

Geauga County Planning Commission

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

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

GEAUGA COUNTY PLANNING COMMISSION AGENDA

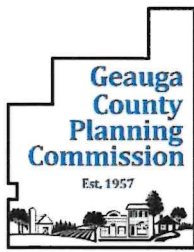
December 23, 2025 SPECIAL MEETING

12611 Ravenwood Drive

Conference Room B200, 2nd Floor

8:00 A.M.

1. Pledge of Allegiance
2. Roll Call
3. Letter to the Geauga County Commissioners regarding Geauga County being a member of NOACA
4. Adjournment



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DECEMBER 23, 2025 SPECIAL MEETING MINUTES

1. Pledge of Allegiance

Chairman Nick Gorris called the December 23, 2025 special meeting of the Geauga County Planning Commission to order at 8:00 a.m. at 12611 Ravenwood Drive, Room B200, Chardon, Ohio. A quorum was present. Roll call was taken by Ms. Crombie, and the following members were present:

2. Roll Call

Members present: Nick Gorris, Phillip Miller, Caterina Cocca-Fulton, Gary Neola, Enzo Perfetto, Dennis Bergansky, Jim McCaskey, Matt Johnson and Alternate Walter Claypool for Commissioner Ralph Spidalieri. Members absent: Commissioner Brakey and Commissioner Dvorak.

Staff present: Linda Crombie (Director) and Allyson Kobus (Planner II/GIS Coordinator). Staff absent: Pamela Irizarry (Administrative Assistant).

Mr. Jim McCaskey arrived at 8:01 a.m.

Ms. Cocca-Fulton arrived at 8:05 a.m.

3. Letter to the Geauga County Commissioners regarding Geauga County being a member of NOACA

Chairman Gorris said this is a special meeting and asked Ms. Crombie if it was posted on the Commission's website. Ms. Crombie said yes and the News Herald. Ms. Crombie discussed minor formatting issues and typos of the letter. Mr. Neola said the letter was reviewed at the December meeting and Commissioner Brakey wanted more data. He said two appendix items were added to the letter. Appendix 1 detailed how to separate from the MPO and Appendix 2 being the Estimate Gas Tax Paid by Geauga County.

Mr. Perfetto asked for some details regarding when NOACA was established and what their mission statement is. Mr. Claypool responded, saying NOACA has been around since 1968 and the Federal Government at the time thought they needed organizations to maintain the federal roads and bridges using the gas tax. He said the core objective of an MPO is transportation and he questioned why it has been allowed to include funding outside of roads and bridges. Mr. Claypool said the county engineers design roads and bridges. Money is put into a pot from ODOT and NOACA decides what projects are funded. Mr. Claypool said NOACA acts as a council of governments. The council can then spend money on things like climate, land use, and economic development plans. Mr. Perfetto likened it to a government within a government.

Mr. Claypool also mentioned that Geauga County used to receive two (2) million dollars in funding. The county engineers would meet at a NOACA meeting and work together to divide the funds. The current Executive Director, Grace Gallucci, changed the process of how projects receive funding and now Geauga County receives less. Mr. Claypool said if we separated from NOACA, there would be non-MPO funds available through the 18.4 cents gas tax that ODOT funds. However, if we form an MPO, there are certain funds or grants that we can apply for that we would not be able to apply for if we were not in an MPO. Mr. Claypool said NOACA received \$35 million in direct discretionary funding and because they are an

MPO, they qualify to apply for more funding. If Geauga County left, we would get approximately \$7 million discretionary and can also apply for STBG (Surface Transportation Block Grant) funding. If we are an MPO, we compete with NOACA and other MPO's and are at the same table.

Mr. McCaskey noted the letter states that we would want to form an MPO with Lake County; can we form an MPO with Ashtabula? Mr. Claypool said no because the urban areas must be contiguous with one another so we can only form an MPO with Lake County. Mr. Neola asked if Ashtabula could be added later on. Mr. Claypool said yes and added that Lake County is our sister county.

