



Geauga County Planning Commission

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<https://bocc.geauga.oh.gov/departments/planning-commission>

MARCH 12, 2024 MEETING MINUTES

1. Pledge of Allegiance

Chairman Nick Gorris called the March 12, 2024 regular meeting of the Geauga County Planning Commission to order at 7:31 a.m. at 12611 Ravenwood Drive, Suite A334, Chardon, Ohio. A quorum was obtained. Roll call was called by Ms. Irizarry, and the following members were present:

2. Roll Call

Members present: Commissioner Dvorak, Gary Neola, Nick Gorris, Dennis Bergansky, Walter Claypool, Caterina Cocca-Fulton, Dan Miller and Jim McCaskey.

Members absent: Commissioner Tim Lennon and Commissioner Ralph Spidalieri.

Staff present: Linda Crombie (Director), Allyson Kobus (Planner II) and Pamela Irizarry (Administrative Assistant).

Township Members present:

Chris Alusheff, Claridon and Chester Township Zoning Inspector
Kathleen McCarthy, Chester Township Zoning Secretary

Mr. McCaskey arrived at 7:35 a.m.

Ms. Cocca-Fulton arrived at 7:34 a.m.

Commissioner Dvorak left at 9:05 a.m.

3. Approval of Minutes for the February 13, 2024 Regular Meeting

Commissioner Dvorak made a motion to approve the February 13, 2024 regular meeting minutes, and Mr. Claypool seconded the motion, and upon a call for the vote, the motion passes.

4. Approval of Agenda/Addendum Items:

Chairman Gorris asked if there was anything to add to the agenda, seeing none, Mr. Bergansky made the motion to approve the agenda as presented and Mr. Neola seconded, and upon a call for the vote, the motion passes.

5. Financial Report and Approval of Expenses

Chairman Gorris said as discussed at the previous meeting, the Financial Report and Approval of Expenses were sent to the board in the Dropbox link. Ms. Crombie added that the report will now be sent out the week before the meeting along with all the meeting materials.

Mr. Bergansky made a motion to approve the financial report and the summary of expenses and Commissioner Dvorak seconded, and upon a call for the vote, the motion passes.

6. Director's Report:

1. New Planning Commission member: Ms. Crombie said she would first like to welcome new board member, Matt Johnson, from Middlefield. He met with staff on February 27, 2024, where he was provided a copy of the General Plan and given guidance on what the Planning Commission and staff do and how to navigate the website to find information.

2. New Building Lots: Ms. Crombie said February had four (4) building lot proposals submitted, there were two (2) for Thompson, one (1) for Munson, and one (1) for Middlefield township.

3. Claridon Township Land Use: Ms. Crombie said staff continues to work with Claridon Township Land Use Committee; discussion was about their survey results summary, they reviewed the analysis of their Institutional zoning district, and are preparing to hold a public meeting for any comments. After that the staff will begin working with the committee on writing the actual plan. There was 12.5 hours in February spent on the plan update and a total of 133.7 hours for staff involvement from May 2023 to February 2024.

4. Thompson Township Land Use Plan Update: Ms. Crombie said she and Ms. Kobus are in the early stages of assisting Thompson Township and spent approximately 1.5 hours in February preparing for their land use committee organizational meeting.

5. Interoffice Assistance: Ms. Crombie said she provided Geauga Soil and Water Conservation District with population data from the previous four censuses for Chester, Russell, and Bainbridge Townships and made the County's Department of Economic Development aware that Ohio Senate Select Committee on Housing completed their regional public hearings regarding barriers to affordable housing.

Ms. Kobus attended another Solar Eclipse meeting with the Geauga Department of Emergency Services (EMS) and Geauga Park District representatives, and she updated the salt done area map for Geauga Public Health. Mr. McCaskey commented how the whole weekend before the Solar Eclipse, the Historical Society is expecting a lot of traffic. Mr. Gorris said it will be no different than when Burton has the Geauga County Fair, the problem will be when the eclipse is done, and everyone leaves at once. Ms. Kobus said EMS is working to help out with traffic by using the "Ways" app.

