

**PAW PAW TOWNSHIP
PLANNING COMMISSION MINUTES**

Regular Meeting – January 20, 2026

1. MASTER PLAN OPEN HOUSE

An open house event was held between 5:30 pm and 6:30 pm. Approximately 50 people attended.

2. CALL TO ORDER AND ROLL CALL

Chairman Kerby called the formal portion of the Paw Paw Township Planning Commission meeting to order at 7:00 pm.

PRESENT: Chairman Kip Kerby, Chad Learned, Phillip Arbanas, Jim DeGroff, Phil Hover, Adam Garland, Chuck Felcyn

ABSENT: None

3. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

4. APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA

The Planning Commission reviewed the proposed meeting agenda.

- Learned offered a motion *to approve the agenda as presented.*
- DeGroff supported the motion.
- Chairman Kerby called for the vote, and the motion passed unanimously (7-0).
 - Aye: Chairman Kerby, Learned, Arbanas, DeGroff, Hover, Garland, Felcyn
 - Nay: none
 - Abstain: none

5. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

The Planning Commission reviewed the draft minutes from December 16, 2025. DeGroff mentioned that Bowditch was not present and corrected Brian Herbert's name.

- Learned offered a motion *to approve the minutes from the meeting held on December 16, 2025, as amended to remove Bowditch from the minutes and to correct Brian Herbert's name.*
- DeGroff supported the motion.
- Chairman Kerby called for the vote, and the motion passed unanimously (7-0).
 - Aye: Chairman Kerby, Learned, Arbanas, DeGroff, Hover, Garland, Felcyn

- Nay: none
- Abstain: none

6. PUBLIC COMMENT ON NON-AGENDA ITEMS

- No general public comments.

7. BUSINESS

a. Public Hearing and Consideration of the 2026 Paw Paw Township Master Plan Update

Mr. David M. Jirousek, AICP, presented an overview of the Paw Paw Township Master Plan 2026, including the purpose of the Master Plan as the long-range policy foundation for Township decision-making. He summarized the public engagement process used to develop the plan, including open houses, roundtable discussions, and surveys conducted between 2024 and 2026, and reviewed the community's overall vision and direction to preserve farmland, natural resources, water quality, and rural character while managing growth in a manner consistent with existing infrastructure capacity and fiscally responsible public investment.

Mr. Jirousek also reviewed key priorities related to land, environment, housing, community assets, and the economy, including directing higher-intensity development toward areas near the Village of Paw Paw and existing services, protecting environmentally sensitive areas, and encouraging conservation- and cluster-based development. He explained the Future Land Use Framework as a 20-year guide for growth, preservation, and investment, noting that the framework simplifies land use into seven categories and de-intensifies future land use to better align with existing zoning patterns. He concluded with implementation guidance, emphasizing the Master Plan as a living document intended to guide zoning decisions, ordinance updates, and Township investments, followed by questions and discussion regarding next steps.

Chairman Kerby opened the public hearing.

Commenter 1- Art Brill

- Expressed concerns regarding potential commercial development at the intersection of 60th Avenue and M-51.
- Asked how the current zoning designation was originally established.
- Referenced wetlands located west of the commercial area and suggested the designation be reduced or pulled back to exclude wetland areas.
- Requested the Planning Commission consider development impacts on Lake Cora, including safety, property values, and environmental benefits.
- Noted the Township is a landowner on Lake Cora and a member of the Lake Cora Development Association.
- Encouraged the Township to reassess the commercial sites based on priorities for the Lake Cora area.

Commenter 2 – Ms. Grincelda

- Asked about drainage plans for 42nd Street.
- Noted concerns related to high water table conditions and wetlands.
- Asked how drainage and infrastructure projects will be addressed.

Commenter 3 – Mike Tralovec

- Stated agreement with Art Brill’s concerns regarding commercial zoning.
- Noted there are approximately 50-60 homes accessing Lake Cora from 60th Avenue, and that this access connects to M-51.
- Stated that large-scale development would create safety concerns due to traffic and access issues.
- Identified wetland protection as a priority.
- Indicated the area was historically intended for more local-scale commercial development and recommended staying aligned with that intent.
- Stated land prices are high for local commercial in the area.
- Requested a clear Township expression of intent for commercial development between 60th Avenue and Red Arrow Highway, and that it should respect the 100+ Lake Cora property owners and be documented as a matter of public record.

Commenter 4 – Heath Wall

- Expressed concerns regarding rural preservation and the impacts of large-scale alternative energy development.
- Stated concerns related to solar panels, wind turbines, and battery energy storage systems (BESS).
- Indicated opposition to battery storage, solar, wind, and data centers in the Township.

Commenter 5 – Susan Bartell

- Lives near Three Mile Lake.
- Requested removal of the waterfront designation on the west side of Three Mile Lake, noting the property is agricultural.

Commenter 6 – Chris Platchta

- Lives on Lake Cora.
- Noted that fill is needed to build land along the lake.
- Asked about the intent of “mixed business” in the Lake Cora area.
- Expressed concern that the plan could allow 50-60 businesses in the area without public sewer and water service, and questioned how commercial development can be planned without utilities.
- Encouraged the Township to be watchful of potential implications of commercial intensity.
- Stated support for sewer service for residential areas to protect Lake Cora.
- Noted concerns about high water table conditions and the intensity planned between Red Arrow Highway and I-94 along M-51.
- Stated that tax revenue should not be the sole priority.

Commenter 7 – Brian Herbert

- Expressed support for the shift back to Agricultural Residential south of the Village.
- Recommended that the zoning map be updated to match the proposed Future Land Use Plan, including Township-initiated rezonings.

