

MINUTES
CASCADE CHARTER TOWNSHIP PLANNING COMMISSION
MONDAY, August 18, 2025
6:00PM
2865 THORNHILLS AVE SE

ARTICLE 1. Vice-Chairman Kraemer called the meeting to order at 6:00 pm.
Members Present: Korstange, Cribbs, Kraemer, Madiol
Members Absent: Rowland (Excused)
Others Present: Community Planning and Development Director Andrea Hendrick, Planning Consultant Chris Khorey of McKenna, Township Manager Jade Smith, Township Supervisor Grace Lesperance, Legal Counsel Michael Homier of Foster Swift, Planning Administrative Assistant Nick Govan and others listed on the sign-in sheet.

ARTICLE 2. Approve the current Agenda
Motion was made by Member Madiol to approve the Agenda.
Supported by Treasurer Korstange.
Motion carried unanimously.

ARTICLE 3. Disclose any Conflict of Interest
There were no conflicts of interest.

ARTICLE 4. Approve the Minutes of the August 4th, 2025, meeting
Motion was made by Treasurer Korstange to approve the August 4th, 2025 meeting minutes. Supported by Member Cribbs.
Motion carried unanimously.

ARTICLE 5. Acknowledge visitors and those wishing to speak.
There was no one wishing to speak on non-agenda items.

ARTICLE 6. Case #25-3892 – Public Hearing
Applicant: Cascade Charter Township
Requested Action: Recommendation of Comprehensive Zoning Ordinance Amendments.

Supervisor Grace Lesperance provided a brief introduction explaining how the Township arrived at this comprehensive zoning ordinance amendment. She outlined the completion of two initiatives over the past four years: the strategic plan in 2022 and the master plan in 2024. She emphasized that with West Michigan under tremendous growth pressure, the Township wants to proactively ensure growth complements Cascade's quality of life and character rather than eroding it.

Supervisor Lesperance explained that the previous Master Plan prioritized industrial development southeast of the airport, which would have required additional expressway ramps at potentially four different locations. She noted this direction was inconsistent with maintaining Cascade's character. The new Master Plan, adopted in 2024, changed this trajectory, and now the zoning ordinance must be updated to be consistent with the Master Plan.

She stressed that the ordinance focuses on new development and redevelopment only and does not force existing properties to change unless owners voluntarily choose to develop or redevelop.

Planning Consultant Chris Khorey of McKenna presented a comprehensive overview of the proposed zoning ordinance amendments. He explained that the August 7, 2025 draft being considered had been revised from the July 3 draft based on public input received at the August 7 Township Board workshop. Planning Consultant Khorey outlined the guiding philosophies of the ordinance: protect single family neighborhoods, preserve rural character of the eastern part of the Township, upgrading 28th Street to meet Cascade's character and expectations, enhance the village's unique style, make it easy to further Township goals while making it difficult to go against them, and demand quality development.

He detailed what is not changing in the ordinance, including the airport commerce district, airport overlays, and the recently adopted solar ordinance. He emphasized that most provisions in most zoning districts are not changing, and the boundaries of single-family districts remain unchanged.

For homeowners, Planning Consultant Khorey explained that most rules are not changing. He noted that an August 7 revision eliminated proposed increases to side setbacks for single family homes. Changes include eliminating the ability to request taller fences through special use permits; this would now require Zoning Board of Appeals approval instead. He also noted new waterfront regulations limiting key-hole arrangements for off-water properties.

Regarding accessory buildings, Planning Consultant Khorey explained the new system is based on lot size and zoning district, with increased allowances compared to the current 832 square foot threshold. Township Manager Jade Smith clarified that these numbers were not arbitrarily created but were based on data pulled from previous cases brought before the Planning Commission. He explained that the Township had no idea where the previous 832 square foot number came from, so staff analyzed previous cases to determine what made the most sense. He noted the new scale gives property owners more rights to their properties and allows them to do more with their property. Manager Smith noted that the Planning Commission has been hearing many cases for accessory buildings over 832 square feet, so the new system will help streamline the process and make accessory buildings permitted by right, rather than requiring special use permits. Planning Consultant Khorey further clarified that accessory dwelling units are not allowed under this ordinance.

