PENINSULA TOWNSHIP

13235 Center Road, Traverse City
MI 49686
www.peninsulatownship.com

Township Board Special Meeting
October 13, 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:** none
5. **Conflict of Interest:**
   Wunsch has a conflict of interest with the discussion on signs.
6. **Consent Agenda:**
   A. Invoices
   B. Reports
      1. Fire Department
      2. Peninsula Community Library
      3. Grand Traverse Sheriff's Office Citation, Accident, and Arrest Statistics
      4. Treasurer
      5. Engineering on Water Projects in Peninsula Township
   C. Minutes from September 22, 2026, Township Board Regular Meeting
   D. Approval of Qualifying Statement for Peninsula Township from the Department of Treasury
   E. MI Public Policy Survey on Michigan Local Government Leaders' Views on Large-Scale Data Centers
   F. Mission Hills Street Light Removal Budget Amendment
   G. Correspondence
      1. Fred Woodruff, Maura Sanders, and GTRLC
      2. Patricia Conlon
      3. Attia Qureshi
      4. Garry Mannor
      5. Fred Woodruff

   Brad Niergarth from audience requested that invoices and treasurer's report be moved to business.
   Alexander moved to approve the consent agenda as amended with a second by Clark.
   Roll call vote: yes – Clark, Milliken, Alexander, Wunsch, Sanger, Chown, Sanders **Passed unan**
7. Approve Agenda

Sanger moved to approve the agenda as amended with a second by Milliken. Motion passed by consensus

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

Todd Wilson, 782 Neahtawanta Road: I served on the 2018 strategic planning committee and survey group, and since then I've been part of the non-motorized committee. In regard to the two recent tragic crashes and MDOT's suggestions on increasing road safety, I thank you to our first responders and township board for identifying and including road safety changes in the current draft of the non-motorized action plan. These improvement options are detailed on the township website and reflect much of what MDOT advocates and is already part of roadway improvements elsewhere in this state. I encourage all residents to read through the non-motorized action plan and provide input with region-specific recommendations. Unfortunately, these recommendations cannot eliminate all the contributing factors to the car crashes. I encourage continued greater enforcement of speed limits and sobriety testing. You have all done an excellent job in identifying the problem areas and providing timely solution options to be considered while funding the process through successful grant applications. I especially thank Susie Shipman, Maura Sanders, and Becky Chown for their assistance and participation throughout the process. Thank you very much.

Maddy Henkel, 8830 Dawn Circle: I'm a senior at Central High School and a friend of Jason Solomon's as well as a former classmate of Wilder Seeburger's. Both were Central High School students, and both of their lives were lost in tragic accidents on Center Road, with alcohol and speed allegedly involved in both incidents. I'm here tonight because I believe something needs to change. Jason was a friend of mine. He dated one of my best friends for nearly three years. He was a senior as well, a driven student, a football player, and well liked by all of his classmates. Wilder, a junior, was also a very important part of our school community and beloved by family and friends. He played soccer and was known for his warmth and friendliness. Both were young students with futures ahead of them, and now neither has the chance to graduate from high school. Their families and friends have to live with a forever loss that cannot be undone but could have been prevented. Center Road has become a place where people drive at extremely high speed, sometimes over 100 miles per hour. This is reckless behavior that puts everyone on the road at risk. I'm asking the board to help us change that. The Old Mission Gazette recently reported that during an effort to increase police presence on Center Road, officers issued 40 to 50 tickets in a singular day. Those tickets went to drivers traveling five to 20 miles per hour over the speed limit. This enforcement is extremely important, and I appreciate the officers who are working to make the road safer. But it also raises an important question: how do we catch or better prevent the reckless drivers that put our lives in immediate danger? Whether it's through increased police presence on the peninsula in addition to speed-regulating signs or stronger speed enforcement, we must do something to make our roads safer. In working with the Grand Traverse County Road Commission and the Sheriff's Office, we should develop a comprehensive safety plan for Center Road. It may even be beneficial to have a clearly publicized phone number or reporting system to contact when residents witness reckless behavior. People need to know how and should be encouraged to use their voices to help protect us all. I understand that Peninsula Township may not have complete or direct authority over every road safety decision, but we all have a voice, and we need to use that voice to take action and make a difference, not just in our lives but in the lives of those who drive and will drive on Center Road every single day. We shouldn't have to wait for another tragic accident to occur to take action and

make the peninsula safer. For those of us who knew Jason and Wilder, this is not simply a traffic issue. They were our friends. They were our classmates. They were young lives that have been cut way too short. I'm asking you to help make Center Road safer, not just in memory of Jason and Wilder but for everyone who has lost someone in a similar accident. No one deserves to go through this type of pain, especially when accidents like this could be avoided. Thank you.

