

ROBINSON TOWNSHIP PLANNING COMMISSION
March 13, 2025

The special meeting of the Robinson Township Planning Commission was called to order at 7:00 PM. at the Robinson Township Hall.

Present	Absent
Shawn Martinie Bill Maschewske Lydia Brown Michelle Gillespie Steve Ambrose Phil Crum Kathy Kuck	None

Also present were contracted Township Planner Gregory Ransford of Fresh Coast Planning and Doug Marshall, a member of the public. A copy of the Sign-In Sheet is attached.

Approval of Agenda

A motion was made by Michelle Gillespie and seconded by Lydia Brown to approve the agenda of the March 13, 2025 meeting as written.
The motion carried unanimously.

Adopting of Previous Minutes

A motion was made by Lydia Brown and seconded by Michelle Gillespie to approve as written the minutes of the February 25, 2025 Planning Commission meeting.
The motion carried unanimously.

New Business

The specific purpose of this special meeting was to review changes to the Zoning Ordinance proposed by Greg Ransford, the Township contracted Planner and Principal from Fresh Coast Planning, following the recent adoption by Robinson Township of a new Master Land Use Plan. The proposed changes for this meeting are generally in response to Chapter 4, Lowland Resource Conservation Strategies, that were identified and approved in the new Master Land Use Plan and now need to be included in the Zoning Ordinance for implementation. Also re-reviewed were changes reviewed at the February 13, 2025 Special Planning Commission meeting. The complete memorandum, dated March 2, 2025, from Gregory Ransford regarding Lowland Resource Conservation Strategies and the carryover of some miscellaneous items from the previous month is attached.

Comments Regarding Re-review of Open Issue Definitions, General Provisions, Agricultural, and Residential Strategies

Items discussed do not necessarily follow the order from the Gregory Ransford Memorandum dated March 2, 2025 (attached).

Section 4.28 – It was agreed to not include the A-1 or A-2 Zoning Districts in this section which would allow multiple principal buildings on one parcel. It was requested the Township Attorney review this section.

Section 4.37 – The consensus was to add the A-1 and A-2 Zoning Districts to the RR, R-1, and R-2 Zoning Districts, limiting the number of principal buildings to (1) one.

Section 4.28, Lot, Use – This section needs to be reviewed with the Township Attorney.

Definition of Agritourism – The Planning Commission accepted the definition. The numeral “(5)” was added after the word “five”.

Section 3.63 Lot – The revised definition was accepted.

Section 8.4(A) 1 – The Planning Commission accepts “nor” in place of “or”.

Definition of Buffer – The Planning Commission requested the definition be revised to make a berm of adequate size be acceptable without trees.

Section 10.4(A) – The Planning Commission accepts correcting “plated” to “platted”.

Section 10.4(B)1(a) – Accept changing “or” to “nor”.

Section 10.4(B)1(d) – Revision accepted.

Section 11.4(A) – Correction accepted.

Section 11.4(B)1(a) – Revision from “or” to “nor” accepted.

Section 10.4(B)1(d) – The Planning Commission accepts the correction.

Section 11.4(A) – Correction accepted.

Section 11.4(B)1(a) – Change “or” to “nor” accepted.

Section 10.4(B)1(d) – Correction accepted.

Definition of Development – Planner Ransford received the following definition of “development” from the Township Attorney as requested by the Planning Commission and the Planning Commission generally accepted it.

“Development --Any plat, condominium, or site condominium subject to review by the Township Planning Commission.”

Septic suitability review – The Planning Commission did not recall requesting this analysis and Planner Ransford agreed to discontinue work on this subject.

Master Land Use Plan Chapter 4, Lowland Resource Conservation Strategies

Add Section 9.4(A) – The Planning Commission accepted this section with the condition that the Township Attorney be consulted regarding the inclusion of the Army Corp of Engineers references.

Section 9.4(B) – Accepted.

Additional Provisions and Considerations Not Included in Strategy List

Section 9.2(B) Permitted Uses – Roadside Stands were deleted since they are allowed by the Michigan Right to Farm Act. “Navigation” was stricken since its meaning was unclear.

Section 4.9(B) Private Roads – Change accepted.

Considerations Not Included in the Strategy List

It was noted that all three of the items listed were previously addressed in the above discussions.

Having completed reviewing the input from Planner Ransford, the Planning Commission discussed the Medium Density Residential Strategies in the recently adopted Master Land Use Plan. It was agreed that further research was needed to verify the requirements for public utilities in this residential classification.

Old Business – None

Pay Bills

A motion was made by Michelle Gillespie and seconded by Shawn Martinie to pay salaries for the March 13, 2025 Planning Commission meeting (all seven members present).

The motion carried unanimously.

Bill Maschewske presented a receipt for \$60.00 for 2025 Master Citizen Planner Classes through Michigan State University. Chairperson Martinie requested the receipt be emailed to him for subsequent reimbursement.

Due to scheduling issues, it was agreed to have no Planning meeting in April, making the May 8, 2025 the next Planning meeting.

Adjournment

A motion was made by Lydia Brown and seconded by Michelle Gillespie to adjourn the Planning Commission meeting at 8:55 PM.

