

OSHTEMO CHARTER TOWNSHIP
PLANNING COMMISSION
MINUTES OF A MEETING HELD OCTOBER 23, 2025

AGENDA

PRESENTATION: 2045 COMPREHENSIVE PLAN DRAFT

A meeting of the Oshtemo Charter Township Planning Commission was held Thursday, October 23, 2025, commencing at 6:00 p.m. at the Oshtemo Township Hall, 7275 West Main Street.

MEMBERS PRESENT: Michael Chapman, Township Board Liaison
Philip Doorlag, Chair
Deb Everett, Vice Chair
Scot Jefferies
Scott Makohn
Alistair Smith
Jeremiah Smith

MEMBERS ABSENT: None

Also present were Jodi Stefforia, Planning Director; James Porter, Township Attorney; Leeanna Harris, Planning and Zoning Administrator; Colten Hutson, Zoning Administrator; Jennifer Wood, Recording Secretary; and approximately 53 interested persons.

CALL TO ORDER AND PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Chair Doorlag called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m. Those in attendance joined in reciting the Pledge of Allegiance.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Chair Doorlag inquired if there were any changes to the agenda. There were none.

Mr. Jefferies made a motion to approve the agenda as presented. Mr. Chapman supported the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

PUBLIC COMMENT ON NON-AGENDA ITEMS

Chair Doorlag opened the floor for public comment on non-agenda items. Fourteen individuals addressed the Commission. The majority of speakers expressed opposition to the potential for a battery energy storage system project in the Township.

**APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES FROM THE MEETINGS OF AUGUST 14, 2025
(corrected), AUGUST 28, 2025, and SEPTEMBER 23, 2025**

Chair Doorlag asked for additions, deletions, or corrections to the minutes of the regular meetings held on August 14, 2025 (as corrected) and August 28, 2025, and the special meeting held September 23, 2025. There were none.

Mr. Chapman made **a motion** to approve the Minutes of the Meetings of August 14, 2025, as corrected, August 28, 2025 and September 23, 2025 as presented. Mr. A. Smith **supported the motion**. The **motion passed** unanimously.

PRESENTATION: 2045 COMPREHENSIVE PLAN DRAFT

Chair Doorlag introduced Suzanne Schulz and Sara Morning-Hilt from Progressive AE to present on the draft 2045 Comprehensive Plan.

Consultants Ms. Suzanne Schulz and Ms. Sarah Morning-Hilt presented an annotated review of the draft 2045 Comprehensive Plan. The presentation followed up on prior joint meeting discussion with the Township Board with the intent of walking Commissioners through each chapter of the document for comment before finalizing the draft.

Ms. Schulz began by summarizing the purpose and scope of the plan: a 20-year policy document guiding future land use, growth, and infrastructure. It is not a regulatory ordinance but rather a framework for future zoning and development decisions. She outlined the extensive public engagement process, which included community surveys, social events, and focus groups.

Chapters 1 & 2 – Foundation and Engagement

Ms. Morning-Hilt described the plan's structure, beginning with background data, demographics, and engagement outcomes. This included the six guiding ideas emphasizing belonging, housing diversity, local commerce, growth management, transportation safety, and coordination with prior plans.

Community feedback and engagement data included hundreds of survey responses and multiple public outreach sessions.

The Chair asked for Commission discussion. No major objections were voiced; Commissioners agreed the foundational vision and goals reflected community values.

Chapter 3 – Vision and Goals

The vision for Oshtemo emphasizes a community designed for everyone, adaptable, diverse, and balanced. The six core goals:

1. Strengthen sense of place and belonging
2. Expand housing options for all
3. Improve transportation connectivity and safety
4. Support balanced economic growth
5. Protect natural features and environmental health
6. Enhance community well-being and safety

The Chair asked for Commission discussion. Vice Chair Everett asked about proposed tax abatements for housing incentives as referenced in the plan.

Attorney Porter clarified such programs are permitted under state law, often through Brownfield or tax increment financing (TIF) programs, which have expanded beyond contaminated sites to include housing projects.

Mr. Chapman confirmed the Township previously used TIF for housing development.

Ms. Schulz added that the comprehensive plan lists such tools for consideration; the Township Board would later determine their use and expectations.

Commissioners noted that the brownfield provisions prevent local opt-outs, allowing more predictable implementation for a developer and community.

Chapter 4 – Future Place Types

This section detailed the Place Types Map, a visual guide for how land use is expected to evolve. Changes since the prior version shared at the joint meeting included adjusting the neighborhood residential boundary eastward from 6th to 7th Street.

The Chair asked for Commission discussion. Vice Chair Everett asked about the lack of a gateway designation to the north; staff noted the gateways are focused on major corridors like Stadium Drive and Main Street.

Chair Doorlag requested clarification on how place types differ from zoning.