Attia Qureshi, 2494 Carroll Road: I am the owner and run the U-pick on Wilson Road by Third Coast Fruit Company. For six seasons, we have parked a restored 1946 GMC pickup truck on an orchard that we manage at Wilson and Center Road, where our customers come to pick sour cherries. I'm proud to say that a lot of locals know our truck and know it is coming up on cherry season when they get to drive by it, along with the people who come and love our cherries so much. The truck sits right outside of the right of way in a clear vision area and meets the township's lettering and size limits. The amendment that was given for discussion today, 208, would ban it as a portable message sign. In its place, the ordinance would force us to use feather flags, stacks of plastic signs, and sandwich boards, which I imagine is exactly what we're trying to avoid. The ordinance's own purpose includes preserving rural character and historic and cultural resources. A piece of the peninsula's farming history meets that standard a lot better than plastic and vinyl signs. The ban on vehicle signs makes sense if it's trailers, boxes, something that looks like trash. I completely understand the intent behind it. We don't want more clutter. I'm not asking you to drop the ordinance. I'm asking for a narrow allowance, which I have proposed as an amendment: one historic farm vehicle, on a working farm, only during the same season. The ordinance already allows for seasonal signs subject to the same setback rules as every other sign. The language I provided provides a narrow scope so it can't be abused. It’s not only us; there are other businesses on the peninsula that have cute signs on historic farm vehicles that I think our community appreciates and loves along with the people who come to visit. The amendment would apply equally to any farm or winery. I've submitted a proposed draft for changes, and I will stay during your discussion if you have any follow-up questions for me. Thank you for your time and consideration.

John Wunsch, 17881 Center Road: I want to speak to two items on the agenda: the PDR and signage. In terms of the PDR, I want to thank the board for [approving] the Warren easement. It has taken 30 years, but we now have a continuous stretch of preserved farms from south of Gray Road all the way to Devil's Dive. There are things like this town hall and churches interspersed but the farms you see when you look to the west from Center Road are all prevented from development. Thank you for that step. We have numerous more properties. We will continue the progress.

On the signage. Visual works: a speed sign is six square feet, and the scenic road sign at the turnoff by Chateau Grand Traverse is just shy of 20 square feet. It helps to visualize. The overall proposal, with that in mind, is reasonable. There was some question about the off-site difficulty for some issues of enforcement. However, it would seem that's an important asset to farms that are off of Center Road. I encourage you to work with it to make it workable rather than not do it. I would think if a letter had to be there that included the name and address and signature of the property owners, specifically what they're allowing, and the name and the contact information of the farm, it would be reasonably easy to follow up on. I encourage you to work on that. And, finally, thank you all for doing this. Every community needs leadership. Leadership is difficult. You will never make everyone happy. Your job is to find a path, move forward. You've been doing it. Thank you. Please continue to do so.

Caitlin Bears, 6010 Center Road: I'm here to express my support for the Bayshore Marathon. I have participated as a spectator and a runner. I live in the neighborhood close to the start and finish at the beginning of Center Road. I love how inspiring the event is for our community. I feel lucky. We have the privilege to allow people to have a slice of what we get to experience living on the peninsula every day when they participate in this special event. Personally, the Bayshore has been a guidepost for me over the last few years. When I had some struggles with fertility, I had stopped running. I went as a spectator to the Bayshore Marathon, and I was so inspired that I got back into running and the next year I did the half marathon. I'm just one of the many people who participate in this special event, and I hope we can host it for many years to come so it can inspire others. Thank you.

