

Minutes of the Gaines Charter Township Planning Commission

Regular Meeting held March 26th, 2026, at 7 pm

8555 Kalamazoo Ave., SE, Caledonia, MI 49316

MEMBERS PRESENT: Rober, Haagsma, Billips, Wiersema, Thomas

MEMBERS ABSENT: Giarmo and Waayenberg, with notice.

STAFF PRESENT: Dan Wells, Community Development Director; Dakota Swan, Assistant Planner

1. CALL TO ORDER AND ROLL CALL

Chair Giarmo called the meeting to order at 7:01 PM.

2. CONSIDERATION OF MEETING AGENDA

The agenda was approved as presented.

3. CONSIDERATION OF MEETING MINUTES

Consideration of the February 26th, 2026, regular Planning Commission meeting minutes.

Motion:	Motion by Thomas, supported by Haagsma to approve the minutes of February 26 th , 2026.
DISCUSSION:	None.
AYES:	All
NAYS:	None
ABSTAIN:	None
DECISION:	Motion Carried (5-0)

4. INQUIRY OF CONFLICT OF INTEREST

None.

5. PUBLIC COMMENT

Taylor Rieder of 7522 Carpet Rose Drive expressed her concerns pertaining to a proposed rezoning requested by Microsoft for a data center at the northwest corner of Patterson Avenue and 76th Street. Rieder explained that as a mother she is concerned about adverse effects on quality of life for residents in the area and students at the nearby elementary school.

Stephanie Pratt of 4642 76th Street expressed similar concerns, noting that she does not believe a data center is compatible with the neighborhood character in the area and that she is very concerned about the long-term effects that may arise from chronic exposure to vibrational sounds. Pratt encouraged the Planning Commission to consider a moratorium on data centers and to consider an update to the Zoning Ordinance to further restrict noise emissions and increase setback requirements.

Tony Mauer, a former resident of Gaines Charter Township, expressed his concerns regarding the proposed rezoning, including a lack of job opportunities associated with the project. Mauer stressed that he would like to see Microsoft serving the Township rather than the Township serving “big tech”.

6. ITEMS FOR CONSIDERATION

A. Public Hearing; 6875 Hammond Avenue SE – Rezoning from Suburban Residential to Village Residential

Motion:	Motion by Haagsma, supported by Billips to open the public hearing.
DISCUSSION:	None.
AYES:	All
NAYS:	None
ABSTAIN:	None
DECISION:	Motion Carried (5-0)

No comments were made.

Motion:	Motion by Wiersema, supported by Haagsma to close the public hearing.
DISCUSSION:	None.
AYES:	All
NAYS:	None
ABSTAIN:	None
DECISION:	Motion Carried (5-0)

Brett Elder, the homeowner of 6875 Hammond, explained that he is seeking a rezoning of his property from Suburban Residential (SR) to Village Residential (VR) with the intention of dividing and selling the property as two buildable lots.

Planner Wells explained that Elder currently has frontage on Hammond but ideally would like the resultant parcel of a future split to have frontage on Dutton Avenue as well. A rezoning to VR would satisfy the dimensional requirements for lots in the Zoning Ordinance, and the property is future zoned for Village Residential use. Wells noted that the request satisfies all standards of approval from Section 31.40 of the ordinance, noting that the only viable use on this parcel would be residential, as it would

not meet the dimensional requirements necessary to sustain a permitted institutional use. Wells also noted that the parcel has public sewer service but not water, however, the Township is working on bridging a gap in water service in the neighborhood which will eventually connect the property to public water.

Commissioner Wiersema inquired about where sewer lines currently run; Wells responded that there is sewer in both Dutton Avenue and Hammond Avenue, but there is a gap in water service. Wells explained that this is because several houses in the area used wells in the past, and over time the Township has been working in a piecemeal fashion to connect residents in the neighborhood to water service.

Motion:	Motion by Haagsma, supported by Thomas to make a positive recommendation to the Township board for the rezoning of 6875 Hammond Avenue from Suburban Residential to Village Residential.
DISCUSSION:	None.
AYES:	All
NAYS:	None
ABSTAIN:	None
DECISION:	Motion Carried (5-0)

B. 2096 76th Street SE – 4 to 1 Ratio Wavier

Bruce VanderVennen spoke on behalf of his father Jack VanderVennen, who is the homeowner and applicant for this request. VanderVennen explained that his father owns 38 acres of land and wishes to divide it to sell a piece of land to his granddaughter while preserving the remaining acreage for farming, however, the parcel they desire to create does not satisfy the dimensional requirements for lots in the Gaines Charter Township Zoning Ordinance.

