

Minutes of the regular meeting of the Georgetown Township Planning Commission, held Wednesday, December 17, 2025.

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

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

Absent: Brian Reed

Also present: Ryan Schab, Zoning Administrator (ZA)

#251217-01 – Planning Commission Agenda for [December 17, 2025](#)

Moved by Gary Veldink, seconded by Geoff Brown, to approve the agenda of the [December 17, 2025](#) meeting as presented.

MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.

#251217-02 – Minutes of the [December 3, 2025](#) Planning Commission Meeting

Moved by Gary Veldink, seconded by Chairman Samy, to approve the minutes of the [December 3, 2025](#) as presented.

MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.

#251217-03 – (SUP2505) Frank Wiedemuth and Misty Scott (Fur Baby Services LLC), 2825 Barry St., are requesting to operate a Kennel, under Sec. 6.3 (C), on a parcel of land described as P.P. # 70-14-33-200-034, located at 2825 Barry St., in an Agricultural district (AG), Georgetown Township, Ottawa County, MI. ([Site Plan](#), [Application](#), [Kennel Drawing](#))

Frank Wiedemuth (property owner) and Misty Scott (Fur Baby Services LLC), the Applicants, delivered their presentation to the Planning Commission.

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

Geoff Brown asked the applicants how and where dog waste will get disposed of.

Misty Scott stated she uses V.I. Pets dog waste service for pick up. She has a 13-gallon trash can dedicated to waste. She stated V.I. Pets picks up the trash can daily.

Geoff Brown asked if the applicant will be with the dogs at all times in person or if she would be watching them on camera.

Misty Scott stated she would be with them in person at all times for safety reasons. She stated some of the dogs she watches are diabetic or elderly and she wants to be there if she needs to step in with her medical training.

Tom Healy asked how long the applicants have owned the property.

Frank Wiedemuth stated he's owned the property for one year.

Tom Healy asked where the applicant intended to split the parcel.

Frank Wiedemuth stated he intended to split the parcel where the LDR section is indicated on the site plan, but bring the line all the way to the back property line.

Tom Healy asked if the applicant owned the building to the north of the LDR section.

Frank Wiedemuth stated yes, he does.

Tom Healy wanted to confirm the kennel, per the site plan, is intended to be where an existing cornfield is now.

Frank Wiedemuth stated yes, that is accurate because the kennel must be 100 feet away from the LDR lot.

Tom Healy asked how far off the rear property line the kennel will be.

Frank Wiedemuth stated it must be a minimum of 75 feet away. The other setback requirements, as stated on the site plan, more or less dictate a small area where the kennel can go. He stated he is a licensed builder and intends to build his primary residence on the LDR lot and Misty will be residing on the parcel with the kennel.

Tom Healy asked if Frank Wiedemuth intended to continue leasing the parcel as a kennel, even if Misty moves out or decides not to run the kennel business herself anymore.

Frank Wiedemuth stated he does not necessarily intend to require any potential future tenants to operate a kennel on the property.

Tom Healy asked if the property is currently connected to City of Hudsonville water and sewer.

Frank Wiedemuth stated yes, it is.

Jeannine Bolhouse asked about how clients would be dropping off animals to the kennel. She asked where the transfer of the animal would occur; at the residential building or would they bring the dogs back to the kennel, and if the latter, is there a way to get a vehicle back to the kennel.

Frank Wiedemuth answered there will be a drive back to the kennel and the intent will be only four or five dogs at a time.

Jeannine Bolhouse wanted to confirm with the ZA that a special use approval stays with the property. So if the property sells to new owners, they would be allowed to operate a kennel there too.

The ZA confirmed that was correct.

Jeannine Bolhouse asked if the property is not used as a kennel, are there any limits to what it can be used for.

The ZA stated that if the building is no longer being used as a kennel, it would be out of compliance with the special land use. If they no longer wanted to use it as a kennel, it would become an enforcement issue.

Chairman Sammy asked the applicant about the “aggressive dog area” that is outlined on the building plan.

Frank Wiedemuth stated the plan was to have a large dog area and a small dog area, and if there was a dog that was having a hard time getting along with the other dogs, then it could go into the smaller “aggressive dog area” by itself.

Chairman Sammy asked if dogs were able to see the other dogs, with the concern being barking and noise levels and what were the soundproofing remedies for that.

Frank Wiedemuth stated yes, they can see each other and at this point they have not looked into soundproofing.

Chairman Sammy asked the ZA about how the property split would affect the zoning district (LDR/AG).

