WHITEWATER TOWNSHIP PLANNING COMMISSION
Whitewater Township Hall, 5777 Vinton Road, Williamsburg, MI 49690
231-267-5141 Phone

REGULAR MEETING
APPROVED AMENDED MINUTES
Wednesday, July 1, 2026, 7:00 p.m.

CALL TO ORDER:
Chair Stratton called the meeting to order at 7:13 p.m.
The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.
A microphone check was done.

Public Attendance On-site at Township Hall: 8 (approximately)
YouTube Viewing (in real time): 3 (approximately)

ROLL CALL: Secretary Peltonen called Roll.

Present:
Rene Stratton, Chair
Sadie Merchant, Vice Chair
Denise Peltonen, Secretary
Scott Trumbull, Member
Michael Sherman, Member

Rod Rebant, Member
Randy Mielnik, Township Board Trustee

A quorum was established.

Absent: None.

ALSO PRESENT: Recording Secretary Kay Held

SET/ADJUST AGENDA:
Unfinished Business, Item 11(c): "Amendment to Article 6: PUD" should read "Amendment to Article 6: COPUD"

Board Action: Ms. Peltonen made a motion to approve the Agenda as amended. Mr. Trumbull seconded the motion.
VOTE: YEAS: All. NAYES: None. Motion carried.

DECLARATION OF CONFLICT OF INTEREST: None.

PUBLIC COMMENT:

Mr. Jim Maitland: In the Planner's presentation during the 7/1/26 Special Meeting, he repeatedly stated "we" when in fact it is the Planning Commission doing the decision making.

Ms. Kim Mangus: Business owners have concerns about the proposed Overlay District including a wall to hide parking lots, reduction in allowable signage, landscaping requirements, and display area allowance. Three of the four COPUDS on the map were not COPUDS when developed. Ginops and Renee's House of Quilting are not COPUDS. She believes there is an error in the map.

Ms. Renee Savage: Snow removal is an issue. The Commercial District is not being properly represented. Berming and fencing parking lots is not realistic.

Ms. Carol Hockin, Acme Christian Food Store and Pantry: Property was purchased in 2012. Cars in the parking lot face east and west, and headlights do not face M-72. As a past Township Clerk and Planning Commission Member when the

COPUD was put in 30 years ago, the PC Chair attended a conference resulting in objectives for the M-72 Corridor. No one understood this at the time.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES:
June 3, 2026, Regular Meeting Minutes of the Planning Commission: Amendments: No

Board Action: Ms. Stratton made a motion to approve the Minutes of the June 3, 2026, Regular Meeting as presented. Mr. Trumbull seconded the motion.
VOTE: YEAS: All. NAYES: None. Motion carried.

CORRESPONDENCE:
Mr. Jim Maitland – Article 6
Ms. Debra Lytle – STR Survey
Anonymous, to Mr. Kelley Sullivan of EPIC – Crisp Road STR

REPORTS / PRESENTATIONS / ANNOUNCEMENTS / COMMENTS:

Zoning Administrator – Deb Graber: ZA Graber's report was in the meeting packet. She additionally reported:
8 new Permits during the month of June
1 Land Division (pending)
3 closed complaints
Land Use Application was updated.

The STR jury trial has been rescheduled from 6/17/26 to 9/29/26 at 1:00 p.m.

In reviewing the proposed COPUD District and working with businesses, she recommended eliminating it; making the existing four properties Commercial or Industrial. Conditions may be placed on properties through a Site Plan Review. Mr. C's new owner does not want to put in more trees in front due to visibility. Landscaping, lighting, etc., are not cross-referenced from the COPUD to other Ordinances.

Planning Commission Chair – Rene Stratton: Will present report under "Unfinished Business – STR Survey"

Township Board Representative – Randy Mielnik: He will address the Civil Infraction issue later in the Agenda. The Township Board is in the process of redesigning the website. Any input to improve user accessibility can be directed to the Township Clerk. He delivered a Township Board presentation regarding the Land Division Ordinance in connection with the Master Plan.

ZBA Representative – Scott Trumbull: The ZBA met on 6/25 /26. A public comment from Ms. Lytle was reviewed. Minutes were approved to formalize the denial of the Olsen's variance request. Article 20 verbiage of the Zoning Ordinance was reviewed; the ZBA will revisit this at its next meeting. There will be a variance request at the July meeting.

ROWG (Resident Outreach Work Group) – Rod Rebant: The ROWG is ready to move forward and has developed a six-month plan for the Capital Improvement Plan focus points. They include:

-Fire Station (equipment/land/assets)
-Parks & Recreation
-Township Facilities
-Cemetery and other Unimproved Lots

Their objective is to complete the tasks by year's end. The asset inventory will be comprehensive regarding value, depreciation, location, insurance implications.

