

Ganges Township Planning Commission
Special Meeting Minutes for September 30, 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. Additions to the Agenda and adoption

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

III. Old Business – Lake MI Overlay District Discussion

The PC members shared their ideas for the Lake MI Overlay District. It was decided that the PC would review Pierson's draft ordinance line-by-line. After that, they will review Gregory's and Badra's.

In the first paragraph, remove the word 'natural' to just say ordinary high water mark.

Badra noted at the previous meeting, the PC decided that the district would include the entire lakeshore in the township; extending 500 ft to the east. Now, **Badra** is thinking 200 ft is more reasonable. He contacted EGLE to get clarification on the 30-year and 60-year recession line but he did not get a response. The PC discussed where the measurement should start, the top of the bluff, toe of the bluff or somewhere at the water.

Badra noted that others use either the ORDINARY high water mark (580.5 ft) or the

erosion hazard line (583 ft), which is the line along the shoreline that is the landward edge of the zone of active erosion. **Smalley** noted that there are a few structures built into the bluff because EGLE does not regulate the bluff and Ganges Township's setback is 40 ft from the water's edge.

Pierson referenced the Michigan Compiled Law 324.32311 which states that an ordinance that regulates a high-risk area, flood-risk area, or environmental area shall be submitted to the department for approval or disapproval. Setbacks established by the department shall not be construed as limiting local units of government from establishing larger setbacks.

Pierson noted that the location of the overlay district should state: 'The Lake Michigan Overlay District is the entire length of the area along Lake Michigan in Ganges Township and stretches 250 ft back from the ordinary high water mark'. **Gregory** clarified that certain lots may be partially regulated by the district.

Under the Uses section:

Edit number 1 to say 'walkout basements are prohibited.'

Remove '2. crawl spaces or piling construction shall be required.'

Remove '3. A mechanical room, not exceeding 100 square feet, may be excavated within the footprint of the dwelling. The mechanical room shall be located in a place that would not increase the allowable 10' perimeter of the building allowed for excavation.'

Edit number 4 to say: 'A grading plan signed and sealed by an engineer licensed in the State of Michigan and associated with an engineering firm licensed in the State of Michigan shall accompany any building permit utilizing best management practices for high risk erosion areas and the soil types in the Township.'

Edit number 5 to say: 'Underground pools shall be prohibited within 130 ft of the bluff.'

Edit number 6 to say: 'Underground irrigation shall be prohibited within 70 ft of the bluff.'

Under the Setback section:

The PC decided to use feet as the measurement instead of the PRD (Projected Recession Distance (feet) landward). Replace the '30 year PRD' with '70 ft'. Remove 'as provided by the EGLE "Parcels in High Risk Erosion Areas of Ganges Township, Allegan County"'.

In the second paragraph, replace the '60 year PRD' with '130 ft'.

Remove the third paragraph that states, 'For the purpose of this Overlay, Waterfront (front yard) setbacks shall apply to all buildings and structures, regardless of whether they have a roof or not'. The PC noted that this does not need to be noted again because the setbacks are already stated in the underlying district.

In the fourth paragraph, remove 'and shall be constructed of permeable surfaces to encourage runoff infiltration'. The PC felt that residents should be able to choose the material of their driveway as long as it is permitted in the underlying district.

Add: 'stairs to the beach are the only structures allowed on the beach or bluff. Stairs require a permit and they must comply with building code'.

Under the Excavation, Earth Moving, Land Contouring section:

Number 1, remove 'except within 10' of the building footprint and'.

The PC decided to put number 4 on hold until they can decide on proper wording.

Remove number 5 and edit number 6 to say, 'any tree removal shall retain the stump and root system to ensure stabilization of the bluff area'.

Under the Shoreline Protection section:

Edit the first paragraph to say, 'No shoreline protection structure shall extend any further towards Lake Michigan than 15 ft from the toe of the bluff lakeward. The shoreline protection structure shall be designed to meet or exceed a 50-year storm event at the site for all permanent shore protection structures. A professional engineer LICENSED IN ~~from~~ the State of Michigan AND ASSOCIATED WITH AN ENGINEERING FIRM LICENSED IN MICHIGAN shall certify that the structure has been designed and will be constructed in accordance with these standards'.

Add 'all equipment and material FOR SHORELINE PROTECTION must be brought in by barge'.

Under the Restoration of Nonconforming Structures section:

In the first paragraph, replace 'prior condition' with 'original footprint'.

Under the Permits section:

At the end of the first paragraph, add 'and/or building permit from Ganges Township'.

Under the Definitions section:

Remove the 'Natural Ordinary High Water Mark' definition.

Add the 'Ordinary High Water Mark' definition.

The PC decided to wait until the next meeting to review Gregory's notes for the Overlay District. A special meeting was scheduled for October 20th at 6:00 PM to continue discussions. The PC also decided to change the regular meeting start time to 6:00 PM on October 28th to discuss the overlay district, the moratorium and ordinance corrections.

IV. Future Meeting Dates - October 20th, October 28th & November 18th

V. General Public Comments

Lana **Murch** - 2384 Lakeshore Dr. recommended that the PC utilizes already developed tools and the best, current practices to implement regulations. She shared two documents that are meant for municipalities to use as a guide. She also noted that revetments or armored protection should be limited or prohibited, as they can be the biggest contributor to erosion on the bluffs.

Andy **Murch** - 2384 Lakeshore Dr. noted that the PC should measure from the ordinary high-water mark because the bluff is arbitrary. He also recommended that the PC look into revetments because they are the biggest contributor in terms of damaging the shoreline.

VI. Adjournment

Gregory made a motion to adjourn the meeting. **DeZwaan** seconded the motion. The meeting was adjourned at 8:43 PM.

Respectfully Submitted,

Katelynn Wolfe, Ganges Township Recording Secretary