The motion carried unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,

Bill Maschewske, Secretary
Robinson Township Planning Commission

Attachments:

March 13, 2025 Planning Commission Sign-In Sheet

Memorandum from Gregory Ransford, MPA, of Fresh Coast Planning dated
March 2, 2025 regarding Zoning Ordinance Rewrite – Lowland Resource Conservation Strategies



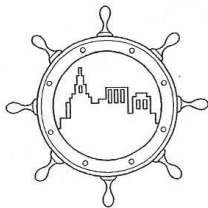
SIGN IN SHEET
Special Meeting of the
Planning Commission
Thursday, March 13, 2025 - 7:00 pm

PRINT NAME

SIGNATURE

DOUG MARSHALL

Doug Marshall



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MEMORANDUM

To: Robinson Township Planning Commission
From: Gregory L. Ransford, MPA
Date: March 2, 2025
Re: Zoning Ordinance Rewrite – Lowland Resource Conservation Strategies

As a result of your recent direction, attached are our suggested revisions related to the Strategies from Chapter Four – Lowland Resource Conservation of the Robinson Township Master Plan (RTMP), as well as our findings related to the general audit. Coupled with those suggested revisions, we raise several items for your review and direction.

It is important to note that this review, while focused on the Lowland Resource Conservation Overlay Zoning District for the purpose of this memorandum, may be piecemealed over the course of this project to complete the full review of the Robinson Township Zoning Ordinance (RTZO). As a result of this, the Planning Commission should not conclude that this is a complete review of all possible provisions of the RTZO related to the Strategies within the Lowland Resource Conservation Chapter. However, it is nonetheless very comprehensive. In that regard, we have formally completed our review of the following chapter and section of the RTZO to provide our recommendations herein:

- Section 4.28 and Chapter 9

Prior to outlining the relevant Strategies from Chapter Four of RTMP, below we summarize your direction from the previous meeting regarding Chapter Three – Residential Uses and general provisions within the RTZO.

As you will recall, you directed us to perform the following. Where appropriate, we have explained the revision with a sub bullet point(s).

- Definition of Agritourism – limit agritourism to existing building(s), when a building is utilized for the use. *See page identifier Chapter 3 – Page 3*
- Section 4.42 – Sod Farms – modify to Board approval rather than Planning Commission. *See page identifier Chapter 4 – Page 28 and Page 29*
- Section 3.63 and/or Chapter 4 – Principal Buildings – allow multiple principal buildings in B-1, B-2, I-1, and I-2
 - Section 3.63 – we added “or buildings” to the definition of a Lot. *See page identifier Chapter 3 – Page 13*
 - Chapter 4 – We revised Section 4.37 from “reserved” to limit the RR, R-1, and R-2 Zoning District to no more than one principal building, which implies that the other zoning districts may have more than one principal building. *See page identifier Chapter 4 – Page 26*
 - That said, does the Planning Commission want to treat farms in the RR District the same as the AG District and allow multiple principal buildings?
 - Related, Section 4.28 – Lot, Use limits lots to no more than one principal use, unless specifically permitted and except for a lot which has both a farm and a farm dwelling. We contemplate whether the Planning Commission supports allowing multiple principal uses within the B-1, B-2, I-1, and I-2 Districts in addition to principal buildings. *See page identifier Chapter 4 – Page 19*

- Section 8.4(A)1 – 3rd line, change “not” to “or”
 - While this was your direction, we reviewed the language from Park Township that was our original draft of the same and that provision used the word “nor,” which we inserted instead. We believe this is more appropriate than “or” so the language does not read as if it is one or the other, but to ensure that neither can occur. We anticipate you will agree. *See page identifier Chapter 8 – Page 3*
- Definition of Buffer – add language regarding a berm
 - We drafted this language in a means that avoids a berm as a mandate because of the existence of mature trees. We anticipate that the Planning Commission would not want to accidentally require the removal of mature trees, which are the very purpose of the Buffer, to provide for a berm. *See page identifier Chapter 3 – Page 5*
- Section 10.4(A) – change “plated” to “platted” in the first line. *See page identifier Chapter 10 – Page 2*
- Section 10.4(B)1(a) – change “not” to “or.” *See page identifier Chapter 10 – Page 4*
 - While this was your direction, we reviewed the language from Park Township that was our original draft of the same and that provision used the word “nor,” which we inserted instead. We believe this is more appropriate than “or” so the language does not read as if it is one or the other, but to ensure that neither can occur. We anticipate you will agree.
- Section 10.4(B)1(d) – strike “A minimum” at the beginning. *See page identifier Chapter 10 – Page 4*
- Section 11.4(A) – change “plated” to “platted” in the first line. *See page identifier Chapter 11 – Page 1*
- Section 11.4(B)1(a) – change “not” to “or.” *See page identifier Chapter 11 – Page 3*
 - While this was your direction, we reviewed the language from Park Township that was our original draft of the same and that provision used the word “nor,” which we inserted instead. We believe this is more appropriate than “or” so the language does not read as if it is one or the other, but to ensure that neither can occur. We anticipate you will agree.
- Section 10.4(B)1(d) – strike “A minimum” at the beginning. *See page identifier Chapter 11 – Page 3*

In addition to the aforementioned, you asked us to consult with the Township Attorney regarding the proposed definition of “development.” We have emailed him in this regard and will let you know the details of his reply when received.

