Mansfield Township Planning Commission Board Meeting Minutes – Draft

Date: November 12, 2026 Time: 3:30 PM
Location: Mansfield Township Hall

1. Call to Order

The meeting was called to order by **Russ** at **3:30 PM**.

2. Pledge of Allegiance - Invocation

The Pledge of Allegiance was recited by all in attendance.

3. Roll Call

Board Members Present:

- Russ
- Mike
- John
- Jeff

Board Members Absent:

- George – Resigned from position

Also Present:

- Cliff Smith

4. Approval of Previous Meeting Minutes from 04-07-2026

Motion by **Mike**, supported by **Jeff**, to approve the July meeting minutes
Motion carried.

5. Approval of Agenda

Motion by **Jeff**, supported by **John**, to approve the agenda as presented / amended.
Motion carried.

6. Open Board Meeting Session

7. Zoning Report

- Pam was absent but Russ provided the zoning report and reported on two land splits that are under review. Keith Haapala is splitting about 40 acres off 160 acres, and Phil Minerick is splitting an 80-acre parcel off 200 acres. There are open questions on the 80-acre parcel (the camp): it was formerly owned by a nonprofit and is now coming back to a nonprofit, so it is unresolved whether the special use permit runs with the land or requires a full new process; the zoning administrator is consulting attorneys and may have answers at the board meeting.

8. Public Comments

- Cliff Smith applied for the Planning Commission vacancy since George McCumber resigned. Cliff was present.

9. Chair Report

9.1 Comments from the Chair: Russ

- George McCumber did resign from the Planning Commission. Russ asked Mike Carey to ask the MTA to see if a person from Sagola Township that is currently serving on their Planning Commission, if they could also serve on Mansfield

Township Planning Commission. Russ also asked Mike Carey to ask the MTA if a person living in an adjacent township, if they can be on the Mansfield Township Planning Commission.

- Russ attended the Data Center seminar in Marquette and he provided the power point to everyone on the commission. One thing they talked about was that it is important to have an industrial zone to be able to build a datacenter. The seminar stressed to have some regulations on the books in your township. The data centers don't want the litigation costs so they like to build them where there aren't any regulations. Russ said that the person speaking at the seminar was an attorney but he indicated that it wasn't legal advice.
- It was pointed out that you can have a moratorium on building data centers but it can't be open ended and they recommended a limit for a township of 60 days to 6 months.
- Many of the regulations need to include specifics on the following:
    - Planning where they can be built.
    - Noise levels coming from the data centers.
    - Insuring they have a closed loop water system.
    - What type of cost they will cover for infrastructure such as maintaining the roads.
    - How far away from other residence property.

10. Data centers Discussion

- Michigan may heavily regulate where data centers can go — Jeff ran an AI search on pending state changes and shared it with everyone. Pending statewide moratorium bills and other measures (clean energy mandates, retail protections, water restrictions, safety standards) were also reported.
    - House Bill 631 is the "data center siting and community protection act": it would standardize expert noise, agricultural and energy assessments for any facility exceeding 25 megawatts, and would repeal incentives such as tax exemptions.
    - Example cited: a 575-acre farm in Sterling had no regulations on the books to restrict a data center, and litigation failed as a result. A settlement included a $6 million payment tied to construction.
    - Infrastructure concerns raised: no sewer or water lines, probably not enough power locally, and fire protection — a member who worked in a data center said outside fire service is still needed and proposed requiring operators to cover the cost of fire support above the township's fire ordinance
    - Russ said at the seminar they recommended a minimum industrial zone size of 100 acres, but they also suggested as low as 50 acres is possible.
    - Township-owned land discussed: the dump site (about 40 acres), roughly 20–40 acres in the Dykes area, and a small parcel by the railroad tracks; nobody confirmed the township holds 100 contiguous acres.
    - The commission is broadly agreed on regulating short-term rentals, solar farms and data centers, but getting it through the town board is the obstacle. John argued the board shot last year's attempt down as a waste of time for something that would probably never come; Mike and Jeff countered that there is no harm in having it on the books and that unprepared townships get "steamrolled".
    - The Planning Commission feels that we should have an ordinance in place to cover the concerns of data centers. Based on the seminar, Russ heard they are requiring 100 acres for an industrial zone. We discussed that Mansfield Township doesn't have the infrastructure needed such as sewer, fire protection and power but the contractors could build all of the infrastructure into their data center structure. It was discussed that the size of the acreage owned by the township includes a few 40 acres parcels but nothing contiguous to cover 100 acres.
    - We would need to establishing a new industrial zone which would require notifying affected owners, advertising, and public hearings, so it will take time. The township attorney should review any ordinance before approval. None of the commission members are in favor of this.
    - The commission is broadly agreed on regulating short-term rentals, solar farms and data centers, but getting it through the town board is the obstacle. Jeff argued the board shot last year's attempt down as a waste of time for something that would probably never come. Mike / John countered that there is no harm in having it on the books and that unprepared townships get "steamrolled".
- **This will be tabled for one of the next meetings of the planning commission in 2027.**

11. Ordinance review

- Jeff mentioned he has reviewed every township ordinance and wrote down questions, with notes dated 4/1/2025; the plan is to email the list to everyone, and the review will begin next year pending clarification from the board. Jeff emailed his notes to all members while in the meeting.
- Firearms prohibition at the Mansfield Township dump: the dump is closed, so the need is probably not required anymore.
- Several ordinances are already repealed — the state construction code and electrical inspection are now handled by the state — and a Mike suggested grouping repealed ordinances in a separate subcategory on the master list so numbering gaps are explained.
- Ordinance 8, prohibiting prison facilities, was raised as a possible comparison point for data centers and solar farms.
- Ordinance 15, a zoning amendment adopted 5/20/1998, overlaps ordinance 6 (zoning districts, first adopted 1983, amended in 1998 and again in 2025 or 2026); a member questioned why amendments were not folded into one ordinance.
- Repealing Ordinance 8 may have been done by ordinance when a resolution would have sufficed.
- The previously reviewed noise, motoring, littering, fire and park ordinances are all fairly new and should be fine.
- Any actual change to an ordinance requires a public meeting; simply repealing or leaving ordinances unchanged, we believe, does not.

12. Meeting Calendar for 2027

- The commission members agreed on the following dates and all meeting times will be at 4:00PM.
    - February 2, 2027
    - May 4, 2027
    - August 3, 2027
    - November 2, 2027

13. Board Privilege

- John expressed his frustration with the town board because the town board seems to ignore the planning commission's recommendations even after members of the planning commission attend various seminars and learn what is recommend but the board ignores the recommendations. Other members expressed John's sentiments.

14. Adjournment

Motion by **John**, supported by Jeff, to adjourn the meeting at 4:40.
Motion carried.

15. Next Steps

- Mike: Check with the MTA whether someone who lives in Sagola Township and already serves on its planning commission can serve on Mansfield Township's commission, and whether members must live in an adjacent township.
- Russ: Bring the sample data-center zoning ordinance from the seminar and draft one for the commission to work from by the next meeting.
- Jeff: Email the ordinance notes and questions to all members which has already been sent.
- Mike or Russ: Get an MTA login to obtain the sample ordinance.
- Pam Minerick: Continue to pursue attorney answers on the 80-acre nonprofit parcel, possibly reporting at next Wednesday's board meeting.

Respectfully Submitted - Jeff Tushoski, Mansfield Planning Commission Secretary