

Minutes of the regular meeting of the Georgetown Township Planning Commission, held Wednesday, August 6, 2025.

Meeting called to order by Chairman Josiah Samy at 7:03 p.m.

Present: Josiah Samy (Chairman Samy), Jeannine Bolhouse, Jessica Ulberg, Geoff Brown, Gary Veldink

Absent: Brian Reed, Tom Healy

Also present: Ryan Schab, Zoning Administrator (ZA)

#250806-01 – Planning Commission Agenda for [August 6, 2025](#)

Moved by Gary Veldink, seconded by Jeannine Bolhouse to approve the agenda of the [August 6, 2025](#) meeting as presented.

MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.

#250806-02 – Minutes of the [July 2, 2025](#) Planning Commission Meeting

Moved by Gary Veldink, seconded by Geoff Brown, to approve the minutes of [July 2, 2025](#) as presented.

MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.

#250806-03 – Master Plan Review with Tanya DeOliveira – Williams & Works ([Master Plan Memo](#), [Chapter 4 – Public Utilities](#), [Chapter 5 – Transportation](#), [Community Survey](#))

Tanya DeOliveira offered to walk the Planning Commission through Chapter 4 – Public Utilities first.

Gary Veldink stated the northwest quadrant is the weakest location in the Township for building right now because there is no sewer on 48th Avenue. He stated that around 100 acres of land is being purchased in that area and development will take 15 – 20 years. Further, he believes the Blendon Township side of 48th Avenue will be developed first.

Geoff Brown asked why Blendon Township would be developing their side of 48th Ave. first.

Gary Veldink stated that he has not spoken to anyone at Blendon Township to confirm his theory, but he has spoken to other people in the development business.

Geoff Brown offered that an explanation could be that Blendon Township has an easier process for developing land.

Gary Veldink stated that he wasn't sure, but he suspects Blendon Township has simpler conditions for approval.

Geoff Brown stated he felt Georgetown Township has a reputation for being difficult for developers to work with.

Gary Veldink expressed that he was unsure how the pressure line for sewer in 48th Ave. works, and that pressure lines work in a unique way. Economics could be a factor for running sewer down 48th Ave.

Chairman Samy asked Gary Veldink if he wanted commentary on the public sewer situation in 48th Ave. added to Chapter 4.

Gary Veldink said yes, he did. He continued by saying he believes Blendon Township is going to benefit from Georgetown's water sources in the next few years. He stated that Blendon has the potential to see bigger growth than Georgetown. Sewer is available in 48th Ave. near the apartments north of the ice arena. He stated that for running sewer in that area to be worthwhile to Blendon, they need to spread the cost of that project over time on a parcel that can generate that cost.

Geoff Brown asked if it would be a good idea to make a goal of the master plan to develop the northwest quadrant so we can add improvements like sanitary sewer lines and water lines to rural areas.

Gary Veldink stated that his understanding is that public water and sanitary sewer funding comes from water and sewer bills paid by residents/local businesses. When the Township needs public water and sanitary sewer infrastructure improvements, the Township must project 10 years into the future to plan for that need. The Township is currently aging, and the current lines were put in 50-60 years ago and they need repair. Water and sewer bills go up to pay for those things.

Chairman Samy stated developing in the northwest quadrant would require water and sewer lines and those lines need to be paid for somehow, whether by the Township or by a private developer.

The ZA suggested phrasing the Master Plan to state that if lines were to be installed in those areas, they would be initiated by development. Not necessarily planning for the installation but stating it would be acceptable for the lines to be installed should development require it.

Gary Veldink asked if it was possible to figure out the RU's of the area the sewer line would service, relating it to whether or not a housing development would be able to pay for the sewer line installation and maintenance.

Chairman Samy stated that as the Master Plan is currently written, certain zonings and developments can only be allowed in areas that have water and sewer, which 48th Ave. largely does not have in the northwest quadrant, however the Master Plan could be rephased to allow for certain zonings and uses to be permitted in the area if the developer initiated the installation of water and sewer lines.

Geoff Brown stated he agreed a goal should be to bring sanitary sewer and public water to the entire Township in the future, whether that is a private investment or a public-private cooperative. He further stated that the township is not helping itself by putting off planning for the future of our rural areas because he feels those rural areas will eventually be developed to some extent. He stated the Township has outgrown its ability to service more homes and businesses, and that needs to be planned for.

