

Douglass Township Planning Commission Annual Report Calendar Year 2024

***Douglass Township
Montcalm County
State of Michigan***

***Douglass Township
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INTRODUCTION

The **Michigan Planning Enabling Act (MPEA)** allows for the establishment of local Planning Commissions, Master Plans, and other associated activities. Douglass Township's Planning Commission is established by **Article II.125.3811 under Planning Commission Creation and Administration**. This report is prepared and submitted to the Township Board according to the **Douglass Township Planning Commission bylaws, section 4 (e) under Duties and Responsibilities and section 13 (a) and (b) under Annual Report**. The Planning Commission is responsible for:

- Developing/Reviewing the Douglass Township Master Plan which provides guidance for land use and future development
- Creating a zoning ordinance to align goals of the Master Plan to future land use regulations •

Reviewing proposed projects ensuring they comply with zoning rules

- Considering special issues or participating in projects as directed by the township board

MEMBERSHIP

The **Douglass Township Planning Commission bylaws section 2 under Membership (a) and (b), and section 3 under Requirements of Membership (a-d)** outline standards for the Commission. In 2025, the Douglass Township Planning Commission consisted of 7 members whose terms, attendance, and training are listed in the chart below.

| Name | Membership start date | Term expires | Attendance | Trainings (hrs) | Field Trips |
|---|-----------------------|--------------|------------|-----------------|-------------|
| Rick Baldwin *appointed for a one year term in Jan. 2024 | Jan. 2001 | Dec. 2024 | 6/8 | | |
| Mike Swan Vice Chairman | July 2022 | Dec. 2025 | 5/8 | | |
| Kathy Craig Secretary | Jan. 2023 | Dec. 2025 | 8/8 | | |
| Eric Tester Board Liaison | Jan. 2023 | Dec. 2025 | 8/8 | | Site visit |
| Melissa Bannen | March 2023 | Dec. 2024 | 7/8 | | |
| Matt Moorman | March 2023 | Dec. 2026 | 8/8 | | |
| Jon Bailey Chairman | April 2023 | Dec. 2024 | 8/8 | | |

MEETINGS

The **MPEA** requires that local Planning Commissions meet at least four times a year. The **Douglass Township Planning Commission bylaws section 7 under Meetings (a-d)** states rules for meetings. In 2025, the Douglass Township Planning Commission met regularly on the last Wednesday of each month at 7 pm and held a total of 8 meetings which included Regular Quarterly Meetings, Special Meetings and Public Hearings. (The Douglass Township Board voted to approve funding for additional Planning Commission Meetings in 2025). Several of the meetings were held consecutively on the same night in

order to be fiscally prudent, but are broken down as separate meetings. The **Douglass Township Planning Commission bylaws section 9 under Minutes (a) and (b)** require a synopsis of meetings which is provided in the following chart:

| Date | Type of Meeting | Summary |
|------------------------|-----------------------------|--|
| 1/31/24 | Regular | Election of Officers, Annual Report review, attorney guidance on zoning issues regarding height of pole barns, building accessory structures on vacant property, square footage of small homes, various questions on pc procedures. |
| 3/13/2024 | Regular | Reviewed attorney drafts of ordinance changes on zoning issues regarding height of pole barns, building accessory structures on vacant property, square footage of small homes. Permitting issues and updates, support for Citizens for Local Choice ballot initiative to restore local control of zoning. |
| 4/24/24 | Public Hearing | Gathered public input and reviewed proposed changes to zoning ordinance regarding height of pole barns, building accessory structures on vacant property, square footage of small homes. Voted to recommend to board. |
| 4/24/24 7/31/24 | Regular Regular | Reviewed zoning permit application samples, came up with a plan, will pass on to board a sample for consideration. Added a survey requirement for new buildings. Discussed short term rental ordinances, campers, violations, noise, process for codifying updates to zoning ordinance book when that time comes. |
| 9/11/24 | Special | Discussed amendments to current wind and solar ordinances in light of PA 233 going into effect in November. Also discussed battery storage ordinance, and updating violations timeline from 45 days to 21. Voted to send these topics to Public Hearing Oct. 9 |
| 10/9/24 | Special and Public Hearings | Gathered public input on trigger ordinances for renewable energy projects and creating an overlay district for renewable energy, as well as changing the violations timeline from 45 days to 21 days. |
| 10/30/24 | Regular Meeting | Reviewed Flat River Zoning District changes, height of Lake houses, follow up on camping, short term rentals |

