



2022 ANNUAL REPORT

ISABELLA COUNTY PLANNING COMMISSION

prepared by:

***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 2022, the Planning Commission's membership was as follows:

Kelly Bean, Chairperson*
Tim O'Neil, Vice-Chairperson
Ann Silker, Secretary
Steve Swaney, BOC Representative
Phillip Vogel

Kyle Camp
Jerry Neyer
Bob Campbell
Adam Brookens

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

3.0 MEETINGS

At the February 10, 2022 organizational meeting, the Planning Commission set their meetings for the second Thursday of the month at 7:00 p.m. at the Isabella County Building. Unlike the previous few years, all Planning Commission meetings in 2022 were held in person. In 2022, the Commission met in every month with the exception of January, April, August and October. All meetings are held in compliance with the Open Meetings Act (PA 267 of 1976).

- The Planning Commission held eight (8) regular meetings and one (1) special meeting in 2022.

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).

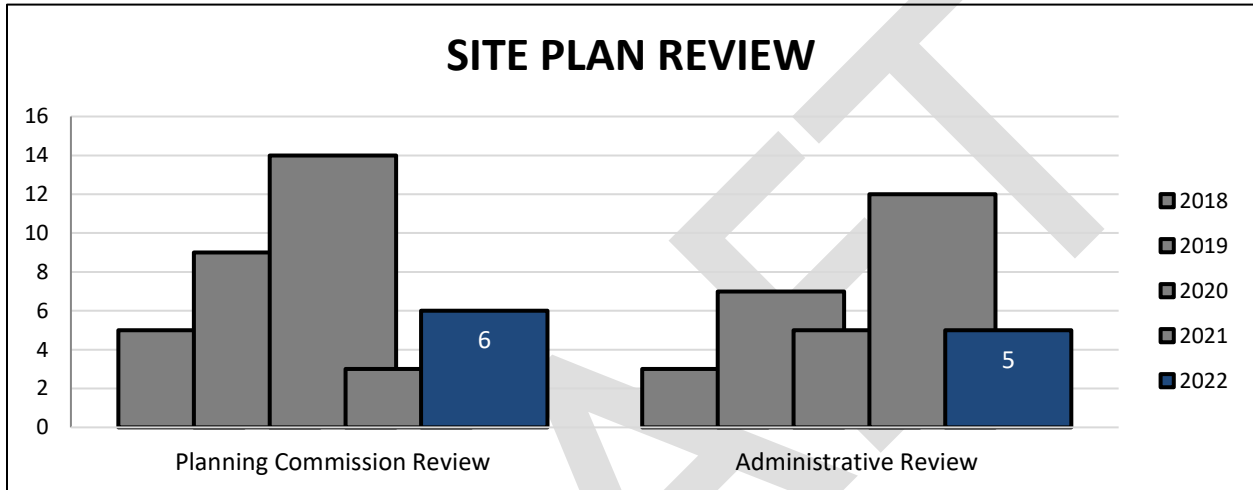
5.0 PLANNING COMMISSION ACTIVITY IN 2022

The Planning Commission continued to be active this past year holding in-person meetings. The Commission continuously reviewed the Zoning Ordinance and in doing so, recommended a few changes to the zoning map. This was done with careful consideration to the needs of the community and upholding the integrity of the County Master Plan. The Commission also continued remain active with communications to the Townships. The following is a summary of all activity in 2022:

5.1 Master Land Use Plan Review: Beginning in May 2022 and continuing throughout the remainder of 2022, staff worked closely with the Planning Commission to make minor changes to the Isabella County Master Land Use Plan. The entire master plan update process was performed in compliance with the Michigan Planning Enabling Act, act 33 of 2008, as amended. The changes included:

- Grammatical, text and other general document formatting updates,

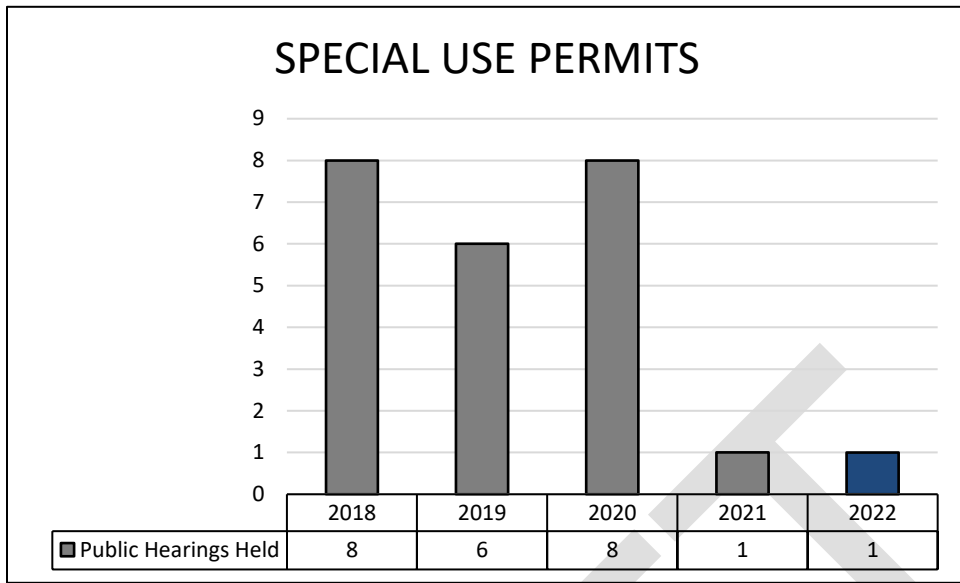
- Updates to the cover page, table of officials, and table of contents,
- Addition of a County-wide existing land use map with updated data,
- Updates to the format of the future land use maps with minor changes in Denver, Isabella, and Sherman Townships,
- Updated Census demographic data following publication of the 2020 U.S. Census,
- Sections were added for Airport Layout Plans and Sanitary Sewers and Water Supply Systems,
- Renewable Energy within Visions and Goals, and
- Updates to the Survey of Goals to Townships.



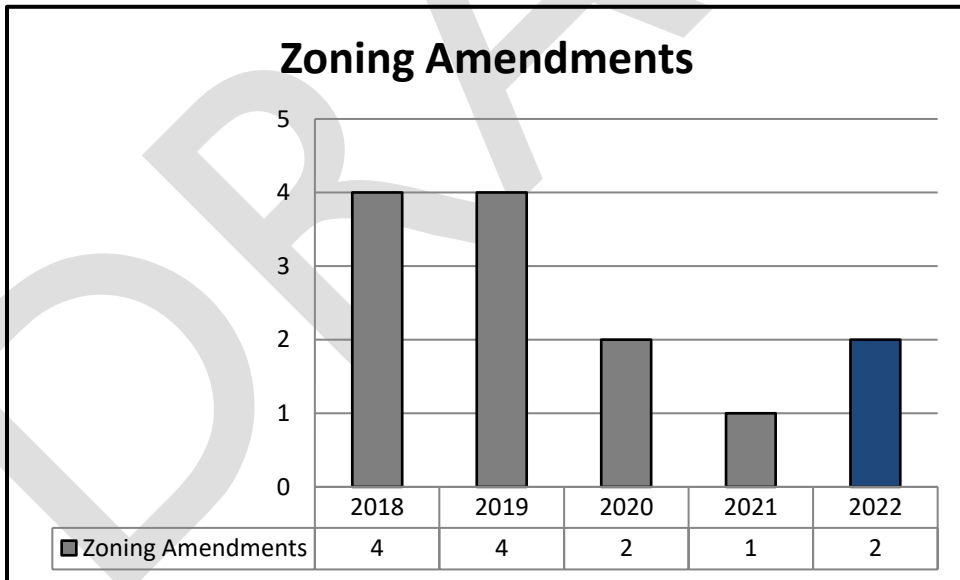
5.2 Site Plan Reviews: In 2022 a total of eleven (11) site plan reviews were performed. Six (6) of which were conducted by the Planning Commission and five (5) were conducted by staff. Site plan reviews conducted by the Planning Commission and staff included new and expansions of, commercial and industrial businesses. Overall, this was a slight decrease from 2021 where a total of fifteen (15) site plan reviews were performed.