Gary Veldink referred to a recent case where someone wanted to build a gas station at 48th Ave. and Fillmore Street. Had the township allowed for the gas station to be built, it would have been on a septic system. He expressed he was not sure if the Township should change its zoning to say developers cannot build unless they have public water and sanitary sewer.

Jeannine Bolhouse asked if the township does already require public water and sanitary sewer for commercial properties.

The ZA stated that for subdivisions, yes, public water and sanitary sewer are required. However, if a property is already zoned as commercial and it does not have public water and sanitary sewer, then yes, a business could be developed on well and septic provided health department guidelines are met. In the case of the gas station, had the parcel already been zoned commercial, they could have been approved, and the gas station would have been built with a septic system. However, that parcel needed to be rezoned to commercial first, and one of the reasons the rezoning was denied was due to a lack of public water and sanitary sewer.

Gary Veldink stated he was not sure the Township should look at changing zoning. He stated there are parcels in the township that simply will not be serviced by sanitary sewer.

Jeannine Bolhouse stated she believes there are two separate issues when it comes to public water and sanitary sewer: maintenance of the aging infrastructure and the cost involved with that, and then expansion of these systems. Regardless of expansion, the township must be able to pay for and update existing infrastructure. She also brought up that residents frequently complain about not understanding why they must be required to connect to sanitary sewer when it becomes available.

Tayna DeOliveira stated she was taking note of the commissioners' concerns and comments. She stated that the Master Plan will have an implementation chapter which functions as a to-do list where these concerns will be addressed.

Jeannine Bolhouse stated that she was hoping for something to be put in the Master Plan to explain to residents how infrastructure like public water and sanitary sewer continue to cost money. These systems age and need constant maintenance, and the community is ultimately responsible for maintaining their systems.

Gary Veldink agreed and commented that it would be good to state the reason for the maintenance, i.e. sanitary reasons. Septic systems that are aged and poorly maintained contaminate the aquifer, affecting all residents.

Jeannine Bolhouse agreed.

Chairman Samy expounded on that by stating there was a Township Board resolution that passed years ago that spoke to the public health and wellness aspect of public sewer systems. He suggested it would be good to add an explanation in the Master Plan reiterating public health and wellness when it comes to public sewer systems.

Tanya DeOliveira agreed and stated that the importance of maintaining public sewer systems can be highlighted in either the utilities chapter or in the implementation chapter. She also commented

on how this conversation is related to a conversation about building up in established commercial areas versus building out into undeveloped areas.

Gary Veldink agreed the conversations are related. He further stated that expanding sanitary sewer can prove difficult. He cited the example of the Meadowbrook Plat off the north side of Bauer Rd. He stated septic systems are failing in that area and they want sanitary sewer. But sewer isn't available to them now and would have to be brought in from Briarwood Ave. [which lies about 1800 ft to the east]. He stated there are pockets all over Georgetown where to give one neighborhood sanitary sewer, an adjacent neighborhood must receive sewer first. He asked which was better; spending \$20 million on installing sanitary sewer in 48th Ave. or spending \$10 million to install sanitary sewer in an established neighborhood.

Chairman Samy stated this conversation relates to other conversations the Planning Commission has had lately about sprawl; when there is sprawl every system depends on the one next to it to remain effective. He suggested that perhaps they recommend in the Master Plan that priority should be improvements to the "heart" of Georgetown for example, rather than expanding outwards.

Gary Veldink recalled that there had at one point been federal funding for public sewer in the 70s [and 80s], however many residents petitioned against having sewer installed. Their refusals are the reason there are pockets of no sewer in the middle of a neighborhood that otherwise has sewer.

There was general discussion about layout of some maps and images in the Master Plan.

Chairman Samy returned to discussion of public water and sewer systems and mentioned peak water usage as cited by the City of Wyoming in a recent presentation. Georgetown accounted for a large portion of peak water usage [21% of total peak usage of all municipalities on the City of Wyoming water system] and this in turn affects our water bill from the City of Wyoming.

