

PENINSULA TOWNSHIP

13235 Center Road, Traverse City
MI 49686

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**Agricultural Advisory Committee
November, 18, 2025 at 2:00 p.m.
Township Hall
Minutes**

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

2. **Pledge**

3. **Roll Call**

Present: Hemming, Heller, Bramer, Johnson, Coggon, Baldyga, Gomez, Kroupa.

Late: Edmondson

4. **Citizen Comments: none**

5. **Approve Agenda**

Baldyga moved to approve agenda as presented with a second by Hemming. Motion passed by consensus

6. **Conflict of Interest: none**

7. **Consent Agenda:**

1. Approve meeting minutes from Agricultural Advisory Committee Regular Meeting, September 16, 2025

Baldyga moved to approve consent agenda as presented with a second by Hemming. Motion passed by consensus

8. **Business:**

A. Committee Member Changes

Secretary Erin Hafeli has resigned; committee expressed their appreciation for Hafeli's work. Nick Johnson has been appointed as second alternate by township board and Chris Baldyga has moved into voting member position. Committee reviewed requirements for secretary role. No volunteers. Town board supervisor Sanders volunteering to fill in secretary role for one month.

B. Planning Commission/ Town Board Updates

Beard [PC representative] reviewed sign ordinance red line edits as presented in packet, which are still under discussion at PC with types of signage, size, quantity, location and respective zoning districts. PC is looking for feedback on the current edits. Comments can be sent in writing to planner and Beard and those will be passed on to re-write committee and PC.

Committee discussed seasonal versus temporary, setbacks for signage, and permit requirements for on premises. The regulation and limitation of "incidental signs" within the property had pushback from committee. Feedback will be reviewed by PC at December meeting.

Recommendation from AAC [Agricultural Advisory Committee] for adjusting acreage minimums to standard 40 acres has general support from the zoning rewrite committee and PC. Currently being reviewed by planner for the implications of that change on the rest of the zoning code. Concern

was raised by Heller that the AAC's recommendation of 40-acre minimum had not explicitly stated the uses. Beard agreed to pass on that the AAC's 40-acre recommendation includes uses as previously stated for 60-acre minimum in zoning amendment 201.

Sanders gave update for town board. Zoning administrator position is being interviewed for, vacant seat on PC accepting applications. Jed Hemming is attending the zoning rewrite committee meetings.

C. Update from Small Processor Subcommittee

Subcommittee member Molly Stretton: meeting regularly, both as a collective group and individually to gather feedback from Peninsula Township farmers. We are continuing to compile data, explore ideas and shape an outline of potential ordinance language. Our goal is to have a draft ready in December. There's a lot of momentum from multiple groups to develop a farm ordinance that is fair, practical and aligned with state and federal laws and norms. I am personally committed to working collaboratively with those groups and individuals as we move forward.

D. Introduction of Old Mission Citizens Coalition

Hemming introduced the establishment of the organization, aimed at addressing concerns they have with Peninsula Township governance concerning examples such as agriculture and shoreline regulation. Focussing on an independent review of township ordinances. President Fred Swaffer and Secretary Fred Woodruff introduced themselves. Edmondson expressed his hope for the coalition to be advocates for the agricultural community perspective.

E. Discussion of next area of focus for AAC

Baldyga raised desire for the continued focus on opportunities for small processors. Sub committee is currently working on developing some guidelines and hoping to bring forward next month. Heller requested further review of the sign ordinance after reworking at PC level. Beard confirmed that before anything goes to public hearing at PC level the AAC will review first. Hemming gave a recap of the work the sub committee will be bringing in December for review, citing some small processor examples that could be better supported to keep more land in agricultural use. First concern addressed will most likely focus on acreage.

9. Citizen Comments:

Fred Woodruff, 4824 Forest Ave: suggest as you go through this process of redoing the zoning ordinance, that there are experts. Agriculture is going through tremendous change. That's what I've learned meeting with this group [Citizens Coalition]. MSU Extension Service, Groundworks, there's a group that's holding a summit on agritourism. A lot of expertise that could be brought to this body as an advisory group, who then advises the PC, who then goes to the rewrite committee. There could be public hearings that are more than just citizens giving their personal views. People who have expertise, independent and unbiased. Advice and data on what you ought to consider as you carve up the township and decide uses by right, uses by special conditions, etc.

Fred Swaffer, 1045 Gray Road: stress the importance of small farms. Acreage in that five to 39 acre range. The cost of entry for new farmers on the Old Mission Peninsula is cost prohibitive at 40, 80, 100-acre parcels. Parcel down the road from me, 1.8 million, 80 acre farm. Vacant four or five years now. Had a buyer, but the numbers didn't work. New farmers, as some of us old people age out, where are they going to come from? How are they going to afford entry? The only way is with smaller parcels, to try to build their business. The more farms we have, the less houses we have. The less houses, the less stress we have on our land. Perfect example on the corner of Montague Road. Hawthorne Vineyards. Mr. Hawthorne had the authorization to build 35 homes. That's 35

wells, 35 septic tanks, 70 vehicles, and who knows what else. What kind of carbon footprint is that? How much carbon are his grapevines sequestering? Those are the things we have to think about when we think about farming. They are preserving our views. They are bringing value to the residents of the peninsula. Their stories don't always get out. We have to work harder getting their story out to the public, who just want to live their life, until some unfortunate thing comes up that gets their attention. They go, "Oh, maybe I should have been watching what's going on." That's my goal, and I think the purpose of the organization.

10. Board Comments:

Sanders gave a safety reminder in light of the past weekends tragedy, with the shooting of a Peninsula Township resident in Traverse City. Tensions have been rising, and a winery owner's recent aggressive confrontation with a township committee member was reported to the sheriffs department.

A FOIA request has been made by a winery owner and will be released at their request to the public concerning recent social media references to the wineries "5-acre plan."

Edmondson brought up concern that home occupancy businesses are generating traffic and operating under the "honor system" of self reporting for registration at the township level. Regulation is expected by obvious overuse being reported by neighbors. Baldyga expressed same equivalency should be expected for agricultural use.

11. Adjournment

Gomez moved to adjourn at 3:45 p.m. with a second by Baldyga.

Passed by consensus