PENINSULA TOWNSHIP

13235 Center Road, Traverse City
MI 49686
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Township Board Meeting
September 22, 2026, 3:00 p.m.
Township Hall
Minutes

1. **Call to Order** by Sanders at 3:00 p.m.
2. **Pledge**
3. **Roll Call**
   Present: Sanders, Clark, Sanger, Wunsch, Chown
   Absent excused: Milliken, Alexander
4. **Governmental Updates**:
   Parks committee: gave an update on the flooding issues presented by residents at the August township board meeting and discussed at the August parks committee meeting. Residents on the border of the west side of Bowers Harbor Park and Bowers Harbor Natural Area's north side have been dealing with decades of flooding issues. Thanked Supervisor Sanders and Trustee Wunsch for their hands-on support during a flooding event to open locked culverts. Brought out the drain commissioner and watershed employees who recommended a comprehensive hydrologic study. Drain Commissioner Andy Smits provided the current water table elevations at various water wells in the vicinity, the topographic elevation contours, and the soil taxonomy. He will next take soil borings at key locations to classify the soil texture, color, and saturation as well as note the presence of any perched water. He will share his findings to help us determine next steps.
   A new grant opportunity for parks has been offered by a foundation relationship that was a significant source of funding for the Hemlock Boardwalk asking us to submit a proposal. Thank you, Becky [Chown], and this board for your support and to this foundation for its support of great projects in our parks.
   Concerned about the new increasing floods within the parks. Trees in the southwest corner are developing fungus, and previously dry walking paths are now wet into late June. Thanked the board for pursuing solutions.
5. **Conflict of Interest: none**
6. **Consent Agenda:**
   A. Invoices
   B. Minutes from September 8, 2026, Township Board Regular Meeting
   C. Request to Donate Surplus Fire Hose to the Northwest Regional Fire Training Center
   D. Correspondence
      1. Craig Haddox
   Sanger requested invoices be moved to business item I.
   Chown moved to approve the consent agenda as amended with a second by Wunsch.

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

7. **Approve Agenda [no motion or vote]**
8. **Brief Citizen Comments (for agenda items only):**

Susan Tarczon, 15763 Smokey Hollow Road: is excited about the current PDR property purchase you are contemplating approving today and the fact that we have several others in the queue that could come along quickly. I serve on the selection committee, and I'm glad to have this proceeding. I want to again thank the board for your continued hard work on the citizens' behalf. It's often a thankless job and a continuous job. I appreciate your continued efforts to keep the rural character of our beloved peninsula as you make the many decisions that come before you every day. Thanks.

9. **Business:**

A. Introduction to Zoning Amendment #208, Signage (Sara Schroeder)

Schroeder: this signage ordinance amendment was recommended by the planning commission [PC] and agricultural advisory committee [AAC] for approval. The current moratorium on signage ordinance enforcement was established while AAC worked on language to support the agricultural community. PC worked on updating language to bring the ordinance into compliance with the Supreme Court ruling on content neutrality such that regulation cannot be based on what the use is for. A church versus a garage sale cannot have different rules. Regulation must be based on the type of sign, short term versus long term, on premise or off premise, agricultural or commercial.
Sanger: expressed concern for new language allowing off premise signage. Is concerned about visual blight on Center Road and difficulty in enforcement. Also raised concern about allowing feather flags, which are considered mobile, conflicting with current language in the ordinance.
Board agreed to send edits to Schroeder to include in a redlined version at next board meeting on October 13 but not to schedule a public hearing on this item yet.

B. Introduction to Zoning Amendment #210, Special Use Permits (Sara Schroeder)

Schroeder: reviewed the need recognized by the PC to streamline minor amendments to existing SUPs; must be a 20 percent or less change up to 1,000 square feet of change on a property. Amendment clarifies the review process between the PC and town board to reduce processing time.
Sanger: requested a redline version of changes for next meeting before scheduling a public hearing.

C. Introduction to Zoning Amendment #211, Chickens (Sara Schroeder)

Schroeder: multiple residents requested this addition to the ordinance. Current setbacks limit options in residential zoning. There was no public comment at the PC public hearing. Chickens would not be free range, would be limited to six chickens, and roosters would not be permitted.
Board discussed including language for HOA approval, for applications to be submitted with HOA approval (if applicable) for added support for township when regulating disputes. Disagreement on if that is necessary. Board will schedule a public hearing for October 13 meeting.

D. Introduction to Zoning Amendment #213, Lighting (Sara Schroeder)

Schroder: regulating LED light bulbs is causing light trespass onto other properties, violating the dark sky ordinance. Fixtures that previously complied with old bulbs have proved inadequate with high lumen LED bulbs. Enforcing violations resulting from a change of light bulbs has been difficult to navigate. Current language also exempts porch lights, an item that is not adequately defined by the ordinance.
Board discussed need for clear language defining dark sky compliant fixtures and bulbs. Red line comparison of changes will be presented at next meeting along with a public hearing.

E. Resolution 2026-09-22 #1, Warren Farm PDR Purchase Agreement (Sanders)

Will Manty, Grand Traverse Regional Land Conservancy: introduced Warren easement presented by the selection committee for board approval. Is an 82-acre contiguous property. Easement will

allow four homes sites, one per 20 acres. A 15-acre no-build will be established to protect scenic views along Center Road and Grey Road. A two-acre envelope on western edge of property has been designated for a small-scale horse boarding facility, restricted to 13 horses to prevent commercial scale use in future. Warren property connects other large PDR easement properties. Easement has been appraised at $1,306,000. PDR fund currently has more than 8 million.

Sanger: is concerned that the packet does not have enough information for him to know what the board would be approving. Does not even know where the property is. Did not have time to read the material thoroughly or dig into it. Plans to abstain from voting.

