Minutes – Planning Commission Meeting – Wednesday, October 28, 2026

Meeting called by: Chair Rick Sevey @ 7:00 PM Solon Township Hall, 15185 Algoma Ave NE, Cedar Springs

Members Present*:* Chair Sevey requested Member Roll Call

Brad Carey __X___ Hal Babcock__X___ Mark Hoskins_X___ Keith Sawade _AB____ Rick Sevey __X__
Jon Tilburt__X___ Joe VandenBerg__X__

Others present: Supervisor – Ellick, Attorney – Homier

Pledge of Allegiance

Approval of Minutes - Motion to accept September 23, 2026, meeting minutes by Hoskins, second - Vandenberg, all Ayes, Carried.

Approval of Agenda – Sevey commented they do need to put public comments on agenda items right underneath approval of agenda, approving agenda as is for now, but working on that. Motion to accept Agenda by Sevey, second – Tilburt, all Ayes, Carried.

Agenda Items to be reviewed by the Planning Commission:

1. McKenna Group- Master Planner's – Andrea Hendrick & Christopher Khorey

Khorey: Went through the Master Plan Update Process as well as the Existing Conditions exhibits presented. Highlighting from 2020 Solon had 6,488 residents and census estimate of 6,652 in 2025. An average household size of 2.69 people which is above the State average of 2.4. A median income of $87,000 and a median home value of $320,000. The average Township commute time was 27.7 minutes, and they expanded the trade area to 45 minutes to capture job centers in Grand Rapids, Kentwood, Wyoming and Muskegon. Solon Township had a population change from 2010 (5,988) to 2020 (6,488) which is +8.7%. This is comparable to the trade area +8.5%. To account for people moving in, moving out, deaths, migration, etc… the housing demands continue to grow into 2030, 2040, 2050. Solon is 91% owner occupied while most communities are only 75% owner occupied. At the current rate of construction, the gap to meet the needs of the community continues to grow in 2030, 2040, 2050 assuming 10 new houses per year. Before 2050 the Township needs 419 to 519 new housing units, much of this need already exists or will before 2030. How many acres are needed depends on density and placement i.e. AR, R-1, or R-2. He further expanded on existing business needs and included Cedar Springs in that data. Highlighting where current and future needs may be to align Master Planning efforts.
Hoskins: Advised that many assumptions are made off the Existing land use map and he does not believe the map is correct as far is what is currently zoned right now. We may want to go over that with McKenna Group.
Khorey: Absolutely, we can go over that and make edits and corrections.
Khorey: The market says people want to live here, and they want to live here in a rural environment where they can be in Grand Rapids in under half an hour. That's unique. There aren't that many places where you can live on acreage in the woods, and you can be in a pretty big city that fast. Not to mention the beaches and stuff that aren't that far away either. So that is a draw. And meanwhile, if you're an industrial business looking for sites, you've got Cedar Springs water and sewer. You've got a highway, but they can go to Walker and Kentwood and get all that infrastructure in place, ready to go. They don't pay for it. That's where they're going to end up. So you can see how the attractiveness of Solon to residents is higher than the attraction of Solon to businesses.
Sevey: The only problem with that, people want to move here for the rural community. It's a fairly large farming community. If you get too much growth moving in, that rural community is going to be gone. The farm is going to be gone.

Khorey: That's why it's very important to right size that.
Vandenberg: Multifamily and mother-in-law suite type things. Have you factored this in the demographics? We have the new apartments in Cedar Springs that are going to take how many residents?
Khorey: There's this undersupply of rentals, but it's very possible that that Cedar Springs complex will eat up all of that, because now it's available in the community. You have a future demand for 500 new houses. With your current zoning at 2 acres per house that will use up 1,000 acres, 500 houses on 2 acres each. If you do nothing that is a possibility.
Khorey: Next month we are really going to dive into this geographically.

2. Ordinance Amendment – Data Center – Draft 6 & 7

Homier: We have gone through multiple revisions, draft seven was refining some of the concepts rather than wholesale substantive revisions. The next step for the planning commission would be to set a public hearing and then either review and revise or make a recommendation, and then the board gets it, and the board then can act on that amendment.
Smallwood: Spoke up to push for a moratorium extension.
Homier: The longest that we generally do is one year, with a possible extension of six months, and we rarely use the six months. More importantly, I guess for purposes of my review of the ordinance, an extension of the moratorium is only necessary to the extent that you believe that the ordinance is not ready for a public hearing. I've gone through the ordinance multiple times. We've made multiple revisions. We've spent hours refining it. It doesn't mean that you can't revise it following a public hearing or at the public hearing. But the only purpose to extend a moratorium would be if you understood or had to address substantive issues in the ordinance as it's drafted, and I just don't see them.
Tilburt: Motion to set a public hearing for the December meeting, second - Hoskins, all Ayes, Carried.

