

Ganges Township Planning Commission
Regular Meeting Minutes for August 27, 2025
Glenn Community Center (Glenn Hall)
6953 114th Ave. Glenn, MI 49416

I. Call to Order - Roll Call

Chair: Jackie **DeZwaan** called the meeting to order at 7:00 pm.

Roll Call: Chair: Jackie **DeZwaan** - Present

Vice Chair: Dale **Pierson** - Present

Secretary: Phil **Badra** - Present

Commissioner: Edward **Gregory** - Present

Commission Trustee: Dick **Hutchins** - Present

Zoning Administrator: Tasha **Smalley** - Present

Recording Secretary: Katie **Wolfe** - Present

II. Additions to the Agenda and adoption

Gregory made a motion to approve the agenda. **Badra** seconded the motion. Motion passed.

III. General Public Comments

John **Solomon** - 6720 118th Ave. wondered if the PC had received his communications.

Marsha **Maslanka** - 1811 66th St. quoted the Ordinance Book and Master Plan, highlighting that the ordinances are designed to promote the public health, safety and general welfare. She also noted concerns about the traffic study that was conducted; stating that it was completed on weekday mornings, not during holidays, and there was a pedestrian fatality in the past that was not reported on the study.

Aaron **Kronmeyer** - 6556 118th Ave. continued on about the fatality, he stated it happened in 2018 and the incident number is 1379418. He added that this incident was not noted on the traffic study.

Randy **Schipper** from Cunningham Dalman, representing several property owners in the area that are opposed to this Special Land Use (SLU), highlighted portions of the letter he

submitted to the PC. He noted that Saugatuck Meadows has to be considered in conjunction with Campit because in his FOIA request to Ganges Township, Michael **O'Connor** identified himself as the managing member of the applicant. Campit is two separate entities operating as one campground. Also, Special Land Uses run with the property, so whoever has the approval can transfer the approval with the property. This proposal is for 89 new RV sites. In the response to **Schipper's** FOIA request, you can see that **O'Connor** has also already submitted a proposal asking to add 90 campsites on the north of 118th. This would more than double the RV sites doubling impacts on the community.

Linda Hopkins **Laakso** - 1735 66th St. noted that the homes in the area are the residents' biggest investment.

Barbra **Andrews** - 1738 66th St. noted that the residents in the area do not want the Special Land use to pass.

John **Napoli** - 1782 Lakeshore Drive noted the deterioration of his well and wondered if there are any regulations or inspections from the health department regarding the impact on water and sewage from all the campsites in the area.

Jan **Firmiss** - 1815 66th St stated that Campit is loud and rowdy all summer and she would hate to see it build up even more.

Dave **Laakso** - 1735 66th St questioned if the meeting was regarding the final site plan or a Special Land Use. He also noted that a campground is permitted in the Res/Ag district with a Special Land Use if they meet the six criteria.

Kim **Mannion** - 6611 Deer Trail noted that there are compliance issues and zoning violations that have OCCURED ~~been addressed~~ at Campit.

Gregg **Greiner** - 1748 Blue Star Hwy commented that many people in the community do not want the campground. He added that campers do not provide anything to the community but they use up resources and create safety issues.

Charles **Mannion** - 6611 Deer Trail noted that the Master Plan talks about the township having a rural atmosphere. He added concerns about safety, traffic on 118th Ave and 66th St, and environmental risks.

Stephanie **Hughes** - 6645 Foote Trail noted whether this is an expansion or not, the campground does not meet the SLU requirements. Also stating that Campit's events are open to the public but it seems they do not apply for events through the township.

Delaney **Kronmeyer** - 6552 118th Ave. stated that there is plenty of commercial property available along Blue Star Hwy for a potential location for the campground. He also voiced concerns about RVs pulling into or turning around in his driveway as he is right across the street from the entrance of the proposed campground.

Linda **Rodriguez** - 1665 65th St. noted that Ganges Township needs to stand up for itself.

