

Geauga County Planning Commission

12611 Ravenwood Dr. • Suite #380 • Chardon, OH 44024
Phone: (440) 279-1740 • Email: Planning@co.geauga.oh.us
<https://bocc.geauga.oh.gov/departments/planning-commission>

GEAUGA COUNTY PLANNING COMMISSION AGENDA

April 8, 2025 REGULAR MEETING

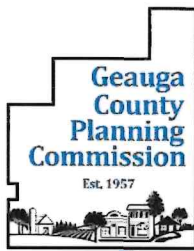
12611 Ravenwood Drive

Conference Room A334, 3rd Floor

7:30 A.M.

1. Pledge of Allegiance
2. Roll Call
3. Approval of Minutes:
 - A. March 11, 2025 Regular Meeting Minutes
4. Approval of Agenda/Addendum:
5. Financial Report and Approval of Expenses:
6. Other Business: None
7. Major Subdivisions to be reviewed: None
8. Township Zoning Amendments to be Reviewed:
 - A. Chester Township
Text Amendment ZC-2025-2
Initiated March 19, 2025
By Zoning Commission
 - B. Chester Township
Text Amendment ZC - 2025-3
Initiated March 19, 2025
By Property Owner Gregory V. Mersol
9. Director's Report:
10. Correspondence: None
11. Old Business:
 - A. 2026 Draft Budget
 - B. Farmland Preservation Plan Update
12. New Business:
 - A. Norfolk Southern Request for Comments (Rail Line Abandonment)
13. Adjournment

Per Article 4, Section 2 of the Bylaws of the Geauga County Planning Commission,
this agenda is subject to modification.



Geauga County Planning Commission

12611 Ravenwood Dr. Suite #380, Chardon, OH 44024

Phone: (440) 279-1740 Fax: (440) 285-7069

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

APRIL 8, 2025 MEETING MINUTES

1. Pledge of Allegiance

Chairman Nick Gorris called the April 8, 2025 regular meeting of the Geauga County Planning Commission to order at 7:30 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: Nick Gorris, Phillip Miller, Gary Neola, Alternate Dave Fabig for Commissioner Jim Dvorak, Matt Johnson, Caterina Cocca-Fulton, Dennis Bergansky, Jim McCaskey, Alternate Dane Davis for Commissioner Carolyn Brakey, and Alternate Walter Claypool for Commissioner Ralph Spidalieri.

Members absent: None

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

Guests: Chris Alusheff, Chester Township Zoning Inspector and Kathleen McCarthy, Chester Township Zoning Secretary.

Ms. Cocca-Fulton arrived at 7:31 a.m.

Mr. McCaskey left at 9:02 a.m.

3. Approval of Minutes for the March 11, 2025 Regular Meeting

Chairman Gorris asked for a motion to approve the minutes for March 11, 2025. Mr. McCaskey said he would make a motion to approve the minutes, but he feels there needs to be a discussion with the Commissioners on how their attendance is being recorded when the alternates are present for one of them. They appear in the minutes as being in attendance and absent. Mr. Claypool said we are an independent board and Planning Commission would make the decision on this. When he goes to the NOACA meetings, he is the alternate for Commissioner Ralph Spidalieri, so he is Commissioner Ralph Spidalieri.

Ms. Cocca-Fulton said there was a minor typo on page 3. After the meeting she would point out the typo to Ms. Irizarry

Motion made by Mr. McCaskey to approve the March 11, 2025 regular meeting minutes as noted, Mr. Neola seconded the motion. Upon a call for the vote, the motion passes.

4. Approval of Agenda/Addendum Items:

Mr. Neola made the motion to approve the agenda as presented, and Mr. Bergansky seconded, and upon a call for the vote, the motion passes.

5. Financial Report and Approval of Expenses: (March)

Chairman Gorris asked Ms. Irizarry if there was anything she would like to highlight in the Financial Report and Expense Report. Ms. Irizarry said all the invoices paid are now out of the 2025 accounts and she added the requested changes to the Financial Report made by Mr. Davis at last month's meeting.

Mr. Davis made a motion to approve the financial reports, and the summary of expenses for March 2025. Mr. Bergansky seconded, and upon a call for the vote, the motion passes.

