

# PENINSULA TOWNSHIP

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## AGRICULTURAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE

### Regular Meeting Minutes

April 21, 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, Edmonson, Coggon, Beard

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

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

**Motion Passes**

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

**A. Approve meeting minutes:**

- **Agricultural Advisory Committee Regular Meeting February 17, 2026.**

**B. Correspondence**

**Motion by Gomez to approve consent agenda with second by Kroupa.**

**Motion Passes**

**8. Business:**

**A. Planning Commission Updates**

A memo dated April 16 from Sara Kopriva addresses signage size, noting the AAC has supported a 20 square foot maximum. Some Planning Commissioners question whether a smaller limit would be more appropriate. Staff is compiling comparisons with surrounding jurisdictions to assess typical standards; this information is not yet available. Kroupa offers prior research comparing other districts.

Following the public hearing, unresolved questions delay referral of the sign ordinance to the Town Board. The TB approves extending the enforcement moratorium through the end of the year, allowing current practices to continue. Key provisions, including allowing A-frame signs as temporary signs if properly placed and anchored, evaluating appropriate time limits for temporary event signage, and reconsidering restrictions on seasonal off-premises signs. Proposed standards include permitting one feather flag per property, allowing either a monument or ground pole sign (but not both) in agricultural areas, and adding provisions to allow flagpoles across districts.

Concern is raised about a proposed 15-foot setback beyond the road right-of-way. Intent is clarified as requiring placement only outside the right-of-way, with no additional setback, and this will be confirmed. Signs should remain out of the right-of-way, including during the moratorium.

Concern raised that the ordinance definitions are confusing and may be misinterpreted as permitted uses rather than explanatory terms. It is clarified that permissions are outlined later in the code, with tables in Section 10.08 providing guidance. Suggestion is made to include a disclaimer or cross-reference directing readers to the appropriate sections for permitted uses, which is supported as a helpful improvement.

Concern raised about an imbalance between private property owners and state-regulated directional (TODS) signs placed within the road right-of-way, which advertise businesses along M-37. These signs are permitted

through state programs, require application and fees, and are not subject to local township approval, leading to perceived inequity in size, placement, and visibility standards. Questions also raised about the need for continued ordinance work given the extended moratorium and lack of apparent complaints. Explained that ordinance updates are required to comply with legal standards, including content neutrality requirements. Further clarification on state signage regulations is deferred to planner Sara Kopriva for follow-up. Discussion focuses on the purpose of continuing ordinance work during the moratorium, with questions raised about whether a problem exists given limited enforcement. It is clarified that updates are required to meet legal standards and present an opportunity to modernize the ordinance and improve flexibility, particularly for agricultural uses.

The proposed 20 square foot signage limit receives pushback, though the PC requests justification rather than rejecting it. Providing supporting research from other jurisdictions may address concerns. Increased participation from the farming community in township decision-making is encouraged to better represent agricultural interests. Committee indicates its primary request is feedback on signage size, supported by sharing prior research materials. Additional items, including flagpoles and sign types, are discussed with general agreement and no strong opposition expressed. Clarification is provided that “ag district”, and “ag zoning” are used interchangeably in the ordinance.

Discussion addresses the 201-acreage minimum amendment and uncertainty about whether it can be considered, as the TB has directed committees not to pursue it. Concern is raised about limiting discussion, with requests for clarification on which parts relate to legal issues. It is noted this clarification would need to come from the TB or attorney and may require resources. The topic is deferred to a broader discussion.

## **B. Town Board Update**

- **Discussion of March 24, 2026 Town Board meeting comments addressing AAC**

Edmonson expresses concern about the 201-acreage minimum amendment, noting past committee work lacked sufficient ag representation and that strong opposition from the ag community was not reflected in the TB’s decision. Frustration is raised over perceived lack of support for agriculture, ongoing legal disputes, and increasing legal costs. Emphasis is placed on the need to better communicate ag concerns to decision-makers and build broader support to achieve greater flexibility. Baldyga clarifies it has only recommended lowering the acreage requirement under 201 to improve accessibility, not revising the full amendment due to ongoing legal uncertainty. The current ordinance is viewed as ineffective and underutilized, with no applicants. Focus is placed on supporting smaller, value-added ag operations and continuing incremental improvements rather than delaying action.