The ZA stated the split would not change the zoning at all. The western parcel would have split zoning (LDR/AG) and would have an agricultural building in the northern part with a residential building in the southern part when it’s built. The eastern parcel (where the kennel intends to be built), would have AG zoning.

Chairman Sammy asked if that split occurs, then does the kennel location need to change to maintain the 100-foot setback from the new LDR parcel.

The ZA stated the LDR portion of the new parcel is where it is and the kennel’s location in relation to that won’t change either.

Frank Wiedemuth stated his hope was to have the new parcel be split zoned LDR/AG and the property with the kennel on it would be completely AG zoning.

Jessica Ulberg asked Misty Scott how long the typical length of stay is for the dogs.

Misty Scott stated she will kennel dogs for vacations. Otherwise, a lot of the dogs are special needs and they just need supervised daycare. She gave the example of a dog she cared for that had seizures and many kennels will not accept a dog that has seizures.

Jessica Ulberg stated she understood that the applicant’s primary client type is special needs dogs. She asked the applicant if special needs dogs bark more or less than typical dogs because a large concern with a kennel will be noise.

Misty Scott stated they stay pretty quiet. She stated a lot of her clients come from bad situations and are too scared to display the more aggressive behavior of barking. She stated they bark once in a while, but mostly just want a place where they feel safe.

Jessica Ulberg asked if a dog were to stay overnight if the applicant or an employee monitors them overnight.

Misty Scott stated she will sleep nearby. She stated the dogs are like children to her.

Gary Veldink asked the ZA if there was a limit to the number of buildings each parcel can have because they will be zoned AG.

The ZA stated yes. The existing buildings are agricultural and at this point, they are non-conforming because they are not being used for an agricultural use. The kennel is not allowed to be used as a storage building. He would not permit another accessory building on these parcels. If the applicant were to want to put up a new accessory building, the existing agricultural building would have to come down. If a special land use for a kennel is permitted, that building must be used for a kennel and nothing else.

Gary Veldink wanted to clarify if the kennel ceases operating, that particular building cannot be used for anything else like storing a car or tractor.

The ZA stated that was correct.

Gary Veldink stated he has built a kennel before in his career. He stated they are designed to hold a certain decibel of sound so the sound won't carry outside of the building. He stated he did not know if sound mitigation was written into building code or not.

The ZA stated special land uses have standards that need to be met regarding production of noise and odors among other things. Additionally, there are requirements specifically for kennels regarding mitigation of negative impacts to the surrounding area. He stated the PC could adopt a condition of approval regarding noise based on those ordinances.

Gary Veldink asked the applicant if she would have employees.

Misty Scott stated she has a friend's daughter who could help if she needed her too, but otherwise it would only be her. She says she prefers to keep the number of dogs to a minimum to care for them better.

Gary Veldink stated he asked because the kennel was going to be equipped with a bathroom, which seemed like it would be because an employee was working there.

Frank Wiedemuth stated they were told the building needed to be equipped with a bathroom.

Gary Veldink stated that the kennel ordinance states "animals may be placed in an outdoor area for limited periods of time" and he stated a timeframe may be worth discussing. He asked if there were any other animals on the property.

Frank Wiedemuth stated only Misty Scott's personal dogs were on the property.

Gary Veldink stated her dogs may take away from what the kennel was allowed to have. The ordinance is written to state the number of animals is limited to a certain amount per acre.

Chairman Samy stated that per Sec 20.4 of the kennel ordinance, the limit applies to animals “occupying the facility” and it “shall be four animals for the first one acre and an additional animal for each additional 1/3 acre.” So if the applicant’s dogs occupied the facility, then yes, they would count.

Gary Veldink asked Frank Wiedemuth to confirm the ownership/rental situation of the property.

Frank Wiedemuth stated he owns the property, and he is renting the existing home to Misty.

Tom Healy stated in response to Gary Veldink’s point about limiting the amount of time dogs would be allowed to be outside, per the ordinance someone must be out there directly supervising the dogs, which would mitigate the amount of time they will be out there naturally.

Chairman Samy asked if the ordinance addresses decibel levels.

The ZA stated it does, however historically it is not something the township code enforcement officer enforces, and it is handled instead by the Ottawa County Sheriff’s Department (OCSD). If there were repeat offenses, that would become a breach of peace issue.

Chairman Samy asked if the township gets notified when people call the OCSD about those issues.