8. Township Zoning Amendments to be Reviewed:

A. Chester Township Text Amendment ZC-2025-2 Initiated March 19, 2025 By Zoning Commission

Ms. Crombie said Chester Township submitted two (2) Articles of their Amendment impacting Article 2: Definitions and Article 5: District Regulations.

5.01.03 Accessory Buildings

5.01.03 (B)(1): Ms. Crombie said this relates to owners who want to construct a "lean-to" type roof extension and she presented pictures of common types of "lean-to's" to give the board a visual of what is being proposed.

Ms. Crombie said the use of the word "attached" in this sentence can be tricky. Someone could construct a "lean-to" structure immediately abutting the structure but not be attached and could argue the regulations do not apply. She recommends the Township consider a pared down version of this wording with their APA and to consider the following wording: *"Enclosed accessory buildings and structures with a lean-to style roof extension covering an unenclosed or partially enclosed area shall be included in the combined total ground floor area, per Section 5.01.03(B). Said structures shall otherwise comply with minimum required setbacks."* She also recommends the Township create a maximum square footage for "lean-to's" based upon a certain maximum percentage of the enclosed building. These types of structures can be large and could extend all the way around an accessory building. Also, the Township should consider someone might want to construct more than one "lean-to". The proposed language states "an attached lean-to" meaning they're only allowing one "lean-to", and if the "lean-to" extends all the way around the structure, having a maximum square footage is especially important.

5.01.03 (B)(2): Ms. Crombie said a complicated calculation is proposed regarding how to measure the roof extensions. Ms. Crombie recommends simplifying the language in this section to state the area under roof as measured at the outermost points of the support posts.

5.01.03 (B)(2): Ms. Crombie said the language "...measuring the distance between the wall of the structure..." read as "enclosed structure" and not "structure". She recommends revising this.

5.01.03 (D): Ms. Crombie said this sentence should start with "Detached accessory buildings".

5.01.03 (E): Ms. Crombie said this section states accessory buildings and structures shall not be located over "leach" fields, in accordance with the regulations of Geauga Public Health (GPH). This language already exists, and it is being relocated to its own sub-section. It should not be included as this is not a

requirement enforceable by zoning. How is the Zoning inspector going to know the actual boundaries of the septic system's leach field to enforce this? She said if it is in the regulations, it is the zoning inspector's responsibility to enforce it. Geauga Public Health is not involved in accessory building permit applications so this regulation appears to be preventative to protect the homeowner from installing a structure that could damage their septic system. Ms. Crombie noted that it is not only a matter of structures being located "over leach fields". GPH requires minimum isolation distances from all parts of the septic system per State of Health Regulations. Ms. Crombie recommends this language not be included. Mr. McCaskey asked if "shall" means it is enforceable? Ms. Crombie said yes, that makes it the zoning inspector's responsibility to be involved in making sure it is compliant. Ms. Cocca-Fulton said that the onus should be on the property owner.

2.02.0 Words and Terms Defined

"Yard, Required": Ms. Crombie said the intent for this definition is to differentiate between a "yard" and the minimum "required yard" based on the setbacks. The definition of "Yard, Front" in Chester Township's resolution means a yard extending along the full length of the front lot line between the side lot lines, and from the front lot line to the front of the principal building. Ms. Crombie suggested a more specific definition for "Yard, Required Minimum" as meaning that portion of a lot located within the required minimum front, side, and rear setbacks, except as otherwise provided by this resolution.

Mr. Claypool asked if "yard, required" is ok, isn't this redundant? Ms. Crombie said "required yard" does not mean the whole yard and the Township proposed it as they had to explain the difference to many property owners. It's a definition that is not technically needed. Chairman Gorris said this clarifies what portion of a lot cannot be used. Ms. Cocca-Fulton asked do we need "Required Yard", can it say "setbacks". Chairman Gorris asked if "yard" is in the Model Zoning? Ms. Crombie said yes.

Chris Alusheff, Chester Township Zoning Inspector, said this is the result of various houses having setbacks of 200 feet, but what is required is 70 feet. If you look at the back yard, it goes from the back door to the rear line; it's to clarify the difference between "required yard" and "buildable area". Mr. Claypool said the residents need to look at what the setback requirements are, they can figure it out. Ms. Cocca-Fulton said at some point there is ambiguity of "required yard" and "setbacks". Mr. Alusheff said he likes Ms. Crombie's recommended definition of having a "required yard" related to "setbacks".

