PENINSULA TOWNSHIP

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AGRICULTURAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE
Regular Meeting Minutes
August 18, 2026
2:00 p.m.

1. **Call to Order** by Kroupa at 2:00 p.m.
2. **Pledge**
3. **Roll Call**

Present: Kroupa, Heller, Baldyga, Edmonson, Coggon, Gomez, Hemming
Also Present: Planner Sara Schroeder
Absent: Johnson

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

Don Coe, 211 Midtown Dr: States July 13 public meeting regarding RTF and GAAMPs is helpful and encourages the committee to consider Ryan Coffee Hoag's recommendations along with existing 2011 ordinance, model ordinances, small-farm model report, public input, and Citizens Coalition ordinance prepared by Mansfield Associates. Speaker suggests incorporating elements from these resources into a revised ordinance to provide a clear and efficient path for agricultural tourism and related uses. Key points include recognizing agricultural tourism as important to Old Mission Peninsula's agricultural future, allowing appropriate agricultural tourism and on-site processing uses subject to applicable regulations, distinguishing farm-related activities from separate commercial enterprises, establishing clear definitions and scalability standards, and utilizing Township's PDR program to support agriculture while discouraging residential development.

Approve Agenda

Motion by Coggon to approve as written with a second by Baldyga. **Motion Passes**

5. **Conflict of Interest:** None
6. **Consent Agenda**
   - **A. Approve meeting minutes:**
     - Agricultural Advisory Committee Regular Meeting June 16, 2026.
   - **B. Correspondence:**
     - Don Coe
     - John Wunsch

Motion by Baldyga to approve consent agenda with second by Kroupa. **Motion Passes**

7. **Business:**
   - **A. Resignation of Jen Bramer from AAC on 8-14-26**

Members thank Jen Bramer for her time serving on the Agricultural Advisory Committee and expresses disappointment regarding her resignation. Members concur, noting that Bramer has been a valuable committee member and that her concerns reflect broader frustration within the agricultural community regarding a perceived lack of response and support from the Township Board. Members express hope that Township leadership is aware of these concerns and recognize Bramer's efforts to support the community.

Discussion follows regarding committee membership changes. Garrett Goggon is expected to move into a full membership position, Nick Johnson is expected to become Alternate 1, and the TB will appoint a new Alternate 2, subject to the Supervisor's preference. Members discuss whether to submit recommendations for the new alternate and agree that suggestions may be forwarded to the Board, although there is some concern that previous recommendations were not considered.

Members discuss Jen Bramer's resignation and note that ongoing delays with agricultural ordinances may contribute to frustration within the community. It is noted that the Sign Ordinance has passed the PC and is moving forward to the TB. Members are encouraged to review the ordinance and attend the Board meeting if they have concerns. Appreciation is expressed for Jen's service to the committee.

B. Presentation of example ag ordinance from OM Citizens Coalition: Fred Swaffer & Doug Mansfield

Fred Swaffer, President of the Citizens Coalition Old Mission Peninsula, and Doug Mansfield of Mansfield Land Use Consultants present a draft agricultural ordinance prepared at the Coalition's expense. Fred states that the draft has been reviewed favorably by local farmers and MDARD representatives, as well as Ryan Coffee Hoag. Coalition supports adoption but welcomes further discussion and revisions through the Township's review process.

Doug Mansfield provides background on his extensive experience with township planning, special use permits, subdivisions, wineries, and agricultural tourism. He emphasizes that farming is a commercial and sometimes industrial activity that can involve inherent nuisances and states that regulations should be clear, objective, fair, and legally defensible. Mansfield expresses concern that existing and proposed ordinance language does not provide sufficient clarity regarding opportunities, restrictions, and expectations. He states that the ordinance should focus not only on sustaining existing farms but also on supporting future farmers and the long-term viability of agriculture on Old Mission Peninsula. Mansfield discusses historical and current traffic patterns and notes that growth has been modest. He emphasizes preserving and building upon Old Mission Peninsula's agricultural identity, heritage, and character to support its long-term viability. States that the special use permit process is lengthy and burdensome and is not well suited for agricultural uses. He emphasizes the need for clear and predictable standards, so farmers understand what is permitted and what is required. Mansfield explains that the proposed ordinance uses GAAMPs as a guide for development and mitigation while allowing qualifying agricultural uses through administrative approval rather than a special use permit. The proposal requires a bona fide farm and establishes standards for agricultural tourism and related uses, including processing, farm markets, farm stays, and other activities. Mansfield emphasizes using clear conditions and setbacks instead of special use permits to provide predictable standards while addressing potential impacts such as traffic, noise, and proximity to neighboring residences. Mansfield states that proposed standards are reviewed with farmers, users, and MDARD and include proportional farm-stay allowances, setbacks, parking, and compliance with applicable Township and agency regulations. He explains that properties unable to meet the standards could pursue a special use permit for mitigation. Mansfield emphasizes that the proposal is intended to support agricultural tourism while protecting surrounding properties and recommends allowing qualifying uses through administrative approval. He requests an opportunity for the Coalition to meet with Township planners to further review and refine the proposal.

