwest Michigan, we are the last to harvest. Help educate the public that nature rules.

## **11. Adjournment**

**Kroupa moved to adjourn with a second by Hafeli.**

**Motion approved by consensus**

**Adjourned at 3:55 p.m.**