

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

July 14, 2026 REGULAR MEETING

12611 Ravenwood Drive

Conference Room A334, 3rd Floor

7:30 A.M.

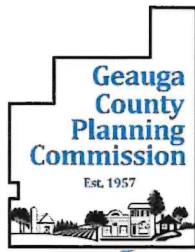
1. Pledge of Allegiance
2. Roll Call
3. Approval of Minutes:
 - A. June 9, 2026 Regular Meeting Minutes
4. Approval of Agenda/Addendum:
5. Financial Report and Approval of Expenses:
6. Other Business: None
7. Major Subdivisions to be reviewed: None
8. Township Zoning Amendments to be Reviewed:
 - A. Auburn Township
Text Amendment ZC -2026-01
Initiated June 11, 2026
By Zoning Commission
 - B. Chester Township
Text Amendment ZC-2026-4
Initiated June 17, 2026
By Zoning Commission
 - C. Chester Township
Text Amendment ZC-2026-5
Initiated June 17, 2026
By Zoning Commission
 - D. Chester Township
Text Amendment ZC-2026-6
Initiated June 17, 2026
By Zoning Commission
9. Director's Report:
10. Correspondence: None
11. Old Business:
 - A. Farmland Preservation Plan Update
 - B. Schedule of fees

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

12. New Business: None

13. Adjournment

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



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JULY 14, 2026 MEETING MINUTES

1. Pledge of Allegiance

Chairman Gorris called the July 14, 2026, 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 present. Roll call was taken by Ms. Irizarry, and the following members were present:

2. Roll Call

Members present: Commissioner Brakey, Nick Gorris, Philip Miller, Dennis Bergansky, Enzo Perfetto, Bob Rogish Jr., Matt Johnson, Matthew Mesok, and Alternate Walter "Skip" Claypool for Commissioner Spidalieri.

Members absent: Commissioner Dvorak and Lee Imhof.

Staff present: Linda Crombie (Director), Allyson Kobus-Havel (Planner II/GIS Coordinator), Pamela Irizarry (Administrative Assistant) and Oliver Richard (GIS/Planning Intern).

Mr. Johnson arrived at 7:36 a.m. Commissioner Brakey left at 8:29 a.m.

3. Approval of Minutes:

A. June 9, 2026 Regular Meeting Minutes

Chairman Gorris called for corrections or comments regarding the previous meeting minutes. Commissioner Brakey requested that the minutes note the specific reasons behind Mr. Perfetto's uncertainty regarding abstaining, as well as the context for Mr. Fabig's abstention. Ms. Crombie presented the red-lined document with the proposed modifications.

Motion made by Mr. Claypool to approve the June 9, 2026 regular meeting minutes as amended, and Commissioner Brakey seconded the motion and upon a call for the vote, the motion passed unanimously.

4. Approval of Agenda/Addendum Items:

Mr. Claypool requested the addition of an item to the agenda regarding the Village of Middlefield's utilization of Tax Increment Financing (TIF) to fund major infrastructure improvements for development. Chairman Gorris said this item will be listed under number 12(A) New Business.

Motion made by Mr. Rogish to approve modifying the agenda as noted and Mr. Bergansky seconded, and upon a call for the vote, the motion passed unanimously.

5. Financial Report and Approval of Expenses: (June 2026)

Motion made by Mr. Perfetto to approve the financial report and the summary of expenses for June 2026 as submitted and Mr. Bergansky seconded, and upon a call for the vote, the motion passed unanimously.

6. Other Business: None

7. Major Subdivisions to be reviewed: None

8. Township Zoning Amendments to be Reviewed:

**A. Auburn Township
Text Amendment ZC-2026-01
Initiated June 11, 2026
By Zoning Commission**

Ms. Crombie said the amendment seeks to define "Data Centers" under Article 2 but prohibit them within Article 5, while introducing "Information Technology Services" as an accessory use. Ms. Crombie said her concerns are that the proposed 400 square foot size restriction on Information Technology Services is overly restrictive. Additionally, she noted potential enforcement challenges, questioning whether the zoning inspector possesses the technical expertise required to evaluate floor plans and verify compliance and whether there is a system in place to ensure review proposed changes to an interior of building.

