



**CHARTER TOWNSHIP OF CHOCOLAY**  
**PLANNING COMMISSION**  
**2023 PLANNING COMMISSION ANNUAL REPORT**

## **PLANNING COMMISSION ACTIONS**

### **January**

The Planning Commissioners participated in a meeting on January 16 in the Township Fire Hall. There were four items on the agenda for the regularly scheduled meeting.

#### ***New Business***

1) Election of Officers

The Commissioners held their annual election of officers. Officers for 2023 are:

Ryan Soucy	Chair
George Meister	Vice Chair
Donna Mullen-Campbell	Secretary
Rebecca Sloan	Vice Secretary

The Commissioners voted to not review the Planning Commission bylaws, as the latest revision was done in 2022.

2) 2022 Planning Commission Annual Report

The Commissioners reviewed and approved the 2022 Planning Commission Annual Report. The Commissioners voted to forward the report to the Board for consideration.

3) Industrial Zoning District Conditional Use Discussion

The Commissioners decided to propose rezoning for seven parcels on US 41 South from Industrial (I) zoning to Commercial (C) zoning. They also voted to apply the mixed use overlay district to the same parcels.

4) Zoning Districts and District Intent Statements

The Commissioners discussed items for the Board to consider for the joint meeting between the Board and the Planning Commission in February.

### **February**

The Planning Commissioners participated in two meetings on February 13 in the Township Fire Hall.

The first meeting was a joint meeting between the Township Board and the Planning Commission.

Roger Zappa, Township Attorney, presented detailed information regarding the potential rezoning of the Agriculture / Forestry (AF) district. After his presentation, both Board members and Commissioners discussed the information presented and how that would apply to the new zoning



ordinance. The Board gave the direction to the Commissioners to continue to work on the zoning ordinance, with the intent of presenting an ordinance that was easy to read and reasonably easy to enforce.

There was one item on the agenda for the regularly scheduled meeting.

### ***New Business***

#### 1) Joint Meeting Discussion

Commissioners discussed the directions, comments, and concerns from the joint meeting. Much of the discussion centered on the process of writing of the new zoning ordinance.

Commissioners decided on four agenda items for the March meeting:

1. Public hearing to discuss rezoning of properties in the Industrial district on south US 41 South
2. Determine the first set of online survey questions for the zoning ordinance using the newly acquired *FlashVote* software
3. Resume discussion of zoning ordinance definitions
4. Review of the table showing the potential reduction of non-conformance based on acreage sizes in the AF zoning district

## **March**

The Planning Commissioners participated in a meeting held on March 20 in the Township Fire Hall.

There were four items on the agenda for the meeting; all were considered unfinished business.

### ***Unfinished Business***

#### 1) Proposed *Zoning Ordinance* Changes

Commissioners discussed the options for including single family residential and registered rentals in the Industrial zoning district. Staff presented four options:

1. Leave the ordinance as is.
2. Add *Single Family Residential* and *Registered Rentals* as conditional uses in the Industrial zoning district.
3. Rezone seven parcels located below Beaver Grove on US 41 South from Industrial to Commercial and apply the Mixed Use Overlay District to the newly zoned parcels.
4. Rezone seven parcels located below Beaver Grove on US 41 South from Industrial to a new zoning district to match the district as it is defined in the Township master plan.

The Commissioners chose to go with option two; they requested a public hearing at the next meeting so they could finalize the decision and send it to the Board for consideration.



2) Non-Conforming Parcels in the Agriculture / Forestry (AF) Zoning District

Commissioners continued to discuss options related to the non-conforming parcels in the AF district. They reviewed a table of options with suggested acreage sizes and proposed uses for those options.

3) Public Input Discussion / Survey Questions

Commissioners discussed the questions that would be presented to the public with the *FlashVote* software. They designed five questions that will be used in the first public *FlashVote* poll.

4) Proposed Zoning Ordinance Definitions

Commissioners decided to table the discussion until the April meeting.

## April

The Planning Commissioners participated in a meeting held on April 17 in the Township Fire Hall.

There were three items on the agenda for the meeting; one was considered unfinished business, and two were considered new business. The Commissioners also conducted a public hearing regarding proposed changes to the language for the Industrial zoning district.

Commissioners decided to address new business before unfinished business.