Brad Niergarth 8718 Peninsula Drive: I asked to have those two items moved because I believe they're important business matters and would like to see them discussed in detail. On September 28, your financial report was issued, year-end audit from March 31. That audit report includes a paragraph in the opinion letter about the financial impact that the winery lawsuit has on the township financial position. I'd like to draw your attention, if you haven't read it yet, to that as well as the public. It also includes on pages 34 through 38 five different violations of Public Act Two, the Budgeting Act, that total up to over $900,000 in your general fund of budgeting deficiencies that you under budgeted. That's a pretty serious matter. What it mentions in the material weakness letter is that your township clerk's office does not get their bills approved and make sure they stay within the budget. Every month when you propose that bills get paid that are going to push you over budget, you're violating the public budgeting act and asking the board to vote on that. That's why I think they should be discussed, and you should be certain that they don't push you over because you're in that position again this year, I suspect. You also had budgeting violations in the parks fund and PDR fund. There is an interesting transaction that's reported in here for the $588,000 transfer from the general fund to the parks that you had dated in July as a change in the treasury's report and the cash balances they show as of March 31. On one hand it's good to have the money transferred. On the other hand, it should have been budgeted because it's one of the violations. I'm curious as to how our treasurer's report shows cash balances in July transferred to the parks when it shows in the audit report of March 31. I think that deserves some explanation. Another consideration is in your parks fund. You may have that money committed or designated for Kelley Park, the $588,000, since it's the ARPA money. I think you elected to do that. Does that mean your regular parks monies are running short that you need to fund those with transfers because you're borrowing money from the Kelley Park now to pay those? Just as it was reversed last year, you borrowed money from the regular parks fund to pay Kelley Park bills. Just a point for consideration. Thank you. If you have any questions on that, or you have any questions on your financial audit report, it'd be great to see your auditor come and present it and explain it to all of you because it is pretty significant in depth and width. I'm glad to answer any questions. Thank you.

9. Business:

A. Grand Traverse County Sheriff's Office Update on Road Safety (Sanders)

Grand Traverse County Sheriff Mike Shea: spoke about the two recent deaths from car crashes on Center Road. Could not comment on active investigation, but said a plan is being worked on. Explained that when speeding violations are reported, witnesses are needed to testify, which is hard to secure, in order to give a citation. Commended public comment from Maddy Henkel calling for the community and township to engage in safety and education for more preventative measures.

Answering questions from the board, is not in favor of speed cameras. For the record, is in favor of the Flock cameras. Encourages residents to call 911 to report suspicious behavior from drivers impeding safety on the road.

B. MDOT Suggestions on Increasing Road Safety (Sanders)

Sanders: reached out to MDOT. Representatives met with township members to go over additional road safety options. Packet has information presented on page 70. MDOT is in favor of adding mumble strips on the white outside line strip. They do not need permission to add them but are asking for public input and support. Survey will be put on the website.

Chown: MDOT explained that the reason we don't already have them is the extensive biking on the peninsula. Would like community support before adding them. Would only add them where the shoulder is at least four feet wide.

C. Public Hearing for Bayshore Marathon 2027 (Sanders)

Bayshore Representative: spoke to safety concerns in light of the recent vehicle deaths. Safety is at the forefront of planning for next year's 45th anniversary of the Bayshore Marathon. Tentative date is May 29, the Saturday before Memorial Day Weekend. Same number of participants, same course and schedule.

Sanders opened the public hearing at 7:32 p.m.

No public comment

Sanders closed the public hearing at 7:32 p.m.

Sanger: requested better planning for temporary signs and barricades that direct traffic for detours. In previous years, they weren't set up in time or removed promptly. Possibly expecting law enforcement to set up but not being managed well.

Clark: commented on litter pick up missing small tabs off energy packs runners pull off with their teeth and spit in the road. Requested more thorough clean up of litter.

Sanders: reviewed insurance policy renewal period coming up. Said any approval requires the insurance indemnification policy.

Sanger: the two million current policy coverage is likely inadequate for any claims levied against the township.

Alexander moved to approve the Bayshore Marathon contingent upon updated insurance, a set up and retrieval plan for all signage, and litter pick up with a second by Chown.

Sanger: questioned if the budget for next year might change the participant fee.

Clark: that would be a change in the fee schedule, not the budget.

