

2017

**ISABELLA COUNTY
PLANNING COMMISSION
ANNUAL REPORT**



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Isabella County Planning Commission

With assistance from:
Isabella County Community Development Department

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

The Isabella County Planning Commission functions under and has their powers and duties set forth by both the Michigan Planning Enabling Act (PA 33 of 2008) and the Michigan Zoning Enabling Act (PA 110 of 2006). The Michigan Planning Enabling Act (MPEA) provides for the creation, organization, powers and duties of Planning Commissions. The Michigan Zoning Enabling Act (MZEA) provides for the adoption of zoning ordinances and the establishment of zoning districts and prescribes powers and duties of certain officials including the Planning Commission.

Section 19 of the MPEA (MCL 125.3819) requires the Isabella County Planning Commission to make an annual written report to the County Board of Commissioners. This report is to provide the Board with a summary and status of planning activities over the past year.

2.0 MEMBERSHIP

The MPEA states that the membership of the Planning Commission shall be representative of important segments of the community, such as the economic, governmental, educational, and social development of the local unit of government, in accordance with the major interests as they exist in the local unit of government, such as agriculture, natural resources, recreation, education, public health, government, transportation, industry, and commerce. The membership shall also be representative of the entire geography of the local unit of government to the extent practicable.

In 2017, the Planning Commission's membership was as follows:

Kelly Bean, Chairperson*	Tim O'Neil
Jeremy Murphy, Vice-Chairperson	Ann Silker
Nancy White, Secretary	Gordon Gilchrist
Jim Horton, BOC Representative	Bob Campbell
Phillip Vogel	

** Member has obtained the Master Citizen Planner Certificate through MSU Extension.*

For 2017, the Board of Commissioners have appointed Bob Campbell to complete a 3 year term ending December 31, 2019.

3.0 MEETINGS

The Planning Commission meetings were scheduled for the Second Thursday of the month at 7:00 p.m. in Room 225 of the Isabella County Building. The Commission met every month in 2017. In 2018, the Commission will continue to meet on the Second Thursday of the month. All meetings are held in compliance with the Open Meetings Act (PA 267 of 1976).

- The Planning Commission held twelve (12) regular meetings in 2017.

4.0 PLANNING COMMISSION RESPONSIBILITIES

The Planning Commission's basic duties and responsibilities include the following:

- Perform Site Plan Reviews as required in the Zoning Ordinance.
- Conduct public hearings on and make decisions on Special Use Permit requests as specified in the Zoning Ordinance.
- Conduct public hearings on and make recommendations to the Board of Commissioners on Zoning Ordinance Text Amendments in accordance with the MZEA, Isabella County Zoning Ordinance and the Isabella County Master Plan.
- Conduct public hearings on and make recommendations to the Board of Commissioners on rezoning requests (Zoning Map Amendments) in accordance with the MZEA, Isabella County Zoning Ordinance and the Isabella County Master Plan.
- Update and maintain the Isabella County Master Plan in accordance with the MPEA.
- Review and make recommendations, as required by the MZEA, on zoning amendments for any Township in the County that has their own zoning ordinance.
- Review and comment on any proposed Master Plans or Master Plan amendments for any community within or adjacent to Isabella County as required by the MPEA.
- The Planning Commission is also considered a reviewing agency for applications into the Farmland and Open Space Preservation Program (PA 116).

