

Mansfield Township Planning Commission Meeting Minutes Final – 08/14/2025

Russell Bauwens, Chair, called the meeting to order at 4:00 pm with the Pledge of Allegiance, followed by an invocation by Mike Carey.

Call to Order - Pledge of Allegiance - Invocation

Roll Call – All present

☒ John Gilner
☒ Jeff Tushoski
☒ Mike Carey
☒ George McCumber
☒ Russell Bauwens
☒ Pam Minerick

The following members of the public were also in attendance:

Bill and Lynn Flemming, Laurie Netzow, Lona Fende, Jim and Patty Kaltinger, Mike Finney, Debbie Campbell and Cheryl Lyons of the Hosking Property, Mark Godwin, Kristen White, Steve Larson, Linda and Cliff Smith, Lisa Wise

Rose Poynter and John Luetz was in attendance at 5:15.

Approve Minutes of the 04/10/2025 meeting

Motion by: Mike

Seconded by: John

Agenda Approval

Motion by: Mike

Seconded by: John

Chairman comments:

- Russ emphasized the importance of staying on topic and adhering to the schedule.
- He reminded the Commission about the special meeting on August 20th, 2025, at 6:00 PM to discuss a special use request from WE Energies, which involves the construction of two communication towers for internal use only.

Zoning Report: – Pam Minerick

- Pam shared the Site Inspection Report for recent building permits.
- She reiterated the details of the special use request from WE Energies and reminded everyone of the August 20th meeting.

Review Agenda for Public Meeting for 8/20/2025:

- Pam distributed the agenda for the upcoming special meeting regarding WE Energies' special use permit request. A question was raised about the purpose of the communication towers, and Pam clarified that they would not be used for cell service but solely for WE Energies' internal communications.

Discussion on L1 Properties & Lake Frontage requirements:

- Pam reviewed the zoning amendment process outlined in the zoning ordinance (page 35).
- Mike Carey noted that the current L-1 zoning requires a 300-foot lot rather than 300 feet of lake frontage, leading to confusion. He argued that the zoning language is unclear and interpreted differently across various sections of the ordinance.
- Jeff Tushoski read to the committee and the public the proposed resolution which Mike Carey and Jeff Tushoski provided to the Planning Board.
- Jeff Tushoski also pointed out that the current L-1 Zoning ordinance states one of the intents of this zone is to provide **low-density residential use** and to ensure Keyhole development or funnel development will absolutely not be permitted use.” The low-density residential use is what we are trying to preserve with this resolution clarification.
- Pam referenced a 1983 zoning ordinance book, which stated that a “Minimum lot width is 300-feet and the lot is measured at the front setback line”.
- Pam mentioned that there are several amendments pending approval and proposed including clearer language for lakefront zoning.
 - Note: Pam emailed me after the meeting to let me know that there are actually 17 pending zoning ordinance amendments and she included the proposed amendment for the L-1 and RR zoning that I sent her per the minutes listed below in the Actions Required Section.
- Pam said she will send out a list of zoning amendments to the planning commission board before our next meeting which will be a special meeting to simply vote on the amendments to send to the township board.
- Jeff will send Pam the language that was proposed in the resolution that Mike Carey and Jeff Tushoski outlined for lakefront properties in Mansfield Township which is shown below:
 - *Dimensional requirements for waterfront lots (L-1 Zoning District) to specify a minimum of 300 feet of lake frontage from a straight-line distance between the points where the side lot lines intersect with the high-water mark on the lake and also 300 feet of lot width at the 100-foot setback from the lake. Both measurements must be met.*
- Russ agreed to schedule a special meeting for a vote on the zoning amendments if the Township Board will approve it. Both Mike Carey and Jeff Tushoski offered to forgo their pay if cost was an issue in approving the special meeting.
- Mike agreed to raise the issue at the next Township Board meeting on August 20th, asking them to send a letter to the Zoning Administrator and Assessor to pause any lot plots or building permits in the L-1 district until the zoning language is clarified.

Blight Ordinance Discussion:

- John provided an proposed Ordinance Preface that would be language that would be published to cover ordinances #11, #23 and #24 of the Mansfield Township Ordinances the language proposed would be the same for all the listed ordinances such as the way to file a complaint, the Authority of the Board and the steps for non-compliance, etc. This would shorten the already established ordinances not just the Blight Ordinance. This would shorten the ordinance #23, Junk and Blighted Structures down to 8 sections.
- John also wants to change some of the language in the Blight Ordinance to tie it into the preface and change some of the language to specify the terminology of “junk” in the definitions of the Blighted

ordinance. He also changed language to specify the term “trash” by including household garbage, litter and waste.

- John made a comment that an ordinance amendment just needs board approval.
- Mike made a motion to approve ordinance 23 and 24 as edited by John. Jeff seconded the motion.

Continued discussion of Chapters 3 & 4:

- We didn’t have much discussion on this section. However, John Gilner brought up the fact that we have already addressed some of the language in regards to the Michigamme Reservoir and the fence river watershed. This language could be added to the Master Plan.
- Jeff indicated that he needs the latest Master Plan in a word document so he can edit it to include the language we have already discussed. Russ said he would provide that to him.