Sanger: asked if a change might be possible.

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

D. Public Hearing for Zoning Amendment #211, Chickens (Sanders)

Sanders: changes requested by the board are in the packet.

Sanger: recommended a wording change in section 7 .2.10 sub-1, which states no land use permit is required for chickens. However, a structure to house chickens exceeding 25 feet would require a land use permit per the standards in the ordinance.

Milliken: clarified that HOA regulations would supersede the township ordinance if more restrictive.

Sanders opened the public hearing at 7:40 p.m.

No public comment

Sanders closed the public hearing at 7:40 p.m.

Sanger moved to approve the addition to the amendment clarifying that a land use permit is required for structures greater than 25 square feet with a second by Milliken.

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

Wunsch moved to approve Amendment #211, Chickens with a second by Chown.
Roll call vote: yes - Wunsch, Sanger, Chown, Sanders, Clark, Milliken, Alexander **Passed unan**

E. Public Hearing for Zoning Amendment #213, Lighting (Sanders)

Sanger: reviewed changes not picked up from the last meeting. LED was not defined. Proposed "light-emitting diode build, high extension low-energy light source" language. Section D, exterior lighting standards, is applicable during site plan approval, but if no site plan is required and the homeowner is putting up a light without one, would miss the requirement of full shielding. Under Prohibited Lighting Types, add "LED builds with 400 kelvin or higher color temperature."
Sanders opened the public hearing at 7:45 p.m.
No public comment
Sanders closed the public hearing at 7:45 p.m.
Sanders asked to table the item and for changes to be included at the next meeting.
Alexander moved to table the discussion to the next town board meeting with a second by Chown.
Motion passed by consensus

F. Discussion of Proposed Zoning Amendment #208, Signage (Sanders)

Clark moved to recuse Wunsch with a second by Chown. **Motion passed by consensus**
Sanger: reviewed proposed changes. Starting with page two, clarify "ordinance enforcement officer." Current use of "code officer" is not consistent with other ordinance language. Still concerned about off-premise signs being allowed.
Chown: asked to have portable signs on historic trucks and farm vehicles added. That was missed.
Board discussed concerns with feather flags and off-premises signs. Also the importance of balancing safety and visual appeal with rights of the community and farmers. Supports proposed language for allowing signs on historic farm equipment. Considered number of signs allowed versus square footage of total signs.
Sanders moved to table this item to the next regular board meeting on November 10, with a public hearing to follow at a later meeting, with a second by Clark. **Motion passed by consensus**
Sanders moved to return Wunsch to the meeting with support by Sanger. Motion passed by consensus

G. Discussion of Proposed Zoning Amendment #210, Special Use Permits (Sanders)

Sanders: reviewed the amendment and recommends adding the language that there is no inherent right to receive a special use permit amendment with board support.
Chown moved to schedule the public hearing for Zoning Amendment #210 for November 10 with a second by Milliken. **Motion passed by consensus**

H. Discussion on Updating Packet Policy (Sanders and Wunsch)

Wunsch: reviewed packet policy last updated in February 2025. Recently, emails from residents communicating with all board members have requested not to be included in packet. It's customary for any correspondence that includes a minimum quorum of the town board to be presented to the public. Legally, any communication with the township is subject to FOIA requests.
Board consensus.
Sanger: requested change to packet release timeline.
Chown: discussed the process of packet preparation. Noted that the planner's limited hours make getting packet materials ready to publish even by the current deadline very difficult.
Board discussed how to improve the system for earlier information release.
Clark: questioned the rational behind the packet addition policy for correspondences.
Board discussed the concept of giving public a chance to provide input once the packet is released

and the increased difficulty for board members to catch up with new information.
Board: agreed to continue pursuing new timeline with tentative change possible in January. Will bring back at next meeting for continued discussion. Agreed to changes already discussed.
Chown moved to approve the policy amendment that correspondence directed to a quorum of the board or greater be included in the packet and that there be no more packet additions with a second by Clark. **Motion passed by consensus**