Ms. Crombie said data centers vary in scale from edge/micro, enterprise, which are associated with businesses, to colocation and hyperscale facilities. Current market demands and use of artificial intelligence are accelerating the need for larger hyperscale and colocation centers. The larger facilities face significant regulatory and community push back due to their extensive footprints, environmental impacts, consumption of agricultural land, and massive resource requirements. While cooling technologies differ with some operations relying heavily on water and others utilizing air-cooled systems, resource consumption remains a central concern.

Ms. Crombie said any township that prohibits a use should evaluate it based on health, safety, and general welfare. She reviewed the Township's existing zoning, noting that the B-4 Office/Light Industrial District is somewhat commercial in nature but permits light industry. Light industry is defined as those that are relatively clean, Ms. Crombie said in contrast, the I-1 General Industrial District accommodates manufacturing, and production uses but also allows light industry.

Ms. Crombie expressed concerns regarding the full prohibition of data centers given the different types. She noted that a company might challenge the broad restriction by arguing that data centers constitute a "Light Industry" use, especially since no examples of light industrial uses are listed in the resolution. Such a challenge could strip the Township of regulatory control as a judge would end up deciding, potentially creating an unfavorable outcome for the Township. Per the June 15, 2026, Ohio Township Association webinar, *"Data Centers: Balancing Growth, Infrastructure, and Community Impact,"* the presenting attorney indicated that prohibition is the quickest way to end up in court, and the Planning Commission's assistant prosecuting attorney generally agreed. Ms. Crombie cautioned that without further refinement, the amendment risks complete prohibition on all data centers. Additionally, while the Township is introducing a definition for "information technology services," the proposed 400 square foot limitation may be perceived as overly restrictive at the micro-management level. Plus, there is no mechanism in place for the Township to review all building floor plans to ensure compliance.

Ms. Crombie noted the Township could rely on its existing language where any use not specifically listed is prohibited. She observed that Auburn Township and other jurisdictions within the County utilize this approach as a regulatory safeguard. It is though the premise that you are guilty until proven innocent versus innocent until proven guilty. If specific "light industrial" uses are left unlisted, the Zoning Inspector (ZI) has the professional discretion to evaluate and deny a use, including a proposed data center

application. The applicant would then have to appeal to the Board of Zoning Appeals (BZA). Ms. Crombie outlined two potential paths for a denied applicant: they could either seek a use variance through the BZA or initiate a formal zoning amendment process under Ohio Revised Code (ORC) 519.12. The amendment route could involve a public referendum, ultimately placing the final decision in the hands of township residents rather than the Board of Trustees.

Ms. Crombie reviewed parts of the Auburn Township Land Use Plan as it serves as a vital framework for assessing land use decisions. In particular, water availability in terms of gallons per minute (GPM). The Township does not have significant water resources and there was little interest in central water service.

Ms. Crombie said a township could designate data centers as a conditional use, subjecting them to rigorous development standards. These criteria could include requiring public water, implementation of closed-loop cooling systems, and comprehensive water availability testing to ensure long-term aquifer sustainability. Such requirements could deter a data center from considering that community.

Commissioner Brakey said water is not the only issue, as data centers require high voltage power. Mr. Claypool asked if this was the first zoning amendment regarding data centers and Ms. Crombie said yes. He said his biggest concern is how data centers are defined. He feels this is a court action waiting to happen. Mr. Claypool said if the power is not coming from the outside, how will this impact the community. He recommends the Township go back and rethink this definition in terms of what they are zoning for. Ms. Crombie said if a data center utilizes onsite power, such as an electric substation or natural gas plant, the Township has no authority over public utilities.