Ms. Schulz explained that the map shows policy intent, not zoning law; rezonings would occur over time based on infrastructure and context. When considering a rezoning request, the Township would refer to the place types map for the envisioned future land use for the subject area.

Mr. A. Smith raised concerns about agricultural areas being shown as future residential. Ms. Schulz advised that current farming can continue indefinitely; the map simply indicates where future residential development could occur when landowners choose to retire or discontinue farming.

Mr. Jefferies referenced the implementation matrix, asking how binding it would be.

Ms. Morning-Hilt confirmed it is advisory, guiding future zoning updates.

Discussion followed about building heights in the innovation and industry zones.

Mr. Jefferies questioned why commercial areas allowed taller buildings. Ms. Schulz agreed the height range could be expanded and flexibility added. One solution suggested was to add an asterisk that would allow for buildings closer to the highway to be taller.

Ms. Schulz offered to meet with Mr. Jefferies to walk through the matrix in further detail.

Mr. Chapman emphasized preserving agricultural heritage. Ms. Schulz agreed to strengthen this in the plan and referenced Kent County's farmland preservation strategies as examples.

Chapter 5 – Go Green Oshtemo Integration

This chapter incorporates sustainability and open-space initiatives from the Township's prior Go Green Oshtemo Plan, highlighting:

- Park and recreation enhancement
- Greening neighborhoods and corridors
- Preserving countryside landscapes
- Encouraging resilient stormwater practices

The Chair asked for Commission discussion. Mr. Jefferies supported the stormwater recommendations, preferring natural, safe stormwater features over large retention ponds.

Commissioners expressed general satisfaction with this section.

Chapter 6 – Master Streets Plan

Ms. Schulz and Ms. Morning-Hilt previewed the Master Streets Plan, linking transportation context to land use. The plan recognizes urban, suburban, and rural conditions within the Township and aims to improve pedestrian safety, multimodal connectivity, and road design. A more specific presentation on the plan is planned for the next meeting.

The Chair asked for Commission discussion. Mr. Chapman asked about cooperation with the Road Commission. Ms. Schulz acknowledged challenges but noted ongoing efforts through the Michigan Association of Planning to influence road design standards and local input.

Mr. Jefferies commended the Road Commission's progress in working with residents and the Township and emphasized using the plan to guide future collaboration.

Ms. Schulz described a fiscal analysis showing the long-term costs of low-density development patterns and how compact growth helps maintain infrastructure sustainably.

Chapter 7 – Implementation

Ms. Morning-Hilt outlined how the plan's policy recommendations will transition into zoning and ordinance updates. Key implementation themes include:

- Strengthening sense of place through public programming and gateway improvements
- Revising zoning to support missing middle housing
- Encouraging context-sensitive design for commercial and mixed-use areas
- Improving multimodal safety through specific countermeasures and partnerships with MDOT and the Road Commission.

The Chair asked for Commission discussion. Vice Chair Everett requested the Education section include Mattawan and Otsego schools in bold, equal to Kalamazoo Public Schools. Staff agreed.

Commissioners reviewed priorities, including the Township Hub Area Plan (around the library and park) as a focal point for future community programming and improved pedestrian connections across West Main Street.

Next Steps

Ms. Morning-Hilt outlined that at the November 13, 2025, Planning Commission meeting, there will be a detailed review of the Special Studies within the 2045 Comprehensive Plan and the Master Streets Plan and a recommendation will be made to the Township Board to release for public review. Following the Township Board's approval to release the 2045 Comprehensive Plan and the Master Streets Plan, the plans will then enter a 63-day public comment period, after which revisions can be made, if any. Next, the Planning Commission will hold a public hearing and recommend that the plans be adopted by the Township Board with or without changes.

Chair Doorlag closed by thanking the presenters and Commissioners for their engagement. Ms. Schulz and Ms. Morning-Hilt expressed appreciation for the Commission's collaboration, emphasizing that the plan reflects a balance between smart growth, natural resource protection, and fiscal sustainability.

Chair Doorlag recessed the meeting for a 5-minute break before proceeding to public comment.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Mr. Doorlag called the meeting back to order at 8:05 p.m.

Chair Doorlag opened the floor for public comment. Three people came forward, two spoke in regard to concerns of the comprehensive plan and master streets plan and one in opposition to the potential for a battery energy storage system in the Township.

OTHER UPDATES AND BUSINESS

Chair Doorlag inquired if there were any other updates or business.

Chair Doorlag informed the Commission that he will have a scheduling conflict on the first meeting of each month and will be unable to attend those meetings going forward. He requested input from the Commissioners regarding his position as Chair. Ms. Stefforia reminded the Commission that officer elections take place each January. The Commissioners expressed their support for Chair Doorlag to continue serving in his current role. Chair Doorlag thanked the Commission and noted that he will be present for the November 13 meeting.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 8:15 p.m.

Minutes Prepared: October 27, 2025

Minutes Approved: November 13, 2025