PENINSULA TOWNSHIP

13235 Center Road, Traverse City MI 49686
www.peninsulato wnship.com

Township Board Special Meeting

October 14, 2024, 2:00 p.m.

Township Hall

Notice/Agenda

1. **Call to Order**
2. **Pledge**
3. **Roll Call**
4. **Brief Citizen Comments (for agenda items only)**
5. **Approve Agenda**
6. **Conflict of Interest**
7. **Consent Agenda: none**
8. **Business:**
   A. Agricultural Advisory Committee Interviews
9. **Citizen Comments**
10. **Board Comments**
11. **Adjournment**

* If you would like to use a portable hearing device, please ask the recording secretary.

Rebecca Chown, Clerk
Posted October 9, 2024, 12:00 p.m.

Peninsula Township Agricultural Advisory Committee

Interview Schedule:

2:10 pm - Baldyga, Chris
2:20 pm - Bramer, Jennifer
2:30 pm - Edmondson, Dave
2:40 pm - Gomez, Raul
2:50 pm - Hafeli, Erin
3:00 pm - Heller, Nancy
3:10 pm - Hemming, Jed
3:20 pm - Kroupa, Bern
3:30 pm - Kroupa, John
3:40 pm - Santucci, Marc
3:50 pm - Seibold, Lew

Outline for the Agricultural Advisory Committee Structure

- This will be an advisory committee appointed by the township board to provide input on issues facing production agriculture within Peninsula Township
- Appointment of 7-9 members with diverse farming backgrounds and interests
- Terms will be 3 years with the first appointments staggered between 2 and 3 years
- The committee will meet a minimum of 6 times per year w/ the day and time to be determined by what works best for the majority of committee members
- Non-voting members include: staff liaison = Planning and Zoning Director, one member of the planning commission, and one board member
- The role of staff is to prepare agendas and packets, conduct research and general support to the committee
- The role of planning commission and board liaison's is to report back to planning commission and board and provide input on pending township projects, etc.
- Meetings will be broadcast on YouTube and minutes taken (a recording secretary will be hired to support the committee)
- A chair, vice chair and secretary will be selected at the first regularly scheduled meeting to help facilitate meetings
- Bylaws will be drafted and adopted consistent with other boards and committees

Chris Baldyga

Questions for the Agricultural Advisory Committee Applicants

Chris Baldyga – 9707 Montague Rd

1. Please describe your farm operation. We are interested in understanding what you farm, how large the farm operation is, etc. **My wife and I have two farms and our home on OMP. They total 66 ac with 31 acres of active AG between the two farms where we grow grapes and chestnuts. We also buy grapes from other OMP growers and produce and sell wine primarily direct to consumers who visit our farm winery.**

2. What do you see as the greatest threat to farming on the peninsula? **Most threats to American AG operators, regardless of crop, are often the same: rising operating expenses, volatile weather conditions, climate change, increased global competition, reduced market access, limited exit strategies, less farm workers and more mechanization, OMP's unique topography/location that doesn't let us scale as efficiently to compete with other farming areas, increased competition with development for local real estate and increased land prices, etc.**

3. How is your farm operation being affected by Township ordinances? What specific changes would you suggest that would make your operation more viable? **Generally speaking, we need a better use-by-right AG ordinance allowing value-added operators more flexibility to grow, process, and sell their products directly from their farms, offer farm experiences, and be allowed all the associated and appropriate activities with that use. Flexibility and creativity should be key drivers for our Township when writing ordinances that promote innovation and new investment into the agricultural scene.**

4. Should any segment of agricultural production get "special treatment"? **I'm not sure what 'special treatment' might mean in this context – I believe AG is AG. I'd like to see Pen Twp do more to incentivize new and first-time farmers, ag processing plants, farm business renovations, etc., by offering potential incentives (such as property tax abatements) to reinvigorate the AG space on OMP.**

5. Do you support the PDR program? Why or why not? **I do support people's right to choose what to do with their land though I personally don't like taxpayer dollars being used to purchase dev rights. If someone wants to donate or "sell" their dev rights to a land conservancy or similar entity, then they should be able to do so for whatever income or tax benefit they might gain. I also believe that if the Twp is spending millions in taxpayer dollars to protect and maintain open space, it should be to the shared utility of all in the form of parks or functional greenspace.**