Ms. Crombie said the staff recommendation is for approval with modifications as follows: the Township not prohibit data centers and consider how prohibiting them would impact data processing that are otherwise accessory uses, advise the Township to rely on language in the Township Zoning resolution, which states that a use not listed shall be prohibited; not adding definition of Information Technology Service, noting that imposing a restrictive 400 square feet cap is a constructive prohibition; review their land use plan as it relates to supporting this amendment; review the purpose of statement of B-4 and I-1 district to reference "customary uses"; recommend that the Township inventory parcels that would be of sufficient size for colocation or hyperscale type data centers using an average of 0.5 to 1.5 acres of land per every megawatt; and recommend the Township review the alphabetical references listed in the proposed amendment.

Chairman Gorris said it is up to the Township to do its due diligence. Commissioner Brakey said some of the recommendations, particularly the ones about not outright prohibiting data centers and to not add the definition of Information Technology Service, would suggest the recommendation should be for denial. Mr. Claypool agreed but said townships have the right to deny certain types of businesses so they could prohibit data centers if they wanted to.

Mr. Claypool said he would like to move to deny. Commissioner Brakey asked if the board is following staff recommendations listed. She feels the memo has good information overall and it should be included. Chairman Gorris said he agrees with staff recommendations and is rephrasing it to denial and the staff will send a memo to the Township along with the review memo.

Motion made by Chairman Gorris to recommend denial of Auburn Township Text Amendment ZC-2026-1 and the modifications in the staff review memo be submitted to the Township Zoning Commission to more specifically clarify the size and type of data centers under consideration. Seconded by Mr. Claypool. Upon a call for the vote, the motion passed with eight votes in favor, and one abstention, with Mr. Bergansky abstaining.

Mr. Claypool said the Commission should consider drafting a definition of data center to add it to the Model.

**B. Chester Township
Text Amendment ZC-2026-4
Initiated June 17, 2026
By Zoning Commission**

Ms. Crombie said the Chester Township Zoning Commission submitted zoning amendment ZC-2026-4, which impacts all Articles within the document relating to format updates, such as font size, color integration, tables, and corrected page numbering, the removal of quotation marks from definitions, section renumbering to align with the Model Zoning framework, and adding the Township's seal to the front cover. Non format changes include establishing consistent references to the Ohio Revised Code, eliminating Roman numerals. The staff recommends approval of the amendment.

Motion made by Commissioner Brakey to recommend approval of Chester Township Text Amendment ZC-2026-4, and seconded by Mr. Claypool, and upon a call for the vote, the motion passed unanimously.

**C. Chester Township
Text Amendment ZC-2026-5
Initiated June 17, 2026
By Zoning Commission**

Ms. Crombie said the Township previously submitted this amendment as ZC-2026-1 earlier this year, however it was denied pending formatting changes that needed to be initiated first. Under the current proposal, amendment ZC-2026-5 introduces minor wording changes, removes reference to the Ohio Department of Transportation (ODOT) regarding amendments, and establishes language regarding non-conforming lots of record under single ownership, specifically stipulating that abutting lots are considered a single lot.

Ms. Crombie said under Section 1008.0, Nonconforming lot of record, the opening paragraph states "in any zoning district, a building, structure, or use shall be allowed on any lot of record" but this directly conflicts with language in the proposed item (E) "Abutting lots considered one lot", and language in (E)(1) "Restrictions on combined lots".

Ms. Crombie expressed concern regarding single ownership stipulations. Specifically, she questioned whether an owner possessing ten non-conforming lots could circumvent local zoning regulations by deeding the parcels under different names. The staff recommends evaluating all lot consolidation proposals on a case-by-case basis as well as any requested variances, such as minimum building setbacks or dwelling sizes. Additionally, Ms. Crombie said that any legally established "lot of record" may be sold without local zoning review, regardless of its compliance status. Ultimately, due diligence and the burden of proof regarding zoning compliance is the landowner's responsibility but these proposed regulations will require more research and verification for zoning personnel. As an aside, Ms. Crombie said building on existing lots of record first is infill development, which supports farmland preservation efforts.