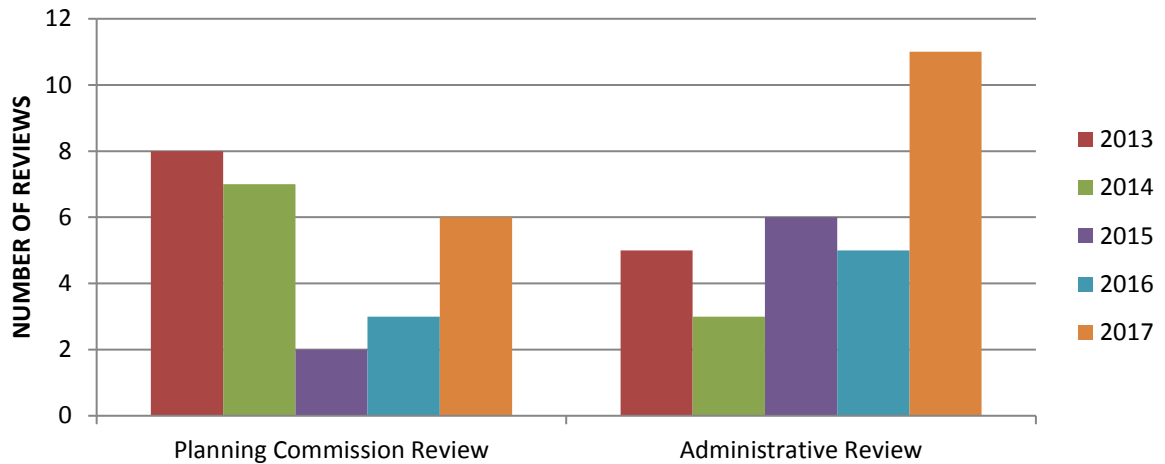
5.0 PLANNING COMMISSION ACTIVITY IN 2017

The Planning Commission continued to be active this past year as they strived to meet their goals for the year. The Commission continuously reviewed the Zoning Ordinance and in doing so, recommended multiple changes to the ordinance. This was done with careful consideration of the needs of the community and upholding the integrity of the County Master Plan. The Commission also continued active communication with the Townships. The following is a summary of all activity in 2017:

- 5.1 MASTER LAND USE PLAN REVIEW:** The Planning Commission in 2017 reviewed the Master Plan on several occasions during requests for action. A few areas have been identified for updating upon the next Plan update. According to the Michigan Planning Enabling Act, the Commission shall review the Plan at least every five years. Staff suggests a base line review of the master plan as the county moves towards the 2020 census.

5.2 SITE PLAN REVIEWS: In 2017 a total of seventeen (17) site plan reviews were performed. Six (6) of which were conducted by the Planning Commission and eleven (11) were conducted by staff. This is an increase from last year where eight (8) site plan reviews were performed. Since the Zoning Amendment in 2008 the Commission would like to point out that nearly half of all site plan reviews have been performed by the staff as per the amendment.

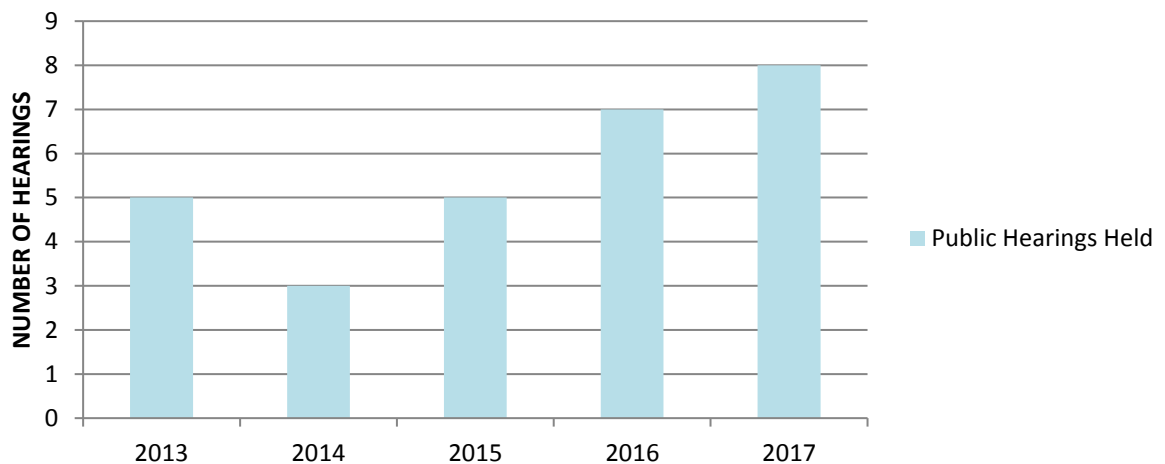
SITE PLAN REVIEWS



The Commission continues to see the benefit of reducing the number of applicants required to appear before the full Commission and expediting the permit process for those applicants.