The ROWG met with the Fire Chief and conducted a walk-through of the fire station. The Chief has greatly improved organization of this small facility which includes utilizing storage containers for fire training. There is much equipment including new fire engines, an ORV and rescue boat. A database is being provided to the Township Board. The Fire Chief is currently also serving as Manager of Parks & Recreation.

There is one opening on the ROWG; new members are welcome.

Additional Items: None.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS:

Amendment to motion on ZA #2026-03: repeal and replacement of Article 7–Planned Unit Development, Amendments to Article 8-Condominium Development, Amendments to Article 12-Site Plan Review, Amendments to Article 13-Special Land Uses (except 13.17), Amendments to Article 19-Administration, Amendments to Article 2-Definitions:

Chair Stratton explained the above motion was passed at the 6/3/26 meeting; however, Amendment to Article 5, 13.17(c) was part of the packet and discussed at the Public Hearing; however, was inadvertently omitted from the Public Notice.

Mr. Aamodt encouraged, in an abundance of caution, that the PC amend this motion to ensure Article 5, 13.17(c) is specifically included as it was not itemized in the Notice.

Mr. Mielnik stated moving Special Use Standards to Article 5 could create some confusion. Mr. Aamodt will offer language to clarify. Article 5 would be removed from the Findings of Fact adopted at the last PC meeting.

Ms. Peltonen ~~referenced~~ inquired if the 100-year flood boundary/special flood hazard areas are related to the setbacks in the Ag District. Mr. Mielnik does not believe so. The floodplain is a FEMA regulatory area.

Board Action: Mr. Mielnik made a motion based on the specific findings and conclusions discussed pursuant to Article 21 in the Whitewater Township Zoning Ordinance, the Whitewater Township Planning Commission recommends that the Board:

repeal and replace Article 7-Planned Unit Development for the purpose of Master Plan alignment, procedural updates, density allowances and other minor changes pertaining to clarity and redevelopment;

amend Article 8-Condominium Development regulations to provide for a residential cluster option to encourage open space preservation, update requirements including those for landscaping including minor changes pertaining to readability;

amend Article 12-Site Plan Review to improve process, clarify approval and validity details and other minor details pertaining to the clarity and readability;

amend Article 13-Special Land Uses to delete redundant language, clarify approval and validity details and other minor details pertaining to the clarity and readability;

amend Article 19-Administration to provide clarification on Land Use Permit processes and other minor changes pertaining to clarity and readability;

and Amend Article 2-Definitions to accompany the preceding Amendments above.

Mr. Rebant seconded the motion.

Note: there were technical difficulties due to Township internet access.

Board Action: Ms. Stratton made a motion to continue the meeting without the online aspect at this time until the technical provider is able to re-establish service. A public record is maintained through the Recording Secretary. Mr. Trumbull seconded the motion.
VOTES: YEAS: All. NAYES: None. Motion carried.

There was additional discussion; Mr. Rebant inquired about a tracking process of Amendments.

ROLL CALL VOTE (to above Mielnik motion):
Merchant-Y, Peltonen-Y, Trumbull-Y, Rebant-Y, Sherman-Y, Stratton-Y. Motion carried.

Amendment to 13.17 and Article 5 – PC Discussion: Mr. Aamodt provided information regarding proposed Article 5 Amendments and the application to all uses. A memo discussing each item for edit/adjustment is in the meeting packet. There was additional discussion among PC Members regarding verbiage. Article 5 will be revisited during the next bundle review of the Zoning Ordinance.

Board Action: Ms. Stratton made a motion to schedule a Public Hearing on Wednesday, August 5, at 7:00 p.m. at the next PC Regular Meeting on proposed text amendments related to relocation of use-specific standards from Article 13.17 to Article 5 of the Zoning Ordinance, and to make minor modifications to correct typos, address Home Occupations and to provide explanatory text with respect to requirements for permitted by right and special uses. Ms. Merchant seconded the motion.
ROLL CALL VOTE: Peltonen-Y, Trumbull-Y, Rebant-Y, Mielnik-Y, Stratton-Y, Peltonen-Y. Motion carried.

Amendment Article 6: COPUD – PC Discussion: Mr. Aamodt reviewed this Article, prospective content changes and minor typos/corrections as well as improving clarity and developing more tangible standards.

DISCUSSION:

Mr. Mielnik: Addressed the origin of the COPUD and four rezonings; to his knowledge the map is correct. He referenced the initial Master Plan survey comments, some of which ultimately drove the M-72 COPUD albeit confusing. He supports more precise standards and the collective vision of M-72's vision in an Overlay. He commented perhaps this is not the time for an Overlay District.

