

**Ganges Township Planning Commission
Special Meeting Minutes for October 20, 2025
Ganges Township Hall
119th Avenue and 64th Street
Fennville MI, Allegan County**

I. Call to Order - Roll Call

Chair: Jackie **DeZwaan** called the meeting to order at 6:00 pm.

Roll Call: Chair: Jackie **DeZwaan** - Present

Vice Chair: Dale **Pierson** - Present

Secretary: Phil **Badra** - Present

Commissioner: Edward **Gregory** - Present

Commission Trustee: Dick **Hutchins** - Present

Zoning Administrator: Tasha **Smalley** - Present

Recording Secretary: Katie **Wolfe** - Present

II. Adoption of the Agenda

Gregory made a motion to approve the agenda. **Hutchins** seconded the motion. Motion passed.

III. Approval of Prior Minutes

Motion made by **Hutchins**, seconded by **Pierson** to approve the September 23, 2025 minutes, with corrections. Motion passed.

Motion made by **Badra**, seconded by **Pierson** to approve the September 30, 2025 minutes, with corrections. Motion passed.

IV. Correspondence

Smalley to PC email from **Murch** Re: Bluff protection ordinance

Gregory to PC Re: Bluff protection. With response from **Phelps**

Badra to PC Re: Overlay District

2 Badra to PC Re: Zoning Ordinance

Pierson to PC Re: Campground

V. Old Business –

Badra noted that he talked to Brad Misner, the planner from McKenna. However, when Ganges Township received the quote, FOR THE ASSISTANCE OF A PLANNER FROM MCKENNA, it was noted that Misner is no longer with the company. **Badra** asked the **PC** what role they want the new planner to have in the campground ordinance and overlay district. **Hutchins** suggested that the **PC** rewrite the ordinance and then have the TOWNSHIP'S legal firm go through it. Then McKenna can do the formatting to add it to the Ordinance book.

DeZwaan agreed and noted that she would like to see the Zoning book in a three-ring binder rather than spiral bound.

Smalley clarified that McKenna will codify the changes into the ordinance but not have a part of the writing of the text. They will also have to renumber everything because the overlay will be a new district.

A. Lake MI Overlay District Discussion

The **PC** decided to go through the draft of the Overlay District and make edits as necessary.

Under the Intent and Purpose section, remove all of the semicolons and add periods at the end. Remove the word 'and' at the end of number 4.

Under the Uses section:

There is a double sentence in number 2. Remove 'and associated with an engineering firm'.

Add: 'In order to prevent contamination of Lake Michigan waters, prevent erosion of Lake Michigan beaches and to promote safety, ATVs, other motorized vehicles and large domesticated animals are not allowed in the submerged lands or the beaches of Lake Michigan in Ganges Township. This does not apply to official emergency vehicles.'

Add: 'Fences and retaining walls are prohibited from the shoreline to the bluff line.'

Badra talked with EGLE and they said the Township does not have to present the Overlay District to EGLE unless it is less restrictive than their REGULATIONS ordinance.

Gregory stated that he would feel more comfortable if modifications to the bluff required a building permit plus an engineer's review of the shoreline protection and whether or not it will adversely impact the neighbors or the lakeshore.

Gregory continued that he would also like to see a cleanup of failed shoreline protection systems that have been previously installed.

Badra agreed with **Gregory** regarding the engineer's review ONLY if they are familiar with the eastern side of Lake Michigan. He continued that he understands that some individuals do not want any kind of revetments, however, he does not think it is the **PC's** right to tell a homeowner that they cannot protect their property.

Under the Setback section:

Add: 'Shoreline protection structures shall not be allowed unless the structure to be protected existed already and ALSO lies within the 70 ft setback.'

Under the Excavation, Earth Moving, Land Contouring section:

Edit number 4 to say: 'In no instance shall any excavation, contouring, or earth moving occur within a required bluff line setback area.'

Edit number 5 to say: 'Any tree removal, not associated with the construction of a permitted building or structure, shall retain the stump and root system to ensure stabilization of the bluff area.'

Under the Shoreline Protection Section:

Add: 'Wherever and whenever possible a Bluff to Toe Protected natural angle capable of sustaining anti erosive vegetation natural to the area is preferred.'

Add: 'No development on or near this Overlay District shall ever discharge sewer, drainage or product that is in any way a pollution INTO of the Lake Michigan Shoreline Waters.'

In the first paragraph, edit the third sentence to say: 'An engineer licensed in the State of Michigan and associated with an engineering firm from the State of Michigan and WHO is familiar with the eastern shore of Lake

Michigan, shall certify that the structure has been designed and constructed according to these standards.’