### ***New Business***

1) #34-23-01 Proposed Changes for the Industrial Zoning District

Commissioners conducted a public hearing prior to discussing this item. After discussion, the Commissioners decided to add *Single Family Residential* and *Registered Rentals* to the Industrial zoning district as conditional uses. They voted to send the language to the Board for the Board's decision on adding the language to the Township zoning ordinance.

2) Final Site Plan Review Application SR 23-04 - Ironworkers Local 8 Training Facility

Commissioners reviewed and discussed site plans with the applicants for a proposed Ironworkers Training Facility that will be located on M-28 East between the America's Best Value Inn and Nagelkirk Gardens.

After discussion, the Commissioners approved the site plan with some minor conditions.

### ***Unfinished Business***

1) Proposed Zoning Ordinance Definitions

Commissioners reviewed three definitions and decided to table the remaining discussion until the May meeting.



## May

The Planning Commissioners participated in a meeting held on May 15 in the Township Fire Hall.

There were five items on the agenda for the meeting; two were considered unfinished business, and three were considered new business. The Commissioners also conducted a public hearing regarding a conditional use permit for JX Trucking Center.

Commissioners decided to address new business before unfinished business.

### ***New Business***

1) Conditional Use Permit CU 23-11 - JX Trucking Center

JX Trucking Center requested a conditional use permit for their business proposal that will be located in the former Blondeau Trucking building behind the Dry Dock; Commissioners conducted a public hearing prior to discussing this item. After discussion, the Commissioners decided to grant the conditional use permit for the project.

2) Final Site Plan Review Application SR 23-12 - JX Enterprises, Inc.

Commissioners reviewed and discussed site plans with the applicants for the proposed trucking facility that will be located on in the former Blondeau Trucking building. The applicants stated that the facility will have an addition added to accommodate a proposed sales area.

After discussion, the Commissioners approved the site plan.

3) Planning Commissioner Training - Site Plan Review

Township Manager Bill DeGroot presented training to the Commissioners regarding site plan review.

### ***Unfinished Business***

1) Proposed Zoning Ordinance Definitions

Commissioners reviewed several definitions and decided to table the remaining discussion until the June meeting.

2) Proposed Agriculture Zoning District Language

Commissioners decided to table the remaining discussion until the June meeting.

## June

The Planning Commissioners participated in a meeting held on June 19 in the Township Fire Hall.

There were five items on the agenda for the meeting; three were considered unfinished business, and two were considered new business.

Commissioners decided to address new business before unfinished business.



### ***New Business***

- 1) Conditional Use Permit CU 23-19 – 6565 US 41 South

The owners of the property located at 6565 US 41 South requested a conditional use for the property to allow them to use the existing house as a residence. After discussion, the Commissioners decided to grant the conditional use permit for the project.

- 2) Rezoning Application 34 23-19 – 537 West Branch Road.

Commissioners reviewed and discussed the rezoning of a property that was previously State land to Agriculture / Forestry (AF). The applicant stated that the property would be only used for agricultural purposes.

After discussion, the Commissioners recommended sending the rezoning to the Board for consideration.

### ***Unfinished Business***

- 1) Proposed Zoning Ordinance Definitions

Commissioners continued reviewing definitions for the new zoning ordinance. They finished the discussion and made recommendations that will be presented as a final draft at the July meeting.

- 2) Proposed Agriculture Zoning District Language

Commissioners discussed the proposed AF districts and reviewed the intent statements for each district. Commissioners decided to set the districts with three sizes: AF 1 (under three acres), AF 2 (3 acres to 15 acres), and AF 3 (15 acres or more).

Commissioners reviewed and modified proposed land uses for each district.

- 3) Proposed Land Uses

Commissioners reviewed the proposed zoning districts and intent statements for each district. They began the discussion on proposed land uses, with the intent to review the uses again at the July meeting.

## **July**

The Planning Commissioners participated in a meeting held on July 17 in the Township Fire Hall. There were four items on the agenda for the meeting; three were considered unfinished business, and two were considered new business.

### ***Unfinished Business***

- 1) Proposed Zoning Ordinance Definitions

Commissioners finished reviewing definitions for the new zoning ordinance, with minor changes to the language. The Commissioners decided to review the language one final time during the September meeting.



2) Proposed Agriculture Zoning District Language

Commissioners reviewed and modified proposed land uses for each district and made several minor changes to the language. The Commissioners decided to review the language as a final draft during the September meeting.

3) Proposed Zoning District Intent Statements and Land Uses

Commissioners reviewed the proposed zoning districts and intent statements for each district and made a change to the language. The Commissioners decided to review the language as a final draft during the September meeting.