Discussion examines whether the proposed small processing framework relates to the 201 amendment. It is generally viewed as a separate issue, intended to support smaller-scale, value-added ag operations, while larger operations would still require additional review due to increased impacts.

Members note that small processing may overlap with 201 by allowing processing on smaller parcels and suggest defining a clear threshold to distinguish between small-scale uses and larger operations. Concern that the township may view small processing as connected to 201, creating uncertainty about how to proceed.

It is acknowledged that members lack clear direction from the TB on what falls under 201, and that the scope of restrictions remains unclear. The committee considers sending questions directly to the TB to clarify how to move forward.

Hemming suggests a regular joint meeting between the committee, PC, and TB (e.g., quarterly) to improve communication. Concern is expressed that the TB lacks understanding of the background and research behind the small farm processing proposal, including work related to GAAMPs and Right to Farm. Improved coordination is seen as necessary to support informed decision-making.

Discussion focuses on how joint meetings are initiated and structured, noting they are typically called when coordination between the TB and PC is needed, and can be requested by either body or other committees. It is also noted that smaller, less formal meetings can occur without triggering quorum requirements.

A motion is made to request a joint meeting (or series of meetings) between the committee, PC, and TB to improve communication and clarify the intent and background of the small farm processing proposal. The goal is to address misunderstandings, share research, and create a more efficient path forward.

Alternative approaches are discussed, including presenting directly at TB meetings or providing a clear summary of key priorities. However, concern is expressed that there is a broader lack of understanding and alignment, and that direct dialogue is needed to reduce confusion, avoid repeated back-and-forth, and ensure all parties have a shared understanding of goals and constraints.

**Motion by Hemming to request that the township consider holding joint meetings (full or sub-quorum) between the Agricultural Advisory Committee, Planning Commission, and Township Board to improve communication.**

**Motion Passes**

Discussion focuses on timing and structure for a joint or informal meeting, with consensus that it should occur soon—ideally within a month—rather than being delayed. Smaller, informal meetings with limited participants are viewed as more practical for addressing questions and improving alignment.

Concern is raised about a lack of clear direction from TB, including unclear guidance on committee structure and workflow. There is a desire to ensure future work aligns with expectations and remains actionable, avoiding effort that may be rejected due to misalignment.

Discussion emphasizes that economic development is the central issue, particularly supporting agriculture as a viable business. The committee's work is framed as helping farmers sustain operations through modern, direct-market approaches rather than traditional models.

Concern raised over criticism that the committee is overstepping by drafting detailed ordinance language, with clarification that this level of detail was previously encouraged to provide meaningful guidance. Stressed that the intent is not to create final ordinances or undermine zoning, but to contribute informed recommendations that will still go through the full review process.

Heller emphasizes the need to clearly communicate needs rather than wants, and to simplify proposals so they are easier to understand and evaluate. It is noted that the small processing concept is still in draft form and frustration arises from it being criticized before formal submission.

The committee reiterates that its role is to outline practical, real-world needs of farmers—such as generating income from small-scale operations—rather than drafting final ordinance language. Improved communication and education are seen as essential to bridge misunderstandings and align expectations.

Concern is also raised that official meeting minutes do not fully reflect the depth of prior discussions. A request is proposed to submit a full transcript of the relevant meeting portion to the TB for inclusion in the record to ensure accuracy.

### **C. Continued Discussion of small acreage subcommittee draft ordinance**

The proposed cap on retail space is determined to be unworkable based on a discussion between Baldyga and Ryan Coffey Hoag (Chair, State of Michigan Farm Market GAAMPs Committee), who explains that state GAAMPs and Right to Farm protections do not limit building size. Instead, farm markets are regulated by the requirement that at least 50% of products originate from the affiliated farm, with remaining items still being agricultural products.

It is further noted that many ag uses are broadly protected at the state level, limiting local control. As a result, local ordinances must rely on general standards and case-by-case review, particularly for higher-intensity uses like processing, rather than imposing strict caps.