Public Comment:

- There were lots of comments from the public all centered around the L-1 zoning issue. I could not capture every comment but no other issue was brought up in the public comments except for the L-1 zoning discussion.
- Cheryl Lyons – Brought up the fact that they are 3rd generation property owners on Lake Ellen and would like to see 300 feet of lake frontage specified in the zoning ordinance and not just a 300-foot lot. She feels that this would ruin the lake if the density of the lake is changed substantially. She also brought up the fact that there are 3 campers on one lot that are using one dock and felt it is similar to keyholing.
- There was some discussion about the number of docks that could be on the lake if the larger land owners made pie shaped lots that would provide access to many more docks. Russ mentioned that residence still needed to abide by DNR regulations and permitting for docks placement. Russ also stated that pie shaped lots don’t fit the current zoning regulations.
- Laurie Netzow – Commented on the dock regulations about docks that can be removed during the winter didn’t need a permit. Lori said there was an amendment years ago that addressed the issue of 300-foot lake frontage but it never was added to the zoning ordinance.
- Lise Wise – She commented that the zoning ordinance for L-1 is confusing and she would like to see the zoning ordinance addressed and the language changed since it is confusing. She would like to have this addressed quickly.
- Bill Flemming – He is asking for a simple fix on the language by having 300 feet on the lake frontage and 300 feet at the 100-foot setback required. He is concerned about the additional amendments and would like to see if the planning board can get this language on the amendments and have a special meeting to address the issue and vote as soon as possible.
- Mark Godwin – Also indicated that the zoning language must be addressed and clarified and would like to see the 300-foot Lake frontage requirement established.

Board Privilege:

- Jeff Tushoski brought up the fact that we were charged by the Town Board to review all the ordinances and we have not discussed this since our 1/23/2025 meeting. We need to get this on the agenda.
- Jeff Tushoski also said we should bring up to the board again on allowing the planning board to hold more meetings other than just 4 per year. I just don’t feel we get enough done in 4 meetings per year which drags out our required accomplishments. Mike, George and John agreed.

- Jeff Tushoski brought up the fact that we discussed a Township Survey to be completed by residence either on line or mailed. This was part of the 1-23/2025 Meeting minutes. John mentioned that we discussed having GEI Consultants company to do this survey for us.
- John brought up the fact that the language in the minutes from the previous meeting where we discussed the Master Plan changes in section 3 & 4 should be added to the Master Plan per the notes below:
 - *It was agreed that we should include the following statement from the Recreation Plan into the Township Master Plan – “The Way Dam/Michigamme Reservoir is a popular recreational facility located in the Township. WE Energies own a majority of the land surrounding the reservoir and does provide recreational opportunities and facilities in the form of boat launches, campsites, and other access points. The Township recognizes the popularity of this water body and would like it to stay the undeveloped, recreational facility it currently is. This may require the Township to become a more active partner with WE Energies or even a stakeholder through various strategic acquisitions of property to maintain the unique, undeveloped waterbody that it is. Boating, fishing, water trails, hunting, and other outdoor and water recreational opportunities are available at the reservoir and surrounding land. The Township would like to preserve these features and develop additional similar recreational opportunities. The Township would like to preserve the lakes and wetlands along with the entire Michigamme Reservoir including the FENCE River and the entire Michigamme River shores.” The Planning Commission also decided we should reference the entire Michigamme River watershed as this would include all the natural areas around the tributaries, lakes, and/or ponds.*
 - *Further discussion also included adding verbiage under the Beautification Section of the Master Plan on a strategy to providing a recycling program and large dumpster/garbage cleanup twice a year. A point was made that this could help keep the garbage from being dumped in the woods.*
- Russ will find and send a Word document of the Master Plan so Jeff can edit it.
- John brought up information about a dam that was scuttled and they were going to sell off the land. He brought that up as a possibility for the dam’s on the reservoir and WE energies property could be sold off at some point. We can’t always think these dams will be here forever so he was concerned that we need to have the Master Plan completed with the language above to preserve the land surrounding the Michigamme Reservoir.
- John also brought up the fact that we should still be addressing a solar ordinance.

Meeting Adjournment:

Time Adjourned: 6:10

Motion by: Mike

Seconded by: John

Actions Required:

1. Russ to talk to the board about additional meetings and specifically a meeting required in the next couple weeks to review Zoning Amendments and L-1 Zoning language changes.
2. Russ to find a Master Plan Word document and send to Jeff so he can make edits that we have already identified for section 3 & 4 of the Master Plan.
3. Mike agreed to bring up to the board on August 20th, 2025 which is the next board meeting, to ask the board to send a letter to Pam Minerick, Zoning Administrator and possibly Tammy Hendrickson, Assessor, to pause

any lot plots or building permit approvals in the L-1 zoning districts until this issue is resolved and the language is changed to the zoning ordinance.

4. Jeff agreed to send to Pam Minerick that language changes for the L-1 Lakefront zoning ordinance per the draft resolution.
5. Pam agreed to send out a list of the zoning amendments to everyone on the Planning Commission board.
6. Pam will include the new L-1 Lakefront language in the zoning amendments so they are ready for the special Planning Meeting which Russ will setup within the next couple weeks.