

Minutes of the regular meeting of the Georgetown Township Planning Commission, held Wednesday, June 18, 2025.

Meeting called to order by Chairman Josiah Samy at 7:00 p.m.

Present: Josiah Samy (Chairman Samy), Brian Reed, Tom Healy, Jessica Ulberg, Geoff Brown
Absent: Jeannine Bolhouse, Gary Veldink
Also present: Ryan Schab, Zoning Administrator (ZA)

#250618-01 – Planning Commission Agenda for [June 18, 2025](#)

Moved by Tom Healy, seconded by Jessica Ulberg, to approve the agenda of the [June 18, 2025](#) meeting as presented.

MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.

#250618-02 – Minutes of the [May 19, 2025](#) Joint Special Meeting of the Township Board, Planning Commission, and Zoning Board of Appeals

Moved by Chairman Samy, seconded by Geoff Brown, to approve the minutes of [May 19, 2025](#) as presented.

MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.

#250618-03 – Minutes of the [May 21, 2025](#) Planning Commission Meeting

Moved by Chairman Samy, seconded by Jessica Ulberg, to approve the minutes of [May 21, 2025](#) as presented.

MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.

#250618-04 – Old Business – (SUP 2502) 7537 20th Ave LLC, 7537 20th Ave. to have a restaurant (no drive-through), under Sec. 13.3(B), on a parcel of land described as P.P. # 70-14-15-327-024, located at 7537 20th Ave., in a Office Service (OS) Commercial district, Georgetown Township, Ottawa County, Michigan. ([Site Plan](#), [General Notes Revision](#), [Application](#), [Fee Paid](#))

No action was taken on this agenda item as the Applicant is working on a revised plan.

#250618-05 – (REZ2504) (Ordinance 2025-05): To revise and add the following row to Sec 26.8 TABLE OF OFF-STREET PARKING REQUIREMENTS as follows, the rest of the rows in this category would remain unchanged ([Application](#), [Fee Paid](#)):

USE	PARKING SPACE PER UNIT OF MEASUREMENT AS FOLLOWS:	
INSTITUTIONAL		
<u>Indoor Recreational Facilities</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>Per 300 square feet of GFA</u>

Adam Feenstra with Feenstra & Associates Inc. represented the Applicant and presented the application to the Planning Commission. Adam Feenstra explained the rationale for applying for this ordinance amendment as the use their client is proposing (Climbing Gym) does not seem to fit into any of the existing categories in the parking ordinance. While speaking with the ZA, Adam Feenstra understood that the Planning Commission may be more likely to review the parking ordinance in its entirety rather than just add the requested category. This is a proposition that he and his client agreed is an appropriate course of action and felt like a perfect solution.

The ZA presented the [Staff Report](#) to the Planning Commission. He stated that the Planning Commission could table or deny this specific request and motion to initiate a review of the entire parking ordinance. The review could include bringing in a professional planning consultant to evaluate the categories and calculations for fairness and practicality. The Planning Commission has discussed the need to review the parking ordinance at multiple meetings this year and this is an ideal time to do it with the Master Plan review underway.

Geoff Brown asked the ZA to clarify the distinction between gross floor area (GFA) and square footage.

The ZA stated that GFA is a term referring to all the area of a tenant space as opposed to usable floor area (UFA) which may not include rooms like kitchens/closets. GFA is the entire area of the tenant space including areas like kitchens/closets. GFA is measured in square footage.

Tom Healy asked Adam Feenstra to clarify information in the application. It states there will be 200 linear feet of high climbing walls and 180 linear feet of bouldering climbing walls with 50 climbing stations. This, the application states, would allow for 26 climbers. He asked how it was determined that there would be 26 climbers and is that the total number of climbers that would be active at one time for the entire building.

Adam Feenstra clarified that 26 would be the total number of climbers on the wall at any given time but obviously there can be climbers on the ground waiting. There could be more people within the facility at any given time. Even if you required 1 space per climber and accounted for people waiting to get on the wall, you would be requiring 40-50 spaces, but the ordinance requires over 100 for this use. This illustrates that there is not a good category for this proposed use and hence why they applied to add a new category.

Tom Healy stated that every climber requires 1 belayer on a high climbing wall. Without knowing whether there will be auto-belay devices installed, there could potentially be 26 belayers required. That's conceivably 52 cars on the site just for the active climbers on the wall.