I. Cunningham-Limp Fire Station #1 Feasibility Studies (Sanders)

Bobby Peplinski, township resident and representative for Cunningham-Limp [CL] with Seth Johnson, Mark Maguire from GFA [Gourdie-Fraser] and Architect Ray Kendra: reviewed timeline of CL work on fire station 1 plans on township-owned property, considering options for construction in conjunction with current buildings on site. Is presenting the two plans the township approved at the September meeting. Packet has executive summary comparing costs between moving current township building to build station on flat area to building on the north side of the township-owned property with steep slope.
Board discussed the variable costs and comparisons of both options.
Peplinski: rising prices in construction costs are about 3 percent. Ready to move forward with the design team. Will update board in real time on budget decisions. Detailed process for getting ready for building.
Sanger: believes the alternative site should still be an option.
Sanders emphasized that negotiations made it clear this was not a viable option. Concerns with driveway easements on that property. Negotiations included a trade for current station 1 property, which is zoned commercial and would have high market value.
Board consensus that changing township offices not feasible with current finances, but plans already drafted will help with future capital planning. Board agreed to move forward with just fire station.
Sanders moved to move forward with the design and continued bidding process with Cunningham-Limp acting as the township construction manager in coordination with Ray Kendra and Environmental Architects and Gourdie-Fraser for the construction of just the new fire station 1 as detailed on page 160 of the meeting packet with a second by Chown.
Wunsch: the agenda item did not adequately inform the public a vote would happen tonight.
Clark: the vote for a millage increase already informed the public that the board would be moving ahead.
Wunsch: asked for a better understanding of the financial commitment with moving forward.
Peplinski: continuation of services would allow completion of the design process, an estimated six-month process with established not-to-exceed amounts, typically around $4,000 a month, to provide finalized plans so township will know actual finances for building.
Sanger: asked for an analysis of why the alternative property is not an option. Believes from negotiations between Sanger, Milliken, and the property owner that it's still an option. Concerned that the agenda did not indicate a vote would occur. Is not willing to support the extra two million dollars to fill in and build on township property.
Sanders and Clark: negotiations occurred and the board was not able to reach an agreement. The alternative property is not a viable option.
Roll call vote: yes – Chown, Sanders, Clark, Alexander, Wunsch; no – Sanger, Milliken **Motion passed by majority**

J. Introduction of Draft Blight Ordinance (Sanger)

Sanger: reviewed two ordinances already in effect, the dangerous buildings ordinance adopted in 2012, which requires violations to be against the state building code that is no longer in effect as the county has offloaded the ordinance to the townships to enforce; and the junk ordinance of 2010,

which is difficult to enforce. There is no means for property owner to keep items neighbors report as offensive and how to determine what is objectively an offense. Right to Farm prevails over any restrictions of outside storage. Gave examples of complaints made over visual blight and shared pictures taken from public property. Proposed language from ordinance to address property maintenance and unsightly storage issues, which was developed with legal counsel. The proposed definition focuses on items or structures that undermine property values and introduces the concept of screening from view and includes clarification of Right to Farm protections.
Board discussed clarifying language to permit backyard storage and disagreed on what could be considered "visual blight." Will continue this discussion at the next regular meeting.

K. Update on FOIA Requests for 2026 and Possible FOIA Policy Update (Sanders)

Shaina LaFond, Township FOIA Coordinator: reviewed information presented in packet and noted the significant increase in volume and complexity of FOIA requests. Staff time costs cover locating and duplicating records but exclude administrative time required for coordination and itemization. The finances shown should not be interpreted as revenue for the township; some payments represent ongoing requests. Revised procedures and guidelines with redline amendment to original 2015 FOIA coordinator resolution include that requests must be made in writing, requiring specific identifiers.
Sanders moved that the township board ratify and adopt the updated Peninsula Township Freedom of Information Act procedures and guidelines and written public summary to ensure compliance with the Michigan Freedom of Information Act and authorize the township's FOIA coordinator to implement and administer these procedures effective immediately with a second by Chown.
Roll call vote: yes – Chown, Sanders, Clark, Milliken, Alexander, Wunsch, Sanger **Passed unan**
LaFond reviewed the proposed amendment to the resolution, which formalizes quarterly reporting to the board and provides transparency on the process and finances for up-to-date FOIA-associated workload and resources involved. Original FOIA coordinator resolution is on the website.
Chown moved that the township board adopt Resolution 2026-10-13 #1, Amendment #1 to the Peninsula Township Freedom of Information Act Coordinator Resolution dated June 9, 2015, establishing quarterly and annual reporting requirements for FOIA activity as presented with a second by Sanders.
Roll call vote: yes – Sanders, Clark, Milliken, Alexander, Wunsch, Sanger, Chown **Passed unan**

