

Van Buren County Planning Commission
County Administration Building – 219 E Paw Paw St, Suite 201, Paw Paw, MI 49079
May 28, 2025 – 6:30 p.m.

- 1. Call to Order and Attendance** - The meeting was called to order at 6:30 p.m. by Alyssa Hosbein. **Present:** Alyssa Hosbein, Kurt Doroh, Jan Petersen, Tom Motycka, Barbara Rose, Tony Hemenway, Nick Carlson, Will Pugsley, and Lisa Imus Ransler, staff. **Absent:** Scott Cedarquist, Gordon Andrews. **Guests:** One.
- 2. Approval of Agenda** - Nick Carlson, supported by Motycka, made a motion to approve the May 28, 2025 agenda. Motion was approved by unanimous consent.
- 3. Approval of Minutes** - Hosbein, supported by Rose made a motion to approve the March 26, 2025 meeting minutes. Motion was approved by unanimous consent.
- 4. Public Comment** - None.
- 5. Reports**
 - a. County Board of Commissioners (BOC)** – Doroh provided a report on the County Commission activities over the last month.
 - b. Land Preservation Board (LPB)** – Ransler reported on the grant application process to apply for MDARD preservation funds. There are two applicants to consider for the year end application.
 - c. Southwest Michigan Planning Commission (SWMPC)** – No report.
 - d. Local Visits** – Doroh provided an update on Columbia Townships zoning amendments. Motyka provided an update on the Village of Decatur. Rose invited everyone to a new park opening in Covert Township on May 29th.
 - e. Staff Report** – Lisa Ransler provided updates related to planning reviews and general coordination activities. Gordon Andrews submitted his resignation from the Planning Commission. The County was able to secure an AmeriCorps member to work with local units to become MEDC “Redevelopment Ready”.
- 6. Unfinished Business**
 - a. Columbia Township Zoning & Map Amendment 2025-001 for Utility-Scale Battery Energy Storage Systems** The Planning Commission reviewed Columbia Township Ordinance No. 2025-001, which regulates utility-scale battery energy storage systems (BESS) and creates a Renewable Energy Overlay District. The ordinance meets PA 233 standards and concentrates energy development in designated areas along CR-215 and 24th Avenue. Motycka, supported by Hemenway, made a motion

to concur with the Columbia Township Zoning & Map Amendment 2025-001. Motion was approved by unanimous consent.

b. Columbia Township Zoning Amendment 2025-002 for Solar Energy Systems

This amendment applies special land use requirements to solar installations in the overlay district. Motycka, supported by Rose made a motion to concur with Columbia Township Zoning Amendment 2025-002. Motion was approved by unanimous consent.

7. New Business

a. Paw Paw Township Solar Energy Systems Ordinance Amendment The Zoning Ordinance amendment will regulate both private and commercial Solar Energy Systems (SES), based on the “Planning and Zoning for Solar Energy Systems: A Guide for Michigan Local Governments.” The commercial SES standards are designed to align with Public Act 233 of 2023 and meet the framework for a Compatible Renewable Energy Ordinance (CREO), supporting a balanced approach to solar development. Petersen, supported by Motycka made a motion to concur with the Paw Paw Township Zoning Ordinance Amendment. Motion was approved by unanimous consent.

b. Alma Township Master Plan Update The Commission received notice from Alma Township that they are beginning to update their Master Plan.

c. St. Joseph County Joint Communities Master Plan The Commission received the joint plan submitted by St. Joseph County and its municipalities. To allow the Planning Commission time to review, it was suggested that comments be made on the plan at the June meeting.

d. PA 116 Application – Drozd 2025-01 The application was received by the Planning Commission.

e. PA 116 Application – Drozd 2025-02 The application was received by the Planning Commission.

f. PA 116 Application – Drozd 2025-03 The application was received by the Planning Commission.

g. Paw Paw Township Contractor Services as Special Land Use The amendment allows contractor’s services as a special land use in the Neighborhood Convenience Commercial (NCC) District. The Paw Paw Township Planning Commission unanimously recommended approval. Motycka, supported by Doroh made a motion to concur with the Paw Paw Township Zoning Ordinance Amendment. Motion was approved by unanimous consent.

8. Adjournment - The meeting was adjourned at 7:07 p.m.