

Hope Township Planning Commission

Meeting Minutes

September 9, 2025

The meeting was called to order by Chair Norton at 6:30 pm at the Hope Township Hall, 5463 S. M-43, Hastings, MI 49058. Pledge of Allegiance to the flag.

Members present: Bob Norton, Junior Homister, Larry Heslinga.

******In Zuzga's absence, Homister was selected as the Secretary Pro-tem.

Members absent: Christine Zuzga with notice. Mehmed noted that Craig Jenkins resigned from the Planning Commission, and a replacement has not been selected.

Others Present: Township Planner/Zoning Administrator Nathan Mehmed and approximately seven others at the Township Hall.

Agenda: Motion by Heslinga, supported by Homister, to approve the agenda as presented. All ayes. Motion carried.

Meeting minutes: Motion by Homister, supported by Heslinga, to approve the July 8, 2025, meeting minutes as presented. All ayes. Motion carried.

Heslinga reminded Mehmed about getting the minutes before the meeting.

Mehmed stated that he would include everyone in his email to the secretary with the draft minutes.

General Public Comment: None.

Site Plan Amendment Discussion: Mehmed explained that the Township had received several inquiries and complaints regarding Joe Zalokar's business and the addition of a new driveway for unloading trucks. Mehmed noted that the Planning Commission only approved one driveway, and changes to the number and location of accesses to a public street are considered a major site plan amendment in accordance with Section 5.5 of the Zoning Ordinance, which means the Planning Commission must review and approve it. Norton asked Joe Zalokar, who was present at the meeting, to provide some details.

Zalokar noted that he didn't know that the new driveway required a site plan amendment and thought that he only needed a driveway permit from the Road Commission. He obtained the permit and began to build the drive until Dekema notified him that he was in violation.

The Planning Commission discussed how they could make such an amendment a more streamlined process, given that they think the drive is an improvement and minor, so that Zalokar can get his trucks off the street. Mehmed noted that it wouldn't require a public hearing as he isn't expanding the special use that was previously approved. He also indicated that the Road Commission or MDOT is typically involved in the siting of driveway locations, so a letter or approved permit would prove some level of due diligence; a more detailed report would likely not be necessary. Homister stated that he would discuss a fee adjustment with the Township Board. Zalokar noted that he would go to the office when they are open and discuss or apply.

Master Land Use Discussion: Mehmed explained that this meeting is part one of workshop #2, focusing on land use. Based on past concerns and discussions, he invited two speakers, Ellen Holste from Pierce Cedar Creek Institute and Scott Monroe from the Southwest Barry County Sewer Authority, to provide information to the Planning Commission regarding surface water, groundwater, and public sewer. Mehmed noted that Pierce Cedar Creek Institute had previously contacted the Planning Commission when the Township started the master planning process to discuss watershed planning. He explained that Holste was there to update the Planning Commission on the process and the results.

Monroe, General Manager of the Southwest Barry County Sewer Authority, gave updates about the status of the sewer system. He highlighted that if the system were to expand in the Township, it would likely be on the chain of lakes, including Mud, Wilkinson, and Jones. The system is at about half capacity, so there is room for additional customers. They put in all the pipes themselves, and mostly only add when they are approached by property owners, with a few exceptions. Cloverdale does have sewer to the Post Office. Some areas with pipes in the ground already require property owners to hook up if they have a septic failure. The Planning Commission asked several questions related to process, capacity, and cost of connection.

Holste, who is the Research and Community Engagement Manager for the Pierce Cedar Creek Institute, started her presentation with a background on the Institute and what their mission is. She explained that the Cedar Creek Watershed Management Plan focused specifically on Cedar Creek and its subwatersheds. The document includes data gathering and background information, as well as recommendations, which is what she is focusing on due to time constraints and the

focus of the meeting. Holste specifically discussed stormwater management, thermal, sediment, and nutrient pollution, environmental protection zoning, and best management practices for invasive species. A number of sub-topics related to actions that the Township could take were discussed, including reducing impervious surfaces, vegetated buffer ordinances, and wetland preservation. The Planning Commission asked a number of questions related to the above topics, including where EGLE regulations might supersede and the differences between urban and rural stormwater. Holste clarified how data is being collected and a shift in focus to lakefront property owners. She reminded the Planning Commission that the report is available on the Institute's website and noted that she is available if there are any questions.

Mehmed shared that he brought a large-format future land use map for the Planning Commission to review. The Planning Commission began a conversation regarding buffer zones around bodies of water and improved protection of the Township's lakes. They decided to continue the conversation at the next meeting when Zuzga and a new Planning Commission member can be present. Mehmed reminded the Commission to review the future land use designations in addition to the map for the next meeting.

Zoning Administrator: Mehmed noted that there would be a special exception use request at the next meeting pertaining to an accessory dwelling.

Adjournment: Motion by Homister, supported by Heslinga, to adjourn the meeting. All ayes. Motion carried. Meeting adjourned at 7:51 p.m.

Junior Homister, Secretary Pro Tem

Date