6. When are the interests of agricultural operators in conflict with the interests of residents, or vice versa, and how do you envision balancing these competing interests? **I don't believe that ag operators' and residents' interests are opposed or competing. I believe most people are trying to be productive, profitable, and happy both personally and professionally.**

7. Do you support the legally required process for amending the zoning ordinance to alter any component of the ordinance for agricultural uses or otherwise? **I believe clearly written zoning ordinances that are periodically revisited to be sure they still address the needs of our changing agricultural landscape are vital and I support whatever process achieves this.**

8. How do you see Agri-tourism affecting your farm operation? **As an economic driver, agritourism offers farmers a path to diversification for on-farm activities and value-added products that help us to weather some of the market fluctuations and volatile weather conditions that can damage farm income. Currently, it's the only way my farm operation is viable in form and scope. I believe that people are less connected to their food and farming than ever before, so a chance to bring families "to the farm" to see the people, places and process from which these everyday food products come is greatly valuable.**

9. Is your farm MAEAPs and/or GAAMPs certified? **Yes to both. Our farm on Smokey Hollow Rd. has been MAEAP certified since 2007 and has successfully undergone a full GAAMPs conformance review in all applicable areas and is fully approved.**

10. Can you commit to attending, with few if any exceptions, all meetings of the agricultural advisory committee? (The committee will meet 6 times per year, day and time TBD based on what is best for the majority of the committee.) **Yes.**

Jennifer Bramer

Questions for the Agricultural Advisory Committee Applicants

1. Please describe your farm operation. We are interested in understanding what you farm, how large the farm operation is, etc.

   Our farm operations encompass 366 acres of land on Old Mission Peninsula. Of that total acreage 302 acres are wine grapes that we manage for local wineries and landowners. On the remaining 64 acres we grow strawberries, blueberries, raspberries and a wide array of vegetables and other fruits for sale at our farm market.

2. What do you see as the greatest threat to farming on the peninsula?

   Restrictive local zoning. I believe that in order to keep land in active agricultural production land uses should be expanded to include use by right agritourism activities and smaller acreage processing and retail opportunities.

3. How is your farm operation being affected by Township ordinances? What specific changes would you suggest that would make your operation more viable?

   We are now more limited on processing operations than we were 2 years ago. The requirement to obtain a LUP for a greenhouse when it is an ag building seems over prohibitive. The current sign ordinance could be amended in a thoughtful way to allow both larger and additional signs.

   Some ordinance changes to make our operations more viable would be allowing use by right agritourism activities and reducing acreage requirements for processing and retail sales.

4. Should any segment of agricultural production get "special treatment"?

   All growers should be subject to the same rules and zoning enforcement.

5. Do you support the PDR program? Why or why not?

   I support the original intent of the PDR program and know that it has helped keep many farm operations in business. I think there are misconceptions from some citizens regarding the idea that since township PDR is taxpayer funded that land is more "public" and thus has less personal ownership rights. Additionally, these easements were put in place to "preserve the agricultural industry of Peninsula Township" and recognize that this is a township "with an agricultural-based economy" so zoning should reflect those intents instead of making agricultural uses more restrictive.

6. When are the interests of agricultural operators in conflict with the interests of residents, or vice versa, and how do you envision balancing these competing interests?

   I think it is wrong to assume that residents don't want expanded agricultural uses, as evidenced by the growth of our farm market operation and others. For example, I hear every day from citizens how happy they are to have access to the local produce that our farm supplies them.

Also, Right To Farm laws were enacted to protect farmers from neighbors "not in my backyard" mentality. If residents want to continue to protect farmland from development, uses for that farmland will need to be supported in a broad way so that farmers can function as they see fit for their individual operations.

7. Do you support the legally required process for amending the zoning ordinance to alter any component of the ordinance for agricultural uses or otherwise?

   I support the legal process of amending zoning ordinances as long as state and federal laws are recognized within those changes.

8. How do you see Agri-tourism affecting your farm operation?

   Positively. Getting people on farms to experience where their food comes from benefits all parties. We need agritourism and value-added activities to maintain the profitability of our farm.