6. NOACA Northeast Ohio Travel Study: Ms. Crombie said at the February meeting, board member, Mr. Claypool mentioned NOACA was conducting a regional transit study. She followed up on this and found it is survey but there is an incorrect reference to ODOT on NOACA's website, which she contacted NOACA about, but it has not yet been corrected. The travel survey that was sent to 9,000 households in the NOACA region. Residents cannot take the survey unless they received it in the mail with their assigned eight-character PIN. Mr. Miller asked if people were really being paid to take this survey and Mr. Bergansky said yes. Mr. Claypool said he encouraged anyone who receives this survey to take it.

7. ODOT Strategic Transportation and Development Analysis: Ms. Crombie said ODOT held a listening session at Cuyahoga Community College regarding ODOT's Strategic Transportation and Development Analysis mandated by HB 23. She said her email notification from NOACA of the session went to her junk mail, so she was not able to attend, but did contact ODOT to see if sessions were recorded and ODOT sent her a flyer about the analysis. The analysis has transportation considerations such as safety, congestion, reliability asset condition, resilience, and accessibility. ODOT will be producing a draft of the existing regionals conditions for their internal reviews that will include findings from their engagement efforts across the state. The final reports will be available towards the end of the year. Mr. Claypool commented that Geauga County has their own land use plan and NOACA should not be involved.

8. Subdivision Regulations: Ms. Crombie said she sent out the draft of proposed changes to the Subdivision Regulations, Article III, to various departments in the county that will be affected by these changes for their review. Articles, IV, V, and VI will be presented at future meetings.

9. CEDS Follow-up: Ms. Crombie said as a follow-up to the February Director's Report, she emailed County Administrator, Gerry Morgan, regarding a response from the County Commissioners in relation to the 10/12/23 letter from Planning Commission to the County Commissioners. She will keep board updated when she receives more information.

10. Northeast Ohio Annual Planning and Zoning Workshop: Ms. Crombie said if anyone is interested in attending this workshop, the cost is \$60 for American Planning Association members, and \$70 for anyone else. She will provide more information when it is available in May.

11. Northeast Counties Farm Bureau Rural Connections Program: Ms. Crombie said the February 2024 edition of the Geauga County Farm Bureau newsletter contained a link for members to take a broadband usage survey explaining what their needs regarding broadband might be. Mr. Claypool said the Verizon 5G wireless services are good and in less covered areas, 5G is the solution.

12. Total Solar Eclipse: Ms. Crombie said the County Auditor's GIS department created a hub page to showcase the three (3) larger events happening in Geauga County for the total solar eclipse. They also incorporated Ms. Kobus' story map.

Ms. Kobus also assisted with preparing correspondence with the Department of Emergency Services about the solar eclipse, which was sent to elected officials and township officials.

13. Senate Select Committee on Housing: Ms. Crombie said she is providing the link for the Columbus Dispatch interview with the Ohio Township Association's Executive Director Heidi Fought regarding the Senate Committee on Housing. This is in relation to the Ohio Township Association opposing homebuilders push to take away township zoning. There is a lot of data in the report prepared for the Central Ohio Homebuilders industry who are pressuring state legislators to remove residents' ability to defeat zoning changes through referendum and eliminating non-limited housing rule township zoning.

14. Commercial Construction Activity, February 2024: Ms. Crombie said there was one (1) addition project in February in Parkman Township, for Bow and Reels, which was a storage addition.

15. GIS-Planning intern position: Ms. Crombie said she has received an online application regarding the open intern position. She will be setting up a Teams interview next week. Mr. Bergansky asked what is the course of study for someone in GIS? Ms. Kobus said typically Geography and GIS. Mr. Gorris said some GIS programs have surveying courses as well.

16. Legislative Updates: Ms. Crombie highlighted the House Bill updates.

HB 82, allocates money for the state's capital budget to fund local community and infrastructure projects, has passed the House, and April 8, 2024 is the deadline for projects to be submitted.

HB 181, if passed, is helpful to the community at large, as it will require the County Recorder to make available to the public on the Recorder's website, deeds and other real estate documents recorded on or after January 1, 1980.

HB 391, this bill changes the laws of accessible parking, mostly in Title 45 so it does not have direct impact on zoning.