Discussion highlights that while certain ag activities may be protected under state law (e.g., GAAMPs and Right to Farm), conflicts arise when local officials interpret them as not permitted. In those cases, the burden often falls on the farmer to prove the activity is allowed, which may require seeking support from the Michigan Department of Agriculture or GAAMPs board, and potentially pursuing legal action if disputes persist.

Concern is expressed that this process can be costly and difficult for farmers, reinforcing the need for clearer understanding at the local level. Improved communication, including informational meetings with TB and PC members, is seen as a way to bridge knowledge gaps and reduce conflicts. Increased farmer representation in local decision-making is also emphasized as important for ensuring these perspectives are considered.

Discussion considers timing for sharing the small processing proposal with the township, noting it may be premature to present before internal review is complete. It is suggested the proposal continue through the established process with staff and the PC, with the TB involved later if needed.

Key revisions are discussed, including maintaining GAAMP-based setbacks without modification and reconsidering operational standards. Processing is recognized as distinct from general farming activities, allowing potential limits such as hours of operation for higher intensity uses, while core agricultural activities remain unrestricted.

The proposed 2% cap on building size is removed, as it would conflict with state protections and is not enforceable. Instead, reliance on GAAMPs and market forces is supported, with acknowledgment that local ordinances should not impose restrictions that would not hold up legally.

Discussion centers on whether to regulate processing hours or rely on existing ordinances. It is clarified that core farming activities are protected under Right to Farm and can occur at any time, but processing (value-added activities) is not fully protected and may be subject to local regulation.

Members consider whether limits are needed, particularly for non-harvest processing that could impact neighbors. Suggestions include distinguishing between harvest periods (no limits) and off-season processing, or relying instead on existing regulations such as noise, lighting, and other local ordinances.

There is no final decision, and the issue is identified as needing further guidance, likely from the planner, to determine whether additional restrictions are necessary or if existing rules are sufficient.

Beard makes a suggestion to further break down acreage categories below 40 acres to reflect differences in scale (e.g., 5–10, 10–20, etc.), though it is noted this can be addressed later. Uncertainty remains about whether the proposal falls under the 201 amendment, and clarification from the TB is needed before advancing further.

The committee agrees to finalize edits to the draft and circulate it via email for review before submitting it to the PC.

**Motion by Baldyga to finalize, circulate, and submit the draft to the Planning Commission for review. Motion Passes**

#### **D. Introduction of farm stay and short-term rental language**

Introduces draft language for farm stays and short-term rentals, building on the small processing subcommittee work. An example ordinance from Acme Township is provided as a reference for how short-term rentals could function as an additional income stream for farms.

Hemming supports the farm stay concept, with a proposal to replace the existing B&B ordinance rather than operate both. Farm stays are viewed as more appropriate for larger agricultural parcels, potentially reducing traffic impacts compared to B&Bs in residential areas and encouraging on-site activity rather than frequent off-site travel.

Discussion supports keeping the existing B&B ordinance and creating a separate farm stay category, as they are viewed as distinct uses. Farm stays are seen as an agricultural use tied to larger parcels, while B&Bs remain appropriate for residential settings.

Short-term rentals are discussed as a separate and more complex issue, with agreement that focusing on farm stays is more appropriate for the committee's scope. Farm stays are viewed as a lower-impact alternative that can provide additional farm income, with optional food service and fewer traffic concerns compared to typical B&Bs or short-term rentals.

The farm stay proposal will remain on the next meeting agenda for further review. Members agree to hold off on advancing it, instead taking time to review, suggest edits, and compare it directly with the existing B&B ordinance. Including the B&B language in the next packet is suggested to better understand differences and determine how the two approaches relate.

**9. Citizen Comments:** None

**10. Board Comments**

Hemming brings up an upcoming ag tourism summit in mid-May and is highlighted as a valuable educational opportunity. Past committee attendees note it includes industry speakers, breakout sessions, and discussions on topics such as farm stays, Right to Farm, and growing ag-based businesses. Participation by PC and TB members is encouraged to improve understanding of ag tourism and support informed decision-making.

**Adjournment**

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

**Motion Passes**

Meeting adjourned at 4:07 p.m.