Board discussed the PDR process of establishing baseline documentation once the board has approved the easement. Discussed the horse boarding facility, what township zoning allows, and how to monitor the usage. Property owner will still have to go through zoning to build. Horses are considered agricultural use. Language restricts any commercial use. Enforcement is monitored by PDR and community reporting of misuse.

Clark moved to approve Resolution 2026-09-22 #1, Warren Farm PDR Purchase Agreement, with a second by Chown.

Roll call vote: yes – Wunsch, Chown, Sanders, Clark
Abstained: Sanger **Passed by Majority**

F. Requested Budget Amendment for Parks (Clark)

Clark: in 2024, board agreed to allocate $18,000 for signs. Need to move money to start payments.

Clark: moved to approve budget amendment parks signage with a second by Sanders.

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

G. Requested Budget Amendment for Mission Point Lighthouse (Not the Gift Shop) (Sanders)

Sanders: recommends moving funds from lighthouse revenue to capital improvements to meet their $30,000 contribution for parking lot repaving.

Clark moved to approve the budget amendment for lighthouse parking lot with a second by Chown.

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

H. Amendment to Escrow Agreement for LDA 361 (Luoma and Hagerty) (Sanders)

Sanders amendment for an extension of their timeline.

Sanger moved to approve the amendment to the escrow agreement for LDA 361 with a second by Chown.

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

I. Township Flag Contest (Chown)

Chown: the township flag design contest is open for submissions from residents and must be based on the character of Old Mission Peninsula; the winning design will be picked by popular vote by residents. The deadline for submissions is December 31. Can include the contest in the winter newsletter, which will be available electronically only this time.

J. Update on Road Commission FOIA, Road Commission Projects in Peninsula Township 2021–2024, and Request for Township Residents to Attend Road Commission Meetings on a Monthly Basis (FourthThursdays of the Month at 6:00 p.m. at 1881 LaFranier Road) (Sanders)

Sanders: updated FOIA request to road commission, narrowed in scope to lower cost. An ad hoc committee has been established with Katie Clark and Isaiah Wunsch to attend road commission meetings to ensure township needs are being addressed.

Board discussed the disparity between taxes paid by residents and the work done on local roads. Information in packet details one project in Peninsula Township between 2021–2024 at a cost of $94,613 while resident in that time frame contributed nearly three million in taxes. Road

commission model for prioritizing road repairs greatly disadvantages Peninsula residents. Open call for residents to participate with committee.

K. Update on Current Lawsuits in Peninsula Township (Sanders)

Sanders: read report from legal. On WOMP [Wineries of Old Mission] 1, waiting for court to set oral argument date. On WOMP 2 with Bonobo, Protect the Peninsula [PTP] moved to intervene and was denied in a written opinion by Judge Maloney. PTP filed an appeal to the Sixth Circuit and moved for an expedited appeal, which was granted. PTP's brief is due September 29. The wineries' and township's briefs are due October 20. PTP's reply brief is due October 27. The court has said the parties should not anticipate receiving any extensions. On September 10, the township filed a motion to certify the denial of the stay of appeal and the denial of the motion to dismiss for an appeal to the Sixth Circuit. The wineries' response is due September 24. While that motion is pending, the parties are engaged in discovery. The wineries have designated one expert, Ryan Skog of ESI Engineering out of Minneapolis. The wineries said, "He may testify concerning acoustics, sound isolation, noise control, and vibration control as it relates to the township's new ordinance and the plaintiff's businesses." The township must identify experts before October 9. Additionally, the township earned today that the mediator for the insurance cases EMC and USSIC has set a date for mediation of March 22 in Grand Rapids. Discovery requests were sent out by those insurance companies to the township and wineries.

Municipal insurance companies have recently approached the township asking when township insurance is renewing, hoping to bid, expressing optimism for the township's appeal in court.

I. Invoices

Sanger: reviewed highest invoices excluding payroll and health insurance, asking for explanations.

Miller Johnson for $14,567; insurance coverage council.

Bob Wilkinson for $10,199; combination of four contracts spread over 12 months.

Credit card company for $5,245; early payment to net save on new website design company.

Beckett&Raeder for $6,784; resubmitted revised boat launch plans for Kelley Park. First plans were reviewed by EGLE, which requested the launch be moved south to avoid wetlands and also decrease dredging amounts. The DNR has agreed to the revised plans, which have been resubmitted to EGLE.

8. **Citizen Comments:**

Michele Zebell, 2616 Bowers Harbor Road: in my capacity as a member of the parks committee, I completely botched thanking Becky [Chown]. We have a grant opportunity for our parks that we just learned is being made available. This is a foundation relationship that Becky nurtured and became a significant source of funding for the Pelizzari Natural Area Hemlock Boardwalk. They have gotten in touch, asking us to submit a proposal. We're usually begging people to accept what we turn in. This is amazing. Having attended the great ribbon-cutting ceremony for the boardwalk, I know how much goes into relationship building for these significant donors and causes. Thank you, Becky, and this board, for supporting the work of the parks. I hope this foundation works to support more great projects in our parks. I feel better now. Thank you for indulging me.

9. **Board Comments:**

Clark: thanked staff for work on tax collection. Out of the 26-million-dollar tax roll, collected 16 million in the last 15 days.

Chown: absentee ballots will arrive later this week.

Sanders: this is a shout out to our zoning enforcement officer [Sanger]. I review his invoices every month. He is very busy, and the level of detail and communication with the residents is exceptional.

10. **Adjournment**

Wunsch moved to adjourn at 4:51 p.m. with a second by Clark. **Passed by consensus**