Drew **Scholten** - 6548 118th Ave. commented that he moved to a farming community to raise a family. He also agreed that the campground issue has turned into a big battle in the community.

IV. Correspondence and Upcoming Seminars

Badra to **PC & Peach Creek Investment** re: Contractor's Office/Storage Building

DeZwaan to **Hebert** re: clarification over enforcement with reply from **Hebert**

Letters re: Campit from T. **Knight-Hardy**, **Kim**, **D. Laakso**

From S. **Mackey** to **DeZwaan** re: response to her email

V. Public Hearing – None

VI. Approval of Prior Minutes

Motion made by **Gregory**, seconded by **Badra** to approve the August 26, 2025, Special Meeting minutes, with corrections. Motion passed.

VII. Old Business

1. Final Site Plan for Saugatuck Meadows Campground

To start deliberation, **DeZwaan** read a letter from the Ganges Township Fire Chief, Jason **Jager**. It stated that in the last three years, according to the National Fire Incident Reporting System, the Ganges Township fire department responded to Campit 16 times for medical emergencies and had no fire incidents. In comparison, there are six addresses that the fire department has been to five times or more in the last year. **DeZwaan** noted

that this letter was brought up because a majority of the community thinks the **PC** is dealing with Campit. However, they are not; yes there is a relationship but the **PC** is not dealing with Campit for this meeting.

Badra explained that some land uses are called special land uses for a reason. The reason is because the unique character of special land uses is that they have the potential to adversely affect adjacent properties. That is why the Michigan Zoning Enabling Act requires a public hearing and notification of neighboring property owners that there is a special land use application. **Badra** continued that Special Land Use approval requires two review standards that must be met in their entirety. There are non-discretionary standards and discretionary standards. Non-discretionary standards are clearly stated in the Zoning Ordinance. Discretionary standards are subjective and they require the judgement of each individual PC member to ensure that the special land use is a good fit for the location where it is proposed. Section 18.3.A.1 of the Ganges Township Zoning Ordinance states that special land uses shall be designed, constructed, operated, and maintained in a manner harmonious with the character of the adjacent property and surrounding areas. The Michigan Zoning Enabling Act specifies that special land use approvals are discretionary decisions and conditions may be placed on the approval to ensure compatibility with the adjacent area. In the Saugatuck Meadows public hearing on May 28th, the **PC** listed several conditions that needed to be met before an approval could be considered. In the August 1st letter from the applicant's attorney, these conditions were discussed. The attorney stated that no statement would be given to ensure Saugatuck Meadows would not become an extension of Campit, and that the campground rules and guest rules would not be provided to the **PC** for approval. The letter states that Central Florida Resort Management "reserves the right to enact rules and policies that will ensure orderly, harmonious, safe, and ideal compound operations pursuant to the best practices and business judgement of Central Florida Resort Property Management and its chosen developer operator". **Badra** continued that discretionary standards are not an option, they must be met. The two conditions the **PC** felt were most necessary to ensure Saugatuck Meadows would be a good fit for the area have been rejected by the applicant. **Hutchins** stated after going through the Zoning Ordinance, Saugatuck Meadows does not meet the special land use. He continued, this campground is far from being harmonious

with the character of the adjacent property in the surrounding area; and it is far from being in agreement with the Master Plan of development and keeping the area as rural a nature as possible.

DeZwaan noted in the ZONING ORDINANCE ~~Master Plan~~ it gives the **PC** the purview as discretionary through the plan to administer special land use. There are a lot of things the **PC** can impose as conditions and by putting those restrictions, the campground can be harmonious. Just because Saugatuck Meadows has a relationship with someone who has not complied WITH GANGES TOWNSHIP ORDINANCES, ~~under the Zoning Enabling Act~~ the **PC** is not permitted to say we can judge the proposed campground based on that.