Tayna DeOliveira stated she would be happy to add information about the reasons behind costs going up for residents. She mentioned Georgetown is not unique in that many municipalities are at a crossroads right in terms of systems maintenance because they have been putting off improvements and repairs for decades and instead using the method of sprawl to cover costs.

Gary Veldink stated there is a graph of water usage by municipality that the City of Wyoming put together.

Chairman Samy added to that by stating he was noting a lot of residents on social media stating they did not realize Georgetown received its water from the City of Wyoming. He wanted an explanation in the Master Plan of the fact that the township does not own its own water.

Gary Veldink stated he would speak to Township Superintendent Justin Stadt about providing Tanya with the graphs and data on water/sewer infrastructure costs. The Master Plan can include this information in this section to explain the reason for upgrades and the price for those upgrades.

Tanya DeOliveira stated that this section of the Master Plan is about providing data objectively which can then be used by the Township to plan for the future.

Chairman Samy suggested perhaps the Master Plan could have a section about steps residents can implement on their own properties to help conserve water, like rain barrels and irrigation strategies.

Tayna DeOliveira stated she did something similar for Allegan County's Master Plan where it addressed the challenges they are having with groundwater. Their Master Plan includes a section about educating the public on the current issues and ways that they can help mitigate those problems.

Gary Veldink brought up the fact that it's not just water that needs to be mentioned; the Grandville Sewage Treatment Plant provides Georgetown's sewage treatment. He stated Georgetown owns part of the Grandville Sewage Treatment Plant.

Tayna DeOliveira wanted to clarify whether the Township owns part of the plant or if we simply have a service agreement with Grandville.

Gary Veldink stated he was confident the Township owns part of the plant, but agreed Tayna should receive clarification from Superintendent Justin Stadt on that fact.

Jeannine Bolhouse asked whether the Planning Commission wanted to do anything more to highlight the parks in the Master Plan. She stated parks are a huge asset to Georgetown. She stated the current presentation of the parks seemed too concise for the asset that they are to the community.

Jessica Ulberg asked if they could highlight the splashpads at Maplewood and Rosewood Parks.

Chairman Samy agreed that would be a good addition.

Tayna DeOliveira asked what from the Parks and Recreation Master Plan would make sense to put in the overall Master Plan as well, without being too redundant. She stated she often takes the goals from the Parks and Recreation Master Plan and adds them to the goals portion of the overall Master Plan.

Jeannine Bolhouse asked if the Parks and Recreation Master Plan is part of the overall Master Plan or is it a separate goal-set entirely.

Tayna DeOliveira stated the documents should be working in reference to each other. Even though the Parks and Recreation plan is adopted separately from the Master Plan, they are supposed to work together.

Jeannine Bolhouse stated she liked that idea and that she would like to see more language indicating the Parks and Recreation plan is incorporated into the Master Plan.

Gary Veldink stated that the Parks and Recreation plan was only adopted because without one the township could not apply for grants for park project funding.

Jeannine Bolhouse asked if anyone knew if there was a plan for more public space.

Gary Veldink stated there is a 30-acre piece owned by the township connected to Maplewood Park.

Tayna DeOliveira stated she could add that to the map and label it “Township-Owned Vacant Land.”

Geoff Brown asked if anyone knew the purpose behind purchasing that land.

Gary Veldink answered that the township is currently renting that property to Victory Farms. The property is largely a muck field. He stated it would be very difficult to develop. It’s low land, it’s wet, and there’s no bottom to it.

Chairman Sammy compared the farmland property to the property across from the Township cemetery on 28th Avenue which is also owned by the Township but is currently being used as a soccer park.

Gary Veldink confirmed that, yes, it is currently being leased to a soccer club, but it is a future cemetery. Due to tearing out trees in the east end of the current cemetery lot, the Township Parks Director believes the current cemetery can get another 4 years or so of use before the township needs to utilize the property on the west side of 28th Ave.

Jeannine Bolhouse did not think the 28th Ave. property should appear on the map as a park in the Master Plan as it’s directly leased to a soccer club and not for public use when the soccer club is using it.

Tayna DeOliveira asked to confirm that the 28th Ave. property should not be designated as soccer fields on the map in the Master Plan.

The commissioners agreed that, no, it should not be. Geoff Brown stated that if anything it should be labeled “Future Cemetery.” The commissioners also agreed that the existing cemetery across the street from the 28th Avenue property should be labeled “Existing Cemetery.”