The ZA stated, not necessarily, but the township has contacts with animal control and the OCSD, and they sometimes will reach out in instances like that. He stated there is also a barking dog ordinance that the code enforcement officer can and has enforced. He stated the code enforcement officer will do site inspections at random times to observe the property and if an excessive barking issue is confirmed, code enforcement will require changes to the property to mitigate that.

Tom Healy asked Frank Wiedemuth if he ever planned to operate the kennel himself should Misty Scott vacate the property.

Frank Wiedemuth stated he does not plan to do that.

Chairman Samy opened the public hearing.

Charlene Horling, 2929 Barry St., stated she has two dogs herself that are contained to their yard by an invisible fence, however one of their dogs will ignore the invisible fence if it hears dogs barking. She wanted to know that there would only be up to six dogs allowed.

Chairman Samy stated that is correct.

Charlene Horling then asked which side of the property the outdoor dog run would be on.

Chairman Samy answered that it would be the east side [opposite of Charlene’s property].

Charlene Horling stated she was also concerned about traffic and smell. She was concerned that the noise and smell would impact her quality of life and her ability to sell the property in the future. She also wondered if there would be a camera on the kennel.

Cal Palmbos, 2913 Barry St., stated he was concerned about noise and barking.

Bruce Horling, 2929 Barry St., was concerned about noise and traffic.

Chairman Samy closed the public hearing.

Misty Scott spoke to the concerns about odors. She stated she has a scented cleaning solution made for kennels. She stated her process when it comes to dog defecation is to pick up the waste, clean and sanitize the spot, then use the scented solution on that spot. She stated a local veterinary clinic uses the same solution. She stated she has purchased and utilized a plug-in device that helps to calm dogs and prevent or lessen barking. She stated she is also in contact with several officers in the Animal Control Department at OCSD. She stated she, too, is sensitive to the smell issue and grew up on a farm with cows and the smell can be unpleasant. She stated there are also cleansing solutions that work on the yard to help lessen outdoor odors.

Chairman Samy asked about cameras and noise detection. He gave the example of if Misty was in her home and all of the sudden the dogs started barking.

Misty Scott stated she will purchase a camera system that is made for kennels. She stated there will be six cameras in the kennel. Owners will be able to access the camera feeds to see their dogs. She stated she, too, gets tired of dogs barking and does not want that to be the norm at her kennel. She stated the kennel will be staffed the whole time. Her goal was to do enrichment activities during the day to wear them out so they will sleep at night. She stated if the dogs get human attention they are less likely to bark and her clients being special needs and elderly dogs are going to be more mellow naturally.

Chairman Samy asked if there would be windows open in the facility because neighbors had raised concerns about having their own windows open and hearing the barking.

Frank Wiedemuth stated there would be windows on the building and also heating as well. He stated he also is sensitive to smells and was concerned when he purchased the property if the fields to the north of property had an odor. He would take an issue with the kennel as well if it had an odor and noise. He further stated Misty will not allow her own dogs to be outside alone and will not allow the kennel dogs to be alone either.

Tom Healy stated that while Misty has taken a lot of precautions to mitigate sound and odor, his concern was about the next person to move into the property. He stated he believed this was an inappropriate place for a major commercial kennel. He preferred that the special use stays with Misty's business and should her business leave the parcel, the special use also ends.

Chairman Samy asked the ZA if that was possible.

The ZA stated his understanding of the ordinance was that the use stays with the property. He stated he could look into getting a legal opinion on the matter, but his belief was that the use stays with the property.

Tom Healy stated he would like a legal opinion and that his hope was that the special land use would stay with the applicant.

Geoff Brown asked if the Planning Commission could require that the next property owner must come to the Planning Commission with a proposal for their kennel that must be approved. He stated he agreed with Tom Healy that the next kennel operator may not be as conscientious as Misty.

Chairman Samy stated he did not believe it was possible to keep the special land use with the owner rather than the property. He further stated, the next kennel owner still has to meet all the kennel ordinances and those ordinances effectively limit future kennel owners.

Tom Healy stated he understood all that, however the legal process can be very long.

Chairman Samy asked the ZA how long enforcement on a complaint would take.

The ZA stated the investigation would take about a week to confirm the violations are occurring, then a letter would be sent stating they had a week or so to correct the issues. From there if no corrections were made, it would go on an agenda. Overall, the process in code enforcement would take about three months.

Tom Healy stated all of that would occur before the case were to go to circuit court because a kennel owner could fight the township's decision.

Gary Veldink asked if the property owner were to purchase the farmland to the north of the parcel, could they then have a larger facility that supports more dogs because their acreage increased.

The ZA stated that was a good question and he would have to look into it.