L. PDR update

Sanders: the PDR selection committee is currently working on long-term financial projections for continued enforcement of easements. Financial decisions are made by the board. Is looking for board consensus to allow the committee to continue building those financial models themselves, which will be brought to the board for approval. A member of the committee has professional experience in this field and is providing advice.
Board consensus.
Zoning is currently working on definitions in agriculture with nursery, greenhouse, horticulture, and landscaping. PDR land has become popular with landscaping businesses. Understanding the difference between landscaping and ag is important when migrant housing is being used as federal licensing for visa status. It's different for workers in commercial landscaping versus agriculture.

M. Invoices and Treasurer's Report Update

Clark: no update from the treasurer.
Sanders: the auditor was overall pleased. The report came back that the township is in good standing. There is always the possibility for improvement. The township is already soliciting additional help. Audit states that the $49 million judgement does not present a risk.

8. Citizen Comments:

Brad Niergarth 8718 Peninsula Drive: Katie [Clark, treasurer], I want to publicly thank you for the effort. As I understand it, you do the yeoman's work of getting ready for the audit, which isn't necessarily in the treasurer's department job responsibility. Thank you for that. I met with Fred [Gilstorff, Fire Chief]. He has the most amazing planning and financial management spreadsheets of any fire department in the state. I will guarantee you he has a handle on it. But regarding the audit, there is a paragraph in your opinion letter where you read the… And by the way, what attorney who's convincing you to spend a half million dollars out of million eight in revenue, and you're spending $500,000 of it on legal fees out of your general fund, is going to tell him there's more than a remote chance? He'd be talking to you on one side of his face and him on the other. That's a standard response from the attorney that allows the auditor to put it in there. But he did elevate it to be in the opinion this year. That could cause you a bonding issue, even though you've checked into bonding before. It could be an interest rate difference.

The discussion about minutes, I couldn't agree more. You have such a thick packet. Bigger than most townships of 6,200. Encourage you to move [the packet deadline] up. And if your planner is the one getting in the way of you getting it done, consider what your planner is doing for you and if you need to have an in-house planner. Your 2024 Maner Costerisan report suggests a business manager whether you're going to be charter township or not. I would encourage you to investigate that again. I know you've done some discussion of it. I think a business manager would do you a lot of good. You have 18 million dollars in the bank, and you now have over 10 million, which nine years ago was 4.4 million. You've more than doubled in nine years. Your property taxes have gone from 3.3 to over 6.6 in those same nine years. You've got a lot of business going on and having the packet issued 10 days ahead of time would give the appearance of more planning and give yourselves and the trustees more chance to read it. It concerns me that there's private discussion and negotiations for the fire fund property. I agree with Katie; it's been discussed and it's been in the hopper for two years. I hope we don't lose Fred, and I thank him for his patience waiting for you to get through this. I think you're walking away from a better opportunity, and I'd like to see the numbers and the communication. Maura, I've seen some of the communication between you and Mr. Lagina when I went on it a year ago. I think there's some differential between what I'm hearing was offered and what was offered, and I think you should investigate that, as some of your board members recommended. I think you're walking away from the safest place to have it, where traffic can be coming and going without being combined with traffic from the township hall, [three-minute timer] and it would be more economical. So even though you can raise more millage in your fire fund, don't take the taxpayer dollars lightly. A big expense to spend $2 million more.

9. Board Comments:

Sanders: shared communication from the road commission that their lidar drone was used over Neahtawanta to check on road conditions. Planning to bring discussion forward on a moratorium on commercial sustainable energy and data centers in Peninsula Township.

Clark: requested budget amendments be presented as business items and not on consent.

Sanders: checked with legal counsel as had already been voted on; in future will put budget amendments in business.

10. Adjournment

Clark moved to adjourn at 9:52 p.m. with a second by Alexander. <u>Motion passed by consensus</u>