9. Is your farm MAEAPs and/or GAAMPs certified?

   The farms we own are MAEAP certified and many of the farms we manage are MAEAP and GAAMP's certified.

10. Can you commit to attending, with few if any exceptions, all meetings of the agricultural advisory committee? (The committee will meet 6 times per year, day and time TBD based on what is best for the majority of the committee.)

    Yes.

Dave Edmondson

Edmondson Orchards
H. David Edmondson, 12414 Center Road, Traverse City, MI 49686

Responses as an Agricultural Advisory Committee candidate

Q1: My family has been in agriculture on the Old Mission Peninsula since 1886 when my great grandfather purchased land from Perry Hanna as a homesteader. At that time, he grew potatoes and had dairy cows on 40 acres; today I am raising stone fruit, apples, berries and pumpkins on 240 acres. In 2022, the last two parcels on the centennial farm were sold. Agriculture is a tough business to make money.

Q2: It is my opinion that the greatest threat to farming on the peninsula is over-regulation.

Q3: My farm operation is affected by the inconsistency that has marked the administration of township ordinances. I suggest that my operation would be more viable if the township allowed landowners to have the freedom to make decisions that are in their best interest as businessmen or women.

Q4: I do not think any segment of agricultural production should get "special treatment". Farming is protected under the "Right to Farm" state legislation and GAMPS. These should be the guiding standards that protect and promote agriculture in our community.

Q5: I support the PDR program; I believe it is a good tool for protecting farmland & open space.

Q6: Is there a conflict between "agricultural operators" and the interests of residents? Most of the farmers I know have deep roots in this community and consider themselves among the longest-termed residents in the community. The use of the term "agricultural operators" seems to suggest a different kind of person--someone who uses agriculture as a "means to a different kind of end". What is this question trying to get at?

Q7: I support the legally required process for amending the zoning ordinance, but I think it needs to be streamlined to reduce the amount of time it takes to accommodate change.

Q8: Agri-tourism is positively affecting my farming operation already. It is a very important aspect of staying viable in agriculture as a farmer today.

Q9: No.

Q10: I can commit to attending all meetings of the agricultural advisory committee.

Raul Gomez

Questions for the Agricultural Advisory Committee Applicants

1. Please describe your farm operation. We are interested in understanding what you farm, how large the farm operation is, etc.

   My fiancé and I own a 16-acre farm where we focus on growing high-density fresh cherries. In addition, I serve as the operations manager for Wunsch Farms, which operates the only cherry packing facility on the peninsula. We manage our own 320-acre farm, producing both cherries and apples, and also custom manage over 800 acres of neighboring farms. Wunsch Farms is both a fruit grower and distributor, specializing in fruit sales and marketing. Recently, we expanded our operations by adding a U-pick option to further engage with the community.

2. What do you see as the greatest threat to farming on the peninsula?

   The greatest threats to family farming on Old Mission Peninsula include the increasing impacts of climate change, which disrupt growing seasons and crop yields, as well as market volatility, which makes it challenging to maintain profitability. Additionally, there's growing uncertainty about the next generation's interest in farming, as many families question the long-term sustainability of the industry. Decreasing market opportunities only add to the difficulty. Another significant issue is the high price of land, especially for non-maintained farms that are no longer functional. Farmers often have to pay premium prices for land that requires substantial investment to become operational again, making it harder for family farms to expand or stay competitive.

3. How is your farm operation being affected by Township ordinances? What specific changes would you suggest that would make your operation more viable?

   At this time, our farm operation has not been directly impacted by township ordinances, and we haven't encountered any regulatory barriers that affect our viability. While we haven't identified any specific changes needed for our operation, we remain attentive to future developments and open to working with the township to ensure that farming remains sustainable and productive for our community.

4. Should any segment of agricultural production get "special treatment"?

   While no two farming operations are exactly the same, we all fall under the definition of agricultural operations and should be treated fairly within that framework. I don't believe any segment should receive special treatment, as long as everyone's right to farm is respected. That said, I do think it's important to remain open to special circumstances when they arise, ensuring that all operations have the flexibility and support needed to thrive.