For large lot and agricultural property owners, Planning Consultant Khorey detailed new animal regulations based on animal units per acre, emphasizing these are complaint-driven enforcement rules rather than permit requirements.

The ordinance introduces a purchase of development rights program to allow property owners to monetize land without selling to developers and establishes a private road ban, with limited exceptions, to prevent sprawl in the eastern part of the Township.

This philosophy promotes investment in existing businesses while demanding high design standards and limiting corporate architecture. Planning Consultant Khorey explained that the overlay districts along 28th Street are designed to create consistent rules and discourage planned unit developments.

He detailed the form-based code for the village area, which creates four new zoning districts with detailed architectural, site design, and road design standards. The form-based code interacts with existing planned unit developments by prohibiting new ones and requiring any amendments to comply with overlay standards.

For developers, the ordinance establishes a utility service boundary roughly at Buttrick Avenue, beyond which public water and sewer cannot be extended. New housing standards include minimum square footage requirements and restrictions on tiny homes and micro units.

The overlay districts allow limited housing development in select areas (Starr, Glenwood, and Centennial overlays) with density bonuses available for quality improvements such as green space preservation, owner-occupancy guarantees, mixed-use development, pathway construction, and stormwater management improvements.

The form-based code allows commercial development throughout the village with mixed-use development permitted anywhere and standalone housing restricted to specific areas, requiring special use permits.

Planning Consultant Khorey concluded by outlining three architectural styles required in the form-based code: Craftsman, Main Street Traditional, and Victorian, all intended to maintain village character while prohibiting corporate architecture.

**Motion was made by Treasurer Korstange to open public hearing. Supported by Member Cribbs.
Motion carried unanimously.**

Calvin Tran (Grandville, board member of Abundant Housing Michigan) spoke in favor of the amendments, supporting mixed-use development and growth where infrastructure exists. He challenged the commission to be more ambitious, suggesting elimination of minimum lot sizes, minimum dwelling sizes, and parking requirements to address the housing crisis.

Tedd O'Neill (6749 & 6747 Old 28th St.) expressed concerns about how the plans would affect existing automotive businesses on Old 28th Street, questioning whether businesses like his would be incentivized to relocate and raising concerns about traffic and parking for new residential development.

Joe Cucinella (6716 Old 28th St.) echoed concerns about existing businesses, referencing 50 years of operation and previous renovations. He expressed worry about current business owners being considered in future development plans and raised concerns about water drainage issues.

Durk Martin (7890 36th St.) addressed sidewalk maintenance issues on 36th Street and requested replacement of a missing traffic sign at Buttrick and Cascade.

Ken Lovell (8205 Shadybrook Dr.) questioned the definition of "quality" in development standards and expressed concern about affordability, wondering what quality requirements would add to housing costs.

Robert Camp (Quiggle Ave.) argued that extensive controls, particularly public road requirements, would make development prohibitively expensive and effectively end development in Cascade. He suggested allowing controlled private roads rather than requiring them to be public roads.

Nancy Eardley (1441 Sandy Point Ave.) opposed the form-based code approach, arguing it leaves zoning decisions open to subjective criteria. She questioned the viability of a walkable village concept and advocated for business-friendly zoning instead. She opposed residential development in Starr and Centennial overlays, preferring to maintain the business tax base.

Jordan Painter (2765 Orange Ave.) reiterated concerns about private road restrictions making development costs prohibitive, noting current build costs already approaching \$1.5 million in some areas.

Michelle Lauer (2992 Overlook Summit Dr.) raised concerns about potential conflicts with strategic plan designations for park/green space areas, requested objective data on traffic and environmental impacts, and warned about costs to existing residents from zero setback requirements and potential wildlife disruption.

David Prindiville (4994 Sequoia Dr.) expressed dissatisfaction with the proposed Victorian architectural style within the form-based code.