Ms. Peltonen: Asked for clarification of some terminology. She is interested in business input.

Ms. Merchant: Understands public comments this evening. The Overlay District appears to be urban; she is unsure it fits with the rural M-72 corridor. She doesn't see cohesiveness in an Overlay District over the next several years. Restrictive business is very difficult; however, commercial requirements exist. She recognizes the Master Plan contents.

Mr. Rebant: Expressed agreement with Ms. Merchant.

Mr. Trumbull: Has a small family business background, including his own. He agrees with Mr. Mielnik's suggestion to rework this. He is supportive of the ZA's suggestion to consider eliminating the COPUD and moving business to Commercial or Industrial.

Mr. Sherman: There is common sense in underlying zoning, eliminating the COPUD and considering Commercial/Industrial. He has concerns about the language and requirements in the Overlay.

Ms. Stratton: Expressed agreement with Mr. Mielnik's comments and is inclined to remove the COPUD, returning to Commercial/Industrial Zoning.

Mr. Aamodt provided feedback regarding PC comments.

Board Action: Mr. Mielnik made a motion to repeal Article 6 and any references to it in the Zoning Ordinance and to rezone the four properties either to Industrial or Commercial as previously existed, eliminate that District from the Zoning Map and put this issue before a Public Hearing on August 5, 2026. Ms. Merchant seconded the motion.
ROLL CALL VOTE: Trumbull-Y, Sherman-Y, Rebant-Y, Mielnik-Y, Merchant-Y, Peltonen-Y. Motion carried.

Winery and Cidery Ordinance

Legal Review: A confidential legal review and Attorney Opinion was received from attorney Peter Wendling regarding the proposed Winery and Cidery Ordinance. It was distributed to Members of the Planning Commission.

Giffels Webster Rewrite of Ordinance: Mr. Aamodt discussed his review of the draft Ordinance. He has also reviewed the Attorney Opinion. Mr. Aamodt addressed prospective adjustments to several areas of the proposed Ordinance including language and specifying standards and regulations.

There was extensive discussion with the Planning Commission to clarify content of each section of this proposed Ordinance. Mr. Aamodt will integrate changes based on discussion.

STR Survey Update – EPIC-MRA Report Due in August:
Chair Stratton reported 400 responses thus far were received. Total postcards distributed were 1,670, with seven returned as undeliverable. Due to the 4th of July holiday, the deadline has been extended through July 6; this information

will be posted on the Township website. The telephone survey was completed prior to the online survey. EPIC-MRA will tabulate the survey responses, with a prepared report expected in August.

NEW BUSINESS:

Amendment to Article 22 – Violations, Section 22.01 Penalties: The revised proposed Amendment is in the meeting packet. Mr. Mielnik reported a Township Board Special Meeting was held 6/30/26 in Elk Rapids at a larger venue.

There was public input with regard to moving to a Civil Infraction for Ordinance enforcement related to both the General and Zoning Ordinances. The Board, by motion, is directing the Planning Commission to review Article 22-Violations, per the Township attorney's recommendation. A Public Hearing should be held by the PC in order to provide a recommendation to the Board.

The Township Attorney delivered a presentation at the 6/30 meeting to discuss Civil Infractions versus Misdemeanors. The Board supports the PC in the event they would like the Township attorney present at their Public Hearing.

Board Action: Ms. Stratton made a motion to schedule a Special Meeting with Public Hearing regarding Article 22.01 and 22.02-Violations at a date and location to be determined. Ms. Merchant seconded the motion.
ROLL CALL VOTE: Sherman-Y, Rebant-Y, Mielnik-Y, Stratton-Y, Merchant-Y, Peltonen-Y. Motion carried.

NEXT MEETING: Next Planning Commission Regular Meeting:

Wednesday, August 5, 2026, at 7:00 p.m., Township Hall

PUBLIC COMMENT:

Ms. Kim Mangus: Thanked the PC for their action about the M-72 COPUD/proposed Overlay District. She referenced several sections that warrant consideration for the Industrial & Commercial Districts. She suggested how the terms "permanent cabins" and "yearly review" for Home Occupations might be used. Regarding the Board's Special Meeting last night, she encouraged everyone to view the YouTube recording to familiarize what was discussed. She supports scheduling the Article 22 meeting at a different venue.

PC DISCUSSION / COMMENTS: None.

CONTINUING EDUCATION: None.

ADJOURNMENT:

Board Action: Ms. Stratton made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Mr. Trumbull seconded the motion.
VOTE: YEAS: All. NAYES: None. Motion carried.

The meeting adjourned at 10:04 p.m.

Submitted by: Kay Z. Held, Recording Secretary