Adam Feenstra stated that their request is not specific to climbing gyms and the goal was to create a category that would fit not only climbing gyms but other similar uses.

Tom Healy stated that the Planning Commission's goal is also to create a parking category that fits well with multiple uses. He compared climbing gyms with tennis courts and expressed his own reservations about using maximum occupancy per fire code to calculate parking spaces. He also acknowledged the variations in different uses that could be used with the proposed category as pointed out in the Staff Report.

Tom Healy asked the ZA to confirm that “Indoor Recreational Facilities” is not a category currently in the parking ordinance.

The ZA confirmed.

Tom Healy noted that the addition of this category would create overlap with already existing categories in the parking ordinance. He asked the ZA for his opinion on the most effective way to allocate parking based on people who will be attending indoor recreational uses.

The ZA stated the current ordinance already calls out different parking calculations for stadiums vs. indoor recreational clubs like tennis courts. Stadiums base their parking on the amount of seating available while indoor clubs are based on membership/fire code maximum occupancy. He admitted that he would prefer to work with another professional who can provide advice on the current calculations. Something like a tennis court may need a different calculation than a climbing gym even though they are both indoor recreational facilities. The categories may need to be more specific and defined to account for the variety of uses that could fit in with this category and the current calculations should be evaluated for fairness and practicality. The applicant’s request to add a category called “Indoor Recreational Facilities” to the existing ordinance felt too broad to recommend approval for.

Tom Healy went through the examples the applicant provided in their application for similar uses in the area. He stated that the Grand Rapids area is difficult to directly compare because they have a robust public transportation system and street parking is widely available. The city of Holland is difficult to compare with because their parking ordinance is not clearly defined. The city of Grandville is not a great comparison because they have other requirements that we do not. For example, the applicant’s building would be required to be 100’ from residential which would make the entire project not feasible in the requested location. Byron Township has a parking calculation that might work great for them, but we have double the population. Overall, he agrees the best course of action is to deny this specific variance request and motion to review the entire parking ordinance and bring in a professional to review the categories and calculations. This solution is fair for not only the applicant but all people in the Township.

Chairman Samy asked Adam Feenstra if there was any discussion with the applicant of still pursuing the additional height that they requested a variance for.

Adam Feenstra stated that the applicant is willing to meet the 35’ height requirement without receiving a variance.

Chairman Samy stated that the Planning Commission is considering reviewing the height requirements in the ordinance while reviewing the Master Plan, but he cannot speak for all members. He also asked Adam Feenstra how many total spaces the applicant is proposing for this site.

Adam Feenstra stated that the other uses in the building were transitioned into office spaces as opposed to retail. They were figuring about 40-50 spaces for the climbing gym and 60-65 for the rest of the uses and their site plan would propose a total of 100-102 spaces. This proposal would require the administrative 25% reduction in required parking spaces with the knowledge that most climbers would attend after work when the offices are closed.

Tom Healy stated that he recalled there were only 65 to 66 spaces proposed total when the application was brought to the Zoning Board of Appeals for a parking reduction.

Jessica Ulberg stated that she agreed with the ZA's assessment of the request, the proposed category is vague and would be open to too much interpretation. She mentioned that Impact Volleyball could fit this category even though it was approved as a Sports Stadium/Arena. It could have used a completely different parking calculation if this proposed category was added. She also pointed out that the Impact Volleyball site has parking concerns already and may have been required to have even less parking under the proposed category.

Brian Reed stated that adding this category feels like "putting a patch on a dam." The parking ordinance needs to be evaluated, and definitions need to be added. He believes this specific request should be denied but a larger review of the parking ordinance should be opened with external input.

Chairman Samy opened the public hearing.

Megan Bloemendal, 6608 Suncrest Ave., asked the Planning Commission what the plan is for the property in question.

Chairman Samy explained that there is no current plan being reviewed for the property on Georgetown Center Dr., there was originally a plan submitted to build a climbing gym. The applicant's first step was to obtain a variance for the parking requirement, which was denied. This request is only to amend the parking ordinance and after they will look at the next steps for approval.

The ZA asked Megan Bloemendal if her comment is regarding the agenda item for the property on Kenowa Ave.