Federal Update: H.R. 7325, this bill was recently introduced to the Committee on Financial Services and the Way and Means Committee. Ms. Crombie provided their link and the bill's introductory description, which is intended to address affordable housing. She encourages the board to review it as the federal government is wanting to spend a lot of money regarding this matter. Mr. Claypool said that this is another example of what is wrong with the country.

17. Work Summary, February 2024: Ms. Crombie the month of February was much slower compared to January. There were 14 lot splits/subdivisions/easements/amendments as compared to January, which was 41. The staff referred to the General Plan four (4) times in February regarding Demographics, Economic Development, Natural Resources, and Community Facilities. Staff also assisted with the Claridon Township Land Use plan and Thompson Township Land Use plan preparation.

9. Township Zoning Amendments to be Reviewed:

**A. Troy Township
Text Amendment ZC 2024-1VI
Initiated February 19, 2024
By Zoning Commission**

Ms. Crombie said Troy Township Zoning Commission submitted zoning amendment ZC 2024-1VI impacting Article VI Parking, Driveways, and Loading/Unloading Spaces. She had comments and recommendations.

Section 601; Number of Parking Spaced Required: Trucking or Transportation is being added to list of uses and the number of parking spaces required for each use. One space per employee is logical, but one space per truck/trailer is a minimum requirement that leaves the maximum at the discretion of the business owner. Ms. Crombie had four (4) recommendations:

Recommend 1: define Trucking and Transportation in Article II. This was a Planning Commission board recommendation that was first proposed to be added with the 2019-1 Amendment initiated by the Trustees. Setting a parking minimum/maximum is difficult to determine if the use is not defined. Does Trucking or Transportation allow for only the hauling of freight, or would a limousine rental business be allowed or other related businesses? This is open to interpretation.

Recommend 2: require a minimum of parking spaces and a maximum of parking spaces, based upon lot size or other criteria. Other standards, such as truck parking space width and length should be added.

Recommend 3: set a minimum of visitor parking spaces as businesses needs with vary.

Recommend 4: while not part of this amendment, it was noticed the parking space requirement for "Bowling Alley" is missing the number of spaces required regarding restaurant space. Recommend this be corrected.

Section 606, Driveways: the minimum residential driveway width is being proposed to increase from ten (10) feet to twelve (12) feet. They are proposing a 40 feet minimum driveway setback from an intersection in any zoning district and it further states that driveways associated with state highways shall be in accordance with regulations of the Ohio Department of Transportation. Ms. Crombie

provided standard passenger vehicle widths and with a 10' wide driveway, this leaves 1.5 to 2 feet of space on each side of the vehicle. Ms. Crombie recommends keeping this at ten (10) feet as zoning regulations are meant to be the minimum for safety.

Mr. McCaskey said he likes the idea of twelve (12) feet width. Mr. Neola said it is best to keep the width at ten (10) feet and Chairman Gorris agreed. Ms. Crombie said one of the local fire departments has said in the past that 10 (ten) feet is okay as the minimum. Ms. Crombie said subdivision roads with no curbs must be twenty-two (22) feet wide, equating to an eleven (11) feet wide driving lane. If eleven feet is wide enough for all vehicles traveling at a higher rate of speed, including fire trucks, 10 feet is sufficient for a minimum residential driveway.

In the commercial and industrial districts, the Township is proposing to change the minimum driveway width from 14 feet to 15 feet. Ms. Crombie feels it is not worth the Township's time to do this and recommends instead setting minimum and maximum widths based on one way or two-way drives. Mr. Bergansky said if a business is on a two-way road, there is a need for a wider driveway in a Commercial District; this should be based off the road your turning from. There was discussion that it would be difficult to set the standards based upon road width.

Ms. Cocca-Fulton asked if setting a parking space maximum is typical. She agrees with minimum, but that is "consider" a maximum. Ms. Crombie said maximum parking standards are not common but can be done to avoid installing large expanses of parking that are seldom used. Mr. Claypool said how do you determine minimum and maximum parking spaces. Ms. Crombie said the American Planning Association has standards.