Planner Wells noted that the existing parcel is already noncompliant with the required 4 to 1 ratio, which is permitted by state law but prohibited at the township level without a wavier. The proposed split would bring the parcel further out of compliance with the 4 to 1 ratio, however, there is still enough room for a 66-foot-wide right-of-way to be established should future development occur down the line. The Township anticipates that water and sewer service, which will enable suburban development, will be available in this area in the distant future. Although the applicant has no intention of developing the property at this time, the request for a 4 to 1 ratio wavier will not be prohibitive to future development efforts by a future owner.

Commissioner Wiersema expressed satisfaction that the proposed land division would still leave enough width to establish a right-of-way down the line.

Commissioner Haagsma sought clarification on which existing conditions will end up on the original parcel, and which elements are anticipated to remain on the new parcel; VanderVennen responded that the existing outbuildings will remain on the lot with the dwelling, however, the existing driveway and

easement will be on the new parcel. Planner Wells noted that the proposed division does not isolate any accessory buildings on parcels without primary uses/structures.

Commissioner Haagsma inquired about what the implication would be if the remnant parcel with the driveway ever fell under different ownership than the new parcel; Planner Wells responded that if either parcel were ever intended to be divided, a compliant road would have to be built to access future lots. Haagsma noted that he does not have any concern with the ratio wavier itself however, he is concerned with whether the position of a future driveway would be problematic. Ultimately, the Kent County Road Commission will be responsible for overseeing and approving any future roadway improvements and/or newly created roads and driveways.

Commissioner Wiersema inquired about whether a motion to approve this request would warrant any conditions; Planner Wells explained that conditions would not be necessary to approve the request, as the land division itself would be an approval by right, with issuance of a 4 to 1 ratio wavier.

Motion:	Motion by Wiersema, supported by Billips to approve the 4 to 1 ratio wavier associated with a proposed land division at 2096 76 th Street SE.
DISCUSSION:	None
AYES:	All
NAYS:	None
ABSTAIN:	None
DECISION:	Motion Carried (5-0)

C. 410 76th Street – Concept Plan

Planner Wells explained that there is interest in developing 410 76th Street into a residential development with duplex units that feature large garages, specifically to store RV's. The only mechanism to allow for this type of development would be to rezone the property from Suburban Residential to Multiple Family Residential to achieve their vision, due to the amount of duplex units the developer would be proposing. Wells noted that the developer wanted to informally present their idea to the Planning Commission to get a read on whether they would be amendable to a rezoning. Wiersema and Rober both expressed that they would likely lean against a rezoning to MFR, as this zoning district is such a stark difference from the current SR zoning designation.

D. 2025 Annual Planning & Zoning Report

The Michigan Planning Enabling Act requires the Planning Commission to make a written report to the legislative body (Township Board of Trustees) outlining the operation and status of planning activities.

Assistant Planner Swan gave a brief overview of changes to categorizations within the report, specifically regarding housing data, which are in more alignment with the updated Zoning Ordinance.

Planner Wells noted that less building permits were issued in 2025 than in the previous year.

Motion: Motion by Haagsma, supported by Wiersema to approve the 2025 Annual Planning and Zoning Report, with corrections.

DISCUSSION:

AYES: All

NAYS: None

ABSTAIN: None

DECISION: Motion Carried (5-0)

7. GENERAL DISCUSSION

Planner Wells noted that April 15th will be the special Planning Commission meeting to consider a rezoning request submitted by Microsoft. The meeting will be held in the auditorium at South Christian High School at 6PM.

8. ADJOURNMENT

Motion: Motion by Haagsma, supported by Thomas, to adjourn at 7:56 PM.

DISCUSSION: None.

AYES: All

NAYS: None

ABSTAIN: None

DECISION: Motion Carried (5-0)

CERTIFICATION:

I hereby certify that the above is a true copy of the minutes from the March 26th, 2026, Planning Commission Meeting of the Gaines Charter Township Planning Commission held at the time and place mentioned above pursuant to the required statutory procedures.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Lani Thomas". The signature is written in a cursive style and is positioned above a horizontal line.

Lani Thomas,

Secretary

Gaines Charter Township Planning Commission

Date: April 23, 2026