

Minutes of the regular meeting of the Georgetown Township Planning Commission, held Wednesday, February 4, 2026.

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

Present: Josiah Samy (Chairman Samy), Jeannine Bolhouse, Tom Healy, Jessica Ulberg, Goris Passchier

Absent: Gary Veldink, Geoff Brown

Also present: Ryan Schab, Zoning Administrator (ZA)

#260204-01 – Agenda for the [February 4, 2026](#) Planning Commission Meeting

Moved by Chairman Samy, seconded by Jessica Ulberg, to approve the agenda of the [February 4, 2026](#) meeting as presented.

MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.

#260204-02 – Minutes of the [January 21, 2026](#) Planning Commission Regular Meeting

Tom Healy suggesting amending the minutes as presented to add “and a Future Land Use Map are exactly that, plans,” after “Master Plan” in the beginning of his statement beginning on page 3. He also suggested adding “The ‘uses’ while intended for single family dwellings, are incompatible because of the 30:1 scale with regard to density,” before the last two sentences of his statement beginning on page 3.

Moved by Chairman Samy, seconded by Jessica Ulberg to approve the minutes of the [January 21, 2026](#) Planning Commission Regular Meeting as amended.

MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.

#260204-03 – (REZ2602) (Ordinance 2026-02): To change from Rural Residential (RR) to Low Density Residential (LDR) parcels of land described as P.P. # 70-14-09-100-006, 70-14-09-200-001 and a portion of P.P. # 70-14-09-200-002, located 2769 Bauer Rd. and 2721 Bauer Rd., Georgetown Township, Ottawa County, Michigan. ([Application](#), [Survey](#), [Fee Paid](#), [Property Notice](#))

Michael McGraw, of Paramount Development Corporation, presented the request to the Planning Commission.

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

Tom Healy asked the ZA if he was correct in thinking the north end of the parcels about Taylor Street.

The ZA stated he did not believe that was the case. He presented a GIS map of the area to show that Taylor Street does not extend into the area, and the parcels up for rezoning do not extend all the way up to Fillmore Street, the next street to the north. He stated there are other parcels that do extend from the subject parcels to Fillmore Street owned by the same applicant, but they are already zoned LDR.

Tom Healy then wanted to confirm the subject parcels are surrounded by LDR and essentially already developed.

The ZA confirmed yes, they are.

Neither Jeannine Bolhouse nor Chairman Samy had any questions.

Jessica Ulberg asked if all the parcels owned by Tall Oak Properties in this area will eventually be platted and connected to existing public road infrastructure.

Michael McGraw stated yes, ultimately they will be developed over the next many years.

Goris Passchier had no questions.

Chairman Samy opened the public hearing.

Kort Rippentrop, 8784 Willowview Ct., asked if the Road Commission and the public access to the south [on Bauer Road] have any effect on rezoning capabilities, or running 28th Avenue through those parcels.

Chairman Samy responded that no, it really doesn't. The Planning Commission looks at whether the parcels are consistent and capable with the area and if the area has the capacity for more development too. They don't necessarily look at roads or Road Commission items. He stated eventually when the developer is looking for approval for their plats, they have to go to the Road Commission. He stated this is essentially stage one for the development.

Chairman Samy closed the public hearing.

Tom Healy stated this request was very different from the last rezoning they reviewed because of the fact that it's surrounded by low density residential, which is already developed. He did not think this was the same as changing agricultural property to an LDR kind of setting. He stated he was in full support of this development.

Jeannine Bolhouse stated she had thought a lot about the discussion they had at the last meeting with the rezoning and ultimately she did not have any issues with this current rezoning and felt it was straightforward. She stated moving forward, she would like more clarity on how density and the change in density is factored into the evaluation of the rezoning. She stated it's never been discussed for rezonings, but felt it can and should be discussed regarding consistency, capability, and compatibility, however she wanted more clarity with exactly how that can be taken into consideration. She stated she did not know where that could fit into the discussion, and what they were allowed to do legally under the Zoning Enabling Act to evaluate density.