Chairman Sammy stated that he noticed the township does not have a lot of sports areas. The future cemetery property is privately leased, as is the Port Sheldon Sports Complex. There isn’t really a lot of space for sports or athletics.

Gary Veldink stated he believed the Port Sheldon Sports Complex is owned by the City of Hudsonville.

Chairman Sammy stated he was surprised that the Township does not own any public soccer fields or base/softball fields.

Jeannine Bolhouse agreed.

Gary Veldink disagreed, stating there are fields on the Public Schools’ property, and they are available for public use.

Chairman Sammy countered that those fields are not township-owned.

Geoff Brown stated that while yes, the fields on the public school property can be used by the public, the school has the ultimate say as to when the public can access those facilities. He gave the example that the public can use the pool for open swimming at the Jenison Aquatics Center, but can only do so when free swimming hours are available as dictated by the school.

Jessica Ulberg states Pioneer Park does have one baseball diamond.

Chairman Samy stated Rush Creek also has one baseball diamond.

Jeannine Bolhouse mentioned that people will bring their own goals to play soccer at parks not equipped for soccer, like Maplewood Park.

Chairman Samy cited the example of a sports complex in Zeeland [Zeeland Recreation Center, a community/public recreation center operated by Zeeland Public Schools] that offers various sporting facilities for the community.

Jeannine Bolhouse cited a similar facility in Rockford.

Gary Veldink stated that the 30-acre piece of land that the Township owns adjacent to Maplewood Park could be a future location for soccer fields.

Chairman Samy suggested that the Township Board look at the parks map going into the Master Plan as it's a good visual for what we have.

Gary Veldink stated he would like the Township to work with the county to build more public property off Fillmore [future Bend in the River Park]. He suggested that there are 300 acres there that could be used in part for sporting fields like soccer fields or ball diamonds and that it would be wise for the Township to partner with Ottawa County during the development of that area.

Jeannine Bolhouse asked if they wanted to draw attention to dog parks and that some parks are more dog-friendly than others.

Tanya DeOliveira asked what the dog park situation is in Georgetown currently.

Jeannine Bolhouse explained that the only dedicated dog park in the township is the Grand Ravines Park, which is a county park.

Tanya Oliveira asked what the commissioners felt was the attitude of residents toward dog parks. She asked if dog parks are desired in Georgetown.

Jeannine Bolhouse stated that the Grand Ravines dog park is very busy. There are always tons of people there.

There was general discussion about how the dog park is labeled on the map in the Master Plan and how other parks can be labeled as "dog friendly" on the map.

Gary Veldink stated that he will visit the Port Sheldon Sports Complex with his grandsons and people will be there with dogs off-leash.

Jeannine Bolhouse was surprised to hear that as dogs are not welcome at the Port Sheldon Sports Complex.

Geoff Brown suggested using the old Kmart property for a potential sports complex.

The ZA wanted to return to the sanitary sewer conversation for a moment and mention that there is a sanitary sewer master plan that can be added to the new Master Plan.

Tayna DeOliveira steered the discussion toward Chapter 5 – Transportation. She stated that in the current Master Plan the chapter on transportation is only about roads, but transportation also includes non-motorized paths.

Geoff Brown stated he wanted to make sure the Master Plan addressed questions the public will have about wanting to have traffic lights on certain roads or traffic control devices on certain streets and to mention that the township has very little control over those decisions, that it is all county or state regulated. He wondered if it were possible to, as a Township, tell the county or the state that an improvement is wanted and if the Township has any power to make it happen.

Tanya DeOliveira stated that no, it's not possible. Whoever owns the road has the ultimate authority over that road. On Township-owned roads, the Township has the authority, but on county-owned roads or state-owned roads, the Township has no authority. She explained that there are criteria that need to be met in order to make certain improvements. She stated that the Michigan Department of Transportation has a "complete streets policy" which means that the Township can have conversations with MDOT about an improvement if public support is there for it. It does not mean that MDOT has to comply with the Township's request, however.

