

WHITEHALL TOWNSHIP
7644 Durham Rd., Whitehall 49461
Planning Commission Meeting Minutes
March 4, 2026

I. Call to Order

Meeting was called to order promptly at 6:00pm by Carmen Rodriguez, Chairperson

II. Pledge of Allegiance

III. Roll Call

Planning Commission Members Present: Carmen Rodriguez, Al Wheeler, Tim Hicks, Kathy Dusseau, David Holly and Tom Zmolek

Guests Present: Dennis Kroll, Twp. Supervisor;

IV. Approval of Agenda

- A. A request was made to add an agenda item under new business concerning proposed Michigan legislation which would restrict the power of local governments to make zoning decisions and therefore to plan their future. Mr. Hicks made a motion to add this item, which was seconded by Mr. Wheeler. Motion carried.

V. Approval of Minutes

- A. **November, 5 2025 Minutes:** Chairperson Rodriguez requested approval of the November meeting minutes. No corrections were noted. Ms. Dusseau made the motion to approve and Mr. Holly seconded. Motion carried.
- B. **January 7, 2026 Minutes:** Chairperson Rodriguez requested approval of the January meeting minutes. Mr. Zmolek confirmed corrections needed noted by Ms. Dusseau. Mr. Zmolek made the motion to approve, with corrections, and Mr. Wheeler seconded. Motion carried.

VI. Adoption of 2026 Meeting Cadence

- A. Ms. Rodriguez requested input on the monthly meeting schedule for the Planning Commission. After a brief discussion, it was agreed the Commission would meet every month of the year except July and December. Cancellation of any other meetings would be allowed for unforeseen events, lack of a quorum or lack of agenda. Ms. Dusseau made a motion to approve the agreed upon schedule which was seconded by Mr. Holly. Motion carried.

VII. Public Hearing

- A. Requesting but receiving no public comment, Ms. Rodriguez closed this part of the meeting.

VIII. New Business

A. Threat to Local Zoning Decisions

1. Mr. Holly shared with the commission members a summary of House Bills 5529, 5530 and 5531 which threatens to centralize zoning decisions at the state level, removing the authority for the self-determination of local governments including this township to plan for its own future.
2. Mr. Kroll distributed a handout "Action Alert" as well as Whitehall Township Resolution 26-03 signed unanimously by all members of the full Township Board. [See attached].
3. Mr. Holly mentioned that the perceived need for affordable housing in the state was driving the proposed legislation.

B. Data Center Webinar

1. Members shared lessons learned from participating in a webinar on the emerging concern about zoning and special use requests from AI and other companies for land to place data centers in their towns, villages or townships.
2. Concerns for townships include increased water usage, increased electrical use, increased heat in climate due to energy usage as well as a general negative impact on local communities.
3. Townships were urged to review their ordinances to be prepared for such requests.
4. The Data Center Webinar will be shared again at the NBC Middle School in Montague on Thursday March 12th at 7pm for those interested.

IX. Unfinished Business

A. Re-Zoning Clarification

1. Ms. Rodriguez shared that township legal counsel Ms. Novak clarified the ordinance on re-zoning the prohibition on "spot zoning."
2. Mr. Kroll suggested that certain properties owned by the township and currently zoned as "farm and recreation," could be re-purposed for development. Ms. Rodriguez directed Mr. Kroll to start the process for one specific property he had in mind by submitting an application to Ms. Novak.

B. Master Plan Revision

1. Ms. Rodriguez brought up the township Master Plan (also known as Land Use Plan) and the need for revision and updating. Members shared concerns:
 - a. Mr. Hicks pointed out the potential legal challenges of omitting essential

details.

- b. Mr. Zmolek pointed out the future implications of the inconsistency between the current plan and recent decisions.
- c. Mr. Hicks added that the discussion on data centers supports the need for revision. Ms. Rodriguez concurred.

- 2. The discussion on approach and methods for Master Plan revision was continued from prior meetings. The use of a consultant to revise the current Master Plan was previously recommended, however there was general agreement this may be cost prohibitive. A legal review after revision was mentioned as an alternative to engaging a consultant. Who or how the plan will be revised still needs resolution.
- 3. It was suggested that the commission review the Master Plans from other townships like Blue Lake Township as a reflection on how to proceed.
- 4. Mr. Wheeler reminded the group that Master Plan Guidelines were available online. Mr. Zmolek offered to research this and share findings with the group.
- 5. It was agreed the Master Plan is important, required for legal purposes and future grant applications and clearly needs revision for reasons given. Next steps will be discussed at the April meeting.

X. Correspondence

- A. No new correspondence.

