Olive Township Planning Commission Meeting
Date: Tuesday, July 07, 2026
Time: 7:00 PM

1) Call to Order
    a. The meeting was called to order by Chair Dreyer at 7:00pm

2) Roll Call
    a. Present: Chair Dreyer, Dan Raak, Adrian Meekhof, Jerry Geertman, Brian Raak, Zoning Administrator: Lori Castello
    b. Absent: none

3) Approval of Agenda
    a. **Motion**: D. Raak moved to approve the agenda.
    b. **Support**: Meekhof seconded the motion.
    c. **Vote**: All in favor. Motion carried

4) Approval of Minutes (June 2, 2026)
    a. **Motion**: Geertman moved to approve the minutes of the April meeting.
    b. **Support**: B. Raak seconded the motion.
    c. **Vote**: All in favor. Motion carried

5) Declarations of potential conflict of interest
    a. No declarations of potential conflict of interest

6) General Public Comments:
    a. Chair Dreyer opened the floor for general public comments. There were no public comments. The general public comment period was closed.

7) Public Hearings
    a. Restatement and recodification of Olive Township Zoning Ordinance
        i. Chair Dreyer opened the public hearing.
        ii. Castello reviewed the recodification process, explaining that the Township began updating the Zoning Ordinance in 2024 to transition it to the CivicPlus online platform. She noted that the recodification updates chapter and section numbering but does not change the content of the ordinance.
        iii. The Commission discussed the benefits of the online ordinance, including improved navigation and cross-referencing. Castello also explained that the new numbering will take effect once the ordinance is adopted and becomes effective, and that any numbering updates after adoption will be clerical changes.
        iv. Castello reviewed the adoption process and explained that the Planning Commission's role is to recommend the ordinance to the Township Board, which will consider adoption after the required procedural steps are completed.
        v. The Chair opened the floor for public comments. No public comments were received. The public hearing was closed.
        vi. Commissioners expressed support for the online ordinance and its improved accessibility.
        vii. The Commission discussed the proposed ordinance and expressed support for moving forward with the updated format.

(1) **Motion**: D. Raak moved to recommend the reinstatement and recodification of the Olive Township Zoning Ordinance to the Township Board.
(2) **Support**: Meekhof seconded the motion
(3) **Vote**: All in favor. Motion carried

b. An amendment to Section 16A, Battery Energy Storage Systems, of the Olive Township Zoning Ordinance (Continued)
   i. Chair Dreyer opened the continued public hearing on the proposed amendment to Section 16A (Battery Energy Storage Systems) of the Olive Township Zoning Ordinance.
   ii. Castello reviewed the proposed amendments, explaining they are intended to update the existing ordinance in response to Public Act 233, changes in industry standards, and issues identified during the Commission's ongoing review.
      (1) **Financial Security (Page 2)**
         (a) The existing language requiring financial security "subject to the township's review and approval" was reviewed with no substantive changes proposed.
      (2) **Fire Protection Plan (Subsection B8)**
         (a) The Commission agreed to add a requirement that the fire protection plan also describe the emergency response plan, in addition to fire risks and suppression systems.
      (3) **Operations Agreement / Recording Requirement**
         (a) The Commission agreed that, after Township approval of the applicant's operations agreement, the applicant must record it with the Ottawa County Register of Deeds and provide the Township a recorded copy, to preserve a permanent legal record.
      (4) **Battery Cabinet Height and Stacking**
         (a) The Commission agreed to limit battery cabinet height to 12 feet, prohibit stacking, and limit accessory structures to 20 feet, set out as its own separate numbered subsection rather than folded into setbacks. Castello was directed to draft it as a stand-alone item.
      (5) **Lighting — "Dark Sky" Technology**
         (a) Castello explained "dark sky" technology is a recognized industry and state term for lighting designed to minimize light pollution, not a specific brand, and recommended mirroring state terminology. The Commission agreed to add the requirement.
      (6) **Fire Protection Plan Amendments (Reference to Subsection A)**
         (a) The Commission discussed whether plan amendments should require express fire department approval, or whether the existing cross-reference to Subsection A (which already routes review through the fire chief, supervisor, and board as needed) was sufficient, and agreed to retain the existing reference rather than add new language.
         (b) The Commission also discussed requiring periodic review of the fire protection plan (FRP) and emergency

response plan (ERP) to keep pace with changing suppression technology, and agreed that:

(i) The FRP/ERP should be reviewed every two years, coordinated with other periodic reporting;

(ii) Review should involve an outside or township-contracted engineer, not the operator alone; and

(iii) Any change to operating procedures or components must be reported to and cleared by the Township in advance, with the FRP/ERP updated to match.