Swaffer states that declining crop diversity and age diversity threaten the future of agriculture on the Peninsula. He supports the proposed agricultural ordinance as a tool to help preserve farming and encourages advancing it through the review process, with direct collaboration between Mansfield and Township planners. Recommends that the AAC review and discuss the proposed agricultural ordinance before making a recommendation to the PC. He emphasizes that the committee was established to advocate for farming and that its recommendations should carry meaningful weight in the Township's decision-making process. Mansfield recommends that Township planners review the proposed ordinance with the Coalition to identify common ground before the AAC makes a recommendation. Mansfield discusses examples of agricultural ordinances from other Michigan

communities but notes that few directly address the unique agricultural conditions on Old Mission Peninsula. Swaffer suggests that Peninsula Township has an opportunity to develop a strong, practical agricultural ordinance that could serve as a model for other communities.

Heller asks for clarification on the proposed agricultural ordinance, particularly the definitions and two-page summary of key provisions. Discussion focuses on how the proposal relates to and amends the existing ordinance, with clarification that other existing uses remain unchanged. Heller requests a redlined version identifying specific changes to the current ordinance. Edmonson supports the proposed agricultural ordinance, describing it as practical and streamlined, and recommends that the Agricultural Advisory Committee move it forward due to the importance and urgency of supporting agriculture.

Gomez notes that much of the proposed ordinance is similar to the committee's previous draft and asks how the two proposals should be reconciled. Swaffer states that farmers who reviewed the proposal generally found it well thought out and appreciated its flexibility and concise format. Discussion supports comparing the two drafts, coordinating with Township planners, and seeking additional input from farmers before finalizing the ordinance.

Discussion focuses on how to move the proposed agricultural ordinance forward. Members recognize significant overlap with the committee's previous draft but identify provisions requiring further review. Members debate whether to conduct a detailed review before forwarding the ordinance or have Township planners and Mansfield work through the technical language first. Ultimately, members emphasize that the committee should retain input on the substance of the ordinance while allowing professionals to work through the technical and legal aspects, with regular updates to the committee.

Members discuss the proposed ordinance and agree that additional review is needed before taking action. Schroeder explains that a formal zoning ordinance amendment application should be submitted to initiate the PC review process, after which the AAC can provide feedback. Members agree to pursue the appropriate application process and request a side-by-side comparison of the proposed ordinance and the committee's previous draft for further discussion at the next meeting. Committee thanks Fred and Doug for the presentation.

Members identify next steps for the proposed agricultural ordinance, including reviewing the definitions and preparing a side-by-side comparison with the committee's previous draft. Members note the limited number of remaining meetings before committee terms expire and emphasize the need to make progress before the end of the year. Discussion also addresses whether previously submitted agricultural ordinance language has been reviewed by Township staff and the PC.

C. Planning Commission Updates

- **Small Processor**

Schroeder states that PC has briefly discussed small processor provisions, completed a site visit to Jeff Kane's property, and is seeking additional legal guidance. PC is prioritizing review of the overall draft zoning ordinance, so further discussion of small processors may be delayed or incorporated into the larger rewrite. Members are encouraged to identify other small processing operations that could be visited for comparison.

- **Sign Ordinance**

Schroeder provides an update on the Sign Ordinance, stating that PC held the public hearing and forwarded it to the TB for consideration. Proposed changes include a maximum of 60 square feet of on-premise signage in the ag district and additional limitations on off-premise signage. Members are encouraged to review the ordinance and direct any comments to the TB during the upcoming review and public hearing.

D. Town Board Updates

Schroeder reports that Maura is unable to attend due to circumstances related to the recent fatal accident that took place on the peninsula. Also reports that the Township recently completed the purchase of a 100-acre PDR property for Mark Kelly, adding the property to the PDR program.

E. Discussion of steep slope and tree removal ordinance

Schroeder provides an update on initial PC discussions regarding potential steep slope and tree removal regulations. She notes that agricultural uses are not intended to be restricted and may be exempted from the proposed regulations. Discussion also considers how to prevent agricultural exemptions from being used to clear property for future residential development while allowing flexibility when legitimate farming plans change.

Hemming notes that Grand Traverse County already regulates steep slopes and suggests relying on the existing county ordinance rather than creating additional Township regulations. Concern is expressed that a more restrictive Township slope standard could significantly limit development on the Peninsula. Regarding tree preservation, Hemming recommends education on proper tree care and disease prevention rather than additional regulation. Schroeder encourages these comments to be shared with the PC.