Mr. Claypool advised that he talked with ODOT and they do not want us to leave NOACA and form another MPO because it would make it more complicated for them. He added that Planning Commission could request ODOT confirm the cost model and then share it with the Lake County Commissioners and then to our legislators. Mr. McCaskey asked what the County Engineer, Mr. Haupt, opinion is on this. Mr. Claypool said he did not know but he is always looking out for what is best for the County.

Mr. Neola said he feels if Planning Commission showed the data to Commissioner Brakey, she would be on board. Mr. Bergansky added out of the money that we put in we only get 10% in return. It is a bad investment, and the County is funding a lot of projects outside of the county. He added that Geauga County has very little representation on the NOACA Board. They give us barely enough to keep us in. Cuyahoga County has the majority on the NOACA Board and therefore most of the funding goes to projects in Cuyahoga County.

Mr. Perfetto asked if forming an MPO would mean a staff must be created and Mr. Claypool said yes. Mr. Claypool said the two county engineers (Lake & Geauga) can have an agreement between them and they can make up the MPO. We currently pay around \$35,000.00 a year to be in NOACA, it may even be \$45,000 by now. Mr. Perfetto added that it seems so misaligned between Geauga and Cuyahoga. The Home Builders Association does not know what NOACA does. Mr. Claypool added that NOACA is more focused on Cuyahoga County and the City of Cleveland.

Mr. McCaskey added that we need to stress the money aspect and prove it is a bad investment. Mr. Neola said the residents should expect the Board of County Commissioners to be fiscally responsible, and residents should be pressing this issue. NOACA is overstepping but it is the fiscal responsibility that will sell it. Mr. Claypool said sending this letter will force the issue at a public meeting and the residents will then know. Mr. McCaskey said at the December meeting it was discussed the letter must contain more data. Is this enough data? He believes receiving only 10% should be emphasized. Mr. Claypool said that amount can fluctuate, sometimes more, sometimes less.

Ms. Cocca-Fulton mentioned that NOACA is planning for Geauga County, isn't that our job? Mr. Claypool said NOACA will say they have no authority. Ms. Cocca-Fulton said yet, NOACA has all these plans. She added that the startup of an MPO will be difficult, but it makes financial sense. Ms. Cocca-Fulton said we must find solutions, and she thinks NOACA is getting money for things they should not be doing. Mr. Claypool replied they have something we do not, which is influence. He also added that if Geauga County leaves NOACA then it would set a precedence and other counties will also leave. Mr. Neola asked what would happen if Geauga, Lorain, Lake, and Medina all left NOACA to which Mr. Claypool replied that Cuyahoga County and the City of Cleveland have enough population to still exist as an MPO.

Mr. Johnson asked if leaving NOACA would create more jobs in Geauga County. Mr. Claypool replied yes, and Mr. Gorris added that it would maybe create five jobs and it would not necessarily be only for Geauga

residents. Mr. Gorris felt that the job creation argument would not be a large factor in the decision to leave.

Mr. Perfetto asked if we left NOACA and did not form another MPO then we would not have to pay the \$35,000.00? Mr. Neola said that was correct but if we formed another MPO we would have to put money toward it. Mr. Perfetto added that if we do not form an MPO then we can apply for funding from the non-MPO funds, and we should show the County Commissioners those numbers. Mr. Claypool responded that the non-MPO funding changes every year as it depends on the federal administration. The MPO funds are a known number. Mr. Claypool said Columbiana County left their MPO so it can be done. A county does not have to have MPO funding as ODOT sets up funds for non-MPO counties. Mr. Haupt should know approximately how much those funds are. Mr. Claypool said the Commission could bring in the ODOT District 12 manager to talk. Mr. Perfetto added that this is a recommendation to the Commissioners and it is an interesting topic for the citizens.

Mr. Claypool made a motion to approve the letter as amended with the grammar and typo corrections and to send it to the County Commissioners and seconded by Mr. Bergansky.