Jeannine Bolhouse asked if there is a limit to the number of dogs a single-family residence can have.

The ZA stated for a parcel that is less than one acre in size, "no more than three total dogs, cats, or any combination thereof, at any one time, provided such dogs and/or cats have attained the age of six months or more." He stated this would not apply to the kennel, however.

Jeannine Bolhouse stated the subject parcel is two and a half acres and are asking to have four to six more dogs on it. She also stated the subject parcel is zoned AG and would be able to have farm animals like goats, horses, and cows, by right.

The ZA stated, that is correct; farm animals would be allowed by right on the subject property.

Frank Wiedemuth stated then hypothetically he could have a dozen cows on the property and there would be no code enforcement issue.

Jeannine Bolhouse stated that the number of farm animals is restricted by the size of the property, but yes, he could keep farm animals, with all their noise and odors, by right.

Geoff Brown asked if the ordinance differentiates between a commercial kennel and a kennel for the property occupant's animals.

The ZA stated that the approval is for a commercial kennel.

Geoff Brown clarified he meant even if someone purchased the property and were not operating a commercial kennel, could they keep their own dogs in that building.

Chairman Samy stated that the special land use is for the number of animals “occupying” the building and does not differentiate between commercial or residential use, but at that point the ordinances regarding number of animals for a residential property would go into effect.

Gary Veldink stated he was still struggling with the sound issue. He stated neighbors could call the sheriff’s department if they needed to, but that doesn’t prevent them from getting woken up in the middle of the night by barking dogs. He was not comfortable allowing a commercial use next to LDR properties.

Chairman Samy stated he understood the concern about noise, but stated that this applicant has met all the requirements for their special land use. He asked if there was anything Gary Veldink would like to see when it comes to sound mitigation.

Gary Veldink reiterated the kennel he constructed had to have sound mitigation built into the building itself.

Moved by Jeannine Bolhouse, seconded by Chairman Samy to adopt the staff report as finding of fact and approve the following motion:

Special Use Permit

Motion: To adopt the staff report as finding of fact and to approve Special Use Permit (SUP2505) **Frank Wiedemuth and Misty Scott (Fur Baby Services LLC)**, 2825 Barry St., to **operate a Kennel, under Sec. 6.3 (C)**, on a parcel of land described as P.P. # 70-14-33-200-034, located at 2825 Barry St., in an Agricultural district (AG), Georgetown Township, Ottawa County, MI. **based on the findings that all applicable standards of the ordinance have been met including the general special use standards in Sec. 20.3 and the specific standards in Sec. 20.4 (V), and with the following conditions:**

- 1. The property shall be maintained in a manner compatible with the surrounding neighborhood.**
- 2. Only one sign shall be allowed for identification purposes. Such sign shall be non-illuminated and un-animated, be mounted flat against the wall of the principal building and not exceed four (4) square feet in area. A sign permit shall be obtained for any sign.**
- 3. All animals shall be kept within a completely enclosed building at all times, with the exception that animals may be placed in an outdoor area for limited periods of time, under personal supervision by staff of the facility.**
- 4. The 2.39 acre parcel can only support a maximum of 8 total animals. If a future land split affects the size of the parcel, a new calculation must be completed to determine the maximum number of animals allowed on the site for the kennel use.**

YEAS: Josiah Samy, Jeannine Bolhouse, Jessica Ulberg, Geoff Brown

NAYS: Gary Veldink, Tom Healy

ABSENT/ABSTAIN: Brian Reed

MOTION CARRIED.

Moved by Jeannine Bolhouse, seconded by Chairman Samy to approve the following motion:

Site Plan

Motion: To approve the survey/site plan dated 8/15/2018 and submittal materials, as presented, based on the findings that all applicable standards of the ordinance have been met, and with the items not shown on the plan as listed in Sec. 19.4 waived.

YEAS: Josiah Samy, Jeannine Bolhouse, Jessica Ulberg, Geoff Brown

NAYS: Gary Veldink, Tom Healy

ABSENT/ABSTAIN: Brian Reed

MOTION CARRIED.

#251217-04 – Communications, Letters and Reports

The ZA made a couple of announcements regarding upcoming meetings.

#251217-05 – Public Comments

No public comments were made.