Motion made by Mr. Bergansky to approve with modifications as noted in the review memo, Chester Township Text Amendment ZC-2025-2, and seconded by Ms. Cocca-Fulton, and upon a call for the vote, the motion passes.

**B. Chester Township
Text Amendment ZC 2025-2
Initiated March 9, 2025
By Chester Property Owner Gregory V. Mersol**

Ms. Crombie said Chester Township Zoning Commission submitted zoning Amendment ZC 2025-3 initiated by a property owner impacting four (4) articles of their Amendment

2.02.0 Words and Terms Defined

Ms. Crombie said most of the definitions come straight from the Ohio Township Association's model solar language, except for Small Solar Facility. The definitions include, Ground-Mounted Solar Energy

Systems, Integrated Solar Energy Systems, Rooftop Solar Energy Systems, Solar Energy, and Solar Energy System.

Small Solar Facility: Ms. Crombie said the proposed definition means a Solar Energy System “other” than ground-mounted, integrated, or rooftop Solar Energy Systems. Ms. Crombie recommends the Township use the definition from ORC 519.213(A)(2) of “Small Solar Facility”, which means solar panels and associated facilities with a single interconnection to the electrical grid and designed for, or capable of, operation at an aggregate capacity of less than 50 megawatts. Anything less than 50 megawatts is a “Small Solar Facility”, whether it is a home with a rooftop panel or a ten (10) megawatt facility that can power hundreds of homes. Ms. Crombie said House Bill 501 grants townships the authority to regulate small solar facilities (under 50 megawatts), but townships have already treated residential or commercial rooftop panels or ground mounted installations as an accessory use so as to allow alternate means to heat or power their buildings.

Ms. Crombie said the wording “other than” used in the proposed definition is creating an exception to allow for private use, such as solar panels on the roof of a home, as opposed to a facility, the sole purpose of which is to generate electricity for sale. While the proposed definition of “Small Solar Facility” has the caveat of “other than”; Ms. Crombie recommends using the ORC definition of “Small Solar Facility”, and list them as a prohibited use in Section 5.00.01. Listing “Solar Energy Systems” as a permitted accessory use in the residential and commercial district then only applies to private use, which is what is intended. Chester Township never added solar energy as an accessory use, which is what initiated this amendment.

5.00.01 Prohibited Uses

(K) Small Wind Farms as defined in O.R.C. Section 519.213:

Ms. Crombie recommends adding “Small Solar Facilities” here as a prohibited use. Mr. Alusheff asked if this is added here, would all the others unintentionally be banned. Ms. Crombie said not necessarily but that is why this should be reviewed with their APA.

5.01.02 Permitted Accessory Buildings, Structures, and Uses

(M) Solar Energy Systems in accordance with Article 8:

Ms. Crombie said section 5.01.02 is the Residential section and Solar Energy Systems are being added as permitted accessory use.

5.02.02 Permitted Accessory Buildings, Structures and Uses

(D) Solar Energy Systems in accordance with Article 8:

Ms. Crombie said Section 5.02.02 is the Commercial section and Solar Energy Systems are being added as permitted accessory use. Ms. Crombie recommends the Township consider allowing them in their Restricted Industrial District as well. If the use is not listed in the industrial district, it will conflict with the language in Section 6.09.01 that allows ground mounted systems as a conditional use in any district.

6.09.0 Conditional Buildings, Structures and Uses in all Districts

6.09.01 Ground-Mounted Solar Energy Systems: Ms. Crombie said this language will allow ground mounted solar in any district as a conditional use, the rest of the language lists the requirements.

6.09.01 (A): Ms. Crombie said this language proposes a Ground-Mounted Solar Energy System shall not exceed an aggregate stated capacity of 100 kilowatts. 100 kilowatts can power a home, industrial equipment, and construction sites. This is much less than the 49.9 megawatts allowed for a Small Solar

Facility. Ms. Crombie recommends that documentation from the manufacturer be required to be submitted to the Township regarding the kilowatt capacity.