XI. Announcements.

- A. The next meeting will be held on Wednesday, April 1, 2026, at 6pm.

XII. Adjournment

- A. Mr. Holly made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Mr. Hicks seconded. Motion carried. The meeting was adjourned at 7:13 pm.

Carmen Rodriguez, Chairperson

Date

Thomas Zmolek, Secretary

Date

ACTION ALERT

Local zoning could no longer be a local decision

A bipartisan, bicameral group of legislators announced this week a package of bills to strip local governments of their ability to plan their community's future. While the legislation purports to address the state's housing shortage, rather, it is yet another attempt to preempt local authority and local decisions. Affordable housing is essential across the state, but it should not come at the expense of local input by requiring local governments to follow one-size-fits-all, prescriptive requirements from the state. The legislation does not consider the full scope of factors impacting attainable housing, including labor shortages, rising labor, material and land costs, and state mandates, and instead places the blame solely on local governments. We ask lawmakers to instead work toward a true, comprehensive solution to help resolve the housing shortage, rather than imposing top-down measures that silence voices in Michigan's communities.

The proposal consists of nine bills, four of which were before the House Regulatory Reform Committee today. The local preemption bills are expected to be approved quickly by the House.

MTA urges you to contact your legislators immediately.

Three of the four bills introduced impacting townships are:

- **HB 5529 - Lot Size**, sponsored by Rep. Kristian Grant: Prohibits local ordinances from requiring a minimum parcel or lot size greater than 1,500 square feet for detached single-family residence where the parcel is accessible and will be served by public sewer and public water. The bill is co-sponsored by Reps. Joe Aragona, Reggie Miller, Carrie Rheingans, and Stephen Wooden.
- **HB 5530 - Lot Size**, sponsored by Rep. Jennifer Wortz: Prohibits a minimum parcel size greater than 1,500 square feet for detached single-family residence where the parcel is accessible and will be served by public water and public sewer. The bill is co-sponsored by Reps. Joe Aragona, Kristian Grant, Carrie Rheingans, and Stephen Wooden.
- **HB 5531 - Study Requirements**, sponsored by Rep. Cynthia Neeley: Creates a 60-day decision shot clock after receipt of an application by a local unit of government, even an incomplete application. Permits local units of government to require reasonably necessary studies in reviewing a site plan application but limits when additional information can be required for the same application after initial studies requested. Limits circumstances of when additional information can be required for the same application after initial approval. Co-sponsored by Reps. Kristian Grant, Reggie Miller, and Carrie Rheingans.

WHITEHALL TOWNSHIP

RESOLUTION NO. 26-03__

RESOLUTION OPPOSING STATE PREEMPTION OF LOCAL ZONING AUTHORITY THROUGH THE PROPOSED HOUSING READINESS PACKAGE

WHEREAS, townships in Michigan are granted zoning and land use authority pursuant to the Michigan Zoning Enabling Act, Public Act 110 of 2006, as amended; and

WHEREAS, township boards are elected by local residents to make decisions that reflect the unique character, infrastructure capacity, fiscal realities, environmental conditions, and long-term planning goals of their communities; and

WHEREAS, the proposed "Housing Readiness" legislative package would preempt or limit local authority over zoning and development decisions; and

WHEREAS, housing markets, infrastructure systems, and development patterns vary significantly across Michigan, and a one-size-fits-all statewide framework cannot adequately account for the diverse needs of rural, suburban, and urban communities; and

WHEREAS, preemption of local zoning authority circumvents the role of locally elected officials and reduce the ability of townships to balance growth with infrastructure capacity, public safety services, environmental protections, and fiscal responsibility; and

WHEREAS, many townships are actively addressing housing supply and affordability through master planning, zoning updates, public-private partnerships, and infrastructure investment, efforts which require flexibility and local discretion; and

WHEREAS, meaningful housing solutions require partnership, resources, and investment rather than the removal of local decision-making authority;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the Whitehall Township Board of Trustees formally opposes any legislation within the proposed Housing Readiness package that preempts or limits local zoning and land use authority; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that Whitehall Township urges the Michigan Legislature to preserve local control and instead work collaboratively with townships to provide tools, resources, and infrastructure investment necessary to support responsible housing growth across the state; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that Whitehall Township urges Senator Bumstead and Representative Curt VanderWall to support local control and vote in opposition of any legislation preempting local control; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that a copy of this Resolution shall be transmitted to the Governor of Michigan, and the appropriate legislative committees considering this legislation.

AYES: Holly(motioned) Boyd (supported), Kroll, Nichols, Schmitigal

NAYS:none

ABSENT:none

Supervisor declared motion carried Alison R. Nichols Clerk, 2/25/26 Date