



Calhoun County Planning Commission Minutes  
April 10, 2023 @ 4:00PM  
315 W. Green Street, Marshall, MI 49068  
Garden Level Conference Room

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1. **The April 10, 2023, County Planning Commission Meeting was called to order at 4:01 PM by Ben Lark.**
2. **Roll Call** - called by Teri Zadigian  
Members present: Diane Thompson, Ben Lark, Richard Porter, John Sackrider, Kelli Scott, Dan Livingston  
Members excused: Jen Rice, Terance Lunger, Aaron Haynes  
Staff in attendance: Jennifer Bomba, Community Development Director; Brittany Stein, Zoning Coordinator; Teri Zadigian, Administrative Assistant.  
Public in attendance Jared Zvonar with Leeward Renewable Energy  
Quorum was met.
3. **Approval of Agenda**  
*Moved by Member Livingston to approve the April 10, 2023, Calhoun County Planning Commission agenda, supported by Member Sackrider.*  
On a voice vote, **Motion CARRIED.**
4. **Public Comments (limited to 3 minutes per participant)**  
There was none.
5. **Approval of Minutes**  
*Moved by Member Sackrider to approve the February 27, 2023, meeting minutes as corrected with Dan Livingston as excused, supported by Member Thompson.*  
On a voice vote, **Motion CARRIED.**
6. **Communication**
  - a. Any Communication to come before the Commission.  
Ms. Bomba stated that Barry County is doing an update to their Master Plan, and it is out for review. We are inquiring why we have yet to receive it and make sure we are still on the notification list.
7. **Old Business**
  - a. Any Old Business to come before the Commission  
There was none.
8. **New Business**
  - a. Reappointment of John Sackrider for a term to expire 12/31/2025  
*Moved by Member Thompson to approve the reappointment of John Sackrider for a term to expire 12/31/2025, supported by Member Scott.*  
On a voice vote, **Motion CARRIED.**
  - b. Any other New Business to come before the commission

There was none.

## 9. Township Planning & Zoning Coordination

### a. 3-23-01, Burlington Township: Zoning Text Amendment regarding Solar Energy Systems

The proposed language identifies Private / Residential Solar Energy Systems as systems intended to provide energy on-site through ground or roof mounted systems. Both are defined as permitted accessory structures in all zoning districts and subject to site development standards such as height, setbacks, and area regulations.

The language also defines Commercial Solar Energy Systems as systems intended to provide electricity to the power grid. These systems are managed as a conditional use in the A-1 and A-2 Agricultural Districts and the Development District. Notable Site development parameters include:

- Minimum lot size of 20 acres
- Maximum height of 16 feet
- Minimum setback of solar panels and associated support structures, 100 feet from the side or rear property line and 100 feet from the road right-of-way, exempt when adjacent to a participating parcel.
- Minimum 6-foot perimeter fencing
- Landscaping required along the perimeter of the development, minimum plant height and separation distances specified
- Exempt from maximum lot coverage requirements
- Decommissioning plan, including agreement for financial resources.
- Required public hearing for a special use permit and site plan review

Community Development staff believe that the recommendation by the Burlington Township Planning Commission to amend the zoning policy as it relates to solar energy systems is sound zoning practice and in the best interest of the Township. The Township could take this one step further and consider implementing a solar overlay district that would allow the township to prioritize what properties within the Agricultural zoning districts are most suitable for solar energy development versus active agriculture. Community Development staff recommend for approval of the zoning text amendment by the Burlington Township Board with comments.

*Moved by Member Livingston to recommend approval with comments to implement an overlay district, of the Zoning Text Amendment regarding Solar Energy Systems by the Burlington Township Board, supported by Member Porter.*

On a voice vote, **Motion CARRIED.**

### b. 3-23-02, Emmett Charter Township: Zoning Text Amendment regarding 530 Main Street

Emmett Charter Township Planning Commission has received a request to amend the zoning classification for the parcel located in Section 18 of Emmett Charter Township, specifically parcel ID# 10-140-012-00 located on the northwest corner of Main St. and Bonita Dr. The subject property is approximately 1-acre, currently zoned a mix of local Commercial and Medium Density Residential. The request is to rezone the entire parcel to Local Commercial.

The current zoning for this area includes a 500-foot-wide Local Commercial zoning designation along Main Street<sup>6</sup> from Richmond Ave. north to the Township boundary. The subject property is zoned Local Commercial for approximately 300 feet from the front lot line (Main Street) to the east. The remaining portion of the property is zoned Medium Density Residential. The area of development on this property has primarily been within the area zoned Local Commercial.

The Emmett Charter Township Master Plan designates the property as a mix of Local Commercial and Medium Density Residential, generally matching the Zoning Map. Emmett Charter Township is currently in the process of updating the Township Master Plan and corresponding maps. Consultation with the Zoning Administrator revealed that the goal is to dissolve the split zoning in this area creating a new zoning district boundary which would follow property lines. Eliminating properties with split zoning will allow for confident implementation of zoning policy for these parcels.

Community Development staff believe that the zoning map amendment recommended by the Emmett Charter Township Planning Commission is consistent with the Township Master Plan and will eliminate a split zoned parcel; therefore, staff recommend for approval by the Emmett Charter Township Board the proposed zoning map amendment as outlined above.

*Moved by Member Sackrider to recommend approval of the Emmett Charter Township Zoning Text Amendment regarding 530 Main Street, supported by Member Thompson.*

On a voice vote, **Motion CARRIED.**

- c. 3-23-03, Athens Township: PA 116 Application regarding: Aaron Delagrangé  
The subject property is in Section 23 of Athens Township. The application consists of approximately 57 acres total, with 55 being cultivated. There are three structures on the property: 1 barn, 2 sheds.