Gary Veldink stated that there is also the factor of Township insurance companies. He gave the example of putting in the crosswalk at Hudsonville Middle School, which had originally been wanted at Baldwin St. and 40th Ave., but is now going in at Baldwin St. and Brewer Dr. He also cited the example of the crosswalk being moved further [east] at Alward Elementary on Port Sheldon St. and he stated the insurance company drove that change due to safety concerns.

Geoff Brown cited his experience on the school board for Jenison Public Schools when they wanted to put in a crosswalk at Birchwood Dr. and 20th Ave. due to traffic being so heavy there. He stated it took a year in discussions with the county road commission before the county agreed to install the sidewalk.

Tanya DeOliveira asked if Jenison Public Schools has a Safe Routes to School Committee. She explained Safe Routes to School is a federal grant through the Michigan Fitness Council. The school can get grants to do certain non-motorized infrastructure improvements. She offered to put this information in the Master Plan if the Planning Commission was interested. She clarified that this is through the schools, not the Township.

Gary Veldink stated that this was investigated at one point and he recalled that the Township also has to provide funding for these grants. He stated that it's the schools who should have to pay for the contributing cost, not the Township. He further stated that if a school can install a \$430,000 jumbotron, they can install sidewalks for safe routes to school.

Jeannine Bolhouse countered that by saying that the places where the sidewalk would go, likely are not on school property and cannot simply be installed by the school. She cited the example of kids riding bikes down Bauer Rd. to get to Jenison High School where there are no sidewalks and cars are going 60mph.

Gary Veldink stated there is a bike path on Bauer Rd.

Jeannine Bolhouse countered that the bike path is right next to the traffic [the paved shoulder of the road].

Gary Veldink stated the road was gravel when he was a child and he rode his bike on it all the time.

Geoff Brown stated there was a lot less traffic during Gary Veldink's childhood.

Gary Veldink brought up how much it would cost to put in a sidewalk or bike path on Bauer Rd.

Jeannine Bolhouse agreed that it would be expensive, but as a long-term solution to keeping kids safe, it may be worth the cost.

Tanya DeOliveira asked about the locations of the Maplewood Lake Trail and the Baldwin Bicycle Trail as it was not clearly marked on GIS. The commissioners were able to answer her questions. She also asked about the 36th Ave. Connector project and the Commissioners were not aware of any plans to add a trail along 36th Ave.

Gary Veldink stated there is another trail that runs along 22nd Ave. south toward Jamestown Township.

Jessica Ulberg stated there is also a trail at 8th Ave. Park around the lake.

Chairman Samy wanted the Master Plan to mention that 8th Ave. has become a major thoroughfare for Georgetown. He also asked the ZA if there is a plan for roundabouts that Ottawa County is looking to place.

The ZA stated that Ottawa County is planning on installing a roundabout at the 48th Ave. and Baldwin St. intersection.

Chairman Samy thought it would be a good idea to mention that the county will be installing that roundabout. He then asked if the Master Plan mentions transit of any kind.

Tanya DeOliveira stated that the Master Plan mentions transit exists through Georgetown Senior Center and Wheels to Work [a service through Hope Network]. Both services require a fee.

Tanya DeOliveira wanted to move on to discuss community engagement. The goals chapter will require community engagement. She stated the plan is to do a survey and two pop-up events and an open house. She started facilitating discussion about the survey.

Gary Veldink asked after Question 1 which asks about why people live or would want to live in Georgetown. "Public school district" is an option, but he wondered if they could also add "private schools" as an option.

Tayna DeOliveira offered to add an option for private schools.

Gary Veldink asked about the phrasing of "agrarian lifestyle" as "agrarian" may not be a word many people are familiar with, as he himself did not know that word.

Geoff Brown suggested rephrasing it to "farming lifestyle."

Tayna DeOliveira continued through survey questions up to Question 5 which asks what type of housing from example photos given, does the township need more of. Tanya and the Commissioners had discussion about the pictures and their descriptions.

5. Looking at the image below, what types of housing are needed in the Township? (Check all that apply.):

- 1. Single family homes
 - 2. Attached single-family residential (duplexes, triplexes)
 - 3. Attached single-family residential (townhomes, row houses)
 - 4. Apartment complexes
 - 5. Accessory dwelling units (in-law suite, garage apartment, guest house, etc.)
 - 6. Retirement community and assisted living
 - Other (please specify)
- 7. Tiny homes (homes under 1,000 square feet)
 - 8. Modular home
 - 9. Mixed use housing (apartment over retail, etc.)
 - No opinion
 - I don't want new housing in the Township



The Commissioners asked where condos would fit into Question 5.