(7) **Decommissioning**

(a) The Commission agreed to clarify that removal of an abandoned system includes all structural components above and below ground, with no depth limitation.

(8) **Financial Security / Bonding**

(a) The Commission agreed to add language confirming the financial standing of the bonding company, to avoid relying on a bond from an unreliable or insolvent issuer.

(9) **Semi-Annual Reporting and Complaint Resolution**

(a) The Commission agreed that waiting up to six months for a complaint to appear in the semi-annual report is too long, and agreed to:

(i) Add a separate complaint resolution requirement for prompt logging and Township notification of each complaint and its resolution;

(ii) Require operator contact information on file with the Township and on required signage; and

(iii) Retain complaint summaries in the semi-annual report as well.

(10) **Transferability**

(a) The Commission agreed that a new owner must register and provide a new bond before the prior owner's bond expires or is cancelled.

(11) **Remedies / Revocation**

(a) Castello advised that recent case law questions whether revocation of a special use permit is always legally available, and recommended considering removal of that language, noting other remedies remain available. Castello also flagged a possible conflict of interest for the Township's regular counsel (Ron) and said she would confirm whether outside counsel is needed. No final action was taken pending that review.

iii. Additional Items Discussed

(1) **Noise Standard**

(a) The draft sets a 50 A-weighted decibel limit at the property line of adjacent non-participating parcels. The Commission discussed lowering this to 45 decibels, noting the change represents a significant reduction in perceived loudness (a logarithmic, not linear, scale) and weighing that against the risk that overly strict standards could push an applicant to seek state permitting under PA 233 instead. No final number was set; Castello was asked to review the standard with the Township's attorney. The Commission also agreed Castello should draft a general waiver clause allowing case-by-case discretion to require more or less than the base standard.

(2) **Emergency Access**

(a) The Commission discussed requiring two separate points of vehicular access for emergency responders, and confirmed this is already addressed through the existing Knox Box requirement.

(3) **Construction / Electrical Inspection**

(a) The Commission discussed requiring a qualified third-party inspector for construction, but Castello advised that naming or disqualifying inspectors is not appropriate in a zoning ordinance and is properly a Township Board decision by resolution. The Commission agreed to flag this for the Board rather than include it in the ordinance.

(4) **Escrow Funds and Fees**

(a) The Commission agreed additional escrow is appropriate given the scale of the project, but that specific dollar amounts should not be written into the ordinance. Castello recommended the Township Board set and periodically update fees by resolution, with an initial minimum in the range of $20,000–$35,000.

(5) **Fire Suppression Water Supply**

(a) The Commission discussed whether to require minimum on-site water storage or municipal water connection, and concluded that existing language already directs the fire chief to determine adequate water supply on a site-specific basis, so no additional language was drafted at this time.

(6) **Decommissioning Fee ($2,000/Megawatt)**

(a) A per-megawatt decommissioning fee was referenced as a standard charge to be addressed through a Township Board resolution rather than the ordinance.

(7) **Taxation / Assessed Value**

(a) Castello agreed to research how assessed value would be determined for tax purposes, noting the Assessor's office has an established appeal process independent of the ordinance.

iv. The Chair opened the floor for public comments.

(1) Bev Horinga (Blendon Township resident) spoke in support of strengthening the ordinance and encouraged continued requirements for environmental studies, water testing, and public safety protections.

(2) Eric Vandobschutz commented on the importance of considering noise frequency, in addition to decibel levels, when evaluating battery energy storage systems.

(3) Randy VanderZwaag, member of the Fire Board, emphasized the importance of ensuring an adequate water supply for fire

suppression and encouraged continued coordination with the Fire Chief.

v. The Chair closed the public hearing. The Commission discussed whether to take action on the proposed amendments or review a final revised draft at a future meeting. Castello advised that the remaining revisions were primarily clarifications, with several provisions requiring legal review before final consideration.

vi. **Motion**: Geertman moved to table the proposed amendment to Section 16A until the next regular meeting, pending preparation of a revised draft incorporating the Commission's recommendations and review by legal counsel.

vii. **Support**: B. Raak seconded the motion

viii. **Vote**: Motion carried (Ayes 4, Nays 1)

8) Special Use Renewals/Temporary Seasonal Uses.

a. none.