Pierson stated that the **PC** reserves the right to enact rules and policies for this development's operations that will best ensure orderly, harmonious and ideal campground operations pursuant to the best practices which protect the health, safety, and general welfare of both local and transient citizens. Due to one of the partners in this project having a history of non-compliance, we as a **PC** have the right to impose more stringent conditions than normal if this campground gets approved.

DeZwaan noted that the campground is not required to be in the commercial district and it is an allowed special land use in the Res/Ag district. **DeZwaan** also added that the **PC** cannot regulate water, soil, fire, or roads. When it comes to the traffic, the **PC** requested the fire/emergency exit which was added on the plans. If the **PC** adds these more restrictive restrictions, and the campground does not comply, then the **PC** could revoke the SLU. The township is hiring a new enforcement officer so if it becomes an issue, the township will have better control of it.

Pierson noted that the **PC** deliberately put the definition of a campground from the state into the Ganges Township Zoning Ordinance. He also referenced the following documents: the General Property Tax Act 211.2a, the Michigan Vehicle Code, Act 300 of 1949, under 257.498, the Mobile Home Commission Act, Excerpt 9896 of 1987, 125.2302, 12501 and the Public Health Code 333.125.01. **Pierson** also addressed comments about rust in wells. He stated that the rust has nothing to do with the amount of water being used. It is simply a matter of the soils that we have here and what they do to the water in the underground aquifer.

Pierson stated that in a conflict between a Master Plan and a Zoning Ordinance for Special Land Use in Michigan, the ZO must be followed as it is the legally binding document that governs present land use and development, it is a law. Whereas the MP is a guide for future development. If this development meets all the conditions in the ZO Book then it is the **PC's** responsibility to okay this, because they've met the legal requirements. **Pierson** continued that the **PC** is trying to protect the rural nature of the town. For example, with the latest ordinance, only two houses are allowed on a private road in the agricultural district; and that is to try and protect the agricultural district from the residential input.

Badra commented in reference to the Michigan Zoning Enabling Act, the Zoning Ordinance authorizes consideration or approval of special land uses as a discretionary decision. The regulations and standards upon those decisions shall be specified in the ZO. Those standards shall be consistent with and promote the intent and purpose of the ZO and shall ensure the land use activity authorized shall be compatible with the adjacent uses of land, natural environment and the capabilities of public services and facilities affected by the land. The standards shall also ensure the land use activity is consistent with the public health, safety and welfare of the unit government. Also, reasonable conditions may be required. The conditions may include conditions necessary to ensure public services are adequate, that it's compatible with the adjacent use of the land and promote the use of land in a socially and economically desirable manner.

DeZwaan commented that the **PC** has the ability to impose conditions that make the campground more harmonious with the surrounding neighborhood. If this gets approved and the applicant signs the plan, whatever conditions the **PC** puts on there, must be complied to. If they do not, it is grounds to revoke the SLU.

Pierson stated that a moratorium cannot be retroactive to an application which has already had a public hearing. **DeZwaan** added that the Ganges Township attorney wrote the moratorium starting effective June 10th, ~~and~~ the township had the application before then.

Pierson noted that a professional engineer designed this campground and it was their responsibility to meet all requirements that are imposed by the state and the county. The **PC** does not have the expertise or authority in the technical details related to the water

and sewer. **Pierson** continued, regarding Campit, if they wanted to expand they would have to come before the **PC** and go through the process. It would not be automatic because they are already in business. **DeZwaan** added, in addition to that, Ganges Township is going to go through the moratorium.