B. Campground Discussion

DeZwaan started out by saying, under the Michigan Zoning Enabling and Planning Act the **PC** cannot just say no to more campgrounds. So, the **PC** is going to try to revise the Special Land Use requirements to address concerns stated by Ganges Township residents. Currently there are five requirements listed under Campgrounds in the Zoning Ordinance.

Pierson noted the confusion of RV park versus campground came from the uses section of the Zoning Ordinance. It was determined that ‘RV park’ should be removed from the table of uses because ‘Campground’ is listed in the definitions AND INCLUDES RV PARKS.

Badra stated that campgrounds should only be permitted in the commercial district. The Master Plan says “it is envisioned that development in the Ag/Res future land use category will have a maximum density of 1½ - 2 acres per unit”.

Gregory and **Hutchins** agreed that campgrounds should only be permitted in commercial DISTRICT ~~zoning~~.

DeZwaan disagreed, stating that campgrounds should not be restricted to just the commercial district. She noted that campgrounds are not a commercial operation and they are not open year-round. **Gregory** disagreed, stating that some campgrounds rent their spaces for campers and RVs to stay year-round.

It was agreed by consensus to only permit campgrounds in the commercial district.

Badra noted that the campground definition is directly from the state, so that can stay as is.

The **PC** reviewed **Pierson’s** draft campground ordinance line-by-line.

Edit to say: ‘Minimum campground size shall be 10 acres’.

Remove the line: ‘entire campground shall be under one owner’.

Regarding trash, remove the first part and edit to say: ‘No trash left out overnight at campsites.’

Edit to say: 'No alcohol, beer or wine sold on premises.'

Edit to say: 'A list of all campground rules are to be distributed to campers, adjacent neighbors, and anyone else interested in seeing them.'

Add: 'Campground must be on a primary road with one main entrance/exit and one emergency exit.'

Add: ' All entrances and exits shall be gated.'

Add: 'Campgrounds must be licensed by EGLE and must comply with the requirements for campgrounds as stated in Part 125 of Public Health Code, Act 368 of 1978 as amended.'

Add: 'Park models are not permitted.'

Gregory wondered if the **PC** will ask for a campground's operating procedures at a site plan review. **DeZwaan** replied that the conditions that the **PC** is drafting will be the minimum operating procedures necessary.

DeZwaan stated that she wants to add a statement in the Site Plan Review that says: 'when an applicant signs the site plan, they also agree to abide by the conditions set forth in the letter provided by the township.'

Smalley wondered if the **PC** plans to allow glamping; which involves structures on unlicensed sites in the campground that have bathroom facilities in them.

Smalley suggested saying 'all structures are required to be on licensed sites.'

After confusion on glamping and unlicensed sites, the **PC** asked **Smalley** to create a statement using the correct verbiage to prohibit camping on unlicensed sites.

DeZwaan wondered if the Planner should be at the next meeting. **Badra** replied that the Planner does not need to be here, but wondered if the attorney should be.

Smalley suggested that the **PC** could send the zoning ordinance edits/corrections, the draft overlay district and the draft campground ordinance to the planner.

DeZwaan noted that the **PC** will be reviewing the zoning ordinance corrections at the next meeting.

VI. Future Meeting Dates - October 28th & November 18th

VII. General Public Comments

Chuck **Mannion** – 6611 Deer Trl. suggested when lakeshore property sells, the lakeshore should be cleaned up before the transaction occurs. He wondered if cabins would be allowed in campgrounds.

Andy **Murch** – 2384 Lakeshore Dr. suggested that the PC review the documents he has shared regarding best practices to implement regulations on the lakeshore. He continued that revetments should be banned in order to protect the bluff.

Aaron **Kronmeyer** – 6556 118th Ave. in regards to the outdoor entertainment permit, Kronmeyer wondered if there should be more of a definition between an event for a special occasion versus an event for a business.

Marsha **Maslanka** – 1811 66th St. questioned why campgrounds cannot be banned in the township. She also shared concerns about Campit including: vendors coming into the campground to sell alcohol, permanent decks on the campers and outdoor Christmas lights that are on year-round.

Lana **Murch** – 2384 Lakeshore Dr. reiterated the importance of utilizing the expertise available regarding the best practices to implement regulations on the lakeshore. Murch noted excavation should be permitted only to amend the top of the bluff to get it back to the natural repose angle. She also wondered when the public will have the chance to comment on the Overlay District before it gets approved.

Kim **Mannion** – 6611 Deer Trl. suggested that the PC could share a list of materials the residents could use to protect the bluff.

VIII. Adjournment

DeZwaan made a motion to adjourn the meeting. **Gregory** seconded the motion. The meeting was adjourned at 8:45 PM.

Respectfully Submitted,

Katelynn Wolfe, Ganges Township Recording Secretary