**New Business**

1) Proposed Zoning Ordinance Document Layout

The Commissioners reviewed the proposed layout for the new zoning ordinance. After discussion and some minor changes, the Commissioners decided to approve the layout for the ordinance.

**August**

The Planning Commissioners participated in two meetings held on August 21 in the Township Fire Hall.

The first meeting was a joint meeting with the Township Board. There were three discussion items on the agenda.

1) AF Framework presentation

The Board and Commissioners discussed the direction for structuring the AF district and related zoning. Commissioners were commended on the work that had already taken place and were told to continue to work on the issue.

2) Townhall meetings

The Board requested that the Commissioners decide where and when the townhall meetings would take place regarding the AF issue.

3) Structure Size Below 800 Square Feet

The Board and Commissioners discussed the possibility of reducing the required structure footprint from 800 square feet to a different value, while adding considerations for tiny homes and accessory dwelling units.

The second meeting was the regular Planning Commission meeting. There was one item on the agenda.

1) Joint Meeting Debrief

Commissioners discussed the items presented during the joint meeting with the Board. Commissioners decided to continue working on finishing the discussion and related documents regarding the AF zoning district and decided to set up three townhall meetings to



present the materials to the public for the public's input. Commissioners decided to use the results from the townhall meetings to formulate the final decision for the AF zoning district.

Commissioners further discussed the 800 square foot structure size topic and decided to continue to research the accessory dwelling unit (ADU) issue, with concerns related to the use of the ADU after the initial use was no longer valid.

## September

The Planning Commissioners participated in a meeting held on September 18 and a work session on September 26; both were in the Township Fire Hall.

For the September 18 meeting there was one item on the agenda.

- 1) Draft Ordinance Considerations for the Agriculture / Forestry (AF) District Work Sessions  
Commissioners discussed the items to be presented at the three town hall meetings scheduled for September and October. Discussion included items to be displayed and how the town halls would be conducted.

For the work session on September 26 there was one item on the agenda:

- 1) Draft Ordinance Considerations for the Agriculture / Forestry (AF) District Work Sessions  
Commissioners attended the meeting to hear talking points from the public regarding the proposed changes for the Agriculture / Forestry (AF) zoning district. Chair Soucy gave a short presentation, after which the Commissioners interacted with the public to get their input. 26 participants from the public attended.

## October

The meeting scheduled for October was cancelled so that the Planning Commissioners could concentrate on the work sessions scheduled for October; both work sessions were scheduled close to the scheduled meeting date.

The Commissioners participated in two work sessions during October; one was held on October 10 and the other was held on October 17. Both sessions were in the Township Fire Hall.

For both work sessions there was one item on the agenda:

- 1) Draft Ordinance Considerations for the Agriculture / Forestry (AF) District Work Sessions  
Commissioners attended the meetings to hear talking points from the public regarding the proposed changes for the Agriculture / Forestry (AF) zoning district. Chair Soucy gave a short presentation at each meeting, after which the Commissioners interacted with the public to get their input.

28 participants from the public attended the October 10 work session. 35 participants from the public attended the October 17 work session.



## November

The Planning Commissioners participated in a meeting on November 20 in the Township Fire Hall. There were two items on the agenda.

### ***Unfinished Business***

- 1) Draft Ordinance Considerations for the Agriculture / Forestry (AF) District Work Sessions  
Commissioners discussed the work sessions and the interactions with the public at the work sessions. Commissioners outlined zoning sections within the current AF zoning district that will result in the new zoning districts listed as AG 1, AG 2, and AG 3. The Commissioners instructed staff to bring a draft map of the proposed districts to the December meeting.

### ***New Business***

- 1) Housing Discussion  
Commissioners began discussing housing options for the Township. The discussion primarily focused on ADUs, their types, and the possible locations in the Township.

## December

The Planning Commissioners participated in a meeting on December 18 in the Township Fire Hall. There were four items on the agenda, and the Commissioners decided to do new business prior to unfinished business.

### ***New Business***

- 1) Preliminary Site Plan Review - Dollar General Store # 30520  
Commissioners discussed the preliminary site plan for a proposed Dollar General store that will be located at 4050 US 41 South, the former site of the St. James the Lesser Episcopal Church. Commissioners suggested minor changes to the applicant. The applicant will be bringing the formal site plan back to the Planning Commission at a future meeting.
- 2) Proposed 2024 Planning Commission Meeting Dates  
Commissioners discussed the planning commission dates for 2024. The Commissioners changed the dates for two of the scheduled meetings - from January 15 to January 22 and November 18 to November 25.