5. Do you support the PDR program? Why or why not?

   Yes, I fully support the Purchase of Development Rights (PDR) program. Without it, my fiancé and I wouldn't have been able to purchase our 16-acre farm. We're also grateful to

the previous owners for their commitment to preserving the land for agricultural use. We strongly believe in land preservation and sustainability, and we've seen firsthand how PDR funds have saved farms and allowed others to make significant investments in their operations. Knowing people whose farms were directly impacted by this program only reinforces our support.

6. When are the interests of agricultural operators in conflict with the interests of residents, or vice versa, and how do you envision balancing these competing interests?

   Conflicts between agricultural operators and residents often arise due to misunderstandings or misinformation about farming practices, like pesticide use, noise, or odors. Residents may not fully grasp the necessary steps farmers take to maintain a healthy operation, while farmers might not always consider the impact on their neighbors. Balancing these interests requires open communication and education, so residents understand the importance of these practices and farmers remain mindful of community concerns. That's why I believe the formation of this agricultural committee is such a vital step and a great addition to our township. It creates a space for dialogue and collaboration, helping us find solutions that work for everyone.

7. Do you support the legally required process for amending the zoning ordinance to alter any component of the ordinance for agricultural uses or otherwise?

   Yes, I fully support the legally required process for amending the zoning ordinance for agricultural uses. It's crucial for transparency and allows everyone to voice their opinions, helping us find a balance that works for both farmers and residents. As a farmer, it's especially important for me to understand what is legally permissible before I invest limited resources in project planning. Clear amendments will reduce uncertainty, improve the business environment for all farmers, and provide consistent rules that level the playing field for small and beginning farmers. Right now, the ambiguous zoning language makes it feel necessary to hire legal or consulting help to navigate the regulations, which can be a burden for newcomers. Simple, clear guidelines will benefit everyone involved.

8. How do you see Agri-tourism affecting your farm operation?

   I believe agri-tourism can have a positive impact on our farm operation. By expanding our U-Pick offerings, we not only promote our brand, Third Coast Fruit Company, and our cherry packing operation, but we also create opportunities to educate a diverse group of visitors about the importance of agriculture in our community. This goes beyond just generating revenue; it allows us to highlight the environmental benefits of farming and the crucial role our business plays in maintaining the rural landscape of Old Mission Peninsula.

9. Is your farm MAEAPs and/or GAAMPs certified?

   Yes, Wunsch Farms is MAEAP certified, and several farms under our management are also certified. My own farm is currently in the process of obtaining certification and is expected to be fully certified by November.

10. Can you commit to attending, with few if any exceptions, all meetings of the agricultural advisory committee? (The committee will meet 6 times per year, day and time TBD based on what is best for the majority of the committee.)

    Yes, I commit to attending all scheduled meetings .

Erin Hafeli

Erin Hafeli

Questions for the Agricultural Advisory Committee Applicants

1. **Please describe your farm operation. We are interested in understanding what you farm, how large the farm operation is, etc.**

   Lightwell Lavender Farm is a 10-acre operation located on Carroll Road, producing lavender for essential oil and hydrosol, among other things. We hold an existing special use permit that allows for value-added processing and related activities to support agricultural production. In addition to cultivating lavender, we offer community garden allotments and a you-pick experience, while exploring B2B expansion and export opportunities.

2. **What do you see as the greatest threat to farming on the peninsula?**

   The greatest threat to farming on Old Mission Peninsula is housing pressures throughout the Grand Traverse region. Farmland on Old Mission is priced above market leading new farmers to look off the peninsula for lower land values. Existing farmers are facing losses in crops and purchase contracts as land becomes more profitable for residential development, exacerbated by restrictive ordinances. This dynamic is challenging the viability of farmland in comparison to the potential profits from residential development, putting increasing pressure on the agricultural economy.

3. **How is your farm operation being affected by Township ordinances? What specific changes would you suggest that would make your operation more viable?**

   Township ordinances, particularly those that restrict subordinate uses to active agricultural production, hinder the viability of farms, however, the single most impactful change would be the right to off-premises signage for agricultural land. Located down a blind, dead-end dirt road, I have sought signage rights for my lavender farm on several occasions, including obtaining a lease from an adjacent landowner and going through the special use permit amendment process to secure lawful signage rights. That signage request was again rejected by planning commission. Personal experience with the signage ordinance issue led me to speak out at a township board meeting in 2023, and while a moratorium on enforcement is still in place, the signage issue remains unresolved for farmers. *Marketing online and through other means will continue to increase traffic to the peninsula rather than attracting drivers already in the area though regulated signage.*

   Additionally, as the recent amendment to my SUP was passed by the planning commission and is in line for board approval, I hope to serve as an example to other farmers that collaboration with the township can lead to success. This process so far has demonstrated that it's possible to achieve negotiated results up front, rather than settling disputes through lawsuits later on.

