

PENINSULA TOWNSHIP

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**Planning Commission
Zoning Rewrite Ad Hoc Committee
November 10, 2025, 1:00 p.m.
Township Hall
Minutes**

1. **Call to Order by Beard at 1:04 p.m.**
2. **Pledge**
3. **Roll Call – Present:** Alexander, Beard, Hornberger; Township Planner of Record -- Elise Loud; **Virtual:** Brad Misner & Ethan Senti from McKenna Associates
4. **Approve Agenda**

Motion to approve the agenda as written made by Hornberger, seconded by Alexander. Motion Passes

5. **Brief Citizen Comments (for non-agenda items only):**

Jed Hemming, 2455 Nehtawanta Road: member of the Agricultural Advisory Committee, reported that the group is working on language for an updated agricultural ordinance. Explains that traditional large-scale farming is declining on the peninsula due to high land costs and limited parcel sizes, leaving small farms with few viable options. Currently, small producers can only sell under the state’s Cottage Food Law, which caps sales at about \$25,000 annually, preventing meaningful growth. Jed and fellow member Molly Stretten met with local agricultural entrepreneurs to identify barriers and are developing ordinance language that would align with Michigan’s Right to Farm Act and Generally Accepted Agricultural and Management Practices (GAAMPS). The proposal would create a framework allowing small farms to process and sell their products, with facility size scaled to parcel size, addressing issues such as setbacks, parking, and noise. He expects to present draft language after the next Ag Advisory Committee meeting to the Zoning Rewrite Committee, Planning Commission, and Township Board.

6. **Communications: none**
7. **Conflict of Interest: none**
8. **Approve Meeting Minutes**

- a. October 14, 2025 Zoning Rewrite Ad Hoc Committee Special Meeting

Motion to approve the minutes made by Alexander, seconded by Hornberger. Motion Passes

9. **Business**
 - a. Ordinance Language Review and Discussion
 - i. Signage

Committee reviewed McKenna’s draft sign ordinance and discussed a framework that categorizes signs by location (on- and off-premises) and duration (seasonal, temporary, and permanent). Conversation focused on general size limits, lighting standards, allowances for flags and feather flags, and restrictions on portable and A-frame signs. Members also emphasized the need to support home-occupation identification in residential areas while ensuring the ordinance complies with content-neutrality requirements under recent U.S. Supreme Court guidance. McKenna will return with a cleaned-up draft and questions for further review.

ii. Accessory Dwelling Units

Committee reviews a first-draft ADU ordinance aimed at allowing attached and detached units in R-zones and the Ag-zone with clear controls. Draft places ADU standards in section 7.21 and ties most dimensions to the principal dwelling (setbacks, height, lot coverage). A proposed 50,000 sq ft minimum lot size was not supported; members favor relying on existing limits—lot coverage, setbacks, and septic capacity—so more parcels may qualify. Staff cites current caps (e.g., R-1A one-acre lots with 15% lot-coverage) as workable and noted ADUs could often fit by converting space over garages. The draft includes an owner-occupancy rule for the principal dwelling and, as written, bans all rentals of ADUs; the group discussed optionally allowing long-term rentals while keeping a short-term rental prohibition. Minor edits were flagged. Members support ADUs to address housing flexibility and aging in place, while remaining wary of STR abuse. The item will go to the Planning Commission for feedback and policy choices on minimum lot size vs. performance standards and rental allowances.

iii. Chickens

Committee discusses proposed regulations for backyard chickens. Members agree the draft needed clearer distinctions between agricultural and residential zones. In the A-1 agricultural district, chickens already fall under Right-to-Farm provisions and are allowed to roam freely if kept in safe, sanitary conditions, so no new limits are needed there. The focus, instead, is on residential districts (R-1 zones), where the group supports allowing up to six hens, with no roosters, prohibiting slaughter, and requiring proper coops or enclosures. Members agree one chicken per quarter-acre, as written, was too restrictive and impractical. Discuss excluding guinea hens from residential areas due to noise, and debates whether to permit chickens in C-1 commercial districts. Because some C-1 parcels are still used as homes but could convert to businesses later, the issue will be sent to the Planning Commission for direction. McKenna will revise the draft so chicken provisions apply only to residential districts, maintain no limits in A-1, and clarify sanitation and enforcement language.

iv. Up Next: Commercial Land Uses Conceptual Feedback

McKenna presents framework comparing current permitted and special uses, noting that nearly all uses in the C-1 commercial district currently require special use permits. Asks whether some could instead be allowed by right—particularly restaurants with seating, retail, and service stations—if accompanied by clear operational standards addressing noise, lighting, parking, and outdoor activity. Members reviewed two potential approaches: (1) retaining the special use permit process but adding firm, consistent standards to guide applicants and commissioners alike; or (2) allowing some uses by right, provided they meet those standards. Both options aim to create more objective, enforceable criteria and avoid case-by-case discrepancies in permit conditions.

Several members favor keeping certain uses, especially restaurants serving alcohol, under the special use process due to concerns about hours, entertainment, and noise. Others support drafting specific performance standards to simplify reviews and improve predictability for applicants. Group agrees to maintain current use classifications for now while McKenna develops consistent ordinance standards for commercial uses—potentially paving the way for some by-right permissions in the future. Committee also agrees to fold food-truck regulations into the upcoming commercial use review. Revised language and draft standards will return for discussion at the December 8 zoning rewrite meeting, with the goal of clarifying expectations and aligning commercial oversight with community character.

b. Confirm Next Steps

i. Next Planning Commission Mtg: December 2, 2025

ii. Next Zoning Ad Hoc Committee Mtg: December 8, 2025

Committee wrapped up by confirming next steps and meeting schedules. The sign ordinance will be sent to the AAC for review at its upcoming meeting, and the PC will take it up on December 2. The zoning rewrite committee's December 8 meeting will focus on a deeper discussion of commercial land uses and potential "uses by right," along with informal feedback on the draft signage provisions based on the AAC's input.

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Shaina LaFond, Recording Secretary

10. Brief Citizen Comments:

Jed Hemming, 2455 Neahtawanta Road: said AAC expects to have draft ordinance language on small-acreage farming ready for the December 8 meeting.

11. Committee Comments: none

12. Adjournment

Motion by Alexander to adjourn, seconded by Beard.

Motion passes

Meeting Adjourned at 3:03 p.m.