9) NEW BUSINESS

a. Site Plan Review: Talsma Furniture

i. Castello presented the site plan for a proposed building addition at Talsma Furniture, located at 4943 Talsma Drive (Parcel No. 70-12-32-400-031). She explained that the addition would match the existing building and that the site meets the applicable dimensional requirements.

ii. The Commission discussed the building design and architectural standards of the US-31 Overlay District, including exterior materials, window requirements, and the treatment of long building facades. Members agreed the addition was consistent with the existing building and compatible with the intent of the Overlay District.

iii. Tim Talsma provided an overview of the project, explaining the addition is needed to expand showroom space and was contemplated as part of the original site plan approved approximately 21 years ago. He noted the addition would maintain the same architectural style and glass ratio as the existing building.

iv. The Commission discussed landscaping along the north side of the addition due to the removal of existing trees. Mr. Talsma agreed to install additional evergreen landscaping, with the final landscaping plan to be reviewed and approved by the Zoning Administrator.

v. The Commission reviewed the remaining site plan standards, including drainage, landscaping, lighting, parking, emergency access, and utility services. Castello confirmed drainage approval had been received from the Drain Commissioner, and the Commission found the site plan met the applicable ordinance requirements.

vi. The Commission recommended approval of the site plan with the following conditions:

(1) Approval of building access by the Fire Chief.

(2) Installation of a Knox Box.

(3) Additional evergreen landscaping along the north side of the addition, with the landscaping plan subject to approval by the Zoning Administrator.

vii. **Motion**: Geertman moved to recommend approval of the Talsma Furniture site plan, subject to the stated conditions.

viii. **Support**: D. Raak seconded the motion

ix. **Vote**: All in favor. Motion carried

10) OLD BUSINESS

a. Discussions:
    i. data centers
        (1) on hold until September for seminar attendance/research
    ii. Zoning Ordinance Overhaul work: Private Roads- Draft Review
        (1) Castello recommended commissioners submit any final comments on the private roads draft by email so they can be incorporated into a final draft for review at the next meeting prior to a public hearing.
        (2) Commissioners agreed the draft had been thoroughly reviewed and was ready for final revisions.
        (3) Discussion centered on Section G10, requiring a 24-foot passing area on private roads longer than 500 feet. The Chair questioned whether the requirement was still necessary after reducing the traveled roadway width to 20 feet to help reduce construction costs.
        (4) Castello and commissioners agreed the additional width remains important for emergency vehicle access, and consensus was to retain the 24-foot passing area requirement.
        (5) Castello will update section numbering administratively after final approval.
    iii. Zoning Ordinance Overhaul work: Section 26-46: Zoning Administrator Duties- intro
        (1) The Commission introduced discussion of the proposed revisions to the Zoning Administrator duties but agreed there was insufficient time for a thorough review.
        (2) Chair Dreyer suggested the topic may benefit from a joint discussion with the Township Board, as the Board has final approval authority, while the Planning Commission serves as the recommending body.
        (3) Castello explained the proposed revisions reflect planning best practices and practices used in other communities, emphasizing the recommendations are for the Commission to accept, modify, or reject.
        (4) Commissioners indicated they had not had adequate time to review the proposed changes, and the discussion was tabled until the next meeting.

11) PLANNING COMMISSION MEMBER COMMENT & CORRESPONDENCE

a. Building Permits Report
    i. Castello will send out
b. Splits Report
    i. Castello will send out
c. Updated applications
    i. Castello will have for August meeting
d. Planning Commission comments
    i. Commissioners noted that the Humane Society has broken ground on its approved expansion project and discussed the progress of site improvements, acknowledging that nonprofit projects often take longer to begin construction.

ii. Members also commented positively on ongoing improvements to another development within the overlay district, noting the project is progressing well and enhancing the area's appearance.

12) Adjournment

a. **Motion**: Geertman moved to adjourn the meeting.
b. **Support**: B. Raak supported the motion.
c. **Vote**: Motion carried unanimously. Meeting adjourned at 9:09pm.

13) Next Meeting Date

a. The next regular Planning Commission meeting is scheduled for THURSDAY, August 6, 2026 due to election being held on Tuesday the 4th.