4. **Should any segment of agricultural production get "special treatment"?**

While small-scale farms require a level of flexibility to remain viable, any landowners who go through the public special use permit process should be given due consideration, as they demonstrate a willingness to provide safeguards and conditions. Rejection of uses that are protected by the Michigan Right to Farm Act opens the township to ongoing lawsuits for failure to recognize state law preemption. Moreover, when the township rejects reasonable uses, it sends a message to other farmers that there is a lack of willingness to collaborate on innovative uses of farmland, which can be discouraging for the agricultural community.

5. **Do you support the PDR program? Why or why not?**

   Yes, I support the PDR program, as it helps preserve farmland for future generations. In addition to the existing program, I would like to see farms that are tier 3 PDR land granted grace in collaboratively developing viable accessory uses in line with the township's master plan as these farms are most likely to revert to residential development absent PDR support. This would support long-term sustainability while maintaining the agricultural character of the peninsula.

6. **When are the interests of agricultural operators in conflict with the interests of residents, or vice versa, and how do you envision balancing these competing interests?**

   Competing interests should go through a public process that allows for cooperative solutions, ensuring that all parties with differing viewpoints can find common ground. Open dialogue and public review provide the best opportunity to balance agricultural and residential needs in a constructive manner.

7. **Do you support the legally required process for amending the zoning ordinance to alter any component of the ordinance for agricultural uses or otherwise?**

   Yes, I support the legally required process for amending zoning ordinances. This process ensures transparency and allows for a thorough review, balancing the interests of farmers and residents, while also encouraging an adaptable approach to the evolving needs of modern agriculture.

8. **How do you see Agri-tourism affecting your farm operation?**

   Our farm hopes to offer accessory uses to active agricultural production, such as a lavender aromatherapy sauna, which can be compared to a wine tasting room for grape vineyards. This proposal has already passed the planning commission after months of deliberation, public comment, and revisions to reflect the limited capacity and nature of the proposed accessory use. Such activities provide value-added agriculture opportunities that help sustain small farms while offering educational and experiential benefits to the community with the appropriate safeguards and conditions.

9. **Is your farm MAEAPs and/or GAAMPs certified?**

   Yes, Lightwell Lavender Farm has been environmentally certified since 2017 and is both MAEAP and GAAMP certified. Additionally, we have undergone a proactive inspection by MDARD to ensure compliance under the Right to Farm Act. We are also collaborating with

NRCS and Crosshatch Carbon Farming to develop a comprehensive farm plan that adheres to additional environmental standards.

10. **Can you commit to attending, with few if any exceptions, all meetings of the agricultural advisory committee? (The committee will meet 6 times per year, day and time TBD based on what is best for the majority of the committee.)**

    Yes, I can commit to attending the committee meetings. However, I currently serve on the Board of the Old Mission Peninsula Education Foundation, which meets at 4 p.m. on the second Tuesday of each month. I will need to prioritize those meetings but will make every effort to ensure my participation in the advisory committee.

    Additionally, I would like to emphasize the importance of having a diversity of farming voices on the committee, particularly first-time and female farmers, who can offer additional perspectives. My collaboration with planning staff on farm-related requests demonstrates my commitment to a process of thoughtful and cooperative agricultural land planning, and I believe this type of approach can help shape the future of farming in Peninsula Township.

Nancy Heller

Nancy R. Heller's Answers to the
Questions for the Agricultural Advisory Committee Applicants

1. Please describe your farm operation. We are interested in understanding what you farm, how large the farm operation is, etc.
   I farm several varieties of apples, several varieties of cherries, hay, and a large truck garden on 63.94 acres of land.

2. What do you see as the greatest threat to farming on the peninsula?
   The greatest threat to farming is the ability to make a living including regulations, the rising cost of inputs (labor, equipment, licensing, fertilizers, chemicals, etc.), market volatility, and farm land being more valuable as residential uses.