#251217-06 – Other Business – Parking Ordinance Amendment Discussion

The ZA provided the Planning Commission with the existing parking ordinance and an annotated version, highlighting areas which he recommended the Planning Commission evaluate. ([ZA Memo](#), [Current Parking Ordinance](#), [Current Parking Table Grouping](#), [Proposed Parking Table Grouping](#))

Gary Veldink stated he appreciated the ZA's presentation. He commented that some of the biggest complaints about parking and traffic are regarding schools and the schools do not have to come to the township for zoning approval. He was glad to hear Georgetown Township is not being any more restrictive than several municipalities in the area. He stated a consultant would only look at neighboring communities so he's not sure many changes would come of that, however it would be worth looking at certain property uses and adjusting parking there.

Jessica Ulberg stated she agreed with the ZA's suggestion that for nursing homes, parking should be determined by number of beds rather than number of rooms. She commented on golf courses which can have several uses on one property [she cited Sunnybrook, which has a restaurant open to the public, but the golf course itself is private], and so would have to meet different requirements of the parking ordinance. She brought up health and fitness centers which can have a wide range of parking needs. She stated for example, a yoga studio would be a smaller endeavor that does not need spectator parking, but the volleyball court arena off Port Sheldon Street and 28th Avenue does need spectator parking.

The ZA agreed with that, stating the volleyball arena actually met the requirements of the parking ordinance based on their plans, however they did not have nearly enough parking for the events they planned on hosting.

Jessica Ulberg stated, regarding beauty shops and barber shops, she felt two parking spaces per beauty operator would be sufficient, to match a barber shop's requirement, versus the three that are currently required for a beauty shop. She asked what the difference was between a beauty shop and a barber shop that would require more parking spaces for the beauty shop.

Chairman Samy suggested it is possibly because at a beauty shop, sometimes stylists will be taking care of two clients at once [he gave the example of while one client is having their hair colored, the stylist is cutting another client's hair while the color sets in for their initial client].

Jessica Ulberg stated she found it interesting that roadside stands require six parking spaces. She felt that was a lot of spaces for a use that is for people stopping briefly and leaving.

Chairman Samy stated he struggled with the idea of maxing out parking spaces for every establishment. He stated that save for some exceptions, most parking lots in Georgetown sit largely empty throughout the day. He worries the mindset of having large parking lots prevents businesses from moving into the township. He stated that by forcing the parking issue, businesses would be forced to move out to the more rural parts of the township, which also contributes to urban sprawl. He stated it is important to keep denser uses in certain areas to prevent overall density. He brought up the Master Plan survey results, saying residents were concerned about keeping the rural areas rural, but the township's parking ordinance does not support that. He stated when it comes to hiring a consultant, he does not want to simply compare Georgetown to other municipalities; he wants instead to have the consultant look at the current parking ordinance, and the Master Plan goals, and structure the parking ordinance to support those goals, while balancing the safety and wellness of the residents. He also stated he felt six parking spots for a take-out restaurant is too many.

Gary Veldink commented that these days if a couple goes out to eat with another couple, they will meet each other at a restaurant instead of carpooling, and in that case, two parking spots are needed per table.

Chairman Samy agreed that was true, and also said it is rare that a restaurant is operating at 100% capacity and requiring two spots per table. He stated the current parking ordinance is based on fire code in some spots, and fire code is based on square footage of the building.

Gary Veldink stated it would be interesting to talk to someone in the restaurant industry who could give the Planning Commission statistics about how many of their tables are full on their busiest nights.

Geoff Brown stated they do study and track that kind of thing. He stated restaurants will set up their dining rooms in a way to limit the number of two-person tables available because they want to bring in tables of three to six. He stated he and his spouse meet with other couples for restaurants downtown, they always carpool because they know parking will be sparse.

Tom Healy stated professional input is missing from their conversation. He stated they don't have any rationale for any of the numbers currently in the ordinance.

Jeannine Bolhouse stated she felt a lot of the parking requirements were too high, but she conceded her opinion is based on her personal experience, without the background of running a business or parking limitations. She stated she would appreciate professional insight.

Geoff Brown stated the parking ordinance is very inconsistent and was based on determinations made when the township was much smaller. He stated he's hoping a consultant would be able to rationalize any changes to the parking ordinance, or why things should remain the same.

Tom Healy stated that even if our ordinance is in line with the parking ordinances of neighboring communities, there's a chance their ordinances aren't correct or haven't been updated in some time either. There's a chance their ordinances were based on Georgetown's.

Chairman Samy stated there is merit in having Georgetown set the example as it is one of the largest municipalities in West Michigan.

Tom Healy asked if foster homes or group homes need to be looked at more closely as they are often in residential neighborhoods.

Jeannine Bolhouse stated she wants the consultants to look at shared parking. She gave the example of churches and that their lots are packed full during services, but otherwise sit largely, if not completely, empty.