Schroeder explains that Soil Erosion permits or waivers from Grand Traverse County are required before a Township Land Use Permit is issued. County Soil Erosion oversees active construction, while the Township regulates stormwater after permits close. Discussion notes recent concerns with steep slopes and stormwater runoff and emphasizes the Township's review of long-term stormwater management to prevent impacts to neighboring properties.

Edmonson questions the need for additional Township land-clearing regulations, stating that County Soil Erosion professionals are better equipped to address these issues. Raises concerns regarding a major washout near Center Road and suggests that the Township take action to stabilize the area before further storm events create additional hazards. Schroeder states that the road issue may involve MDOT and recommends discussing it with Maura, who is more familiar with the situation. Discussion notes that the washout is a stormwater issue rather than a soil erosion issue.

Mansfield provides comments on the proposed steep slope and tree-clearing regulations, expressing concern that the standards could unnecessarily restrict development and reduce property value. He states that slope regulations should account for soil type, engineering, and site-specific conditions rather than prohibit development based solely on a percentage of slope. Mansfield also raises concerns that broad tree-clearing regulations could be subjective and difficult to enforce and may encourage property owners to misrepresent agricultural intentions. He recommends that the Township reconsider the proposed regulations and rely on appropriate engineering and professional standards rather than overly restrictive requirements.

Members discuss the potential impact of proposed steep slope and tree-clearing regulations on agricultural and other property owners. Members express concern that the regulations could restrict agricultural activities, reduce property value, and create unintended consequences, while Schroeder clarifies that the proposal is still in development and is not intended to regulate routine tree removal or legitimate agricultural activities. Discussion also considers exemptions for agricultural, forestry, and PDR properties and the need to account for site-specific conditions and existing County regulations. Members agree that the AAC should communicate its concerns to the PC during development of the ordinance.

Mansfield discusses his experience with PDR projects and states that proposed development restrictions on steep slopes and wooded areas could significantly reduce the development potential and value of agricultural properties. He notes that these restrictions would also affect appraisals and the value of properties considered for the PDR program.

Members agree to provide a formal statement to the PC regarding the proposed steep slope and tree-clearing regulations. The committee supports expressing serious concerns about impacts to agricultural properties and requesting an exemption for agricultural uses. Members also acknowledge potential concerns for residential properties. Coggon agrees to draft a brief statement and circulate it to the committee for review before forwarding it to the PC.

F. Continued discussion of farm stay language

Members discuss the proposed agricultural ordinance and agree that further consideration may be appropriate given the PC's current workload and the lack of urgency. Members question whether there is sufficient demand from local farmers for uses such as farm stays and glamping and note that small-scale processing appears to be a higher priority. Discussion also considers the economic feasibility and regulatory burden of farm stays. Members suggest that allowing lodging or B&B-type uses in agricultural areas could provide additional income opportunities while reducing impacts on neighboring properties and potentially encouraging visitors to remain on the Peninsula longer. Members discuss Ryan Coffee Hoag's recommendation to consider a tourism overlay within the ag district to allow additional agricultural tourism opportunities, including B&Bs, campgrounds, and other businesses. Discussion notes that similar overlay concepts have been used in other townships and could provide designated areas for agricultural processing and tourism activities.

Motion by Heller to table further discussion until September meeting with second by Gomez **Motion Passes**

8. Citizen Comments

Fred Swaffer, 1045 Gray Rd: Expresses appreciation for Jen Bramer's service and contributions to the community and emphasizes the importance of Township-appointed committees having their recommendations and citizen input meaningfully considered by the TB. Reiterates concerns regarding the proposed steep slope regulations, noting that agricultural activities could be permitted on steep areas while similar grading for residential development could be restricted, and encourages the PC to consider practical implications when developing the regulations.

10. Board Comments

Hemming: Questions the Township's use of permissive zoning, stating that it is not mandatory under Michigan law and expressing concern that the approach unnecessarily limits property rights. Members discuss the history of the issue and note that, although permissive zoning has been used as an interpretation for many years, it was not formally included in the ordinance.

Baldyga: Recalls that Jen Cram stated at a 2021 agricultural tourism conference that Peninsula Township operates under permissive zoning, noting that although she considered the approach undesirable, it was how the Township operated. Notes that many customary accessory uses are not specifically listed in the ordinance but are generally understood to be permitted, such as recreational activities and gatherings on residential property.

Hemming: Member states that permissive zoning requires the Township to specifically determine what activities are allowed, creating opportunities for increasing regulation. Recalls a past example involving a proposed basketball court in a barn that was denied because it was not specifically permitted. Member expresses concern that this approach can lead to gradual overreach and unnecessary restrictions on private property.

Adjournment

Motion by Heller to adjourn, seconded by Hemming. **Motion Passes**

Meeting adjourned at 4:24 p.m.