Gregory noted that his research has been based on the State of Michigan Public Health Code Act 368, regarding campgrounds, the State of Michigan's Mobile Home Act 96, the Ganges Twp master plan and its guidance, the Ganges Twp ZO, online AI research engine studies and inquires for determination of definitions and practices that are common nationwide, and all the documents from attorneys and the applicant. **Gregory** continued, when researching campgrounds vs. mobile homes, campgrounds are defined clearly as a temporary use of a facility's space. Campground is a temporary thing, whereas mobile homes allow for seasonal use and permanent use. **Gregory** continued that an RV park is not a special use consideration in the residential/agricultural district, but it may be considered in the commercial district. This particular project is completely surrounded by low-density residential developments. The lot size for residential developments is 1.5 acres per dwelling unit, which means that the density in the campground would be six times denser than what is required now per residential lot. This neighborhood and our township is now at its maximum tolerance and accommodation of this land use in the Res/Ag district. **Gregory** continued on with neighborhood factors that would be impacted. The high density area would place a greater demand on police/fire services, greater demand on the townships limited government administrative services, increase the threat of toxic soil saturation and pollution of the area drinking water aquifer, and it is causing the greatest disruption of peace and harmony and a threat to the safety and welfare of the residents in this low-density district. **Gregory** said, based on the evidence submitted in these deliberations, Ganges Township is currently undergoing an RV park land use crisis. The improper and uncontrolled operation of an amplified music theater venue now disrupts residents from miles around. The uncertainty of the operations, parking, sanitation, safety, welfare and the behavior of its patrons needs investigation and corrections as may be needed. And if this disorder is not resolved through better management of its operations, then civil action should be taken.

DeZwaan stated that the Ganges Township definition for an RV park says five or more recreational units. When it comes to the services, Allegan County controls the water and drainage and the road commission decides on the traffic. The **PC** does not control any of that.

DeZwaan noted that she looked into a letter that was sent to the **PC** about a fire truck that was across the street from Campit. It was determined that it had nothing to do with a fire, it was a possible gas leak; there is a lot of misinformation.

Hutchins noted that he made a list of conditions that the **PC** can impose on the campground. However, he continued, the best predictor of future behaviors is past practice and as long as one of the principles in this is Mr. **O'Connor**, there is no credibility in the **PC** making a list of conditions for the campground to follow, unless he has had a turnaround in attitude or if he turns it over completely to Bobbi Jo **Beyersdorf**.

DeZwaan replied that she agrees, however, according to the Zoning Enabling Act, just because a non-compliant “bad actor” is affiliated with one area, you cannot use that to deny him in another area. It is against the law.

Pierson added that is true, but that also gives the **PC** the right to give much harsher conditions to someone who has been a “bad actor” at another place.

DeZwaan continued with a possible condition that could be applied. For example, an enforcement officer can go into the campground at any time when there is a complaint. However, these are enforcement issues; the **PC** does not control that. The township is looking for a new enforcement officer to help with this.

Pierson commented once this decision goes to the COURT ~~state level~~, the **PC** has no idea what the outcome will be. He continued that he would rather keep the decision in the building so that the **PC** can control what GOES ~~does~~ on and what stipulations come out of it, rather than have a judge decide who is not a member of the community. A judge will look at the paperwork from the lawyers and the meeting minutes and make a decision from that. **Pierson** asked the **PC** if they should go through the lists of conditions they all made. **Gregory** stated that he does not have any conditions.

DeZwaan replied that in her opinion the list of conditions has to be done through the motion.

Badra commented that there are a couple of options. A motion can be made now without even looking at conditions, or we can go through and put all the conditions the **PC** wants to add and go through the process of approving. Then, if conditions are broken, there will be another public hearing and the **PC** will have to go through the process of revoking the Special Land Use which will take months. **Badra** stated in his opinion, the **PC** should vote first and if it passes as being denied, then that's that.

DeZwaan disagreed, stating when the applicant signs the site plan, they agree to the conditions. If they violate the conditions, the SLU can be revoked.

Gregory added he does not believe it is the **PC's** purpose to enable this to happen. It is the **PC's** purpose to carry out the law, as we each understand and interpret it. **Gregory** continued that the **PC** should vote on the matter and if it's approved, conditions can be considered. If the campground gets denied, then the list of conditions is an exercise in futility.

DeZwaan commented that **Gregory's** opinion to deny the campground is based on the definition of campground vs mobile home park, water, sewer and fire which are things that the **PC** does not control. **Gregory** replied that he is not interested in controlling things, he is interested in observing and voting on what is before him that may be increased if the **PC** does not cease to further emburden this area.