Chairman Samy stated he felt that was an excellent point. He stated as they go through the Master Plan it might be helpful to have more bullet points or tables about density. He stated they needed to have the conversation about prime farmland and the rights property owners have to sell their property, what rights do developers have, and what powers does the Planning Commission have. He stated he wasn't sure if there have been discussions with the township's attorney on this topic and it may be a good idea to bring to Supervisor Jim Wierenga. He stated that when the Planning Commission sets a precedent by their decision, he wants to make sure they have the township in a good spot.

Neither Goris Passchier nor Jessica Ulberg had any additional comments.

Tom Healy stated the purpose of ordinances are to buffer incompatible uses. He stated over the years there has been such aggressive growth and there's been so much agricultural land available, growth hasn't been an issue, but it seems that buffering would be better served by a gradual density change, as opposed to what, in his opinion, seemed to be a rather large density change.

Chairman Samy stated that was a fair point. He stated Strong Towns ideals come into play here. Georgetown has a dense core, and the subject area is already pretty dense and it's getting more dense. He stated they should be looking at the leapfrog effect of density too when it comes to future land use. He stated there can be two major density hubs and now they are going to meet in the middle, but it puts a strain on utilities. He stated this area probably has better access for utilities than in the northwest quadrant.

Moved by Tom Healy, seconded by Jeannie Bolhouse to adopt the following motion:

Motion: To adopt the staff report as finding of facts and to recommend to the Township Board to approve the following resolution:

Georgetown Charter
Township Ottawa County,
Michigan (Ordinance No.
2026-02)

At a regular meeting of the Georgetown Charter Township Board held at the Township offices on February 23, 2026, 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 LDR district without additional public funds; the uses allowed within the LDR 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:

(REZ2602) (Ordinance 2026-02): To change from Rural Residential (RR) to Low Density Residential

(LDR) parcels of land described as P.P. # 70-14-09-100-006, 70-14-09-200-001 and a portion of P.P. # 70-14-09-200-002, located 2769 Bauer Rd. and 2721 Bauer Rd., 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.

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 3. Effective Date. The provisions of this Ordinance shall take effect upon the expiration of seven (7) days from the date of publication 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 OF ORDINANCE ADOPTION

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.

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.

I hereby certify that notice of this ordinance was published in the Grand Rapids Press on and on _____ . *(Fill in the 2 dates of publication)*

I further certify that the votes for adoption of the foregoing resolution were as follows:

Yeas:
Nays:
Absent:
Abstained:

Respectfully submitted,

By: _____
Jim Wierenga, Georgetown Charter Township Supervisor

Dated: _____

By: _____

Dated: _____

Yeas: Josiah Samy, Jeannine Bolhouse, Jessica Ulberg, Tom Healy, Goris Passchier
Nays: None
Absent: Geoff Brown, Gary Veldink

MOTION CARRIED.

#260204-04 – Communications, Letters and Reports

#260204-05 – Public Comments

There were no public comments.

#260204-06 – Other Business

The ZA stated the township Superintendent Justin Stadt had attended a meeting with Ottawa County about renewable energy facilities. The ZA stated he personally sees the value in creating a workable [renewable energy] ordinance, but did not necessarily think it was a great option to adopt a Compatible Renewable Energy Ordinance (CREO) [a CREO allows for local control for renewable energy facility permitting, but standards for approval can be no more restrictive than state requirements]. He stated there is value in imposing zoning regulations on a renewable energy ordinance regarding setbacks for example, but it also opens the door, so to speak. He stated he has gotten calls in the past about Georgetown’s renewable energy ordinance and the answer was always, “No, we don’t have one” and that was the end of the conversation. It does not mean those companies cannot go to the state or can’t do the project, but telling them, “No” versus “Yes, we have an ordinance. Here’s what you need to do. Here’s the application,” opens the door more. They can still go to the state though. He stated there’s also a funding component to the conversation. He stated the township superintendent’s opinion is to let the state handle those projects and doesn’t necessarily see the value in creating an ordinance for this when the state can come in anyway and approve it. He stated if the Planning Commission still wanted to move forward with crafting an ordinance, they can absolutely do that and create a workable ordinance. He stated he personally could go either way, leaning more towards leaving it alone, and with the Master Plan they can be very explicit about prime farmland, to define it and determine where it’s located. Since there are ways to protect the township from renewable energy farms without creating an ordinance, the township superintendent was of the opinion an ordinance was unnecessary.