6.09.01 (B): Ms. Crombie said this section relates to noise regulation and this language is from the OTA's sample language. Ms. Crombie said noise from a residential/commercial solar energy will be negligible, and would generally be emitted from the power inverters. The Township will have to ensure they have and are trained to use a decibel meter and calibration over time is also necessary. She noted that when attending an OTA webinar, the attorney presenting the information indicated that the Ohio Supreme Court has upheld the "person of ordinary sensibilities" test. Ms. Crombie said the Township could regulate noise based upon if it can be heard at a 100-foot distance from the property line, or have the applicant hire a consultant to do the reading for them.

6.09.01 (C)(4): Ms. Crombie recommends changing language from "must" to "shall" and "back yard" should not be used, recommend replacing with "rear yard".

6.09.01 (D): Ms. Crombie said the proposed six (6) feet height is quite short. There may be many variances associated with this proposed height, but over time the maximum permitted height could be assessed if it needs to be increased. Mr. McCaskey said Mr. Miller's panels are 12 feet high. Mr. Miller said though they cannot be too high because of snow removal. Mr. Bergansky said seven (7) or eight (8) feet would be better. Ms. Crombie said the Commission does not have to make a specific height recommendation. Chairman Gorris said the Township should research this but consider a maximum height higher than six feet.

6.09.01 (G)(1) and (2): Ms. Crombie said a visual buffer can be required, but items one (1) and two (2) regarding enhancing views and being in harmony with existing vegetation are too subjective. She recommends they be removed as the first paragraph describes what is required and item number four (4) lists the minimum height.

6.09.01 (G)(4): Ms. Crombie said six (6) feet at planting is a reasonable minimum to provide for screening, but if a fence is proposed, then the language as written would allow, for example, a twelve (12) feet tall fence. She recommends a maximum fence height be established as a safeguard. Mr. Neola asked if six (6) feet could be written as the maximum, he feels if visual buffer is too close or too tall it would impact panel effectiveness. Mr. Davis said item number four (4) could be eliminated, and if eliminated, a visual cover could be provided referring to the other section about maximum height.

Article 8 Solar Energy

Ms. Crombie said Solar Energy is a new, proposed section that covers the types of solar uses permitted by right or conditionally.

Chairman Gorris said for agriculture, if the property owner sells, the use could change and no longer be agriculture. Someone can have a barn as a home, and later that barn changes into a garage. In this instance, the Zoning inspector would send a letter to the property owner informing them that the use has been changed. Ms. Crombie said you see that often and she knows some zoning inspectors will often advise that a barn be built to meet the setback regulations, if possible, which would alleviate that issue.

Chairman Gorris asked if Chester Zoning has anything to remove non-functioning systems? Are there any requirements that allow something to be maintained. Mr. Alusheff said currently none but must be

maintained in working order. Ms. Crombie said this relates to property maintenance. A Township does not have property maintenance authority, the same is true for the small and large scale facilities; the property owner is responsible as to who must maintain or remove the panels once not in use.

Mr. Claypool asked who created the language for the Solar Energy section. Mr. Alusheff said the owner of a property went to the BZA with many variances and he was advised to initiate an amendment. Mr. Claypool said he can buy 100 acres of property, put chickens and solar panels on it and the Township cannot regulate that. Ms. Crombie said no, anything under 50 megawatts can be regulated by the Township.

Motion made by Mr. Neola to approve with modifications as noted in the review memo, Chester Township Text Amendment ZC-2025-3, and seconded by Mr. Bergansky, and upon a call for the vote, the motion passes.

9. Director's Report:

1. New Building Lots: Ms. Crombie said March had one (1) new building lot proposal submitted, in Parkman.

2. Analysis of Impediments to Housing: Ms. Crombie said she received a copy of the Analysis of Impediments to Housing that the Department of Community Development is required to update every five years in association with their community block grant fund. She has not yet reviewed but will do so. Mr. Claypool said this is a ridiculous report. Be careful who you ask to research and provide information on a topic. He will provide the board with his highlighted points.

3. Claridon Township Land Use Plan: Ms. Crombie said two (2) additional chapters were completed in March 2025. The staff time involved with assistance is 343 hours.

4. Thompson Township Land Use Plan: The township land use committee met March 6, 2025 to discuss their public forum and the next steps will be to participate in writing the plan. The staff time involved with assistance totals 108.5 hours.