Ms. Crombie said staff recommends approval with modifications to keep the reference to ODOT in Article 3 and recommend that "(E)" and "(E)(1)" language regarding non-conforming lots not be added. Chairman Gorris said we will see more of residents trying to build on existing non-conforming lots.

Motion made by Mr. Bergansky to recommend approval with modifications as presented by staff, the Chester Township Text Amendment ZC-2026-5, and seconded by Commissioner Brakey, and upon a call for the vote, the motion passed unanimously.

**D. Chester Township
Text Amendment ZC-2026-6
Initiated June 17, 2026
By Zoning Commission**

Ms. Crombie said the Township proposes to change the accessory building size regulation by increasing the maximum building size from 2,500 square feet to 9,600 square feet based on lot area. Section 501.3 Accessory Buildings, Item (B) currently restricts the maximum combined ground floor area of all accessory buildings on a single lot to 1,280 square feet. The proposed amendment introduces a scaled restriction of 960 square feet of ground floor area per acre, up to a maximum of 9,600 square feet, whichever is greater. Ms. Crombie noted that while scaling building size based on lot area is an established zoning practice, the proposed 9,600 square feet cap is exceptionally large, and questioned the use of "which is greater" wording.

Ms. Crombie said that the Township zoning secretary said they receive numerous variance requests for accessory structures exceeding the current 2,500 square feet. While the frequent submittal and approval of these variances suggest a need to update their language, Ms. Crombie maintained that the existing 2,500 square feet limit remains reasonable. Ms. Crombie also noted that the Township proposes to increase the maximum allowable height for accessory buildings from 15 feet to 30 feet. For context, primary residential dwellings are currently permitted at a maximum height of 35 feet.

Mr. Bergansky questioned whether to leave the first part the existing language or take it out. He feels leaving both rules may not be necessary, but Chairman Gorris said not really. Mr. Mesok asked if temporary buildings are included to which Chairman Gorris responded no. Ms. Crombie said she tested the proposed regulations with the maximum lot coverage regulations with a random half-acre parcel in Chester Township, and it did not exceed the regulations.

Ms. Crombie said the staff recommendations are for the Township to consider a smaller maximum accessory building ground floor area, creating a simplified approach to state all lots under 1.33 acres are permitted the 1,280 square feet and all others calculated based upon 960 square feet per acre up to a specified maximum square footage; the Township confer with their APA regarding whether the language "whichever is greater" is properly used, and the maximum accessory building height be between 18 to 24 feet rather than the proposed 30 feet.

Motion made by Mr. Claypool to recommend approval with modifications as presented by staff of the Chester Township Text Amendment ZC-2026-6, and seconded by Mr. Bergansky, and upon a call for the vote, the motion passed unanimously.

9. Director's Report:

Ms. Crombie said six new building lot proposals were submitted in June 2026. Ms. Crombie said the Planning Commission Intern almost completed the buildings by type layer for Middlefield Township and started on Bainbridge Township. He also prepared the maps for the Farmland Preservation Public Forum.

Ms. Crombie said Ms. Kobus-Havel attended a meeting with the County GIS department, which discussed how the County will be converting over to Enterprise GIS. Ms. Kobus-Havel said Enterprise GIS will allow more local control of data for Geauga County.

Ms. Crombie said she came across the Swank Program in Rural-Urban Policy, which analyzes how agricultural, land use, energy, and economic development policies impact the rural-urban fringe. The data is not collected locally, but it is still an interesting website.

Ms. Crombie said the Ohio Township Association has compiled an overview of legislative amendments regarding House Bill 646. Following its passage in the House, the bill, which establishes the Data Center Study Commission, moved to the Senate and has been formally referred to the Senate Energy Committee. Ms. Crombie also noted that a proposed constitutional amendment by the group Conserve Ohio to ban data centers more than 25 megawatts did not obtain sufficient signatures to be on the November 2026 ballot.