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

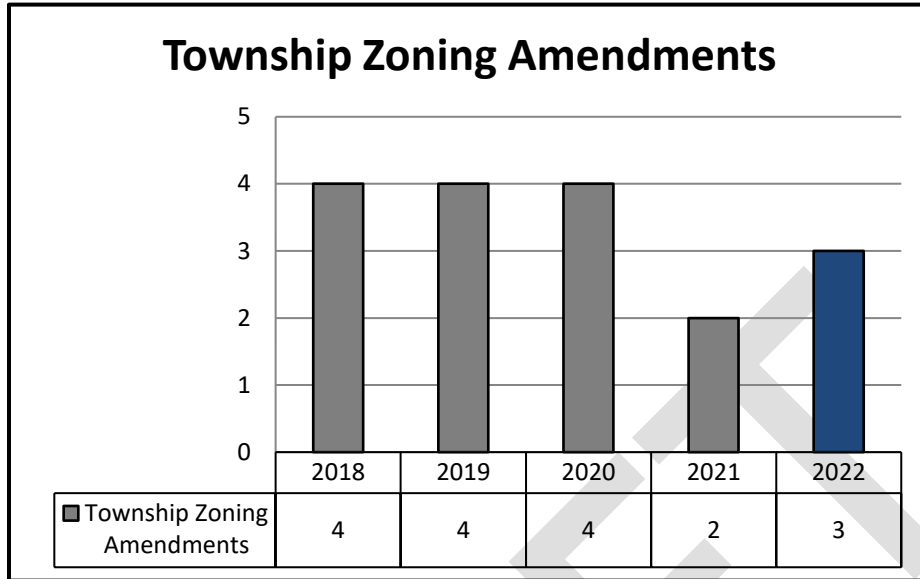
5.3 Special Use Permits: In 2022 the Commission held one (1) public hearing for a Special Land Use Permit. This is significantly lower than the average number of public hearings held each year since 2018 and is the same number of public hearings as were held in 2021. The following is a comparison from 2018 – 2022:



5.4 Zoning Amendments: In 2022 the Planning Commission held two (2) public hearings for Map Amendments. The Planning Commission reviewed and recommended the proposed amendments for approval. The recommendations were sent to the County Board of Commissioners for final action. The following is a comparison from 2018 – 2022:



5.5 Review of Township Zoning Amendments: In 2022, the Commission reviewed and commented on three (3) zoning amendments. Union Township presented two (2) map amendments and one (1) text amendment for review and comment. The text amendment included changes to Solar Energy Systems within the Township’s Zoning Ordinance. The following is a comparison of Township zoning amendments from 2018 thru 2022:



5.6 Master Plan Reviews: In May of 2022, the Commission was presented with amendments to the Master Land Use Plan for Wise Township in Isabella County and a Notice of Intent to amend the Master Plan for the City of Clare.

5.7 Farmland Agreement Applications (PA 116): In 2022, the Commission reviewed and commented on a total of seventeen (17) Farmland Agreement applications in six (6) different Townships (Broomfield, Coe, Denver, Lincoln, Nottawa, and Wise). The applications represented a total of more than 643 acres entering the Farmland and Open Space Preservation Program. This represents a 75% increase in acreage from 2021 when the Commission reviewed seven (7) applications totaling 367 acres.

5.8 Additional Activities

In addition to the previously noted activities, the Isabella County Planning Commission continued to work with RSG on the post construction sound study as required by the zoning ordinance for the Isabella Wind Turbine Project throughout central Isabella County.

6.0 ZONING PERMIT AND VIOLATION ACTIVITY IN 2022

Staff issued 137 Zoning Permits in 2022 which is a slight decrease from 2021. Though lower than the previous year, the number issued in 2022 is consistent with other previous years. As noted previously, staff also conducted five (5) site plan reviews as a result of Zoning Amendment #08-08. Staff has reviewed more than 100 zoning complaints throughout the County including activities in Coe Township in which staff provides administrative support via an intergovernmental agreement.

7.0 ZONING BOARD OF APPEALS ACTIVITY IN 2022

The Zoning Board of Appeals (ZBA) heard requests from four (4) applicants for four (4) different variances. This was the same from 2021 where the Appeals Board heard four (4) requests for a variance. The ZBA will review their actions early in 2023 and make any appropriate recommendations to the Planning Commission at that time.

8.0 TRAINING

No outside training was scheduled in 2022.

9.0 PLANNING COMMISSION GOALS FOR 2023

- Continually review the Zoning Ordinance and make recommendations to the Board of Commissioners on amendments to the Zoning Ordinance.
- The Planning Commission will continually review the zoning ordinance language regarding solar farms to ensure consistency with current industry standards.
- Maintain the open lines of communication between the Commission and the Townships. This was again ranked as the most important goal of the Master Plan in the survey conducted with the 2022 update to the Master Plan. The Commission also believes that this is most important to best serve the people of Isabella County.
 - *Staff will continue to communicate with Township Supervisors in an effort to maintain a high level of communication.*
 - *The Commission will continue to maintain an agenda item for Township concerns for Township representatives in attendance at the Commission meeting.*