



2025 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 2025, the Planning Commission's membership was as follows:

Kelly Bean, Chairperson*
Tim O'Neil, Vice-Chairperson
Ann Silker, Secretary
Bob Campbell, BOC Representative
Phillip Vogel, ZBA Representative

Kyle Camp
Lisa Hoisington
Russ Hyde
Adam Brookens

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

3.0 MEETINGS

At the January 9, 2025, organizational meeting, the Planning Commission set their meetings quarterly for the second Thursday of the month at 6:00 p.m. at the Isabella Commission on Aging Building. All Planning Commission meetings in 2025 were held in person. In 2025, the Commission held quarterly meetings in January, April, July, and October. Additionally, two special meetings were held, one in May and one in June. All meetings are held in compliance with the Open Meetings Act (PA 267 of 1976).

- The Planning Commission held four (4) regular meetings and two (2) special meetings in 2025.

4.0 PLANNING COMMISSION RESPONSIBILITIES

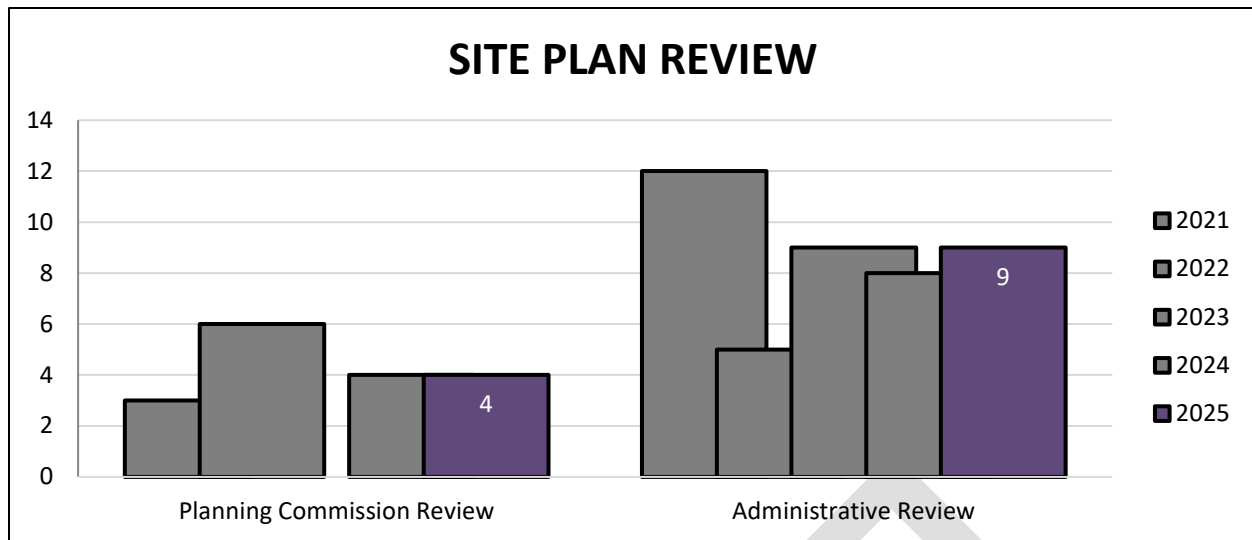
The Planning Commission's basic duties and responsibilities include the following:

- 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 review agency for applications into the Farmland and Open Space Preservation Program (formerly known as PA 116).

