

Hope Township Planning Commission

Meeting Minutes

July 14, 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, Drew Chapple.

Members absent: None.

Others Present: Township Planner/Zoning Administrator Nathan Mehmed.

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

Meeting minutes: Motion by Homister, supported by Chapple, to approve the June 16, 2026, meeting minutes as presented. All ayes. Motion carried.

General Public Comment: None.

Data Center Discussion: Mehmed noted that he reached out to Kaufman's office regarding the Planning Commission's question about the possibility of taking no action on data centers and is waiting for a response. He doesn't have any updates at this time. Homister asked Mehmed to follow up and communicate with Supervisor Peck. He would like to get moving on this.

Shipping Containers: Mehmed presented a draft text amendment addressing some housekeeping edits and clarifying that shipping containers are considered to be accessory buildings. If adopted, the amendment would also clarify that accessory buildings 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 the accessory buildings section, clarifying that the Zoning Administrator shall determine sightlines. A definition for boat house and shipping container would also be added.

The Commission discussed the draft and were overall satisfied with the proposed amendments. Zuzga asked about the mobile home and wheeled vehicle exclusion language in the accessory building and shipping container definitions, and shared her concern that someone might try to say that those exclusions means that they don't have to comply with the standard. It was noted that Section 10.24 already

excludes mobile homes from being accessory buildings. The Commission agreed to remove or move the references so that the intent of the language is clear.

The Commission asked about the use of manufactured home and mobile home throughout the Ordinance. Mehmed completed a cursory keyword search and noted that they both appear to be used interchangeably. He also noted that this seems to be common on the Michigan website and in other ordinances he has worked with. The Commission asked Mehmed to clean up some of the references, and ensure that it is clear that they are used interchangeably. Mehmed stated that he would include that in the next draft.

Zoning Administrator: Mehmed presented a memo outlining examples of lakefront setback requirements in several other communities and the RRC Waterfront Planning Toolkit. A common approach is to take an average setback of existing dwellings and apply that setback to a parcel with a new dwelling, addition, or reconstruction. But it is not necessarily possible to know if this will decrease the number of variances requested, since the change may create other unintended consequences on specific lots. Mehmed noted that the nonconforming straight-line language does not appear to be common, and is fairly unique to Hope Township. The Commission discussed the options. Heslinga agreed that a change to averages may cause other problems and may not do anything to reduce the number of lakefront variances. The Commission concurred. Mehmed explained that another approach could be to allow all dwellings, regardless of their conforming status, to have eight-foot deck encroachments, instead of just encroachments on a conforming dwelling. The Commission decided to take no action, since the existing provisions are working, and many lots require a case-by-case review.

Norton asked if there were any updates on the Master Plan. Mehmed shared that there have been no additional comments other than the EMS service change. He will check with Clerk Jackson regarding when the notice letters were sent. It is possible the Planning Commission could hold the public hearing at the next meeting.

Mehmed stated that he forwarded the Barry County short-term rental ordinance draft to the Commission. The Commission had a brief discussion about the draft, and discussed action taken by other nearby communities. Chapple explained that working in real estate, he gets these questions a lot. A discussion regarding displacement of housing and housing affordability took place. The Commission asked Mehmed if the Township gets any complaints. Mehmed explained that they

get some complaints, but not many. There are a lot of calls about ordinances, but not complaints. The Commission decided to review the draft language and language from other communities for discussion at the next meeting.

Adjournment: Motion by Homister, supported by Zuzga, to adjourn the meeting. All ayes. Motion carried. Meeting adjourned at 7:47 p.m.

Christine Zuzga, Secretary

Date