Ms. Cocca-Fulton said she thinks the recommendation be that Troy Township could "consider" a maximum number of parking spaces.

Motion made by Mr. McCaskey to approve with modifications based upon the Director's comments and as discussed, the Troy Township Text Amendment ZC 2024-1VI and seconded by Mr. Dvorak and upon a call for the vote, the motion passes.

**B. Claridon Township
Map and Text Amendment ZA 24-1
Initiated February 26, 2024
By Zoning Commission**

Mr. McCaskey recused himself at 8:17 a.m. and left the meeting room.

Ms. Crombie said Claridon Township Zoning Commission accepted in a map and text amendment submitted by property owner, Jim McCaskey of McCaskey Properties, LLC, to rezone a three-acre portion of one parcel, 12-090313, from R-1 Residential Single family to C General Commercial. She referred to the land use and zoning maps provided in the memo.

McCaskey Landscaping provided a legal description prepared by a professional surveyor of Commercial District #6 that describes the entire northeast corner if the rezoning were to be approved. The format does not match that of the existing zoning resolution. Ms. Crombie said that to be more clear, the existing text for district #6 should have been provided in the application materials and should have been struck through. The applicant also owns the adjoining property to the west, parcel 12-090245, from

which McCaskey Landscaping operates. This parcel was first used for farming, then became a nursery during the 1990's, and now a landscaping business. Ms. Crombie said landscaping businesses are not listed as a permitted use in the C Commercial zoning district but after speaking with the current zoning inspector, it appears a zoning certificate was issued for the landscaping business by the previous zoning inspector, even though it was not listed a permitted use. Ms. Crombie pointed out the use proposed for the subject parcel is a sales office, which is a permitted use.

She also highlighted items to consider if the rezoning is approved. As with any re-zoning, it would allow for any permitted or conditional uses in the commercial district. The main entrance off State Route 322 would be the access to the property and will need to be reviewed by the Ohio Department of Transportation regarding their state highway access management standards. Ms. Crombie advised that if the parcel is rezoned, a cross access easement with the parcel to the west is something to consider so employees do not have to exit onto Route 322 to access the subject parcel. Separating the customers from the truck entrance/exits is important and will be worked out during the permit review along with screening of residential uses from parking lots or loading/unloading areas on all sides that adjoin or face any property use.

Finally, the Geauga County General Plan has goals listed related to businesses prospering, such as retaining, expanding, and attracting businesses in commercially zoned districts, and maintaining a strong tax base in Geauga County. While this is important, the impacts of the rezoning including traffic, noise, dust, etc. need to be taken into consideration.

Ms. Crombie recommends approval based on the information provided. She also recommends, since the original zoning certificate was issued in error, and there are other landscaping businesses in the commercial district, that the Township Zoning Commission consider amending Section 402.01, Permitted Buildings, Structures, and Uses, to add landscaping businesses as a permitted or conditional use; provide a definition of landscaping business, and add development standards. Mr. Alusheff, Claridon Township zoning inspector said much of the commercial district is non-conforming and the Township will be submitting an amendment in the near future to update the uses.

Ms. Cocca-Fulton asked for clarification that the legal description provided is actually more accurate than what is in the current resolution and Ms. Crombie said yes.

Motion made by Mr. Claypool to recommend approval of Map and Text Amendment ZA 24-1 and seconded by Mr. Bergansky and upon a call for the vote, the motion passes.

Commissioner Dvorak asked Mr. McCaskey to re-enter the meeting.

**C. Chester Township
Text Amendment ZC 2024-2
Initiated February 28, 2024
By Zoning Commission**

Ms. Crombie said Chester Township Zoning Commission submitted zoning amendment ZC 2024-2 impacting Article 9, Signs Regulations.

Section 9.00.0 Sign Definitions, Electronic Changeable Copy Sign: Ms. Crombie said a sign with changeable copy can be manual or electronic. The definition is titled as Electronic Changeable Copy Sign

and the definition has manual referenced, she recommends changing this to a more general title, such as "Changeable Copy Sign". This change though would require changing how it is referenced throughout the amendment. The definition also contains the word "mechanical", what may not be necessary and recommended removing this term.