5.3 SPECIAL USE PERMITS: In 2017 the Commission held eight (8) public hearings for Special Land Use Permits. There has been a steady increase in the number of special use permits and public hearings held since 2014. The following is a comparison from 2013 thru 2017:

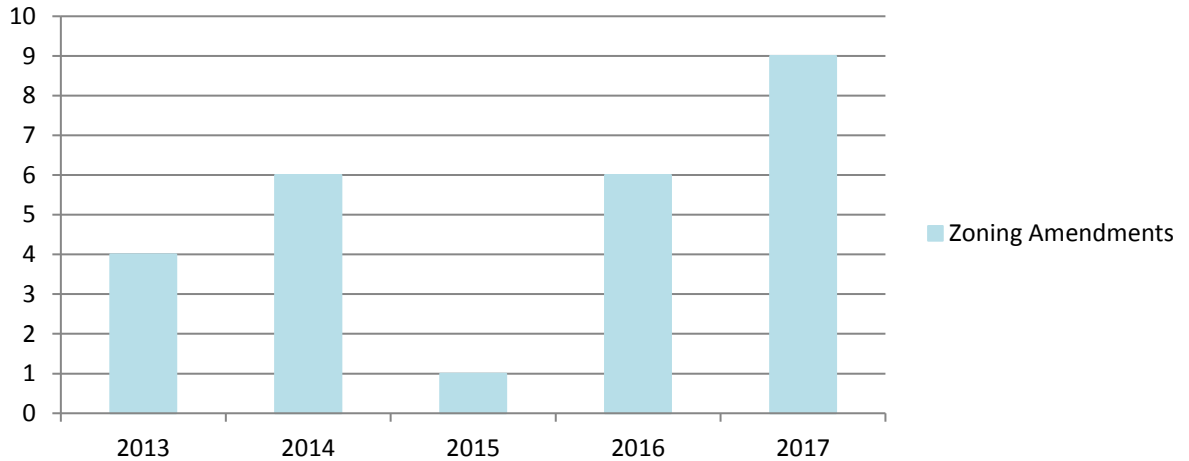
SPECIAL USE PERMITS



5.4 ZONING AMENDMENTS: In 2017 the Planning Commission held nine (9) public hearings for Text and Map Amendments. The Planning Commission

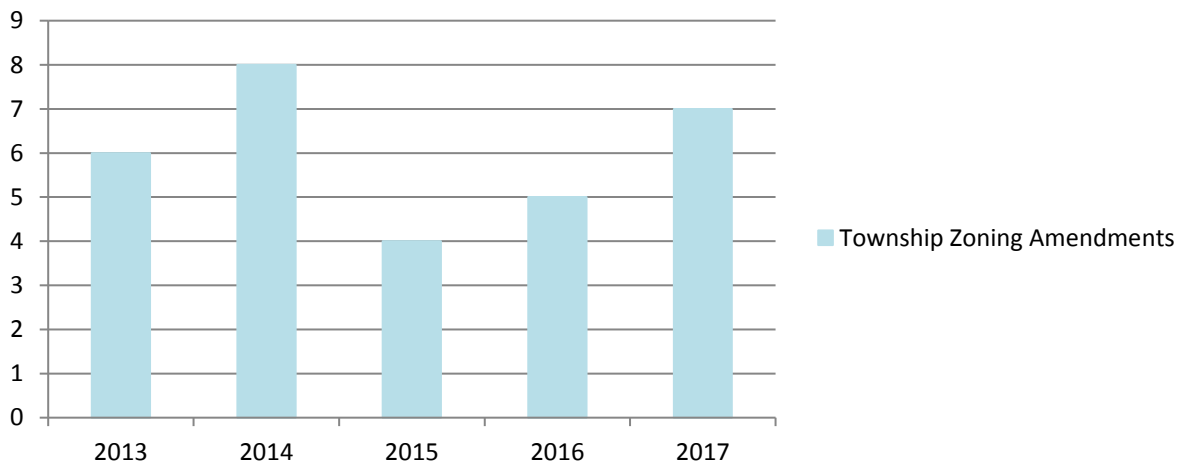
reviewed and recommended changes to the zoning ordinance language relating to agricultural tourism, electronic message boards, wind energy conservation systems, solar farms, industrial use requirements, mineral extraction industries and map amendments in three separate townships in the county. The following is a comparison from 2013 – 2017:

Zoning Amendments



5.5 REVIEW OF TOWNSHIP ZONING AMENDMENTS: In 2017, the Commission reviewed and commented on seven (7) zoning amendments. Union Township presented six (6) map amendments. Wise Township presented one (1) text amendment for review and consideration during 2017. The following is a comparison from 2013 thru 2017:

Township Zoning Amendments



5.6 MASTER PLAN REVIEWS: In September of 2017, the Commission received an update to the Union Township master plan for review and comment. In December Surrey Township, in Clare County, forwarded the Commission a draft copy of their master plan for the commission’s review and comment.

5.7 FARMLAND AGREEMENT APPLICATIONS (PA 116): In 2017, the Commission reviewed and commented on a total of nine (9) Farmland Agreement applications in five (5) different Townships (Denver, Wise, Rolland, Deerfield, and Coe). The applications represented a total of 735.46 acres entering the Farmland and Open Space Preservation Program. This was an increase from last year when the Commission reviewed three (3) applications totaling 204.5 acres.

6.0 ZONING PERMIT AND VIOLATION ACTIVITY IN 2017

Staff issued 163 Zoning Permits in 2017 which is an increase of approximately 2.0% from 2016. As noted previously, staff also conducted eleven (11) site plan reviews as a result of Zoning Amendment #08-08. Staff has received more than 100 complaints throughout the County including activities in Coe Township in which staff provides administrative support to via an intergovernmental agreement.

7.0 ZONING BOARD OF APPEALS ACTIVITY IN 2017

The Zoning Board of Appeals (ZBA) heard requests from nine (9) applicants for nine (9) different variances in 2017. This was a slight increase from 2016 where the Appeals Board heard eight (8) requests for Variance. The ZBA will review their actions early in 2018 and make any appropriate recommendations to the Planning Commission at that time.

8.0 TRAINING

In 2017, the Community Development Department partnered with the City of Mt Pleasant to host training for both the Planning Commission and the Zoning Board of Appeals members. Staff is planning to provide training on Special Use Permits and Zoning Amendments in 2018 to the Planning Commission.

9.0 PLANNING COMMISSION GOALS FOR 2018

- Continue to review and maintain the County Master Plan.
 - *The Commission has reviewed the Plan on several occasions and will plan to conduct a baseline review of the master plan, including a review of Airport access plans that have been filed, in anticipation of the 2020 census.*
- Continue to review the Zoning Ordinance and make recommendations to the Board of Commissioners on amendments to the Zoning Ordinance.
 - *The Commission reviewed and recommended several map and text amendments to the County Board of Commissioners. Recommended changes included agricultural tourism, electronic message boards, wind energy conservation systems, solar farms, industrial use requirements, mineral extraction industries and map amendments in three separate townships in the county.*

- Maintain the open lines of communication between the Commission and the Townships. This was ranked as the most important goal of the Master Plan in the survey conducted with the 2007 update to the Master Plan. The Commission also believes that this is most important to best serve the people of Isabella County.
 - *Staff has visited several townships and/or communicated with several supervisors in an effort to maintain a high level of communication.*
 - *The Commission has an agenda item for township concerns of which a few township representatives regularly are in attendance at the Commission meeting and often make comments.*