Chairman Samy stated it may be worth allowing businesses to have parking agreements for shared parking.

Tom Healy stated there must be a way that older cities manage collaborative parking.

Jeannine Bolhouse stated in cities like New York or Chicago, there aren't reserved parking spots for specific businesses like what is seen here.

Gary Veldink stated Charlevoix, MI does something similar where there may be reserved spaces in front of a building, but there are general use parking lots behind buildings.

Jeannine Bolhouse agreed there needed to be a balance and shared parking lots would help that.

Geoff Brown agreed and gave the example of a restaurant that wanted to set up next to a dentist's office. The restaurant could not meet the parking requirements, but had they been able to obtain a shared parking agreement, they likely could have met the parking requirements. A dentist's office is only busy until 5:00 pm and a restaurant's busiest hours are likely to start around that time.

Jeannine Bolhouse stated parking agreements could provide timing stipulations as well.

Gary Veldink argued that businesses come and go, and what one business owner is happy to agree to, the next business owner may not.

Chairman Samy stated the shared parking agreement would likely become a stipulation of a sale.

Gary Veldink stated that would limit the ability to sell. He stated an option might be to have parcels dedicated to parking being jointly owned by businesses.

Jeannine Bolhouse stated a consultant on parking and shared parking agreements would be able to answer those questions and provide insight on how they work when it comes to selling property or businesses moving in an out.

Tom Healy stated his only comments were that the Planning Commission needs an expert on parking and collaborative parking.

Geoff Brown stated his concerns were the inconsistencies in the ordinance. He stated rationale for the current ordinance numbers is important, and that some numbers may be too few where others are too high. He stated it is important to not restrict the ability to have good businesses in Georgetown because they are a couple parking spaces short. They will take their businesses to Grandville and Hudsonville instead.

Tom Healy stated the Township Board recently denied a request by the Lowing Woods PUD to revise layout and housing styles of an upcoming phase of the development. The Planning Commission had recommended it for approval. He stated the Planning Commission in that case had received expertise from the fire inspector regarding the street layout because no member of the Planning Commission is an expert on fire code. He stated the fire inspector relies on International Fire Code standards which set minimums for different codes. The Township Board still felt the request did not meet the qualifying conditions and denied the request. He related this to the parking ordinance and while there are minimum standards, they can strive to do better.

Chairman Samy stated the volleyball arena is a good example of what can happen when only the minimum parking is approved. On the other hand he stated fire code for a restaurant speaks to square footage rather than table capacity which will be two entirely different numbers. Chairman Samy then asked Gary Veldink to discuss what happened with the Lowing Woods PUD denial as he also serves on the Township Board.

#251217-07 – Other Business – Lowing Woods and Master Plan Discussion

Gary Veldink stated the concern was the alleyways that provide access to the garages were too narrow in their opinion. He stated the alleyways' width may have been fine for most of the seasons, but when it's piled with snow, there was going to be a problem. He stated if a car was parked in an alleyway it would make things even worse.

Tom Healy stated the Planning Commission may not be able to control much about roads, but they can control things that might contribute to congestion issues, like requiring sidewalks be put in. He stated it may be possible for the Planning Commission to require more entrances/exits for a development.

Gary Veldink stated that overall, solving traffic issues at a new development won't solve the issue of when people need to leave the township via Baldwin Street and Cottonwood Drive, stating there needs to be another exit going east across the Grand River.

Chairman Samy stated it may be worth looking at construction requirements for private streets [like the alleyways].

Gary Veldink stated he did not recall if the new plan had sidewalks in front of the houses along the alleyways.

Geoff Brown stated he believed there were sidewalks just on the “front” side of the houses where the front doors were. He further stated the exact layout with the alleyways is functioning well at another Eastbrook Development in Byron Center and it’s a very popular property style. He stated one of the biggest draws to approving that style of housing in the proposal that came to Georgetown was that it would reduce the number of units and have less impact on the traffic in that area. He stated he was curious about who the Township Board spoke to outside of the Planning Commission that made them think the alleyways were not safe.

Gary Veldink stated he was mostly concerned with the safety issue of the alleyways being too narrow. He stated he also took issue with the detached garages and with the fact that it was deviating from the original approval. He stated he was concerned people were going to be parking along the alleyways which would make it harder for a firetruck to get around in an emergency.

Tom Healy stated these issues only emphasize how important it is to have appropriate minimum standards throughout the ordinance.