Commenter 8 – Nathan Smallcombe

- Asked for clarification regarding whether Agricultural and Residential areas will be planned for 10-acre lot sizes or one-acre lots.
- Requested that the plan avoid the proliferation of one-acre lots.

Commenter 9 – Adam Dudycha

- Agreed with Brian Herbert.
- Supported updating the zoning map to align with the proposed Future Land Use Map.

Commenter 10 – Sherry Plangger

- Expressed concerns about one-acre lots within Agricultural Residential / Rural Residential areas.

Commenter 11 – John Lockworthy

- Expressed concerns regarding development along 60th Avenue.
- Stated water quality in Lake Cora is a primary concern and noted the lake's current clarity (visibility estimated at 10–15 feet).
- Expressed concern that runoff from major development could negatively impact water quality.
- Noted that approximately 50% of Lake Cora residents are seasonal and suggested delaying decisions until more residents return.
- Stated Lake Cora residents pay significant taxes and emphasized the importance of keeping residents informed.

Commenter 12 – Tim Hose

- Supported Township rezoning of property south of the Village to Agricultural.
- Supported updating the zoning map to match the proposed Future Land Use Map.

Commenter 13 – Rob Egly

- Supported Agricultural Residential designation south of the Village.

Chairman Kerby closed the public hearing.

Learned asked about the overall time frame for completion of the Master Plan update and stated that the Planning Commission may take the time needed to ensure the plan is updated appropriately.

Jirousek noted that the associated grants could be extended through the end of the year if requested.

DeGross stated that the zoning map should reflect the Future Land Use Map and emphasized the importance of taking the time necessary to ensure the work is completed correctly.

Learned stated that substantial public input has been received and agreed that some Township-initiated rezonings may be appropriate, but noted that this will require additional time and effort to study.

Jirousek agreed that the Township can initiate downzoning efforts, but noted that upzonings are generally initiated through applicant requests.

Learned referenced Lake Cora and stated that the Township should review the Future Land Use descriptions related to mixed business/commercial in this area and consider whether the designation

should be de-intensified. He also stated that a clear statement of overall intent for this area would be beneficial.

DeGroff stated that the Township should further evaluate the Lake Cora area in response to public concerns.

Learned also addressed the earlier drainage comment regarding 42nd Street and noted that drainage improvements are typically a process coordinated by the property owner with the Drain Commission.

The Planning Commission discussed whether one-acre splits would be allowed within the proposed Agricultural/Rural Residential category, and Jirousek clarified that a limited number of one-acre splits may be allowed, but overall density should not exceed one dwelling unit per ten (10) acres.

Arbanas stated that development in rural areas should be encouraged closer to existing roads.

Learned stated that the Woodman property west of Three Mile Lake should be considered for a change to Agricultural Residential.

Additional public comments:

- Brian Herbert reiterated his position that the zoning map should match the Future Land Use Plan.
- Rob Egly expressed agreement with limiting the number of one-acre splits in Agricultural Residential areas.

Learned stated that the Master Plan should also address battery energy storage, solar, and data centers.

Jirousek stated that all public comments would be itemized and reviewed to determine whether the Master Plan adequately addresses the concerns raised and whether amendments to the Master Plan should be considered.

b. 2026 Planning Commission Meeting Dates

- Felcyn offered a motion *to approve 2026 Planning Commission meeting calendar as presented by the provided resolution.*
- DeGroff supported the motion.
- Chairman Kerby called for the vote, and the motion passed unanimously (7-0).
 - Aye: Chairman Kerby, Learned, Arbanas, DeGroff, Hover, Garland, Felcyn
 - Nay: none
 - Abstain: none

c. 2026 Annual Report

Jirousek provided an overview of the draft 2026 annual report. The Planning Commission felt that goals 3-4 for 2026 should focus on battery energy storage systems and data centers, and on the Township's policy on these matters.

- Hover offered a motion *to approve the 2026 Planning Commission annual report as presented, with the addition of goals 3-4:*
 - *3. Develop a position and policy regarding battery energy storage systems*
 - *4. Discuss and determine appropriate regulations and restrictions concerning data centers*
- Learned supported the motion.
- Chairman Kerby called for the vote, and the motion passed unanimously (7-0).
 - Aye: Chairman Kerby, Learned, Arbanas, DeGroff, Hover, Garland, Felcyn
 - Nay: none
 - Abstain: none

8. ADDITIONAL PUBLIC COMMENT

- Residents expressed concerns with marijuana odor complaints and enforcement.
- A resident stated that in agricultural areas, less than an acre would be OK as long as the lots were not as deep.
- A resident mentioned that a Culver's was proposed South of the village and questioned whether sewer was available to serve it.
- There was a general discussion concerning how the survey was distributed and the Township's efforts to spread the word concerning the master plan. The Planning Commission outlined all of its public outreach efforts.

9. ADDITIONAL DISCUSSION

DeGroff referenced a recent fire involving a delivery vehicle carrying approximately 1,000 pounds of lithium-ion batteries, noting that it was difficult to extinguish and posed significant safety risks to responders.

It was also noted that a chili cook-off fundraiser benefiting the Fire Department is planned for February.

10. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting concluded at 8:20 pm.

- Learned offered a motion *to adjourn the meeting at 8:20 pm.*
- Hover supported the motion.
- Chairman Kerby called for the vote, and the motion passed unanimously (7-0).
 - Aye: Chairman Kerby, Learned, Arbanas, DeGroff, Hover, Garland, Felcyn
 - Nay: none
 - Abstain: none

Prepared by: David Jirousek, January 21, 2026

Approved: February 17, 2026