Chairman Samy asked Tom Healy about when he had attended a training on renewable energy facilities, if they discussed lawsuits.

Tom Healy stated they did not.

Chairman Samy stated the lawsuits were a big concern of his. He stated right now Blendon Township is dealing with a battery storage plant. He stated if there was a meltdown, fire or failure at the plant, there is a large radius, that affects even Georgetown, which would be affected by the toxins from the batteries. He stated Blendon Township has been delaying decisions on the storage plant in part due to that danger. He stated his concern was that if there is an ordinance for it, they will come. He stated yes, renewable energy operators could go to the state and bypass the township all together, but they could work on the prime farmland definition to protect themselves.

Jeannine Bolhouse asked if there has been an analysis of what property within Georgetown is at risk for a project like this.

The ZA stated he believed there was one, but he did not have it available to him at the moment. He believed a prior ZA potentially did something like that. He stated if they did not have one, he would love to figure out which parcels have the acreage to allow for a renewable energy facility.

Jeannine Bolhouse stated she was curious because she wondered how much of the township is even at risk for this type of project. She stated she thought they needed to focus on the specific properties that are at risk and the specific projects which could go on those properties. She stated she was less concerned about solar and wind farms, but battery storage was a concern. She stated the question becomes do they create an ordinance that is very specific to those at-risk properties and carefully limit what those properties can do. She did not want to have a global copy of other townships' ordinances. She stated she felt that was the only way it was helpful to create an ordinance for the township.

Chairman Samy stated the training materials on renewable energy facilities explained that battery storage facilities have a minimum of five acres required.

Tom Healy stated the battery storage facility in Blendon Township is proposing a 100-megawatt storage system and 50 megawatts is considered utility-scale. He stated the training he attended explained that a minimum of five acres is required for a 50-megawatt battery storage facility. He stated another thing the training mentioned was utility-scale operators want high-tension transmission lines and a substation nearby, which the operators are very happy to build, and they want flat, cleared land. Because of that, he stated, the threat for these utility-scale facilities are going to be five- to ten-acre parcels that are already cleared and those near the high-tension transmission lines.

Jeannine Bolhouse asked how much of Georgetown's property meets that criteria. She stated even some land out in the northwest quadrant is not clear or flat, there are a lot of ravines and hills in that area.

Tom Healy stated parcels to the east of Boulder Bluff Condos comes to mind; there's a substation there and farmland to the south of that. He wasn't sure if that was muck fields or not.

There was a consensus that those fields were muck fields.

Tom Healy stated then maybe that particular farmland isn't suitable for building.

Chairman Samy stated his concern was that the renewable energy facilities don't all have to necessarily be in one township. He stated, based on the renewable energy training information, for solar operations a minimum average of 250 acres is required, but that could span across township borders. He stated he saw Blendon Township as the biggest concern surrounding Georgetown.

Tom Healy stated Blendon Township does not have a compatible ordinance, they have a workable ordinance. All of the benefits of having a compatible ordinance are lost if the other affected units of government don't have them.

Chairman Samy stated if the renewable energy operators had come to Georgetown first, there is no CREO, so automatically Georgetown would not get any financial benefit from the facility. Blendon Township also does not have a CREO. He stated requirements under Sec. 226(8) of PA 233 aren't strict; it feels like the bare minimum for decibels, height, and shadow flickers [shadows created by wind turbine's blades which, during times of day when the sun is low, could be cast over a home or building].