MASTER PLAN REVIEW

The Planning Commission is responsible for reviewing and updating the Master Plan to ensure it is a continuing reflection of the township's interests and needs. The township's current Master Plan was adopted in 2016. The **MPEA** requires a formal review (and update or reaffirmation) occur at least every five years. The **Douglass Township Planning Commission bylaws Section 4 under Duties and Responsibilities (b) and (c)** direct the commission to consider its Master Plan. A summary of items was

reviewed in 2022 and can be found in the Annual Report for 2022 and 2023. No Master Plan review was held in 2024.

ZONING AND PERMIT REVIEW

The Zoning Administrator for Douglass Township, Dave Kelsey, provided the following summary of all land use permit activity for 2024 and the previous 4 years.

| | 2020 | 2021 | 2022 | 2023 | 2024 |
|--|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|------------------------|
| Pole Barns | 2 | 6 | 11 | 11 | 11 |
| Barn Additions | 0 | 1 | 1 | 2 | |
| Decks | 0 | 3 | 3 | 1 | 8 |
| Garages | 5 | 7 | 3 | 1 | 3 |
| Homes | 5 | 4 | 10 | 6 | 1 denied 2 approved |
| Home additions | 2 | 3 | 2 | 3 | 3 |
| Accessory building | 3 | 2 | 0 | 2 | 4 |
| Variances | 0 | 0 | 4 | 2 | 1 |
| Special Use Permits | | | | | |
| Lot line Adjustment Land division | | | 1 | 3 | 3 |
| Violations | | | | | 19 |
| Misc | 5 | 1 4 | 5 | 6 | 4 |

PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

The **State of Michigan Open Meetings Act 267 15.263 section 3.(5)** states a person must be permitted to address a meeting of a public body under rules established and recorded by the public body. The

legislature or a house of the legislature may provide by rule that the right to address may be limited to prescribed times at hearings and committee meetings only. The **Douglass Township Planning Commission bylaws section 8 under Public Hearings (a) and (b 1-6), and section 7 (f 4 and 7)** sets forth procedures for gathering public comment. The Planning commission **heard and considered** a total of 38 comments from citizens during 2025. The breakdown is as follows:

| | Jan. 31 | March 13 | April 24 Pub. Hearing | April 24 reg mtg | July 31 Reg Mtg | Sept. 11 Special Mtg | Oct. 9 Special mtg/Pub hearing | Oct. 30 Reg. Mtg |
|---------------------------------|----------------|-----------------|------------------------------|-------------------------|------------------------|-----------------------------|---------------------------------------|-------------------------|
| Comment related to agenda items | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 25 | 1 |
| General Public Comment | 4 | 2 | 2 | 1 | 2 | | | 1 |

PLANNING COMMISSION GOALS/WORK PLAN 2024

The **Douglass Township Planning Commission bylaws under Duties and Responsibilities section 4 (f) (g) and (h)** instructs the Planning Commission to make recommendations, if desired, on zoning and planning changes/amendments. The points in the following chart were recommended for review in 2024:

- Review sections of zoning book regarding size of residences to accommodate potential small/tiny houses
- Review ordinances regarding height of pole barns, building on vacant property, height of lake houses, camping, short term rentals, noise
- Review ordinances for renewable energy projects as pertains to PA 233
- Update zoning book to incorporate amendments over the last several years
- Review building permit process/application
- Review inspection process
- Review violations timeline for infractions

SUMMARY

In the calendar year 2024, the Douglass Township Planning Commission accomplished the following: ● Held public hearings to gather input on changes (amendments) to the zoning book ● Updated the building application and inspection process

- Amended the following sections of the zoning book:
 - Height of pole barns
 - Building on vacant property
 - Minimum square footage of homes
 - Renewable energy projects
 - Violations timeline for infractions
 - Front yard for vacant and lake property defined
- Voted to send updated zoning book to public hearing for codification
- Voted to take no action on the following items as current regulations suffice:
 - Short term rentals

- Camping
- Rezoning Lake Stanton to Lake residential
- noise

WORK GOALS FOR 2025

The PC set these initial work goals to be carried over into 2025:

- Finish updating the zoning book and present for public hearing
- Continue the review of height of Lake houses