5. Burton Township Land Use Plan: Ms. Crombie said there was minimal assistance provided. The staff time involved with assistance totals 11.3 hours.

6. Zoning Matrix Update: Ms. Crombie said as she previously reported, the zoning matrix is a spreadsheet that is meant to be a quick reference guide regarding various zoning topics including flag lots, driveway setbacks, pond setback regulations, allowing home occupations in an accessory building and more. Ms. Irizarry has been working on updating this for the past month. It will be presented to the board at a future meeting.

7. Ohio Department of Development zoning survey: Ms. Crombie said the Ohio Department of Development created an 11 question survey about zoning regarding passage of HB 315, which includes \$1.5 million in funds to assist communities in updating their zoning regulations. This information was forwarded to Township Trustees, Fiscal Officers, Zoning Inspectors, BZA and Zoning Commission secretaries.

8. Middlefield Township Annexation: Ms. Crombie said at their March 11, 2025 meeting, the BOCC discussed an annexation from Middlefield Township to the Village of Middlefield. It involves a 64.71 acre parcel owned by Lake Avenue Land Partners LTD, located east of the Woodsong development. It is the proposed site for approximately 200 homes. More information will be provided later.

9. Leadership Geauga: Ms. Crombie said Leadership Geauga met on March 21, 2025 for Business Day. They toured or heard from various speakers, such as Geauga Growth Partnership, Great Lakes Cheese, which allow employees to own part of the business, Kinetico, Marsh Valley Forest Products, and Sharon James Winery.

10. Grand River Wild and Scenic River Advisory Committee: Ms. Crombie said she was contacted by the Lake County Planning Director, Mr. Radachy, to see if she or Ms. Kobus would be interested in volunteering on the Grand River Wild and Scenic River Advisory Committee. There are currently no volunteers from Geauga County, even though the tributaries of the Grand River are in Geauga County. Ms. Kobus is interested in volunteering, and it will not interfere with normal department duties as the committee meets quarterly at 5:00 p.m.

11. Waters of the United States: Ms. Crombie said she previously reported on a court case Sackett v. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) in 2023, which held that the “Clean Water Act’s” use of “waters” refers to “geographical features” that are described as streams, oceans, rivers, and lakes, and to adjacent wetlands that are “indistinguishable” from those bodies of water due to a continuous surface connection. In mid-March 2025 the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency provided an update on how the court case impacts the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency’s review of what constitutes “continuous surface connection”. She presented the updated information to the board and said the 3rd and 4th bullet points are the key points that summarize this update, which are, wetlands directly abutting a jurisdictional water, without a separation by uplands or similar features, meet the “continuous surface connection” requirement, and it rescinds previous guidance and training materials that allowed for jurisdiction over wetlands connected by discrete features, like ditches, swales, pipes, or culverts.

12. Interoffice Assistance: Ms. Crombie said Ms. Kobus made maps for Claridon Township regarding their request to the County Commissioners to prohibit large scale wind and solar. She also assisted Chester Township with an updated zoning map.

13. Commercial Construction Activity, March 2025: Ms. Crombie said there were two (2) significant permits issued for commercial construction projects in March. In the City of Chardon on Water Street, for Cardinal Realty, LLC, a Chipotle, which is 2,370 square feet and Newbury Township, on Auburn Road, CHMK Land LLC, Camp Ho Mita cabins, which is 1,280 square feet.

14. House Joint Resolution 8: Ms. Crombie said at last month’s meeting Mr. Claypool mentioned House Joint Resolution 8, which is a proposed amendment to the Ohio Constitution that would extend the State Capital Improvement Program with an additional \$2.5 billion in general obligation bonds to fund local infrastructure capital improvements. Information was provided and this will be on May 6, 2025 ballot.

15. Legislative Updates: Ms. Crombie briefly summarized House and Senate Bills that impact Planning and Zoning.

Senate Bills:

SB 145: to amend sections of the Revised Code and rename the Department of Development to the Department of Housing and Development and to modify the law related to housing, introduced March 2025: Ms. Crombie said this is similar to SB 246, which proposed several changes directly related to housing. She will compare the two (2) and report back to the board.