Megan Bloemendal confirmed she is asking about the property on Kenowa Ave.

Tom Healy stated that this current agenda item is regarding a request to amend the zoning ordinance for a potential climbing gym that will be located on Georgetown Center Dr., across the street from "The Win."

Chairman Samy closed the public hearing.

Moved by Tom Healy, seconded by Jessica Ulberg, to adopt the staff report as finding of fact and to recommend to the Township Board to deny the request as proposed because the category is not clearly defined and conflicts with other similar categories contained in the Zoning Ordinance, and further to direct that a more in-depth study be undertaken by the Planning Commission and staff for the Parking Ordinance, to clearly define the uses and to provide for required parking that would appropriately meet the needs of those uses.

MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.

Chairman Samy informed Adam Feenstra that the ZA would keep him updated as the Planning Commission reviews the parking ordinance and advised him to provide the ZA with any information that may be helpful for the Planning Commission during their review.

Tom Healy stated that the applicant’s proposal is a cool idea for Georgetown Township.

#250618-06 – (REZ2505) (Ordinance 2025-06): To change from Low Density Residential (LDR) to Low/Medium Density Residential (LMR) a parcel of land described as P.P. # 70-14-24-400-008, located 6621 Kenowa Ave., Georgetown Township, Ottawa County, Michigan. ([Site Plan](#), [Application](#), [Fee Paid](#))

Adam Feenstra with Feenstra & Associates Inc. represented the Applicant and presented the application to the Planning Commission.

The ZA presented the [Staff Report](#) to the Planning Commission.

Chairman Samy opened the public hearing.

Brian Merchant, 6624 Suncrest Ave., asked to see the list of permitted uses and asked the ZA if this request is only to change the size of the lots since the permitted uses are the same in LMR as they are in LDR.

The ZA confirmed that effectively this zoning request will allow for smaller lot sizes but the uses allowed on the site would not change.

Chairman Samy closed the public hearing.

Moved by Tom Healy, seconded by Geoff Brown, to adopt the staff report as finding of fact and to recommend the Township Board to approve the following resolution.

**Georgetown Charter Township
Ottawa County, Michigan
(Ordinance No. 2025-06)**

At a regular meeting of the Georgetown Charter Township Board held at the Township offices on _____, beginning at 7:00 p.m., Township Board Member _____ made a motion to adopt this Ordinance because the proposed zoning designation is **consistent** with the Master plan and the Future Land Use Map for the area; the area is **capable** of sustaining the uses within the LMR district without additional public funds; the uses allowed within the LMR district are **compatible** with the neighboring uses and to adopt the staff report as finding of fact, which motion was seconded by Township Board Member _____:

**AN AMENDMENT TO THE GEORGETOWN CHARTER TOWNSHIP
ZONING ORDINANCE, AS AMENDED, AND MAP**

THE CHARTER TOWNSHIP OF GEORGETOWN (the “Township”) ORDAINS:

ARTICLE 1. The map of the Georgetown Charter Township Zoning Ordinance, as amended, is hereby amended to read as follows:

(REZ2505) (Ordinance 2025-06): To change from Low Density Residential (LDR) to Low/Medium Density Residential (LMR) a parcel of land described as P.P. # 70-14-24-400-008, located 6621 Kenowa Ave., Georgetown Township, Ottawa County, Michigan.

Except as expressly modified by the above, the balance of the Zoning Map of the Georgetown Charter Township Zoning Ordinance, as amended, shall remain unchanged and in full force and effect.

ARTICLE 2. Severability. In the event that any one or more sections, provisions, phrases, or words of this Ordinance shall be found to be invalid by a court of competent jurisdiction, such holding shall not affect the validity or the enforceability of the remaining sections, provisions, phrases, or other words of this Ordinance.

ARTICLE 3. Except as specified above, the balance of the Georgetown Charter Township Zoning Ordinance, as amended, and map shall remain unchanged and in full force and effect.

ARTICLE 4. Effective Date. The provisions of this Ordinance shall take effect upon the expiration of seven (7) days from the date of publication after the adoption of this Ordinance or a summary of its provisions in accordance with the law.

The vote in favor of adopting this Ordinance was as follows:

- Yeas:
- Nays:
- Absent:

MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY AND ORDINANCE DECLARED ADOPTED.