Tom Healy stated he agreed with Jeannine Bolhouse that the biggest threat to Georgetown is a battery storage facility. He stated the language in PA 233 states, "...minimum setback distances, measured from the nearest edge of the perimeter fencing of the facility" so, he asked, how far out can the fence go. Further, the requirements state the facility can be "[300] feet to the nearest point on the outer wall to an occupied building on a non-participating property."

Jeannine Bolhouse stated then a barn wouldn't count because it's unoccupied.

Jessica Ulberg stated she agreed they should look at the land in the township where something like a battery storage facility could even go. She agreed the ravine parcels in the northwest quadrant might not be suitable for a facility. She also agreed battery storage would be the most likely type of facility to come to Georgetown. She stated she felt there wasn't enough room for big wind turbines. She stated she's indifferent on adopting an ordinance because the renewable energy operators should always go back to the state.

Chairman Samy stated if Georgetown adopted a CREO, then operators would not have to go to the state. It stops at the local level. But technically a CREO is just adopting the state's standards as laid out in Sec. 226(8) of PA 233.

Jessica Ulberg stated she felt there was little point in adopting a CREO if it's just the state requirements, and the operators would go to the state anyway if Georgetown did not have a renewable energy facility ordinance. She stated she felt they could do things to make it harder for renewable energy operators to come into the township, like designating farmland.

Tom Healy stated it all begins with determining what parcels are vulnerable to this type of development, and then they can look at what ordinance standards would help those parcels.

Goris Passchier stated he agreed they needed to identify what parcels are possibly at risk.

Chairman Samy stated public perception also needs to be taken into consideration here. He stated he's been following the Blendon battery storage facility situation and a lot of the public believes that the planning commission, because Blendon has a workable ordinance for renewable energy, must *want* renewable energy facilities, even though by adopting a workable ordinance, Blendon was able to make its zoning requirements stricter for those facilities. But the public perception is that they want this here and they are trying to ruin farmland.

Tom Healy stated the Blendon Township Supervisor has stated if he could change anything, he would have engaged the public on talking about renewable energy facilities and have them involved in discussions like what the Georgetown Planning Commission is having now, so that the public understands the township has very little control.

Chairman Samy stated it can be difficult to get the public to engage in a conversation until it's too late; they typically engage when it's next door to them. He stated he recently had to delete his Facebook because of how toxic interactions can be, but he kept noticing the public reacted after the fact, giving the example of the clocktower at the corner of Baldwin Street and Cottonwood Drive and noting the usual low attendance at Planning Commission meetings. He stated no matter what the Planning Commission decides to do, the public may miss the discussions/meeting minutes, and they will come to the same conclusion that Blendon residents have: that the Planning Commission must want renewable energy. He stated he did not feel the Township Board would want to take up this issue either.

Jeannine Bolhouse agreed with Chairman Samy.

Chairman Samy stated he did not think it was worth it at this point to create a CREO. He did not believe it was something that would benefit the township. He didn't think it would benefit the Board to have news crews coming in to film the vote on battery storage or data centers. He stated it would be better to focus on identifying prime farmland and taking steps to protect it.

The ZA stated he would continue looking into this topic, and looking into where vulnerable parcels are in Georgetown for renewable energy facilities. He stated he will keep providing the Planning Commission with updates and encouraged them to send information his way as well.

Chairman Samy stated another issue with a CREO is that if Georgetown were to adopt one and a renewable energy operator were to meet all the standards, it would be approved right away. Whereas if Georgetown did not have one, they have to go to the state and it might give Georgetown other legal options.

Tom Healy stated one of the other points that came out during his training was all municipalities should have a non-utility-scale renewable energy ordinance in place for operations that are less than 50 megawatts. He stated he did not know that Georgetown had that.