Ms. Crombie said there were two significant commercial construction permits issued in June: Middlefield Township at 14829 Madison Road and in Bainbridge Township at 7209 Aurora Road. Ms. Crombie noted the workload for June was higher compared to previous months. Staff referred to the General Plan one time regarding Background/History, to verify square miles of the County.

Ms. Crombie said she attended a meeting with the County Administrator and other department heads regarding County owned lands and how the departments can work together to create a more comprehensive, accessible record of each property; Ms. Irizarry attended the Safety Team meeting where a County wide fire prevention plan was discussed; and Ms. Kobus-Havel met with the City of Chardon and the Auditor's Office to understand how the city updates its GIS, and how these changes are reflected in Realink.

Ms. Crombie said she attended three webinars hosted by the Ohio Township Association. The first being *Data Centers, Balancing Growth, Infrastructure, and Community Impact, Artificial Intelligence (AI) 101*, and lastly, *Zoning Code vs. ORC*. Ms. Crombie briefly highlighted the House Bills related to Agriculture and Planning and Zoning.

10. Correspondence: None

11. Old Business:

A. Farmland Preservation Plan Update:

Ms. Crombie said that the Farmland Preservation Plan Public Forum is scheduled for July 15, 2026, at the Geauga County Fairgrounds. Attendance remains uncertain, but she wanted to thank all who assisted with the preparations including key input from the June 10, 2026 Task Force meeting members regarding the public forum flyers, PowerPoint presentation, land use map, and information stations.

Additionally, Ms. Crombie noted that under the Ohio Department of Agriculture (ODA) grant agreement, the County must conduct outreach to Middlefield Township due to its lack of zoning. To satisfy this requirement, Ms. Crombie, Mr. Rogish, and Ms. Kobus-Havel attended the Middlefield Township Board of Trustees meeting on July 13, 2026. During this session, staff outlined the scope of the Farmland Preservation Plan update and previewed the presentations scheduled for the July 15, 2026, public forum.

The Middlefield Board of Trustees acknowledged the value of conserving agricultural land, though they noted ongoing interest in subdivision of township land in general.

B. Schedule of Fees:

Ms. Crombie said the draft revisions to the Schedule of Fees were presented and discussed during the June 9, 2026, board meeting. An updated version of the Schedule of Fees was included in the meeting packet for review and approval.

Motion made by Chairman Gorris to recommend acceptance of the 2026 Schedule of Fees as presented and seconded by Mr. Rogish and upon a call for the vote, motion passed unanimously.

12. New Business:

A. Village of Middlefield (TIF):

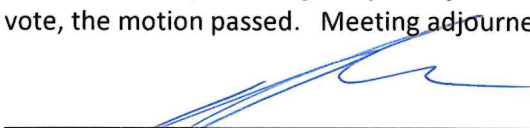
Mr. Claypool said the reason for adding this item to the agenda was to make the board aware of a Tax Increment Financing (TIF) agreement approved by the Board of County Commissioners (BOCC) and the Village of Middlefield for the Heritage Pointe Development Project. This agreement is directed toward financing infrastructure. Mr. Claypool said Geauga County is a rural community, but he sees much development in the Village of Middlefield ("Village"), and we are talking about farmland preservation. It is going from a rural community to an urban community, and this needs to be brought to the attention of the board. He said he realizes though after reading the agreement and the law, the BOCC does not have a choice but to process the TIF agreement. For the people living in the Village, are they aware of what is coming in and do they want it? How do we as the board approach this? Mr. Johnson said it is getting worse, the traffic by his house is horrendous. It is nice to see developments, but how much is too much. Mr. Miller said his brother previously owned the property and could not do anything with it, so he sold it.

Ms. Crombie said the Village requires annexation if sewer and water are desired. Higher density development per the Geauga County General Plan is recommended in the urban parts of the County. The Village has developmental pressures and its own plans and goals. Chairman Gorris said Planning Commission can monitor but it is difficult when the board is not required to be involved.