CERTIFICATION

I hereby certify that the above is a true copy of an Ordinance adopted by Georgetown Charter Township Board at the time, date, and place specified above pursuant to the required statutory procedures.

Respectfully submitted,

Dated: _____, 2025

By _____

Kelly Kuiper
Georgetown Charter Township Clerk

Yeas: Chairman Josiah Samy, Tom Healy, Jessica Ulberg, Geoff Brown, Brian Reed
Nays: None
Absent: Jeannine Bolhouse, Gary Veldink

MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.

#250618-07 – Communications, Letters and Reports

The ZA stated there will still be a Planning Commission meeting on 7/2/2025. There will be one additional agenda item beyond the Master Plan Review which will be a Special Use Permit request for River City Steamboat Company LLC. This application has been in the works for months and the Applicant was told back in April that they were on track for the first July meeting. Moving forward, the first meeting of each month will be solely for the Master Plan Review and regular agenda items will be scheduled for the second Planning Commission meeting of each month. The Planning Commission will be reviewing Chapter 2 Demographics and Chapter 3 Natural Features of the Master Plan at the next meeting.

#250618-08 – Public Comments

No public comments were made.

#250618-09 – Other Business

Chairman Samy asked Geoff Brown to present the [Variance Report](#) he put together for the entire Planning Commission.

Geoff Brown stated that while he was thinking about the upcoming Master Plan review, he wanted to get an idea of what the public has been asking for the most and being denied for. He received a report from the ZA of all variance requests and outcomes since 1996. He put the report into AI to get an idea of what the reasons for denial were. Most often, he found that people were being denied setback and sign variances. He also broke the data down by commercial vs. residential variance requests. The information will hopefully be helpful to the Planning Commission as they begin the Master Plan review and want to think about what members of the public have been asking for.

Chairman Samy thanked Geoff Brown for the report and stated that AI could be a valuable tool for evaluating ordinances and trends while they begin their Master Plan review as the technology was not available during their last review. The Planning Commission wants to focus on issues that are regularly asked about to Township staff or are the subject of recurring variance requests. Specifically, Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs) have been brought up as an issue the ZA receives a lot of calls about and the current ordinance does not allow for them. He acknowledged that based on the May 19, 2025 Joint Special Meeting of the Township Board, Planning Commission, and Zoning Board of Appeals; there is concern from the Township Board that the Planning Commission wants to maximize density. But the Planning Commission is looking to find a healthy balance and address concerns of residents.

Geoff Brown stated that one of the reasons he became interested in joining the Planning Commission was his view that Georgetown is not a business-friendly community and he wanted to understand the reasons why. The variance requests are evidence that there are often restrictions that businesses are not able to overcome to operate. He wants the Planning Commission to look at restrictions that discourage businesses from moving to Georgetown so that the Township can increase its tax base and remove some of the tax burden off the residents.

Brian Reed stated that it is helpful to know about all the specific denials, but it is also important to note that due to these denials, there may be people that never applied in the first place. The Planning Commission should work to understand whether these variances would have been detrimental or could something be tweaked in the ordinance to solve these issues.

Tom Healy stated that there has been an ongoing philosophy in the Township that we do not want a big box store/major chain going in here or a strip of that type of development. There has always been a leaning toward a bedroom community without that kind of retail base.

Geoff Brown stated that it is possible that has been in place for good reason or maybe it has been an unreasonable philosophy that keeps the tax burden on residents. That is what the Planning Commission should be thinking about.

Chairman Samy acknowledged that he is unsure how many setback changes as shown in Geoff Brown's report the Planning Commission could realistically make. He asked Geoff if he knew why these requests were denied.

Geoff Brown stated that this report gives an overview of denials. The ZA told him that if there were a specific number of requests that the Planning Commission wants to investigate in more detail, those minutes could be pulled and the reasons for denial could be made clear.

Tom Healy, who is a member of the Zoning Board of Appeals (ZBA), stated that the ZBA always evaluates variance requests based on the language in the ordinance and via a strict set of seven standards. The ZBA's opinion on ordinances is not part of the equation, they look at whether the requests are consistent with the language of the seven standards. It may be time to look at language in the ordinance.

Chairman Samy stated that the ZBA and ZA along with former Zoning Administrators are brought proposals that may be good ideas but are unfortunately not possible due to the way the ordinance is written.