Tanya DeOliveira stated that condos are an ownership structure and that does not affect the type of housing. Condos could be detached single-family homes or attached duplexes etc. She would talk with her colleagues to determine if this has been addressed in a previous survey they put together and come back with a second draft.

The discussion veered toward tiny homes as being their own category on the survey. Jeannine Bolhouse stated that technically a tiny home is still a single-family home and could reasonably be included in with the overall category of single-family homes.

Tanya DeOliveira mentioned that often in zoning ordinances there will be a special provision for tiny homes. She also gave the example of municipalities that do not want accessory dwelling units [detached “mother-in-law suites”] but do want tiny homes.

Discussion continued until Question 9, which asks residents to give suggestions for what to do with the old Kmart site. Gary Veldink stated he wanted the question removed entirely.

Geoff Brown stated it is a question everyone in the township is talking about.

Gary Veldink explained that the property has been bought by someone else and the township and community now has no say in what happens to that site.

Jessica Ulberg stated newer residents likely do not know even what the Kmart site is.

Gary Veldink agreed and reiterated that there is no point in having a discussion or putting in the survey a question about developing a piece of property the township does not own.

The commissioners agreed and Tanya DeOliveira agreed to remove the question.

There was a consensus among the Commissioners to add an option for greenspace/parks in Question 11.

Discussion continued until Question 22. Jeannine Bolhouse wondered what the value was of asking if there is anyone in the household over the age of 65.

Chairman Samy stated that knowing if there are residents over 65 years of age, and how many of them, can inform the committee and Township Board about what improvements they should prioritize and plan for. There are a lot of multi-generational families living in single households in the community.

Jeannine Bolhouse suggested maybe rephrasing the question to specifically address multi-generational living directly as that information informs a potential housing need.

Geoff Brown stated that what our community sees more of is younger families falling on hard times financially and moving in with a parent.

Jeannine Bolhouse agreed and continued by stating that we also have a lot of families in which 30-year-old children are living with 50-year-old parents. It’s still a multi-generational family, but this

demographic would have been missed in the question about if anyone in the household is over the age of 65.

Gary Veldink also brought up the family type where grandparents are raising their grandchildren.

Chairman Samy agreed it would be helpful to address multi-generational living situations on the survey as it may be important information for addressing housing needs.

Gary Veldink stated the Township sent a survey out to 17,000 residents a couple of years ago and only received 3,000 responses. In his opinion, this meant that 14,000 people were happy enough not to fill out the survey.

Jeannine Bolhouse countered that the lack of responses is not necessarily explained by residents being happy enough to not fill out the survey.

Tayna DeOliveira stated that was why the Township elected to do two pop-up events in addition to the survey. She then directed the conversation to discuss the pop-up events and where they should take place. The ZA and Commissioners suggested the Saturday Slip n' Slide, Touch A Truck, Fall Fest at the library, and the Jenison v. Hudsonville football game. However, they wanted to make sure that they went to two events that cater to different demographics to get a range of responses from a broader audience. Tanya described the activities they feature at the pop-up events like using stickers on a map to have residents create a future land use map or giving residents ten pennies and asking them what improvements they want their pennies to go to using labeled jars. The Jenison v. Hudsonville football game and Fall Fest seemed like they would work out the best timeline-wise and to reach different demographics. The next Planning Commission meeting will be a review of the new draft of the survey and to confirm the community engagement events.

The ZA read a question from Planning Commission member Brian Reed, who was absent from the meeting. Brian wanted to know how the results of the survey are formatted.

Tanya DeOliveira stated results are typically put together in the community engagement report which lists the questions from the survey and then a pie chart or bar graph to display the results (whichever makes the most visual sense) and then comments are listed under that. The community engagement report is added as an appendix at the end of the Master Plan.

#250806-04 – Communications, Letters and Reports

#250806-05 – Public Comments

No public comments were made.

#250806-06 – Other Business

#250806-07 – Adjournment

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

MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:30 p.m.