

**NEW BUFFALO TOWNSHIP PLANNING COMMISSION  
REGULAR MEETING/PUBLIC HEARING  
September 2, 2025 6:30 PM  
17425 RED ARROW HIGHWAY,  
NEW BUFFALO, MI 49117  
MINUTES**

**1. ROLL CALL & PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**

Roll Call Present: Armstrong, Arvanitis, Nesci, Schmidt and Wagner

Absent: Lauricella

Pledge of Allegiance

**2. PUBLIC COMMENT – GENERAL NON-HEARING RELATED:**

Joe from Arcadia Development Group and Jesse Rose from Crush Solutions presented a conceptual plan for a family-centered, affordable housing project on 71 acres at 19701 US 12 and 19312 Grand Avenue.

The proposal is for a PUD to increase density from 112 sites (by-right) to 153 sites. The development would utilize 30 acres, leaving 41 acres as a permanent nature preserve. Home site sizes would range from 4,400 square feet up to 13,000 square feet.

The project aims to offer homes at approximately half the area's average price of \$640,000 (targeting around \$320,000) to serve working families, addressing a limiting factor for people coming to New Buffalo. The high density is achieved by classifying it as a "mobile home park" which allows for smaller lot sizes, with homes built off-site but placed on permanent foundations. This classification requires state approval from the mobile home commission.

Darrell Beltman, the project engineer, explained that the original parcel was 62 acres, and purchasing an additional 10-acre parcel off Grand Avenue allows for a crucial second entrance/exit for emergency services and looped utilities (water, electrical systems), significantly increasing safety and reliability for the community. He noted the uniqueness of such a large open space (40 acres) in Southwest Michigan communities.

The commission raised questions regarding stormwater management for the very flat site, which has only a two to three-foot elevation difference from high to low point. The developer plans to use rain gardens and bioswales to clean runoff and recharge the water table, rather than detention ponds, due to the high water table that would fill excavated holes. They are leaning towards asphalt streets with stone shoulders to maximize permeable surfaces. Discussions have also been held with Eagle (Derek Harrelson and Anna Watson) to ensure compliance in sensitive areas and manage 100-year storm events. Concerns were also raised about lot coverage, with the standard being 35%, and the challenge of not covering smaller 4,400 square foot lots.

A key discussion point was the potential for short-term rentals. The commission expressed concern that allowing them would defeat the purpose of creating affordable housing, especially due to potential noise and disruption for working families. The developers are open to discussing a compromise, such as restricting a majority of the homes from being used as short-term rentals, acknowledging the need for flexibility if homes don't sell.

The commission also expressed a strong preference for the lots to be sold with the homes, rather than a lot-rent model. The developers stated they are still determining this, balancing the option of a cheaper home with higher lot rent versus a more expensive home where the land is also sold.

3. PUBLIC HEARING – Schmidt moved to open the Public Hearing on the proposed amendments to the Township Zoning Ordinances. Verbal vote: CARRIED

Section 1. Amendment of Section 455-1.21 regarding Private Streets.

Section 1. Amendment of Section 455-3.2. Regulated uses table

- Section 455-1.21: An amendment to increase the required cul-de-sac radius to 60 feet to ensure adequate turnaround space for fire trucks, moving trucks, and other large vehicles. This change would apply to new construction on developed lots or if a new structure is built, ensuring safety and accessibility.
- Section 455-3.2 Food Trucks. An amendment to change the permitting process for food trucks from the current 30-day renewable permits to a single, calendar-year permit. This would streamline the process for both the township (reducing the burden of frequent inspections) and operators. The amendment also formally adds industrial zones as a permitted location. A food truck operator currently on Wilson Road (Casey Burke) spoke in support of the annual permit, citing high demand from local workers for quick food options, especially given limited alternatives like McDonald's or closed gas station food options. They confirmed meeting state and county requirements through the state of Michigan and the Berrien County Health Department.

Wagner moved to approve amendment of Section 455-1.21. Anderson seconded. Verbal vote CARRIED.

Schmidt moved to approve amendment of Section 455-3.2. Nesci seconded. Verbal vote CARRIED.

Armstrong moved to close the Public Hearing. Wagner seconded. Verbal vote CARRIED.

#### PUBLIC COMMENT:

Special Land Use at 19325 U.S. 12

Christine Jabor addressed the commission regarding a special land use issue for her 13-acre property at 19325 U.S. 12, which was tabled in May. She stated that individuals with no legal rights to her land (no lease, no record, no lease pendants) are included in the special land use and

warned that an improper extension could result in a lawsuit. She emphasized that she has millions of dollars invested in the property and that the current situation allows people with no rights to her land. She requested the commission discuss the matter, send it to the Township Board for a decision, or formally "un-table" it for resolution, seeking to work collaboratively to resolve the issue and give the landowner some rights.

No immediate action was taken. It was later confirmed during the meeting that the matter is already with the township's attorney for advice.

Estelle Brinkman will request an update from the attorney to ensure the issue is resolved in a timely manner.

a. Excused Absences

Armstrong moved to approve absence for Lauricella at the present meeting.

Nesci 2<sup>nd</sup> Motion. Verbal vote: CARRIED

b. Wagner moved to approve the amended minutes from July 1, 2025.

Schmidt 2nd Motion. Verbal vote: CARRIED

4. ADJOURNMENT

Arvanitis moved to adjourn at 7:07 p.m.

2<sup>nd</sup> Schmidt Verbal vote: CARRIED

  
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Carol Schmidt, Secretary  
New Buffalo Township Planning Commission