Section 9.06 Signs Permitted in the Commercial and Shopping Center Zoning Districts: Item #2, letter "a" Electronic changeable copy sign (s) shall conform to the following regulations: Ms. Crombie said most of the proposed changes are include language from the County Model Zoning Resolution, except items: "ii" and "vii". These two items relate to changing of the messages. Item "ii" allows for the messages on signs for fade out, while item "vii" requires the messages to change at once. Ms. Crombie recommends the township to consider eliminating item "vii" and revise wording on item "ii" to "The entire message, copy, or images shall change to the next message within three (3) seconds."

Mr. Gorris asked if the township could determine what a sign nuisance is based upon item "iv". Chester Zoning Inspector, Chris Alusheff, said only a judge could ultimately make that decision, but zoning has a duty to investigate. Ms. Crombie said it is similar to standard zoning language regarding other nuisances such as smoke and dust. As a follow up to the method of changing the sign's copy, Mr. Johnson commented how some signs have a shutter feature, or timer when they change, which would be mechanical.

Motion made by Mr. Bergansky to approve with modifications based upon the Director's comments, the Chester Township Text Amendment ZC 2024-2 and seconded by Mr. Commissioner Dvorak, and upon a call for the vote, the motion passes.

10. Correspondence:

A. Quarterly Postage Report:

Ms. Crombie presented the Quarterly Postage Report received from the Maintenance Department. She highlighted how in 2023 compared to previous years, the cost of regular and certified mail and number of pieces of mail has gone down considerably. Staff has been diligent in emailing correspondence whenever possible.

12. New Business:

A. 2022 Agricultural Census:

Ms. Crombie said the U.S. Department of Agriculture released the 2022 Agricultural Census data in February. This data is compiled every five (5) years and she compared the data collected in 2017 to the 2022 data. The number of farms in increased by 84 between 2017 and 2022 in Geauga County and the number of acres decreased by 3,026 acres during that same time period. Mr. Bergansky asked why was there an increase in the number of farms? Ms. Crombie said it could be due to smaller hobby farms and Ms. Kobus said many residents keep bees.

Ms. Crombie said for the next Planning Commission 5 Year Goal Timeline to cover 2025-2029, will be prepared and presented at a future date. This information will include updating the 2008 Geauga County Farmland Preservation Plan and will require a sub-committee to assist with the research and plan development.

B. Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) Draft:

Ms. Crombie said the staff has been working on creating a Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) document. She explained that Ms. Irizarry has been working on the project and asked her to highlight some information.

Ms. Irizarry said she has been working on the SOP for the past two years. She discussed the importance of having the procedures on file to ensure consistency in workflow, a decrease in work errors, staff training, and how the Planning Commission has never had such a document before. Also, it is crucial in the event that a staff member, could possibly be out of the office for an extended period of time, and other staff would need to be able to jump in and help out. Ms. Irizarry briefly went step by step over a sample of the SOPs procedures in Financials regarding preparing invoices. This section has been completed but the document will be a work in progress for the next couple of years due to updating other documents, such as the Subdivision Regulations. Mr. Gorris said this was a good idea and suggested to "title correctly" any updated information when saving, avoid using the "save as" feature. Other commission members agreed that creating such a document is important.

C. Land Use Map Update:

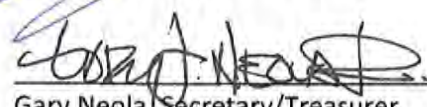
Ms. Kobus said she been working on updating the County Land Use Map, which is one of the goals for 2024 for the past two (2) months. The land use map is a snapshot in time of how land use changes as new homes and business are built or demolished. She also said the December 2023 parcel layer was used along with 2023 aerial imagery. The map is examined on a parcel-by-parcel basis and was updated per the revised land use category definition previously approved.

13. Adjournment:

Motion by Mr. Bergansky to adjourn the meeting, seconded by Mr. McCaskey and upon a call for the vote, the motion passes. Meeting adjourned 9:07 a.m.



