

Cato Township Planning Commission  
Meeting Minutes  
March 8, 2023

The Cato Township Planning Commission met for a regular meeting on Wednesday, March 8, 2023, at the Lakeview Community Center.

**Meeting called to order:**

Chairman Morrow called the meeting to order at 6:00pm with the Pledge of Allegiance.

**Members present:**

Phil Morrow, Chairman	3-year term ending December 2024
Brandi Clark-Hubbard, Secretary	3-year term ending December 2023
Quanah Striker, Vice Chairman	3-year term ending December 2023
Joe Main, Commissioner	3-year term ending December 2025
David Behrenwald, Cato Board Liaison	Board term ending November 2024

**Others present:**

Danielle Bouchard, McKenna Land Planning  
5 members of public (all from Cato)

**Approval of Agenda:**

Clark-Hubbard requested three items be added to New Business for consideration at future meetings based on public comment at township board meetings and recent variance requests: 1) Zoning Complaint Process, 2) Definition of a Farm, and 3) Accessory Building Height. Morrow also added his annual report to the agenda which he presented at the March township board meeting. Striker motioned and Clark-Hubbard supported to approve the meeting agenda as amended. All in favor, motion carried.

**January 11, 2023 Meeting Minutes:**

Striker motioned and Behrenwald supported to approve the January meeting minutes as presented. All in favor, motion carried.

**Public Comment - Agenda Items:**

Morrow opened public comment at 6:03pm. The commission heard from the following:

- Jeremy Kwekel (Cato Township) requested the commission review the definition of "farm" and "bona fide farm" in the zoning ordinance. He noted the two terms are used interchangeably, but not clearly defined. The master plan places an emphasis on preserving farmland; however, according to current zoning, he is not able to farm his 6 acres that was split from a larger farm by previous owners. He would like the commission to consider reducing the farm definition from the current minimum 10 acres to a lesser amount.

Morrow closed public comment at 6:08pm.

**Zoning Administrator Update:**

Kelsey provided the log sheets for December 2022, January 2023, and February 2023. The following permits were issued or denied:

Bradford Laird  
Joseph Tanis  
David Lutterloh

10182 Tamarack Rd  
Honeymoon Heights  
9633 M-46

Pole barn denial—ZBA variance granted  
Pole barn denial—no dwelling on lot  
Dwelling

Sue Skelding  
Chris & Vickie Moon  
John Hill  
David Kosinski

8676 Edgar Rd  
6199 Bass Beach Drive  
7861 Edgar Rd  
11396 Hickory Drive

Enclosed porch  
Garage addition denial–ZBA variance granted  
Pole barn  
Pole barn denial–height/setback (to ZBA)

Kelsey reported he will be taking a ticket to Stanton on Friday for blight at 7106 Cutler Rd. He also mentioned he would like to see the township enhance the complaint process and require all complaints be in writing. The fees and penalties should also be revisited.

### **Board Liaison Update:**

Behrenwald reported the township board would like the commission to review the zoning ordinance's existing complaint process. He mentioned at one point there was a process that required at least two complaints on the same property and a driver's license number before the township board would take action.

### **Old Business:**

#### **Master Plan**

Morrow welcomed Danielle Bouchard of McKenna who provided a kick-off agenda to start the master plan project. Discussion ensued on the scope of the project and a review of existing conditions in the township including population, demographics, housing, and existing land uses. Commissioners discussed that many of the goals and policies in the existing 2010 master plan are still relevant today. These include agricultural preservation and preserving the scenic and natural qualities of the township. Commissioners agreed that the majority of development pressure is likely to be along the M-46 corridor where the township's commercial zone is located. Village annexation initiatives to increase water and sewer hookups were also discussed. As part of the master plan project, McKenna will provide an updated zoning map and a wetlands map. County and primary roads will also be included.

The commission discussed next steps for public engagement and the proposed survey questions provided by McKenna. McKenna will facilitate the survey which will go out to all township and village residents. Results will be filtered between township and village. Commissioners discussed the best means of distributing the survey and determined that a postcard mailing is likely best. McKenna will design a postcard and refine the survey questions to include farmland preservation, rural character, and targeted land uses. A question will also be added for a potential zoning classification around lakes (i.e. Lake-Residential District). Clark-Hubbard to follow up with McKenna on Every Door Direct Mail options through the postal service. Costs will include printing (McKenna contracts with a printing company) and postage. A tentative public open house is planned for the week of May 15<sup>h</sup> at the Community Center; however, this is contingent upon township board approval for the survey costs and timely distribution. The open house will be managed by McKenna, and two commissioners will also attend.

#### **Solar Ordinance**

Work session will continue at the May 10<sup>th</sup> commission meeting. The township board has asked that the residential and industrial/commercial regulations be separated to speed up the process for adopting residential solar zoning.

### **New Business:**

- Chairman Annual Report – Morrow gave a brief report on the commission’s activities over the past year including 8 meetings, website updates, wind ordinance, permit summary, and master plan. For 2023 there are 6 meetings scheduled. The master plan and solar ordinance will be primary focuses in 2023, although the commission may also revisit a noise ordinance. Morrow again asked the township board to consider allocating funds in the 2023-2024 budget to upgrade technology for the Community Center and increase pay for commissioners as current pay is below scale.
- Zoning Complaint Process – to be discussed at future meeting
- Definition of a Farm – to be discussed at future meeting
- Accessory Building Height – to be discussed at future meeting

**Public Comment:**

Morrow opened public comment at approximately 7:55pm. The commission heard from the following:

- Jeremy Kwekel (Cato Township) suggested including survey questions on wind and solar energy but cautioned that these need to be carefully worded to avoid confusion between residential and industrial/commercial uses. He also indicated the existing zoning ordinance may grant additional enforcement authority to the township.
- Matt Hubbard (Cato Township) emphasized the need for the commission to revisit the zoning enforcement process and the zoning ordinance’s definition of blight as it is very broad and all-encompassing.
- Jessica Kwekel (Cato Township) thanked commissioners for their time and energy in addressing zoning issues.

**Next Meeting:**

The next meeting of the commission is a regular meeting scheduled for May 10, 2023.

**Adjournment:**

There being no further business to come before the commission, a motion was made by Striker and supported by Clark-Hubbard to adjourn the meeting at approximately 8:00pm. Motion carried.

Recorded by:

Brandi Clark-Hubbard  
Secretary, Cato Township Planning Commission