Jeannine Bolhouse stated the job of the Planning Commission is to balance public health and safety, with individual property owners’ rights; that they need to be careful about how strict their limits are, but that they still need limits.

Chairman Samy stated the Planning Commission also should look at the current standards, like not allowing detached garages, and consider how adjusting some of those rules could allow for different developments. He asked Gary Veldink if he had an opportunity to visit a similar Eastbrook Homes development to see how it functioned.

Gary Veldink stated he had not and did not need to because he had seen a development like that in Holland that had failed. And another development in Allendale that did not do well.

Chairman Samy asked which development in Holland he was referring to.

Gary Veldink stated it was a development across the street from Ridge Point Church. He further stated there was a development in Allendale off 52nd Avenue that had a similar layout that performed poorly and was converted back to a traditional plat.

Chairman Samy stated the Eastbrook Homes development in Byron Center is doing well though.

Tom Healy asked Gary Veldink if the Township Board had been opposed to the increase in density near the border of the development.

Gary Veldink stated no, it was mostly the narrowness of the streets/alleyways and parking as it relates to emergency vehicles. He stated visitors to the development won’t park in the designated visitor parking spots and walk to their destination; they’ll park off the road.

Chairman Samy stated when he visits friends in condo developments, he uses the designated visitor parking and walks to his destination. He argued that when people sign up to live in a

community like a condo association, which have designated visitor parking spots and rules about parking on the narrow streets, they know what they're signing up for and know there are consequences for not following those rules, such as having their vehicles towed.

Gary Veldink stated he was also opposed to the detached garages and asked what the rationale was behind them.

Chairman Samy and Geoff Brown stated it was because it allowed for private back yards as the yards were fenced in with six-foot-tall fences. Chairman Samy stated he would love to retire to a home that had a similar set up. Geoff Brown stated people were on waiting lists to get into those units in the Bryon Center development.

Tom Healy acknowledged that the demographics of the Planning Commission and Township Board are different, with different generations and different interests. He stated he was concerned that the Township Board would consider taking authority away from the Planning Commission because they are not pleased with the direction they are heading.

Chairman Samy stated that he thought the Planning Commission has a good balance of different age groups and backgrounds, and diversity fosters good conversations and decision-making, but the Township Board has less variability. He stated it would be a good idea to possibly hold a joint meeting for discussion between the Planning Commission and the Township Board. He further stated members of commissions and boards need to be cautious about not putting themselves in the shoes of other people; just because a commissioner or board member would not live in a non-traditional development, that does not mean no one would live in a non-traditional development. He related the conversation back to the Master Plan survey results and said one of the housing types residents felt were missing from the township are those for young families and young professionals, and the housing type Eastbrook Homes had proposed would have met that need. He stated the Planning Commission and Township Board should be asking themselves whether they could see people living in a non-traditional development, and if so, how can the Planning Commission make it safe. He stated he understood the Township Board had a concern over the width of the alleyways, but that the Planning Commission had deferred to the fire department for that. He stated the HOA in a development also plays a part in making sure rules are followed.

Geoff Brown stated the layout works in Byron Center and the units sellout rapidly. He stated developments like Lowing Woods are often extremely self-policing and residents will call whoever they need to in order to have a car removed from a place it should not be parked. He stated Chairman Samy made a good point when he said commissioners and board members should not be making determinations on whether they would live in a development.

Gary Veldink stated commissioners and board members also cannot approve a development just because they would live in it.

Geoff Brown agreed, and said he voted to approve the development because the housing style has already been proven to work well in the Byron Center development.

Gary Veldink reiterated that it is a two-way street.

Chairman Samy stated the danger in Georgetown is that it contains only single-family homes with attached garages on quarter-acre lots.

Geoff Brown stated they call those homes a Jenison Ranch. There's no diversity in housing here.

Chairman Samy agreed, stating he doesn't make his decisions based on whether he would live in a development or not, but on the premise that Georgetown needs more diversity in housing styles. His justification for approving the Lowing Woods request had been because it provided a higher quality of living. He stated the new area was going to provide a park, a dog park, and a pool. He stated the units had detached garages, but they had fenced-in backyards. He stated he felt those units were safer for a family with young children due to the fenced-in backyards.

Jeannine Bolhouse stated there's nothing wrong with the Jenison Ranch style of home, however commissioners and board members need to be mindful about the next generation and the new housing needs that are arising for them. She stated we have plenty of Jenison Ranch style homes, but Georgetown needs other styles too.

