

VAN BUREN COUNTY PLANNING COMMISSION
County Administration Building – 219 E Paw Paw St, Suite 201, Paw Paw, MI 49079
March 26, 2025 – Meeting Minutes

I. Call to Order & Attendance - The meeting was called to order at 6:31 p.m. by Alyssa Hosbein.

Present: Alyssa Hosbein, Tony Hemenway, Gordon Andrews, Barbara Rose, Scott Cedarquist, Nick Carlson, Jan Petersen, Lisa Imus Ransler (Staff) **Absent:** Tom Motycka, Celinda Gilmore, Kurt Doroh, Will Pugsley **Guests:** Mrs. Cedarquist

II. Approval of Agenda - Motion by Barbara Rose, supported by Scott Cedarquist, to approve the March 26, 2025, agenda. *Vote was approved with unanimous approval.*

III. Approval of Minutes from February 26, 2025 - Motion by Alyssa Hosbein, supported by Barbara Rose, to approve the February 26, 2025, meeting minutes. *Vote was approved with unanimous approval.*

IV. Public Comment - None.

V. Reports

a) County Board of Commission (BOC) – No report.

b) Land Preservation Board (LPB) – Cedarquist reported that the Board is revising its local grant application to be compliant with the state, and reviewing what information the applicant needs to provide. It will take approximately one year for the application process.

c) Southwest Michigan Planning Commission (SWMPC) – No report.

d) Local Visits –

- Alyssa Hosbein attended a Lawrence Township meeting where amendments to R-1 and R-2 residential zoning districts were discussed.
- Barbara Rose attended a Covert Township meeting where the Planning Commission is reviewing updates to the Master Plan, Coastal Management Plan, short-term rental policies, and cargo container regulations.
- Jan Petersen attended a Climate Action Forum hosted by the Van Buren ISD, which focused on housing needs and climate-resilient planning strategies.
- Gordon Andrews attended an Arlington Township meeting where local growers raised concerns about recent marijuana processing and land use restrictions, particularly their impact on crop-to-sale operations.

e) Staff Report – Lisa Ransler reported that Tom Motycka and Will Pugsley were reappointed to the Planning Commission. Celinda Gilmore did not seek reappointment, and there is now a vacancy that needs to be filled.

VI. Unfinished Business - None.

VII. New Business

a) Resolution 2025-01 – Termination of Farmland Development Rights Agreement (Ceres Farms LLC) Motion by Scott Cedarquist, supported by Barbara Rose, to approve Resolution 2025-01 recommending support of the termination of Farmland Development Rights Agreement #80-61815-123197 as submitted by Ceres Farms LLC. *Vote was approved with unanimous approval.*

Van Buren County Planning Commission

Resolution No. 2025-01

Resolution Approving Termination of Farmland Development Rights Agreement (Ceres Farms LLC – Agreement #80-61815-123197)

WHEREAS, the Van Buren County Planning Commission has received an application from Ceres Farms LLC to terminate a Farmland Development Rights Agreement under Part 361 of the Natural Resources and Environmental Protection Act (1994 PA 451, as amended), more commonly known as Public Act 116; and

WHEREAS, the land subject to the termination request is located in Section 31, T4S, R14W, Decatur Township, and identified by Tax Parcel Nos. 80-08-031-003-10 and 80-08-031-010-00; and

WHEREAS, the applicant has provided documentation demonstrating that the property is no longer economically viable for farming due to persistent flooding, the presence of heavy muck soils, and limitations of the existing drainage infrastructure; and

WHEREAS, the applicant does not intend to develop the land for buildings or renewable energy, but rather seeks to pursue ecologically beneficial alternatives such as wetland restoration, consistent with the stated intent to maintain rural character and protect natural assets; and

WHEREAS, the Van Buren County Master Plan (2020) recognizes the importance of agricultural preservation, while also acknowledging the need for flexible land use responses to natural conditions (see Agricultural Character / Rural Living, p. 27), and promotes adaptive reuse of land where agricultural use is no longer viable; and

WHEREAS, the Planning Commission finds the request to be consistent with the County's planning goals to protect the rural landscape, support environmental stewardship, and promote compatible land uses when agricultural viability has been compromised;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Van Buren County Planning Commission hereby approves the request by Ceres Farms LLC to terminate Farmland Development Rights Agreement #80-61815-123197, and recommends that this application be forwarded to the Michigan Department of Agriculture and Rural Development (MDARD) with a finding of support.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that a copy of this resolution shall be transmitted to MDARD, the Van Buren Conservation District, and Decatur Township in accordance with application requirements.

b) Final Joint Master Plan for Decatur Village, Decatur Township, and Hamilton Township - The Planning Commission received the final Joint Master Plan for filing.

c) 2024 Planning Commission Annual Report - Motion by Jan Petersen, supported by Alyssa Hosbein, to adopt the 2024 Planning Commission Annual Report with the addition of Barbara Rose and Jan Petersen's attendance at the MSU Extension Open Meetings Act presentation. *Vote was approved with unanimous approval.*

VIII. Adjournment - The meeting was adjourned by Alyssa Hosbein at 6:59 p.m.

Submitted by: Lisa Imus Ransler, Recording Secretary