

Hope Township Planning Commission

Meeting Minutes

June 16, 2026

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, Larry Heslinga, Christine Zuzga, Jr Homister.

Members absent: Drew Chapple.

Others Present: Township Planner/Zoning Administrator Nathan Mehmed.

Agenda: Motion by Homister, supported by Zuzga, to approve the agenda with the addition of “addresses on vacant parcels in Hope Township” and “shipping containers” as agenda items after the data centers discussion. All ayes. Motion carried.

Meeting minutes: Motion by Heslinga, supported by Homister, to approve the May 12, 2026, meeting minutes as presented. All ayes. Motion carried.

General Public Comment: None.

Data Center Discussion: The Commission continued their discussion on data centers and reviewed last month’s discussion with the Commissioners that weren’t present. Mehmed updated the Commission that he obtained the model moratorium ordinances from the Michigan Township Association that Kaufman’s firm prepared. He also explained the links that he sent regarding electrical transmission lines and fiber lines. He shared that through his firm’s work in other communities, they are learning more about what companies siting data centers are looking for. Sufficient grid capacity and fiber networks play a considerable role. He noted that Hope Township does not have much in the way of either, at least according to the mapping data that he has access to. Zuzga and Heslinga discussed the rather small area planned and zoned for industrial. There is limited space where data centers would make sense. The Commission discussed that the Land Use Plan is almost done, and it doesn’t support expansion of resource intensive industrial land uses since there aren’t utilities either.

The Commission continued their conversation regarding being proactive versus reactive. Mehmed shared that some communities are doing nothing and taking the stance that data centers don’t make sense in their community due to a lack of

proper utilities or reasonable sites, or that there isn't demand there. He shared that some municipal attorneys seem to be comfortable with that stance, but it differs from situation to situation. The Commission asked Mehmed to talk to Attorney Kaufman about accommodating versus not accommodating the use given the lack of industrial land and utilities.

Addresses on Vacant Parcels: Homister explained that the Barry County planning office assigns addresses to parcels and that they won't assign addresses to parcels without a principal residence. This becomes an issue when a property owner builds an accessory building, which is allowed on vacant parcels in Hope Township without a principal dwelling, and tries to get electricity run to the building. The power company won't run power to a building without an address. He explained that he has spoken to Jeff Keesler about this, and that the County's position was that they didn't want people living in non-dwellings, and addresses would support that. Homister would like the Planning Commission and Township Board to take action to ask the County to change the policy. The Planning Commission members discussed and agreed that the County's position seemed unreasonable, and possibly unsafe, since 911 would not have an address to dispatch emergency services to. Zuzga stated that she would inquire with the County as well.

Motion by Homister, supported by Zuzga, to support the Township Board in sending a letter to the County to encourage a policy change allowing addresses on properties without a principal dwelling. All ayes. Motion carried.

Shipping Containers: Mehmed stated that the shipping container topic has come up multiple times in the last six months. He shared that he provided the Planning Commission with an example shipping container ordinance from Hagar Township in Berrien County as an example of what other communities are doing. Homister and Norton expressed that they didn't like the Hagar example as it is too restrictive. The Board discussed allowing shipping containers similarly to how accessory buildings are permitted, and directed Mehmed to draft language. Mehmed mentioned some additional housekeeping amendments, particularly the language excluding accessory buildings of less than 200 square feet in the definition, should be clarified, as it seems to put smaller buildings into limbo, instead of excluding them from the number of buildings, which was the original intent. Zuzga agreed that the language was confusing. The Commission directed Mehmed to add that accessory dwellings can be less than 200 square feet, but that they are not counted in the total number, and to move the boat house references to

accessory buildings, clarifying that the Zoning Administrator shall determine sightlines.

Zoning Administrator: Mehmed shared that the Zoning Board of Appeals recently had two variance requests and that one was in regard to the lakefront setback again. The ZBA asked Norton and Mehmed to share their concern regarding the number of requests with the Planning Commission. The Commission agreed that there were a lot of requests, but wasn't sure if a modification would completely solve the problem. Zuzga recommended that Mehmed look into Quincy Township and Battle Creek. Mehmed noted that he would look at options and report back.

Heslinga asked about updates to the C2 gravel pit. Mehmed stated that he does not believe that they have started mining. Norton asked if they should be having an annual review. Mehmed explained that if operations haven't started, it wouldn't be necessary, but would follow up with the applicant again.

Zuzga asked if the land use plan had moved along. Norton responded that it had been sent to the Board. Mehmed noted that they had already received correspondence after the Board authorized distribution.

Adjournment: Motion by Homister, supported by Zuzga, to adjourn the meeting. All ayes. Motion carried. Meeting adjourned at 8:05 p.m.

Christine M. Zuzga

6/29/2026

Christine Zuzga, Secretary

Date