Geoff Brown stated he felt the Planning Commission's job was to do the research and the site visits to new developments essentially so the Township Board does not have to. His concern was that unless the Board members who voted no on the proposed development actually did site visits and spoke to the fire department, he didn't understand how they came to their decision.

Tom Healy stated the Board's responsibility is to the Township as a whole, rather than just one development, and they ask the question, "Where do we want the Township to go?"

Geoff Brown stated if, for example, detached garages are not acceptable in the Board's view, then the Planning Commission needs to know that.

Gary Veldink argued the Board did not have to tell the Planning Commission about the detached garage issue because it's stated in the ordinance as not being allowed.

Chairman Samy argued the purpose of a PUD is to allow for deviations, like detached garages, as long as it provides a higher quality of development.

Jeannine Bolhouse expressed wanting more communication or discussion between the Planning Commission and the Township Board. She stated it may have been worth having the proposal come back to the Planning Commission for revision and discussion. She stated that Planning Commission members, while not elected, are still held accountable. She stated the commissioners all live here, their friends and family live here, and any notion that they are not accountable for their decisions would be rather offensive. She stated she has been on the Planning Commission for almost 20 years, cares about this community, and always does what she believes to be in the best interest of the community.

Tom Healy stated it would be beneficial to have the Board's view on mixed-use developments and where they could be located.

Chairman Samy stated that the Planning Commission's role requires forward-thinking. He stated during the first joint-meeting with the Board, held May 19, 2025, there were a couple members who expressed not wanting any change to Georgetown. They wanted it to be a bedroom community and business can go elsewhere. He stated the Planning Commission is more focused on future planning than the Board, whose role is more all-encompassing. He stated there needs to

be a balance in development. Nobody on the Planning Commission is interested in developing every section of Georgetown, as evidenced by their priority to preserve rural farmland and consider a Clean Renewable Energy Ordinance (CREO) to protect the Township.

Gary Veldink stated there have been very few denials at the Board level in the last twenty years.

Tom Healy stated that was true, but he felt there was also concern that there was a proposal to strike certain parts of the ordinance that gave authority to the Planning Commission when it comes to development proposals and give that authority to the Board instead.

Jeannine Bolhouse agreed the Board had every right to look at a development proposal and deny it or request changes.

Gary Veldink stated Mike McGraw, who represented Eastbrook Homes at the Board meeting was open to receiving feedback on what they had to do to change the plan and get approval.

Chairman Samy stated being unelected is advantageous to the commissioners. He stated their decisions are not influenced by wanting votes or donors. He stated by allowing the Planning Commission to retain power to approve applications, it helps protect the Board. He stated he read the ordinance that was almost proposed [to go to the Finance Committee] and it seemed to say it didn't matter what the Planning Commission had recommended, the Board would be able to disregard the Planning Commission's expertise. The Planning Commissioners are the ones visiting sites and having long discussions about issues so that the Board doesn't have to. He stated he thinks that was the main reason some of the commissioners were a little concerned by the proposed ordinance.

Gary Veldink reiterated that his basis for voting to deny the Lowing Woods revision was health and safety issues and a lack of sidewalks.

Chairman Samy said those were fine reasons and they become workable, but the Township Board never gave a final concrete reason for denial and that was confusing to several commissioners.

Gary Veldink stated looking back, he could have suggested sending it back to the Planning Commission, rather than outright denial. It is uncommon that the Township Board considers a denial like that.

Tom Healy asked if Eastbrook Homes had said during the Board meeting that they were not going to change the layout.

Gary Veldink answered, no, Eastbrook Homes seemed willing to make changes.

Jeannine Bolhouse stated her understanding was that if Eastbrook Homes could not do the detached garages, they would not then do the development.

Geoff Brown stated they had the acreage to widen the alleyway, however they had it narrower because it discouraged parking in the alleyway. If they widen it, people will park there.

Jeannine Bolhouse stated in the past she felt the applications would go back to the Planning Commission rather than being denied altogether.

Chairman Samy agreed that would be a better route because a denial means the applicant must reapply. He further stated a Board member stated he was concerned about the density of the development, but the proposed revision had less units than the current approved layout.

Gary Veldink stated it's difficult to add amendments to Board agenda items, especially on an item as complicated as a development's approval. He reiterated the lack of sidewalks and detached garages issues, as well as the narrow alleyways.

#251217-08 – Other Business – CREO Ordinance Discussion

Moved by Chairman Samy, seconded by Gary Veldink, to table the discussion to a future Planning Commission meeting.

MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.

#251217-09 – Adjournment

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

MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:45 p.m.