16. Housing Starts, 1st Quarter 2025: Ms. Crombie said there were 39 new housing starts in the 1st quarter. Mr. Davis asked if the 39 new housing starts is for new buildings, or does it include a structure that was previously there, torn down, and built again. Ms. Kobus said the data is strictly based on new permits issued by the Building Department, which may or may not involve a demo and re-build.

17. Commercial Construction Activity, 1st Quarter 2025: Ms. Crombie said there were not too many significant commercial construction activities in the first quarter and briefly reviewed the projects.

18. Work Summary, March 2025:

a. Planning/Zoning/Subdivision Administration: Ms. Crombie said in March there were 17 lot splits/subdivisions/easements/amendments as compared to February, which had 19.

b. Comprehensive Planning Efforts: The staff referred to the General Plan four (4) times in March related to Natural Resources, Economic Development, Land Use, and Community Facilities.

Ms. Crombie said much of the referral to the General Plan was regarding a grant application the Foundation of Geauga Parks worked on for University Hospitals regarding a trail the medical center wants to install primarily for its employees and visitors, but county employees could use it too. Ms. Crombie said this trail would expand into the woods, which is owned by University Hospital. This falls under the Strategic Development Areas in the General Plan under Potential Tools and Strategies.

Ms. Crombie received an update on HB 315, which helps Townships and Municipalities Modernize their zoning codes. On February 4, 2025 the Ohio Township Association released an Implementation Guide to assist townships with the various provisions of this bill. The Department of Development will, through a Zoning Modernization Grant, administer a \$1.5 million grant program in 2025 to assist townships in modernizing their zoning regulations and processes. Townships seeking funds should prepare documents outlining proposed zoning updates and their anticipated impact on local development to best be prepared for the application once the program begins.

Ms. Crombie said a Munson Township Trustee requested the draft Guide to Updating a Township Land Use Plan as well as examples of questions from previous land use surveys. Mr. McCaskey confirmed receipt of the draft.

c. Continuing Education: Ms. Crombie said Ms. Irizarry viewed a zoning inspector webinar hosted by the Ohio Township Association and staff completed all required cyber security training.

11. Old Business:

A. 2026 Draft Budget:

Ms. Crombie said the initial budget was presented to the board at last month's meeting. She has finalized and made some minor adjustments. She increased both the "Personnel" account due to the wage adjustments, and the "Membership Dues, Licensing, Subscriptions" account due to the increase cost of Adobe Acrobat Pro and Microsoft Office 365.

Ms. Crombie said there was not time at the March meeting to discuss bringing on another full-time planner; with the three (3) current staff members, a lot of work gets accomplished. Would the board like to keep the staff as is or should we hire another planner to do more interactive mapping, also allowing time for the other staff to do more involved plans, such as corridor plans. Mr. Neola asked-what an "interactive map" is, and Ms. Kobus said it would be creating Township Zoning maps, posting them to the website, linking to the zoning regulations, Zoning Inspector contact information, and more. Ms. Crombie said it could also be maps showing where all the farm markets in the County are located or local restaurants or parks. Mr. Claypool said this all seems like a lot of "fluff" for another employee, he doesn't see the value in it, and another employee is a liability. Mr. Fabig asked what the cost would be to bring on another full-time employee. Chairman Gorris said somewhere is the \$20 pay range per hour, so \$60-80,000 including benefits. Mr. McCaskey said as long as he has been on the board, there has always been talk about updating the Model Zoning, and it hasn't been done yet. He said he understands staff have been helping townships update their land use plans, but he feels another full-time employee would be a benefit. Ms. Kobus said another Planner could work more closely with the Zoning Inspectors. Mr. Neola said if you need information on the Townships, you can just go to their websites to get it.

Mr. Davis said he would first like to give "Kudos" on the budget report, it was well prepared, as for the Microsoft Office 365 subscription costs, what is driving this? Can we share licenses with others? Chairman Gorris said Office 365 is assigned to individuals, so sharing is not a good idea. He can work from home and have access to Office 365 since it is assigned to him, if he had to share the license, that would not be possible. Mr. Davis asked if the County buys the subscriptions in bulk, and Chairman Gorris said yes. Mr. Claypool said when Office 365 switched over to being subscription based, aren't the updates automatic; he doesn't understand the transition cost. Someone needs to talk to ADP about this. Chairman Gorris said some of the cost difference is due to it being cloud base.