Jim Schumar (4790 Cascade Rd.) emphasized the importance of maintaining current community standards and expressed concerns about imposed quality standards, arguing that market forces already drive quality. He questioned parking requirements for buildings close to roads.

Trisha Hielkema (3130 Howlett Dr.) thanked the commission for avoiding Ada's development pattern but requested protections against historic home teardowns and asked about road infrastructure plans for increased density.

Dawn McDonald (6810 Old 28th St.) described traffic problems in Ada and expressed concerns about similar issues developing in Cascade due to walkability and mix-use.

JR Kotrč (6810 Old 28th St.) felt existing businesses were being left behind by new development standards and questioned the Victorian architecture style within the form-based code.

Dan Lauer (2992 Overlook Summit Dr.) emphasized infrastructure concerns with increased density, particularly refuse management, and requested consideration of vertical building trends in height restrictions.

**Motion was made by Treasurer Korstange to close public hearing. Supported by Member Cribbs.
Motion carried unanimously.**

Following the public hearing, Planning Consultant Khorey and staff addressed questions raised during public comment. Planning Consultant Khorey noted where building materials requirements can be found and that they apply only to commercial, mixed-use, and multifamily development in form-based code and

overlay districts, not to single-family homes or development outside those districts.

Regarding Tassell Park and its expansion, Supervisor Lesperance explained that the Township is acquiring the Verburg Automotive property to improve aesthetics and potentially create river access and connections, re-emphasizing that nothing in the ordinance forces existing businesses to change.

Planning Consultant Khorey noted the ordinance does not explicitly prohibit single-family home teardowns, but new construction would be governed by the same setback and scale requirements as current homes.

Community Planning and Development Director Hendrick addressed business owner concerns, explaining that repairs and maintenance improvements not involving footprint expansion would not trigger new requirements. She noted the DDA is implementing facade improvement grants to help existing businesses meet new standards.

Supervisor Lesperance addressed housing affordability concerns, arguing that government cannot solve housing prices through zoning and that the market determines affordability. She emphasized that Cascade is not a starter community and that developers calling projects "affordable" often means cutting corners on quality.

Planning Consultant Khorey clarified that the ordinance cannot restrict property owners from renting their properties but includes incentives for homeownership through density bonuses. He explained that hotels cannot be converted to apartments under the new ordinance because hotel rooms do not meet dwelling unit definitions.

Motion was made by Treasurer Korstange to RECOMMEND APPROVAL of Case Number 25-3892, amendment to the Cascade Charter Township Zoning Ordinance as presented in the draft zoning ordinance version dated August 7, 2025 with the following changes:

- 1. Remove the proposed side setback changes in the R1, R2, RC, Farmland Preservation, and Rural Conservation zoning districts to maintain the current side setback requirements.**
- 2. Add a new section 4.4.C.9 which states: Chickens in the R1 and R2 districts must be within a covered enclosure, a coop and a run, at all times. Chickens shall not be allowed to range freely on any other property. The entire enclosure must meet the setback requirements of section 4.4.C.5, while requirements of section 4.4.C.6 shall only apply to the coop itself.**
- 3. Remove the end of section 6.3.C.2 which reads "except when the yard is adjacent to a designated major thoroughfare, and in such instance, the side street yard shall also be considered."**

Supported by Member Madiol.

Motion carried unanimously.

ARTICLE 7. Acknowledge visitors and those wishing to speak.

David Prindiville (4994 Sequoia Dr.) questioned whether the ordinance had been accepted. Treasurer Korstange clarified that it would move on to the Township Board for deliberation, including a work session and first reading before being adopted.

Scot VanSolkema (2570 Orange Ct.) asked for clarification on accessory dwelling unit definitions, specifically what constitutes a kitchen and whether pool houses with bathrooms and cooking facilities would be allowed. Manager Smith and Planning Consultant Khorey clarified that kitchen definitions are in both the hotel and dwelling unit definitions sections, requiring a stove or cooking device and permanently installed sink.

ARTICLE 8. Other Business

There was no other business.

ARTICLE 9. Adjourn

Respectfully submitted,

Andrea Hendrick, Community Planning and Development Director, Recording Secretary