5.0 PLANNING COMMISSION ACTIVITY IN 2025

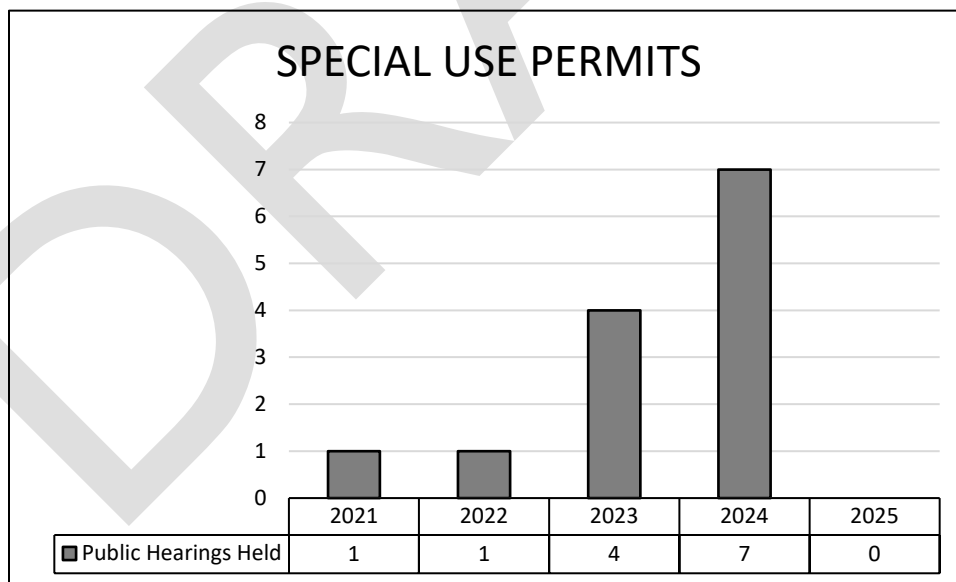
The Planning Commission continued to be active this past year holding in-person meetings. The Commission continuously reviewed the Zoning Ordinance and in doing so recommended a change to the zoning ordinance. This was done with careful consideration to the needs of the community and upholding the integrity of the County Master Plan. The Commission also continued to remain active with communications to the Townships. The following is a summary of all activities in 2025:

- 5.1 Site Plan Reviews:** In 2025 a total of thirteen (13) site plan reviews were performed. Of these, nine (9) site plan review applications were conducted by staff. Site plan reviews conducted by staff included expansions of commercial and industrial businesses. Overall, this was a slight increase from 2024 where a total of twelve (12) site plan reviews were performed.

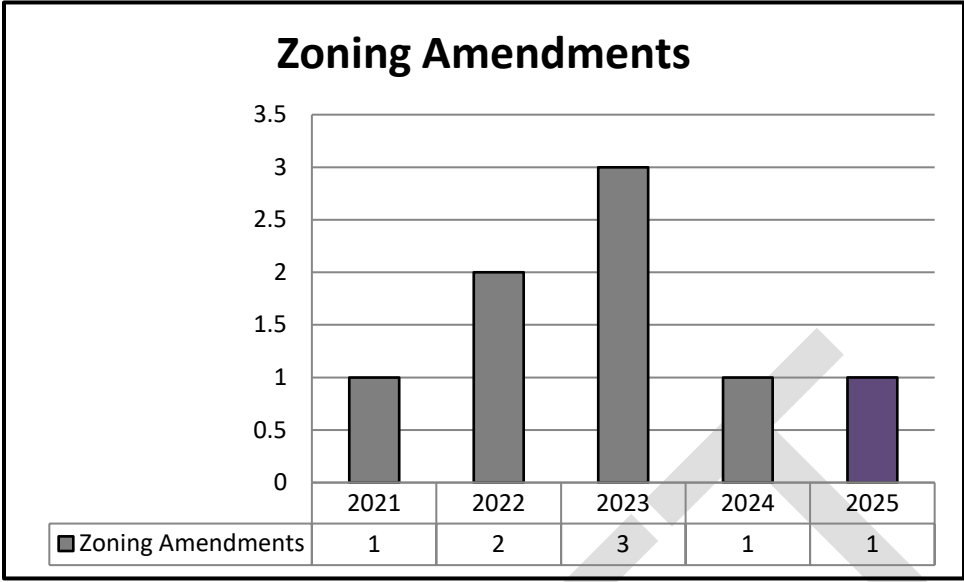


The Commission continues to see the benefit of reducing the overall number of applicants required to appear before the full Commission and expediting the permit process for those applicants.