Mr. McCaskey asked, since the Budget needs to be submitted by April 18, 2025, can we just add the cost of hiring another employee and get the Model Zoning updated. Ms. Crombie said a committee was started in the past for the Model Zoning update, and it could be reinstated, but there would need to be public notice requirements as well. Mr. Claypool said we need to talk about this "holistically", why another employee; can we budget for another employee, and the board can talk about it further. Job descriptions may need to be updated as well. Chairman Gorris said if the board decides to request the funding but does not to hire another employee, the money is given back.

Mr. Davis said he would like to keep with the status quo, pay increases have just been approved due to cost of living increase, but also as an inclination to take on more work. He made a motion to approve the Budget 2026 as presented and defer hiring another employee to a later date. Mr. Claypool said we are an independent board, and under the ORC we can generate our own revenue, which is something to think about. Mr. Neola said can we define the job description for another employee and would this change the other Planner's role and job duties; let's talk about this again in six (6) months.

Mr. Johnson said what about another intern to which Mr. Davis agreed, but he proposed hiring two (2) interns. Ms. Crombie said if she hires another full-time employee, there would not be an intern then. Mr. Davis asked if there were any regulatory updates that are required to be made. Mr. McCaskey said all this conversation about hiring another employee should have been done in February, he feels we should just budget for another employee. Ms. Cocca-Fulton agreed to budget for another employee and remove the intern. Mr. Davis asked to wait to budget for another employee till the 2027 Budget, there might be a need later to hire a new employee. Mr. McCaskey then said to keep the budget as

presented and Chairman Gorris agreed and formulate job tasks and duties for another employee at another date.

Motion by Mr. Davis to keep 2026 Budget request as presented, and seconded by Mr. Claypool, and upon a call for the vote, the motion passes.

B. Farmland Preservation Plan Update:

Ms. Crombie said she received several names of potential farmers from board members and county staff to be on the task force for the Farmland Preservation Plan update. She created a breakdown by agriculture and commodity of which individuals could represent dairy, beef/hogs/poultry, hay, corn/soybeans or other grains, Maple syrup, Honey, produce, and any specialties. She said the names given for the potential task force members have not been decided yet, that is for the board to do. The Commission does not have to decide on potential members today. Chairman Gorris asked what if the potential task force members say no. Mr. McCaskey said to send the letter to everyone interested and see what type of responses we get. Ms. Crombie said she included a paragraph in the letter explaining what the task force will entail, approximately how many months, and frequency they will meet.

Ms. Crombie said timing will be a concern, since not everyone will agree on what is a good time for the task force meetings, but she will send the letters out and see what happens. Chairman Gorris asked if some type of survey could be created, using Survey 123, to find out what times and days work best for all the potential task members. Ms. Kobus said she could create a QR code or link for the letter. Ms. Crombie said it does not need to be that involved. She will ask that question in the letter. Mr. McCaskey said Carmella Shale would be great based on her job.

Ms. Cocca-Fulton asked if the draft letter being sent out was to see if there is any interest and, based upon who responds, would the board then decide who would be on the task force. Ms. Crombie said yes. Mr. Davis said it is good to have a wide spectrum of interest for the task force. Ms. Cocca-Fulton asked if any of the names provided were Amish and Ms. Crombie said yes.

Ms. Crombie said she will modify the letter and add language that the Planning Commission board will decide who to appoint.

Motion made by Mr. Bergansky to send the letter to potential task force members, and seconded by Mr. Davis, and upon a call for the vote, the motion passes.

12. New Business:

A. Norfolk Southern Request for Comment (Rail Line Abandonment)

Ms. Crombie said the BOCC forwarded to her a letter they received from Scott Plum of Norfolk Southern requesting comments regarding a potential rail line segment abandonment in Geauga County. The railroad company is required to ask for comments regarding how this fits in with long range plans for the county. The abandoned segment in Geauga County is 1.8 miles long located in Bainbridge Township along the north side where Geauga Lake used to be and extends into Solon and Aurora.