Nicholas Gorris, Chairman



Gary Neola, Secretary/Treasurer

COUNTY PLANNING COMMISSION FINANCIAL REPORT
Summary

Budget – Prepared March 5, 2024

Details Financials from February 13, 2024 to February 29, 2024



| <u>Account</u> | <u>Appropriation</u> | <u>Expenditure</u> | <u>Balance</u> |
|------------------------|----------------------|--------------------|---------------------|
| Salaries | \$172,040.00 | \$24,439.48 | \$147,600.52 |
| Supplies | \$2,500.00 | \$0.00 | \$2,500.00 |
| Hosp. | \$26,310.00 | \$4,757.96 | \$21,552.04 |
| Medicare | \$2,400.00 | \$347.48 | \$2,052.52 |
| OPERS | \$23,010.00 | \$3,421.52 | \$19,588.48 |
| Worker's Comp. | \$100.00 | \$0.00 | \$100.00 |
| Other Expenses | \$5,200.00 | \$0.00 | 5,200.00 |
| Equipment | \$3,225.00 | \$0.00 | \$3,225.00 |
| Contracted Services | \$0.00 | \$0.00 | \$0.00 |
| Covid -19 Expenses | \$0.00 | \$0.00 | \$0.00 |
| Copier Usage Services | \$1,000.00 | \$0.00 | \$1,000.00 |
| Travel | \$4,600.00 | \$177.07 | \$4,422.93 |
| Advertising | \$325.00 | \$0.00 | \$325.00 |
| Training | \$700.00 | \$0.00 | \$700.00 |
| Member, Dues, Lic. Sub | \$2,300.00 | \$1,045.00 | \$1,255.00 |
| Total | \$243,710.00 | \$34,188.51 | \$209,521.49 |

**SUMMARY RESOLUTION FOR EXPENSES
GEAUGA COUNTY PLANNING COMMISSION**

Mr. Bergansky MOVED THE ADOPTION OF THE FOLLOWING RESOLUTION,
WHICH MOTION WAS SECONDED BY Mr. Neola.

WHEREAS, THE EXPENSES LISTED HEREIN HAVE BEEN INCURRED BY THE GEAUGA COUNTY PLANNING COMMISSION IN ORDER FOR THE COMMISSION TO PERFORM ITS DUTIES; AND

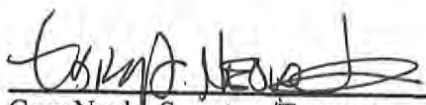
WHEREAS, THESE EXPENSES HAVE BEEN REVIEWED BY THE MEMBERS OF THE COMMISSION AT ITS MARCH 12, 2024 MEETING.

NOW THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, THAT THE GEAUGA COUNTY PLANNING COMMISSION HEREBY AUTHORIZES PAYMENT OF THE FOLLOWING BILLS OR CLAIMS:

| <u>P.O.</u> | <u>ACCOUNT</u> | <u>DATE</u> | <u>VENDOR</u> | <u>AMOUNT</u> |
|-------------|----------------|-------------|--|---------------|
| 0338 | TRAVEL | 2/13 | PAMELA IRIZARRY • Mileage Reimbursement | \$8.17 |
| 0338 | TRAVEL | 2/13 | LINDA CROMBIE • Milage Reimbursement ○ Township Association Dinner/Auburn ○ Claridon Land Use ○ Ohio Senate Select Committee • Reimbursement for Township Dinner Cost | \$115.80 |
| 0338 | TRAVEL | 2/13 | ALLYSON KOBUS • Mileage Reimbursement ○ Township Association Dinner ○ Leadership Geauga ○ Claridon Land Use | \$53.10 |
| 0344 | DUES/SUB/LIC | 2/22 | COUNTY COMMISSIONERS ASSOC OF OHIO • Linda Crombie | \$85.00 |
| 0344 | DUES/SUB/LIC | 2/22 | EXPERT IT • Office 365 C3 Renewal | \$960.00 |
| TOTAL | | | | \$1,222.07 |



Nick Gorris, Chairman



Gary Neola, Secretary/Treasurer

| <u>Planning Commission Revenues from Fees for February 2024</u> | <u>Year to Date Balance:</u> |
|--|-------------------------------------|
| | |
| January | \$1,760.00 |
| February | \$450.00 |
| | Yearly Total: \$2,210.00 |