### ***Unfinished Business***

- 1) Proposed Zoning Ordinance Amendments for the Agriculture / Forestry (AF) Zoning District (34-23-02)  
Commissioners discussed the proposed zoning ordinance language for the AG 1, AG 2, and AG 3 zoning districts. Commissioners made minor changes and recommended the language be put forward into a public hearing at a future meeting.





## 2) Proposed Zoning Map for the Agriculture / Forestry (AF) Zoning District (34-23-02)

Commissioners discussed the proposed zoning district locations for the AG 1, AG 2, and AG 3 zoning districts. Commissioners made changes and will review the proposed mapping again at the January 2024 meeting.

## Planning Director Activities

In addition to preparing agenda materials for Planning Commission meetings and attending the Planning Commission meetings, the Planning Director completed additional activities and attended training and seminars throughout the year:

### January

No activities

### February

- Attended a DNR Recreation Grants webinar  
The webinar focused on how to submit grants related to recreation.
- Attended an Opportunities for Renewable Energy webinar  
The webinar focused on renewable energy options for commercial and industrial locations.

### March

- Attended an Opportunities for Renewable Energy webinar  
The webinar featured the work conducted from the Michigan Clean Energy Assets Roadmap Program.
- Attended a Climate Adaptation Task Force (CATF) meeting in Marquette  
The meeting focused on various activities in and around Marquette related to climate resilience and adaptation.
- Attended a Superior Trade Zone meeting in Rock  
The meeting focused on activities occurring throughout the trade zone corridor.
- Attended a FEMA Substantial Improvement / Substantial Damage webinar  
The webinar focused on the distinctions between damage and improvements caused by catastrophic events.

### April

No activities



## May

- Attended a FEMA Building a Successful Acquisition Application webinar  
The webinar focused on what government agencies had to do to acquire properties located in the flood plain if substantial damage occurred on the property.
- Attended a virtual Association of Flood Plain Manager (ASPM) conference  
The three day conference covered various topics related to flood control, storm water control and flood plain management.
- Attended a FEMA Hazard Mitigation webinar  
The webinar focused on preparing for catastrophic events and what to do when the events occurred.
- Attended a FEMA National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP) webinar  
The webinar focused on updates to the NFIP insurance program.

## June

- Attended the Small Town and Rural Development Conference in Thompsonville  
The conference and related activities provided multiple opportunities and sessions to see how rural communities were working on enhancing their communities.
- Attended a FEMA Planning for Climate Resilient Communities webinar  
The webinar focused on what activities and processes that could be put in place to become a climate-resilient community.

## July

- Attended the MSHDA Listening Tour in Marquette  
The sessions were oriented toward topics related to affordable housing and affordable housing locations.

## August

No activities

## September

No activities

## October

- Attended the Michigan Recycling Coalition seminar in Escanaba  
The seminar focused on community recycling funding, locations, destinations, and other recycling possibilities within the Upper Peninsula.



- Attended the EGLE Recycling Event in Gaylord  
The conference focused on community recycling funding, locations, destinations, and other recycling possibilities.

## November

- Attended the EGLE Material Management Tools and Resources webinar  
The webinar focused on the upcoming EGLE Material Management Plan requirements and the information necessary to complete the plan.

## December

- Attended the Coastal Communities Academy training session in Escanaba  
The training session focused on coastal community ordinances and resources related to Great Lakes coastal communities.
- Attended the EGLE Catalyst Communities webinar  
The webinar focused on the toolkit and related resources to become a Catalyst Community.

## Planning Commission Conditional Use Permits

Application Number	Applicant	Status	Comments
CU 23-11	JX Trucking	Approved	Sale of truck parts, truck sales, truck repair
CU 23-19	Ryan and Jessica Elliston	Approved	Residential use for property located in the Industrial zoning district

## Planning Commission Site Plan Reviews

Application Number	Applicant	Status	Comments
SR 23-04	Iron Workers	Approved	Iron Workers training center
SR 23-12	JX Trucking	Approved	Trucking center

## Township Plans and Ordinances

Plan / Ordinance	Type	Status	Comments
Township zoning ordinance	Update	Approved	Added <i>Single Family Residential</i> and <i>Registered Rentals</i> to the Industrial zoning district as conditional uses