Smalley noted that the **PC** should read through the Site Plan Review Standards and Special Land Use Standards and base decisions on those.

Badra reiterated that in the letter from Mr. **O'Connor's** lawyer, it stated that the campground and guest rules would not be provided to the **PC** for approval.

Hutchins recommended that the **PC** look at Section 18.3 in the ZO and determine SLU before getting into conditions because all standards need to be met.

A.1. says that the special land use shall be designed, constructed, operated and maintained in a manner harmonious with the character of adjacent property and the surrounding area.

DeZwaan replied that the **PC** has the ability to make it harmonious by imposing restrictions. **Hutchins** replied that it does not say "can it be harmonious" it says that it "shall be harmonious". **DeZwaan** noted that it is harmonious with the surrounding areas because of the other campgrounds in the area. **Gregory** commented that it is not the **PC's**

obligation to make it harmonious, it is the **PC's** obligation to make judgement on what is presented.

Hutchins jumped back into the review standards in the ZO, Section 18.3.A.2 which states that the special land use shall not change the essential character of the surrounding area. **DeZwaan** noted that there are two campgrounds in the surrounding area. **Hutchins** replied that the Woods Campground is not adjacent to this property; so Saugatuck Meadows will only be harmonious with Campit. He also added that there have been no problems with The Woods Campground. **DeZwaan** noted that there were complaints when the **PC** did the site plan, but when it was developed, it worked out just fine.

Pierson asked if the **PC** has tried to envision what Saugatuck Meadows would look like after it's developed. He added that there will be a border of trees all around it, and the berm will be planted with trees; adding that it will not be visible to the public, so that makes it harmonious.

Badra made a motion to deny the Special Land Use for Saugatuck Meadows Campground since it does not comply with the Zoning Ordinance Section 18.3 A.1 Basis of Determination (The special land use shall be designed, constructed, operated and maintained in a manner harmonious with the character of adjacent property and the surrounding area). This is a discretionary decision which is allowed by the Michigan Zoning Enabling Act Section 125.3504.

Gregory seconded the motion. Roll call vote:

Hutchins - Yes

Gregory - Yes

Pierson - No

Badra - Yes

DeZwaan - No

Motion passed (3-2)

VIII. New Business – None

IX. Administrative Updates

a. Township Board

Hutchins reported that the Township Board will be working with a new legal firm in efforts to better enforce ordinances.

b. Zoning Board of Appeals

Pierson had nothing to report.

c. Zoning Administrator

Smalley had nothing to report.

X. Future Meeting Dates - September 23rd & October 28th

DeZwaan noted that there are no site plans or special land use applications for the September meeting so the **PC** will continue to work on the Lake Michigan overlay district and the campground moratorium.

XI. General Public Comments

Sarah **Ross** - 9091 Helen White Drive, Lake Ann thanked the PC for their time. She noted for clarification this application was for a campground.

David **Lakso** noted that there is a legal distinction between an RV park and a campground, both in the ordinance and for the State of Michigan.

Mackenzie **Hans** – 7041 Crawford St questioned if the PC's biggest concern was the fear of being sued. **Pierson** responded that is not a consideration. In the overall picture, once it escapes the PC's ability, it is up to the judge and the PC is no longer involved.

DeZwaan added that decisions are based on the law in the Ganges Zoning Ordinance.

Mackey - agreed with previous comments that the PC has to look at what is right in front of them instead of trying to make the proposed campground harmonious with the surrounding area.

Maslanka asked about the moratorium. **DeZwaan** replied that the applicant cannot reapply until the moratorium is done.

XII. Adjournment

Gregory made a motion to adjourn the meeting. **Pierson** seconded the motion. The meeting was adjourned at 9:10 PM.

Respectfully Submitted,
Katelynn Wolfe, Ganges Township Recording Secretary