The ZA stated that Georgetown does not have an ordinance like that.

Chairman Samy stated a few years ago there was a giant solar panel that someone installed in their yard in Georgetown. He asked if the ZA knew what happened to it.

The ZA stated he believed they just got rid of it. He stated solar panels are very popular now, often roof-mounted, which doesn't really affect zoning. But he believed the solar panel in question was

probably seen as a great opportunity to save money, and the owners might not have realized there are some zoning implications and permitting with placing it in the yard.

Tom Healy stated that property was right on a lake and the panel was located in the portion of the yard that abutted the street, but their perception might have been that the front yard was the lake.

Jeannine Bolhouse stated she felt like they discussed at one point putting things on a building's roof, like wind turbines, and what the parameters were for that. She stated she remembers being surprised by what the regulations were.

The ZA stated if someone were to come in for roof-mounted solar panels, for zoning the requirement is they are not expanding the footprint of their home or going over the height restrictions in the ordinance. There isn't otherwise a zoning aspect to it. It's more so electrical permitting. He stated the code enforcement officer will inspect those sites to ensure the panels are on the roof and not in the yard, but otherwise it's not a zoning concern. It's more so ensuring it's built to code and properly installed.

Chairman Sammy stated he remembered talking about wind turbines and looking at decibels for noise. He asked the commissioners if they were all on the same page to do nothing in regard to adopting a CREO or renewable energy ordinance.

Goris Passchier stated he had a comment first, about the discussion on public perception and reactions. He stated he wondered if the township was ever proactive to see what the reaction is going to be for different projects. He stated for example in sales, they have their presentation, but they already know ahead of time what the potential reactions are going to be. He wondered if the township had ever gone through that process.

Chairman Sammy stated he did not know if they ever would have done that. He stated the township has arranged a couple surveys in the past. He stated there was a township-wide survey related to the Master Plan that garnered over one thousand responses out of 55,000 residents. He stated other surveys have resulted in fewer responses. He stated the question starts to become if they were to post a survey on Facebook or the township website, some residents will respond, but the survey won't be scientific at all.

Goris Passchier stated he was more so asking if the township has ever prepared for the reaction of the public. He stated knowing what the public's reaction is going to be will help the township prepare to respond to it.

Chairman Sammy stated that would always be helpful. He stated sometimes they get caught off guard. He stated there was one situation where an Airbnb application came to the Planning Commission to request to have a bed and breakfast essentially, but it was in a neighborhood that had an HOA and there were news crews, every seat in the board room was filled. He stated they had no idea it would turn into something that big.

Jeannine Bolhouse stated the county sheriff even checked in to make sure the commissioners felt safe.

Jessica Ulberg stated she really appreciated Jeannine Bolhouse in that meeting because her legal background helped to curb unrest by the HOA members. She stated the Planning Commission has to follow the ordinance, but they can't enforce an HOA's rules.

Chairman Samy stated there was a big public presence during meetings about Grand Rapids Gravel as well. He stated the Planning Commission typically does not get big reactions and that it's more so the Township Board, and the backlash usually occurs on Facebook.

Jeannine Bolhouse stated there is an element of cowardice involved when people hide behind computer screens. They don't have to say things to people's faces, they don't have to stand up and give an opinion. She stated people can be ill-informed, so it makes it difficult to prepare for what they're going to respond with because the commissioners do their research and have informed decisions. She stated it is difficult to respond when people didn't do research or didn't listen to any of the opinions and discussion had by commissioners. She stated people often have already formed an opinion and they just want to be mad.

Tom Healy stated the biggest concern about what's happening in Blendon Township with the battery storage facility seems to be that people think there will be a toxic event.

Goris Passchier stated the reality is people don't quite trust what they are being presented. He gave the example of being a Vietnam veteran being exposed to Agent Orange. And that's the mindset of many people; they're concerned about toxins.