Upon further discussion, Ms. Cocca-Fulton mentioned that there are attachments labeled as appendices, but the letter does not mention them. Mr. Gorris asked if the ten million dollars is an annual amount to which Mr. Claypool responded yes. Mr. Gorris asked of the 18.4 cents in gas tax that is collected, how much of that is going to the state for state roads, and county for county roads. He added that he feels this is the number we are missing. We do not get all 18.4 cents because we do not maintain federal roads. Federal money supports federal roads such as U.S. 422, U.S. 322 and others. Mr. McCaskey asked if we would get even 50% of the 10 million dollars to which Mr. Claypool responded no. Mr. Gorris added that the money does not go into a pot, it is divided. We are never going to see 18.4 cents at the county level. Mr. Claypool added that road projects are submitted and they go into a queue and the projects are evaluated to determine which are awarded the funds.

Mr. Gorris asked over the past ten years what roads were funded by non-MPO funds. The County Commissioners can ask this of the County Engineer. Funds are allocated based upon population. Mr. Claypool said there is nothing that states that is a requirement. The County Engineer submits projects he wants funding for. NOACA then looks at equity and they say it is more equitable to give the money to other communities because of income. These weighted factors influence the allocation of funds.

Mr. Gorris said there is a need to talk to ODOT. The Amish road safety project a few years ago was made possible through ODOT funds, not NOACA funds. It came out of the state safety funds because they did a safety study. He said the Amish community makes contributions to the community where they live to support improvements. He feels it is not small amount given the size of the Amish community.

Ms. Cocca-Fulton and Mr. Neola revised the letter, so it mentioned the exhibits in the opening statement as well as the importance of financial responsibility.

Mr. Claypool rescinded his motion to approve the letter, and Mr. Bergansky rescinded his second. Upon a call for the vote, the motion and second were rescinded and it passed unanimously.

Mr. Claypool made a motion to approve the letter as further amended and to send it to the County Commissioners and Mr. Bergansky seconded the motion.

Upon further discussion, Mr. Gorris reminded the Planning Commission board of their Bylaws and read the mission statement aloud. He added that it is important to remember the bylaws and to focus on our local entities.

Mr. Gorris also read from NOACA’s website including their mission statement and that each community sets its own development and land use policies. He read that 78% of NOACA’s funds come from the FHWA (Federal Highway Administration), FTA (Federal Transportation Association), the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and other sources. ODOT provides ten percent or less of the overall budget and local dues supplement the budget for projects that are not eligible for federal funding. He said NOACA’s website states they have no legal authority to control land use.

Mr. Neola thanked Mr. Gorris for the reminders and added that he feels the letter is in harmony with the Planning Commission’s mission statement. Mr. Perfetto added that he feels NOACA’s mission statement is contradictory to what they are doing. Mr. Claypool gave the recent example of NOACA proposing a carbon sequestration line directly through Geauga County.

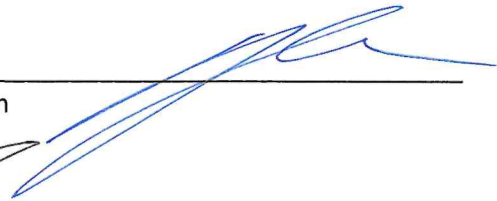
Mr. Gorris called for a roll call vote by Ms. Crombie:

Ms. Cocca-Fulton	Yes
Mr. Berganksy	Yes
Mr. Neola	Yes
Mr. McCaskey	Yes
Mr. Perfetto	Yes
Mr. Johnson	Yes
Mr. Miller	Yes
Commissioner Brakey	Absent
Commissioner Dvorak	Absent
Commissioner Spidalieri	--
Mr. Claypool (Alternate for Comm. Spidalieri)	Yes
Mr. Gorris	Abstain

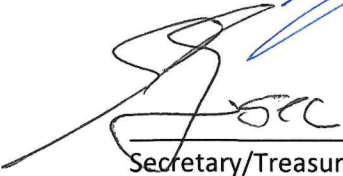
The motion passed with eight in favor and one abstention.

4. Adjournment:

Motion by Mr. Bergansky to adjourn the meeting, seconded by Mr. Neola and upon a call for the vote, the motion passed. Meeting adjourned at 9:21 a.m.



Chairman



Secretary/Treasurer