Ms. Crombie presented an article from the Sun News titled "Rail to Trail: Agreement paves way for 7-mile greenway across three Ohio counties". The article explains how the rail would be utilized in Cuyahoga, Portage, and Geauga County. It could be an asset to Geauga County in looking at the Goals in the General Plan, such as providing quality public safety services, education, recreation and civic spaces.

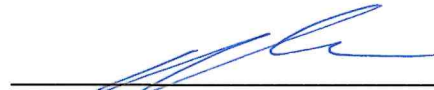
Ms. Crombie pulled other relevant information from the General Plan regarding Bainbridge Township's population, population density, and land use. She said final comments from the board will be sent to Mr. Plum and he is required to submit them to the Surface Transportation Board.

Mr. Claypool recommends the board look at the other considerations of what abandonment means and who would pay for a bike trail? Mr. Davis asked if the abandonment meant the railway had been scrapped. Chairman Gorris said the rails would be removed.

Mr. Miller asked if any land used for the railway would go back to whoever owned it. Chairman Gorris said it depends on how each parcel of land was deeded out. That is for legal to figure out and a lot must go into this review. This letter was just reaching out to the County to see what our thoughts are. Mr. Claypool said the board should be neutral on this. Mr. Davis asked if there was already a trail in the process, is this a proposal to make an extension of the trail? Ms. Crombie said yes, the Headwaters Trail in Portage County already exists on a portion of rail line. Mr. Bergansky said this is a good idea and it goes with our General Plan and recreation. Mr. Davis agreed. Chairman Gorris thought the letter was well aligned with what we have in our General Plan.

13. Adjournment:

Motion by Mr. Bergansky to adjourn the meeting, seconded by Mr. Davis and upon a call for the vote, the motion passes. Meeting adjourned at 9:14 a.m.



Nicholas Gorris, Chairman

Gary Neola, Secretary/Treasurer

COUNTY PLANNING COMMISSION FINANCIAL REPORT
Summary

Budget – Prepared April 1, 2025



<u>Account</u>	<u>Annual Appropriation</u>	<u>Year to Date Expenditure</u>	<u>Balance</u>
Salaries	\$177,354.00	\$38,625.48	\$138,728.52
Supplies	\$2,000.00	\$0.00	\$2,000.00
Hosp.	\$28,550.00	\$7,719.54	\$20,830.46
Medicare	\$2,480.00	\$549.64	\$1,930.36
OPERS	\$23,670.00	\$5,343.52	\$18,326.48
Worker's Comp.	\$100.00	\$0.00	\$100.00
Other Expenses	\$4,700.00	\$62.73	4,637.27
Equipment	\$2,500.00	\$0.00	\$2,500.00
Contracted Services	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00
Covid -19 Expenses	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00
Copier Usage Services	\$800.00	\$53.18	\$746.82
Travel	\$5,000.00	\$822.19	\$4,177.81
Advertising	\$325.00	\$0.00	\$325.00
Training	\$700.00	\$0.00	\$700.00
Member, Dues, Lic. Sub	\$3,200.00	\$0.00	\$3,200.00
Total	\$251,379.00	\$53,176.28	\$198,202.72

<u>Planning Commission Revenues</u> <u>from Fees for March 2025</u>	<u>Year to Date Balance:</u>
January	\$317.40
February	\$1,392.50
March	\$150.00
	Yearly Total: \$1,859.90

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

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

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 APRIL 8, 2025 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>
1159	COPIER USAGE	3/11	DEX IMAGING • <i>Copier Usage</i> ◦ 1/22/25 to 2/21/25	\$53.18
1166	TRAVEL	3/4	GEAUGA TOWNSHIP ASSOCIATION • <i>Quarterly Dinner/Munson Township</i> ◦ Linda Crombie ◦ Allyson Kobus	\$70.00
1166	TRAVEL	3/18	ALLYSON KOBUS • <i>Mileage Reimbursement</i> ◦ Mail Room at Square and Recorder's Office ◦ Thompson Township Public Forum ◦ Planning and Zoning Brainstorming Session	\$47.04
1166	TRAVEL	3/18	LINDA CROMBIE • <i>Mileage Reimbursement</i> ◦ Thompson Township Land Use Update for Public Forum ◦ Burton Township Land Use	\$30.10
TOTAL				\$200.32


Nick Gorris, Chairman


Gary Neola, Secretary/Treasurer