



HOCKING COUNTY
ZONING COMMISSION

Meeting Minutes
March 27, 2025

Members present

Audie Wykle

Bruce Ebert

Michael Linton, Hocking County Commissioner

Steve Buckley

Minutes

- Mr. Wykle started the meeting by providing an update as to the current status of the Zoning Commission. The first community meeting was held this past Tuesday on March 25 and there was a good turnout.
- The Facebook page for the Zoning Commission is now live, as well as a page for the Regional Planning Office.
- Township open house meetings will be starting soon:
 - o April 1 6:30-8 PM at the Laurelville Church of God
 - o April 3 6:30-8 PM at the Marion Township Community Center
 - o April 8 6:30-8 PM at the Gibisonville Recreation Center
 - o April 9 6:30-8 PM at the Ewing Grange in Washington Township
 - o April 10 7-8 PM at the Murray City Municipal Building
- Mr. Wykle explained that the PowerPoint presentation that will be presented at these meetings is the most up to date, and is now available on the Regional Planning website as a PDF.
- Discussions began to establish a zoning commission in June 2023. The group has met continually since then. A timeline of the Zoning Commission is below:
 - o The zoning survey was posted in January 2024.
 - o The group began searching for funding beginning in February; the mission statement was finalized in March. The RFP was also sent out in March.
 - o American Structure Point was one of two consultants that the group interviewed; they were selected June 20, and began working in August 2024.
 - o A booth was set up at the Hocking County Fair in September, and stakeholder meetings were held in October 2024. In December, a presentation and review of the stakeholder meetings was given.
 - o Stakeholder meetings included: emergency services/first responders; local business owners; realtors/brokers/real estate attorneys/developers/design



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professionals; ag representatives/township trustees; and short-term rental owners from a list provided by the Tourism Association. In each meeting, the attendees are asked what concerns they see and what suggestions they have.

- o The first township community meeting was held on March 25 at the Hocking Hills Retreat Center on Chieftain Drive as a central location for Falls, Green and some of Good Hope township residents. Approximate attendance was ~80 people, including Zoning Commission members.
- Mr. Wykle explained that there are several land use tools, and zoning is just one of them. Zoning is a tool that controls how the land is used. There have already been existing regulations in place, for example health department regulations and conveyance and survey standards, etc.
 - o The concern is that there are other pressures that we are seeing, based on tourism. Tourism is the largest industry in Hocking County right now. Tourism uses have placed pressures on the growth of Hocking County, and there needs to be something in place to address those pressures.
 - o The group has tried to be consistent in reaching out to the public, requesting responses on the zoning survey, and at meetings.
 - o It is important to the zoning commission to involve and talk to Hocking County residents and have them involved.
- Mr. Wykle explained that there have been agency meetings with the county Prosecutor's Office, the bed tax administrator, the health department, as well as the county Auditor. The group is working on ideas to help relieve and help guide the growth of Hocking County, allowing us to be more prepared for future development pressures.
 - o Taxes are a topic that has come up. The zoning commission is not directly working on taxes, but conversations are occurring with the Auditor's Office. There are things in place that the group hopes will rectify some of the unfair occurrences in taxation.
- A key slide on the PowerPoint discusses the results of the zoning survey. Approximately 16% identified themselves as not wanting any zoning whatsoever. Approximately 20% wanted to see zoning primarily in the tourist regions, and 25% would like some flexible zoning, 15% minimal zoning.
 - o Property maintenance regulations, special event permits, site standards for specific land uses, and short-term rental permits could be enacted to help pay for their share of the impact that it's going to place on what's identified (highway system, infrastructure, first responder infrastructure).



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These are examples of regulations that the County Commissioners could vote on to put in place.

- Mr. Buckley stated that in Ward township, who had the least number of responses, has Wayne National Forest ATV trails. The fire department had to purchase 2 side-by-sides to assist with emergency trail calls.
 - o Mr. Wykle explained that during a meeting with the bed tax administrator, he stated that there are only 12 cabins in Ward Township. A reason for the limited cabins could be because the bulk of Ward township is either Wayne National Forest, State Forest, or old reclaimed/strip mining that isn't able to support anything else. However, there is public sewer and water in and around Murray City available, and borders Athens County.
- Mr. Linton stated that it is important to note that for the items that the County Commissioners can do, such as regulations that are not zoning specifically, the Commissioners have an appetite to work on, and they are not waiting until 2029 to do something. He stated if the wording and process is right, along with support from the community, their objective is to have some of this in place before the end of this year.
 - o Mr. Wykle agreed, there are actions that can be taken sooner rather than later, that aren't covered under zoning (which zoning requires to be put on a ballot in a general election)

Questions from the Public

- Ms. Tobin in the gallery stated a relative attended the March 25, and asked how long it would take to get something active, whether it would be immediate, or 30 days, etc. Mr. Wykle explained that we want to be sure that we have given time for the public to give their input. It has not been discussed about hearings or the length of time required for the Commissioners to adopt something. We hope to have something adopted before the end of this year.

Upcoming Meetings

- April 24, 2025 @ 2:00 PM

Minutes respectfully submitted by Hannah Montgomery, MPH, REHS