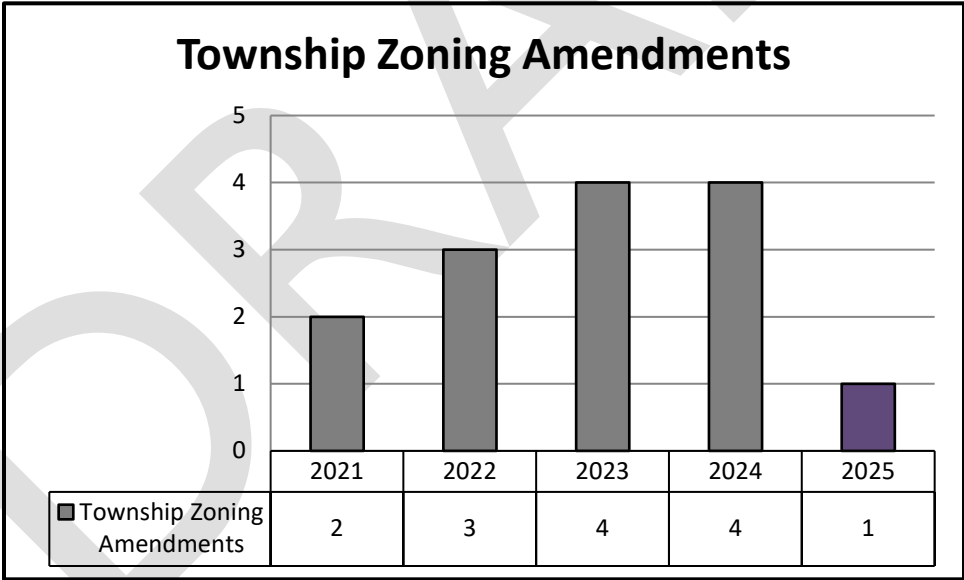
5.2 Special Use Permits: In 2025 the Commission held no public hearings for Special Land Use Permits. This number represents a below average number of public hearings held each year since 2021 (2.6) and is a significant decrease in the number of public hearings that were held in 2024 (7). The following is a comparison from 2021 – 2025:



5.3 Zoning Amendments: In 2025 the Planning Commission held one (1) public hearing for a Text Amendment to the zoning ordinance in order to provide for Battery Energy Storage Systems (BESS). The Planning Commission reviewed and recommended the proposed amendment for approval. The recommendation was sent to the County Board of Commissioners for final action. The following is a comparison from 2021 – 2025:



5.4 Review of Township Zoning Amendments: In 2025, the Commission reviewed and commented on one (1) zoning amendment presented by Union Township. The following is a comparison of Township zoning amendments from 2021 through 2025:



5.5 Master Plan Reviews: In 2025, the Commission was presented with one (1) letter of intent to amend the Master Land Use Plan for the Village of Shepherd, one (1) notice that Coe Township had adopted their Master Land Use plan. Additionally, a draft of the City of Mt. Pleasant, Gratiot County, Village of Shepherd, and Village of Lake Isabella proposed Master Plans (4) were reviewed by the Commission in 2025.

5.6 Farmland Agreement Applications (PA 116): In 2025, the Commission reviewed and commented on a total of nineteen (19) Farmland

Agreement applications in six (6) different Townships (Chippewa, Coe, Gilmore, Isabella, Lincoln, and Nottawa). The applications represented a total of more than 1,202 acres entering the Farmland and Open Space Preservation Program. This represents a 41% increase in acreage from 2024 when the Commission reviewed eleven (11) applications totaling 790 acres.

6.0 ZONING PERMIT AND VIOLATION ACTIVITY IN 2025

Staff issued 146 zoning permits in 2025. While this represents a 20% decrease from 2024, when 181 zoning permits were issued (56 for the Mission Road Solar Farm), the number of permits issued in 2025 is consistent with previous years. As noted previously, staff also conducted nine (9) site plan reviews as a result of Zoning Amendment #08-08. Staff reviewed more than 100 zoning complaints throughout the County including activities in Coe Township providing administrative support via an intergovernmental agreement.

7.0 ZONING BOARD OF APPEALS ACTIVITY IN 2025

The Zoning Board of Appeals (ZBA) heard requests from six (6) applicants for six (6) different variances. This decreased from 2024 where the Appeals Board heard ten (10) requests for a variance and one (1) essential public service. The ZBA will review their actions early in 2026 and make appropriate recommendations to the Planning Commission at that time.

8.0 ISABELLA COUNTY ADMINISTRATION BUILDING

In October 2023, the Isabella County Administration Building was abruptly closed until further notice due to environmental conditions within the building. As such, all Planning Commission meetings for 2025 were held at the Isabella County Commission on Aging Building.

9.0 PLANNING COMMISSION GOALS FOR 2026

- 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 for all viable uses to ensure consistency with current industry standards and state law.
- 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.*

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