The subject parcel is zoned by Athens Township as Agricultural. The Athens Township Future Land Use Plan classifies the property as Agriculture as does the Calhoun County Master Plan. The property owner has requested a 90-year contract for this application.

Community Development staff believe that the Application for Farmland Agreement submitted by Aaron Delagrangé is valid and recommends for approval by the Michigan Department of Agriculture and Rural Development.

*Moved by Member Sackrider to recommend approval of the Application for Farmland Agreement, PA 116 Application, submitted by Aaron Delagrangé, supported by Member Thompson.*

On a voice vote, **Motion CARRIED.**

- d. 3-23-04, Marengo Township: Zoning Text Amendment regarding Electric Infrastructure  
The proposed language defines Electric Infrastructure as: electric transmission systems, including high and medium voltage collection systems and structures to interconnect to the bulk electric system, such as but not limited to, underground, surface, or overhead electric transmission lines and other similar equipment along with accessories in connection therewith, reasonably necessary for the furnishing of adequate electric service including electric substations. Development of

Electric Infrastructure would be governed as a special land use in the Agricultural and Light Industrial zoning districts. Proposed site development conditions include the following:

- All components enclosed with a minimum 6-foot fence
- Landscaping shall conform to the general character and architecture of the surrounding area
- Exempt from underlying site development regulations
- Applicant must comply with all applicable state and federal permits

Community Development staff believe that the recommendation by the Marengo Township Planning Commission to amend the zoning policy as it relates to electrical infrastructure is an important step in managing these types of structures within the community. Staff suggest that the township include additional site design parameters such as: on-site parking, lighting, and security measures. As a special land use, any application to develop electric infrastructure within the township will undergo site plan review. Additional items can be addressed during that process or required as part of the specific conditions and requirements in Article 20. Community Development staff recommend for approval, with comment, the zoning text amendment by the Marengo Township Board.

*Moved by Member Sackrider to recommend approval with comment of, additional on-site parking, lighting, and security measures, of Marengo Township Zoning Text Amendment regarding Electric Infrastructure by the Marengo Township Board, supported by Member Livingston.*

On a voice vote, **Motion CARRIED.**

- e. 3-23-05, Clarence Township: PA 116 Application regarding Edward Masternak Application for Farmland Agreement (PA 116) has been submitted by Edward and Gertrude Masternak for property located in Section 35 of Clarence Township.

Parcel one consists of approximately 79 acres, parcel two consists of approximately 64 acres, and parcel three consists of approximately 32 acres for a total of 175 acres. Most of the property is under cultivation, with approximately 68 acres classified as swamp and/or woodlands.

There are a total of ten (10) structures between the three parcels including two residences, four barns, four tool sheds, one grain silo and two grain storage facilities.

The subject parcel is zoned by Clarence Township as Agricultural. The Clarence Township Future Land Use Plan classifies the property as Agriculture as does the Calhoun County Master Plan. The property owner has requested a 90-year contract for this application.

Community Development staff believe that the Application for Farmland Agreement submitted by Edward and Gertrude Masternak is valid and recommends for approval by the Michigan Department of Agriculture and Rural Development.

*Moved by Member Sackrider to recommend approval, of Application for Farmland Agreement, PA 116, by Edward and Gertrude Masternak for 175 acres total, supported by Member Thompson.*

On a voice vote, **Motion CARRIED.**

- f. Any other Planning & Zoning Coordination to come before the Commission  
There was none.

**10. Township Planning & Zoning Coordination Follow-up**

There was none.

**11. Department Report**

Ms. Bomba shared that the last Government Leaders Forum was on Solar Energy Systems. Attorneys, Catherine Kauffman, and Seth Koches were there to help educate communities on adopting Solar Energy Systems ordinances and help other communities fine tune their current ordinances. Michigan Association of Planning Renewable Energy Academy is conducting a webinar on Planning & Zoning for Wind & Solar Energy Systems on, April 13, 2023, 3:30pm-5pm, \$10 Registration Fee. Bus tours of Wind & Solar Facilities will take place in Southwest Michigan on May 31, 2023, along with a Mini-Workshop Series to dive deep into the planning and zoning for renewable energy, held by the University of Michigan Graham Sustainability Institute. Michigan State University Extension will be also conduct Planning & Zoning for Solar Energy Systems in Calhoun County. This will take place on Thursday, April 27<sup>th</sup>, 2023, 6:30 – 7:30pm at Convis Township Hall.

Ms. Bomba gave an update on membership. Member Lunger’s term of membership is set to expire at the end of May, and he has decided to step down. In addition, Member Rice is stepping down because of difficulty in attending meetings with her employment. Staff will advertise the openings and seek to fill them as soon as possible.

**12. Member Comments**

Member Porter updated members on his township being looked at from a few companies for hydrogen production. Currently, there are no facilities in Michigan, Sarah Mills with University of Michigan is working on drafting an ordinance to regulate hydrogen facilities.

Member Scott stated that the county is investing into energy upgrades, including solar lighting, for its facilities.

Member Livingston shared that he has concerns with the Blue Oval Battery project and that the Senator representing the Marshall area is not supportive.

Member Lark indicated that he toured the marihuana grow facility near his residence and learned a lot.

**Public Comments (limited to 3 minutes per participant)**

Jared Zvonar, with Leeward Renewable Energy, stated that he would like to thank Ms. Bomba and team for putting in the time with the townships on creating ordinances for Solar. It’s been a great partnership for the Solar companies and the townships.

**13. Announcements:**

Member Lark stated that the next Calhoun County Planning Commission Meeting is scheduled for April 24, 2023, at 4:00 p.m. Numerous members indicated their inability to attend the April meeting due to a conflict with their schedules.

**14. Adjournment**

The meeting adjourned at 5:07PM.