3. Ordinance Amendment – Landscape and Snowplow Businesses as a Special Land Use in the Neighborhood Commercial District

Ellick: Our applicant would probably be here. He had a car accident. But in the meantime, he is operating the business out of there now.
Tilburt: You're aware that he's operating a business there without the proper zoning authorization, right? It's not only a lawn business that he's talking about, but I see sign out there about storage on that site, so a storage business.
Perrin: I was made aware he was putting in for the zoning request, I did not know he was operating. I'll make that in part of my rounds. We'll give him notice that he needs to cease and desist until zoning is approved***.***
Tilburt: We are looking at adding landscape and snowplow business as a special land use in the neighborhood commercial district.
Hoskins: I was just looking at storage.
Ellick: Just because he wants to do outdoor storage does not mean you're obligated.
Vandenberg: Those things should be allowed in the neighborhood commercial. I would think lawn care and snow plowing is something that is taking care of the neighborhood.
Tilburt: As opposed to storage is not.
Babcock: *B*ut all we're looking to do here is add landscaping to a list of similar services allowed in commercial district.
Sevey: *Need to* open the meeting into a public hearing.
Vandenberg: Made Motion to open the meeting to a public hearing, second - Carey, all Ayes, Carried.
Duane Gritter: It sounds to me like it probably should have been in the original plan anyway that this should be accepted. This is kind of like normal business. Additionally, storage for the business should be included.
Carey: For clarity, that would be forever in there. Then the next guy doesn't have to go through this process.
Sevey: They still have to bring us a site plan and everything else.
Sevey: Closed the public hearing
Vandenberg: Motion to send it up to the township board, second - Carey, all Ayes, Carried.
Carey: Motion for the December Meeting to start at 6pm instead of 7pm, second - Vandenberg, all Ayes, Carried.
Carey: Asked how the data center would be addressed at the Master Plan Meeting.
Khorey: Master Plan will not be pro or against. Ordinance says they must go in light industrial. They would ask for re-zoning and if they change their mind, it would still be zoned that. We don't want to set aside land use for something that doesn't happen so keep that in mind.
Sevey: Ensley, Pierson are in the process of considering new power lines across prime farmland, messing up irrigation and being given a one-time payment and told to deal with it. He has been to one of the meetings. It is a contracted company. Transmission lines. It is at least 5 years before they start building. When he asked what it was for he was told "not a data center". Just something to keep our eyes on.

Hoskins: We now have a Facebook page. As such, it is a communication page. It is just to put on days, times of meetings, other information that way, it's not a two-way communication with the township.
Sevey: It is just for information.

Unfinished Business:

Open Discussion for Issues not on the Agenda:

1. Planning Commission Members: N/A

2. Correspondence Received: N/A

Report of Township Board Representative - ***Hoskins:*** N/A

Report of Board of Appeals Representative - ***Tilburt****:* N/A

Report of Zoning Administrator –
Ellick: none
Hoskins: *We have* interviewed a couple candidates for the Zoning Administrator position

Public Comment – ***Sevey:*** Opened public comment.

Several people spoke during Public Comment. Summary comment points:

- Rebecca Smallwood, Solon Twp resident, I just want to get on record. First of all, I think holding the public hearing in December, right before Christmas, is a terrible idea. You're not going to get as much people coming as would be desired. I'm not going to be able to come. I'm going to be on vacation. So, I'm just, I'm personally really bummed that you're not holding this in January. I think a lot of people are maybe not going to be able to come to this. The one thing I think is sort of a question is can we understand what the timeline is going to be? So, let's say we have the public hearing in December. You pass it on to the board after that. The board maybe passes it in January or February. Let's say we get an application at that point. How does that mesh with the master plan and all of that, like, could we have something like approved in like March? I think that's what everybody here is worried and wondering about. So, because this feels kind of like all of a sudden now we're moving to the public hearing, you know when, Michael, when I had spoken to you privately a while back, we got the impression that the focus was going to be on the master plan first, and then on the ordinance, because the master plan is supposed to inform the ordinance, not the reverse. So for the ordinance to be passed before the changes to the master plan feels a little back ass words, to be blunt. So I guess I'm just trying, and I think a lot of us here are trying to understand exactly what's going on here because it feels like suddenly you shifted things on us. We thought we had some time.
- Denise, Solon Twp resident, people move and have to drive to Grand Rapids and did it occur to anyone that they do not want to live where they work?
- ***Homier:*** Here's what you need to understand about the moratorium. The moratorium is not just to pass a moratorium; it has to serve a purpose. And if, as I believe it is finished to the extent it is finished prior to public comment, there is no basis to extend a moratorium. I mean, you. What additional work are you going to do on draft number seven? If substantively there are issues, the planning commission, following public comment, can make those revisions or determine whether substantively it needs to be changed.
- ***Homier:*** Anyone is welcome to submit written comments prior to the start of the public hearing.
- ***Carey:*** It will be on the website available for review a month in advance.
- ***Sevey:*** It will be available for review almost two months in advance.
- Denise, Solon Twp resident, did it occur to anybody that people don't want to live where they were work? It's okay to drive out of the rat race and go home to a calm rural home.

- Cindy Patin, Algoma Twp resident, I just want to make it public record because I'm not sure if the presentation that was done is part of the public record. But from what I hear and I understand and I appreciate so much is that clearly, we need more housing, and clearly we do not need a data center.

Adjournment:

Tiburt*:* Motion to adjourn, Second -*Sevey* all Ayes, Motion Carried. Meeting Adjourned: 8:56 pm.

Next Scheduled Meeting: Wednesday, November 18, 2026, 6:00 pm at the Township Hall, note time change to accommodate Master Planner

DRAFT