Finally, while we intended to provide the results of our septic suitability review related to density requirements and the aquifer recharge areas at your next meeting, we have not had the opportunity to begin that review. We will present those results when available.

As noted on page one of this memorandum, in addition to the revisions related to the Residential Uses Chapter and other general provisions, our next set of recommendations are in regard to the Strategies from Chapter Four – Lowland Resource Conservation, which we outline below.

Chapter Four – Lowland Resource Conservation, Strategies

Chapter Four – Lowland Resource Conservation of the RTMP identifies the following Strategies:

- Adopt or enhance policies and regulations in the floodplain area consistent with State of Michigan and Federal laws and regulations
- Limit development within the Aquifer Recharge Area identified by Ottawa County’s Groundwater Sustainability Initiative, which development would negatively impact the Recharge Area

As you are aware, the Strategies are intended to revise provisions that regulate land use requiring approval by the Planning Commission or Board of Trustees. These revisions strengthen the Goals and Recommendations within the related RTMP chapter that precede the Strategy by creating actual law. In this case, we have drafted proposed revisions to Chapter 9 – E-1 Lowland Resource Conservation Overlay District to apply to developments subject to your review and individual lots within the Overlay, where improvements to those lots are not subject to your review.

All of our recommended revisions to the RTZO are attached. Following each recommendation below, we provide notations in italic font regarding the location of the recommended revision in the attached.

Low Density Residential (Rural Residential District)

Strategy: Adopt or enhance policies and regulations in the floodplain area consistent with State of Michigan and Federal laws and regulations

We anticipate that you will agree that the Michigan Department of Environment, Great Lakes, and Energy (EGLE) is very robust with the enforcement of State regulations regarding the floodplain. As a result of this and to accomplish this Strategy, our proposed revisions to Chapter 9 – E-1 Lowland Resource Conservation Overlay District of the RTZO to add Section 9.4(A) – Additional Environmental Standards, is focused on enhancing policies of the Township rather than repeating regulations of the State. The proposed language is from Tallmadge Charter Township, which was adopted as a result of enforcement by EGLE, formally MDEQ at the time, to improve the policy of the Township when authorizing construction within a floodplain or potentially a floodplain. As you will note in the proposed language, it requires statements from EGLE and the United States Army Corps of Engineers in certain circumstances. While this language exists, Tallmadge Charter Township has rarely, if ever, needed to include this Federal Agency in the process as EGLE enforces the laws of the Federal Emergency Management Agency related to floodplains. Given this, and while we wanted to present to you the language verbatim from the Tallmadge Charter Township Zoning Ordinance, which was drafted by Attorney Bultje, it may be appropriate to remove the Army Corps of Engineer references. Related, it is important to note that EGLE does not issue this exact statement, but they do provide correspondence to achieve this regulation.

See page identifier Chapter 9 – Page 3 of the attached.

Strategy: Limit development within the Aquifer Recharge Area identified by Ottawa County's Groundwater Sustainability Initiative, which development would negatively impact the Recharge Area

Similar to previously suggested revisions elsewhere in the RTZO, we propose the addition of Section 9.4(B) – Additional Environmental Standards. However, as aforementioned, we have drafted this language to apply to any lot within the Overlay District, whether within a development or outside of a development.

See page identifier Chapter 9 – Page 3 of the attached.

Additional Provisions & Considerations Not Included in the Strategy List

As aforementioned, coupled with our suggested revisions regarding RTMP Strategies, we also reviewed the RTZO to update additional provisions, where necessary. In that regard, we offer the following comments and seek your direction, where applicable.

1. Section 9.2 – Permitted Uses – similar to our previous conversation regarding “Historic Sites,” we encourage the Planning Commission to review the list of permitted uses within the E-1 Lowland Resource Conservation Overlay District and determine whether any of those uses should be formally defined or otherwise expanded to provide clarity of their intent. *See page identifier Chapter 9 – Page 1 and Page 2*
2. Section 4.9B – Private Roads – during the previous review of our recommendations, you asked that we provide a copy the language revision to this section that includes “unique” farmland in addition to “prime” farmland. That language is now attached. *See page identifier Chapter 4 – Page 9 and Page 10.*

Considerations Not Included in the Strategy List

Given that we provided some returned items for your consideration prior to the Strategies, we wanted to relist them here to make sure they are discussed. They included:

1. Does the Planning Commission want to treat farms in the RR District the same as the AG District and allow multiple principal buildings?
2. Does the Planning Commission support allowing multiple principal uses within the B-1, B-2, I-1, and I-2 Districts in addition to principal buildings?
3. "Not" to "Nor" provisions – Does the Planning Commission agree that the term "nor" was intended rather than "or?"

The second set of Zoning Ordinance Rewrite recommendations has been scheduled for your March 13, 2025 meeting. If you have any questions, please let me know.

GLR
Planner

Attachments