Geoff Brown stated that he believes the Township needs a better balance of businesses. When he moved to Georgetown it was due to it having one of the lowest tax rates in one of the lowest tax rate counties in West Michigan which is not the case any longer.

Chairman Samy stated that Georgetown still has a relatively low tax rate, but property values being high skews the tax bills.

Geoff Brown stated that having a better business tax base may alleviate some of those issues.

Chairman Samy stated that a majority of people's summer tax bill is for schools. When he heard members speak at the Joint meeting about businesses being located elsewhere, he envisioned his own taxes going up because the Township's infrastructure will need investment and it would be great to keep those tax dollars in the Township with local businesses.

Geoff Brown understands that there is an element of Georgetown that wants to keep the bedroom community philosophy. But there is a balance to be found between having businesses that offset costs for residents. If a hotel wanted to move into Georgetown, they may be prevented from doing so due to the height restrictions and again the Township would be missing out on revenue.

Jessica Ulberg stated that it is still possible for Georgetown Township to remain a bedroom community while looking at specific areas to increase density. There are vacant areas around the township that are underutilized.

Tom Healy stated that the entire south side of Chicago Dr. is underutilized, and people seem to be holding onto the value.

Chairman Samy stated that the south side of Chicago Dr. may have wetland issues.

The ZA pulled up the state of Michigan's wetland viewer. There were portions of land south of Chicago Dr. that included wetland soil and protected wetlands. People attempting to develop in that area need to be in contact with the Michigan Department of Environment, Great Lakes, and Energy (EGLE) at a minimum.

Chairman Samy stated that barring wetland restrictions, there could be parcels in that area that could support higher densities, mixed uses, and/or taller buildings.

Tom Healy stated Chicago Dr. would be ideal for that type of development but if issues persisted there, 48th Ave. is an area that is not developed and may be a spot for commercial development.

Geoff Brown stated that recently the Planning Commission denied a rezoning request to have a gas station located on 48th Ave.

Chairman Samy stated that the specific request for a gas station did not meet the rezoning standards and would have leapfrogged development, but the Planning Commission could plan differently for that area.

Geoff Brown stated that he wants the Township's Master Plan to foster development not hinder it.

Tom Healy stated that the needs of the community have changed since COVID, there is less demand for office space.

Chairman Samy stated that he lives on the west side of the Township and while there are a couple of restaurant options near him like Licari's, he usually drives to Hudsonville or somewhere else when he would rather keep his tax dollars in the Township.

Tom Healy stated that various corners at major intersections around the Township near the subdivisions may be key to fostering that type of development. Licari's on the corner of 36th Ave. and Baldwin St. is a good example.

Chairman Samy stated that an issue the Township is running into is that we do not have pocket zoning. It would be ideal to allow for maybe a corner to have commercial but then to not allow it to expand down a street further because it is a neighborhood.

Tom Healy said that would be something the Township's planner Tanya DeOliveira should weigh in on and tell the Planning Commission how practical it is to say that a certain district stops at a parcel line.

Chairman Samy stated that places like Licari's and Brick's gas stations are PUDs which require a large amount of greenspace. The Rush Creek parcel will require a certain amount of greenspace or the applicant would be requesting a deviation.

Tom Healy asked if it is possible to create a PUD that does not have those certain requirements, maybe specifically commercial PUD.

The ZA stated that PUDs have an underlying zoning that they follow but they are still required to meet the PUD requirements including greenspace. Applicants can request deviations but if they come to the Planning Commission with a list of deviations, they are setting themselves up to be denied because they may not be providing for the intent of the PUD or providing a higher quality of development. The Planning Commission and Township Board both review PUDs.

Chairman Samy also acknowledged that every additional deviation that is proposed creates a potential reason for denial. If an applicant has a request that meets all the standards of the PUD, there is no reason to deny it. The Planning Commission should determine which areas they want to see development and have a vision for them. The planner can help the Planning Commission with intelligent ways to go about this.

Tom Healy stated that it will be important to identify which areas the Planning Commission want to see this potential development.

Geoff Brown stated that areas already serviced by public water and sanitary sewer would be ideal for this type of planning.

#250618-10 – Adjournment

Moved by Chairman Samy, seconded by Geoff Brown to adjourn the meeting.

MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:22 p.m.