Chairman Samy stated the nice thing about being on the Planning Commission is they are not elected so they don't have to take actions to get themselves re-elected. The goal is to give the Board as much sound advice as they can. They can take big topics like renewable energy and give the Board the reality of the situation. He stated the Planning Commission does not want to be political and is designed to be neutral.

Tom Healy stated in order to make an ordinance what they want it to be, the renewable energy operators wouldn't come to the township anyway. It would be too unworkable, and they would bypass the township.

The discussion on renewable energy ordinances ended and the ZA spoke to the Planning Commission about a situation that came up at the Zoning Board of Appeals meeting. He stated a potential ordinance change may come of it. He stated he's writing language for it that will be presented to the Planning Commission at the next meeting, during which the Planning Commission can then vote to initiate an ordinance amendment or not. He stated it is in regard to the uses allowed in the Industrial zoning district and a couple definitions. He stated they will talk more about it at the next meeting. He informed the commissioners of upcoming trainings being put on by the Michigan Association of Planners if they were interested in going. The ZA also brought up how he has been getting a number of calls from residents wanting to replace their lawns with rocks. They want to tear out their grass lawns. He stated it was likely spurred on from the water rate increase. He stated the ordinance is very vague. It states homeowners "shall install a lawn or other type of ground cover." The general definition of "ground cover" includes rocks. He stated he did not think the ordinance is strong enough to enforce on properties that have already replaced their lawns with rocks. He stated he did not have an opinion either way, but stated it may be a good idea to better define what a lawn is, what counts as ground cover, and what doesn't.

Chairman Samy stated he understood the concern with rocks though. He wondered what type of rocks they were looking at. He stated if it was pea gravel, it could get all over the roads and in storm drains. He was concerned about that.

Jessica Ulberg stated there is a home in the township that has a complete beach volleyball court in their entire backyard so they have no grass, just sand. She gave another example of a property in the township that already has their front yard being entirely rocks.

The ZA stated the way the ordinance is currently written, there is no violation of the Ordinance.

Goris Passchier stated they need to identify what a “lawn” is. He stated Las Vegas is all rocks, which is natural for that area. However in Georgetown, an all-rock yard would not be natural to the area and felt it would be a negative aspect. He also stated rocks can be thrown. He stated at one time Meijer used to have rocks around their trees, but they got rid of them because it was a security risk. He stated they could identify it as “vegetation” instead of a lawn, and then identify which types of vegetation can be planted here.

The ZA stated they don’t currently have a list of vegetation that can be planted in Georgetown. He stated from the code enforcement side it can be difficult. He gave an example of a resident who had weeds in their front yard, so the township sent them a letter saying they needed to be removed. The resident spoke to the ZA and sent him a list of all the plants in the front yard, saying they were not weeds, and they were specific varieties of plants. So, it can be difficult to enforce.

Chairman Samy stated the ordinance has regulations about houses needing to have a certain amount of square footage; they could possibly do the same thing with grass or rock. He stated there are also whole neighborhoods that have so much concrete in their backyards for patios or pools that it’s creating groundwater issues because rain can’t seep into the ground.

Jessica Ulberg stated people could put in turf.

The ZA stated here is one all-turf property in the township, and Chairman Samy stated there’s a business which has that too.

Jeannine Bolhouse stated she would be interested in what they come up with about regulating how much concrete could be on a property, because she felt it was difficult to enforce. Each lot is slightly different, drainage is a factor, and where do they start measuring the lot from, do they include the sidewalk, etc...

Goris Passchier stated having the ordinance is one thing and enforcement is another, unless every ordinance needs to be enforceable.

Jeannine Bolhouse stated her point was consistency. Everyone’s property is different. She stated she didn’t want to create an administrative nightmare for the ZA and for residents being able to read the ordinance and implement it.

#260121-07 – Adjournment

Moved by Chairman Samy, seconded by Tom Healy, to adjourn the meeting.

MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:06 p.m.