Mr. Perfetto questioned if this is a hardship as a TIF is not necessary to make the project viable. Why pay to help facilitate this if it is something that will not benefit the community. Mr. Claypool asked if the board wants to do something from an awareness standpoint. Mr. Johnson said he would like to have the agreement. Mr. Rogish said the County needs more incentives for farmland preservation, specifically around municipalities or else development will continue. Chairman Gorris directed Ms. Crombie to send the agreement to the board members.

13. Adjournment:

Motion made by Mr. Bergansky to adjourn the meeting, seconded by Mr. Rogish and upon a call for the vote, the motion passed. Meeting adjourned at 8:52 a.m.



Nick Gorris, Chairman



Enzo Perfetto, Secretary/Treasurer

EXHIBIT "A"

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

Mr. Peretto MOVED THE ADOPTION OF THE FOLLOWING RESOLUTION,
WHICH MOTION WAS SECONDED BY Mr. Bengarthy.

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 JULY 14, 2026 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	6/2	DEX IMAGING - Copier usage 4/22/26 to 5/21/26 -Split payment 2025 Carryover Account	\$12.67
0367	COPIER USAGE	6/2	DEX IMAGING Copier usage 4/22/26 to 5/21/26 – Split payment	\$35.40
1166	TRAVEL	6/16	GEAUGA TOWNSHIP ASSOCIATION - Quarterly Dinner -Split payment - Chardon Township 2025 Carryover Account	\$28.81
0370	TRAVEL	6/16	GEAUGA TOWNSHIP ASSOCIATON - Quarterly Dinner – Split payment - Chardon Township	\$41.19
0369	OTHER	6/23	UNIVERSITY HOSPITAL OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH - New Employee drug screening - GIS/Intern – Oliver Richard	\$57.00
0367	COPIER USAGE	6/30	DEX IMAGING Copier usage from 5/22/26 to 6/21/26	\$35.27
TOTAL				\$ 210.34


Nick Gorris, Chairman


Enzo Peretto, Secretary/Treasurer

<u>Planning Commission Revenues</u>	<u>Year to Date Balance:</u>
January	\$432.55
February	\$1,300.00
March	\$1,250.00
April	\$2,350.00
May	\$610.00
June	\$900.00
	Yearly Total: \$6,842.55

GEAUGA COUNTY PLANNING COMMISSION
FINANCIAL REPORT SUMMARY: Month of June 2026
BUDGET - PREPARED

7-Jul-26

<u>Account</u>	<u>Annual Appropriation</u>	<u>Monthly Expenditure</u>	<u>Year to Date Expenditure</u>	<u>Balance</u>
Salaries	\$187,375.00	-\$16,199.52	\$90,877.48	\$96,497.52
Supplies	\$1,500.00	\$0.00	\$112.07	\$1,387.93
Hospitalization	\$48,089.00	-\$4,007.28	\$24,043.68	\$24,045.32
Medicare	\$2,750.00	-\$229.10	\$1,282.92	\$1,467.08
OPERS	\$26,280.00	-\$1,999.70	\$12,308.97	\$13,971.03
Worker's Comp.	\$90.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$90.00
Other Expenses	\$2,700.00	-\$57.00	\$2,008.96	\$691.04
Equipment	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00
Contracted Services	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00
Covid -19 Expenses	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00
Copier Usage Services	\$600.00	-\$70.67	\$70.67	\$529.33
Travel	\$3,860.00	-\$41.19	\$41.19	\$3,818.81
Advertising	\$325.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$325.00
Training	\$400.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$400.00
Member, Dues, Lic. Sub	\$4,100.00	\$0.00	\$1,435.16	\$2,664.84
Total	\$278,069.00	-\$22,604.46	\$132,181.10	\$145,887.90


 Nick Gorris, Chairman

 Enzo Perfetto, Secretary/Treasurer