3. How is your farm operation being affected by Township ordinances? What specific changes would you suggest that would make your operation more viable?
   My farm operation is being affected by Township ordinances through overregulation and the inability to diversify. The township could make my operation more viable by creating fewer complex ordinances that hit a midground. Better community relations would also be helpful. It would help farmers to have the ability to sell value added products.

4. Should any segment of agricultural production get "special treatment"?
   No, everyone should adhere to the ordinance(s) or go before the Zoning Board of Appeals and obtain a variance.

5. Do you support the PDR program? Why or why not?
   I support the PDR program because it has saved a lot of agricultural entities by giving the existing farmers the financial means to continue farming.

6. When are the interests of agricultural operators in conflict with the interests of residents, or vice versa, and how do you envision balancing these competing interests?
   The interests of agricultural operators and residents can often conflict due to several factors, including land use, environmental impacts, economic considerations, and community well-being. Balancing competing interests takes commination and the education of each of their roles in the community.

7. Do you support the legally required process for amending the zoning ordinance to alter any component of the ordinance for agricultural uses or otherwise?
   Yes, but I would like it to be simplified, less time consuming, and at a reduced cost.

8. How do you see Agri-tourism affecting your farm operation?
   Agri-tourism would provide economic benefits through diversified income streams.

9. Is your farm MAEAPs and/or GAAMPs certified?
   My farm is not MAEAPs certified and I am not sure if I am GAAMPs certified or not.

10. Can you commit to attending, with few if any exceptions, all meetings of the agricultural advisory committee? (The committee will meet 6 times per year, day and time TBD based on what is best for the majority of the committee.)
    Yes.

Jed Hemming

AG Advisory Questions

1, The best description is transitional. I just removed 100 acres of fruit trees.

2, Residential development.

3, Since my farm is in transition it is affected greatly. The uncertainty of what agriculture is and how it will be defined by non farm residents creates uncertainty in deciding what future crops are viable. Local direct marketing is limited volume and will not support 300 + acres. Expanded local marketing, Ag tourism, and product related sales seem to be unpopular with non ag residents. This limits the commercial viability of specialty, direct market crops. I don't have a specifice answer to the second part of this question and isn't that the reason for this committee ?

4, NO

5, Yes, as it was originally defined. It was originally an Ag Preservation Program. However, residential development has turned it into an open space program supported, in the long term, by individual private landowners. Open space for the sake of open space and the benefit of the community should be owned by the community not the private landowner.

6, When the need for the commercial and industrial segment of ag enters the picture. Non ag residents seem to forget Ag is a business and needs industrial, commercial and retail activity to survive. Education may help.

7, ABSOLUTELY

8, I think Ag Tourism is a necessity for local specialty crops.

9, ? Not sure how this applies.

10, I will do my best.

Bern Kroupa

Jennifer Cram

From: Cheryl Kroupa <3183cheryl@gmail.com>
Sent: Sunday, October 6, 2024 3:14 PM
To: Jennifer Cram
Subject: Application Questionnaire For Bernard Kroupa

1. Cherries: 5-10 Million lbs. from 12 growers including our own production.
2. Threat(s): A: Local Regulatory environment. B: Smaller number of commercial buyers for processing fruit.
3. Affect of Ordinances: A: Current operation: None
   B: Next Generation Needs: Entrepreneurial opportunities
   Changes: DEVELOP EXTENSIVE MENU OF USES BY RIGHT IN AG ZONE.
   WHEN SPECS ARE MET, PROCEED WITH LAND USE PERMIT.
4. "Special Treatment": Term first appeared in reference to wineries. If we do our work in #3, should be moot question.
5. PDR Support: "Most recent phase". NO
   A: Not needed. Properties we're buying/selling in market fashion.
   B: Expensive
   C: Township/Activists have demonstrated willingness to reduce uses after the fact.
6. Conflicts/Balancing:
   A: Beyond age-old nuisance conflicts, there seemingly exists a sense that ag land is an amenity that comes with the purchase of a single family dwelling and the right to make decisions regarding ag land. They must be very separate and defined.
   B: In our own operation we have tried to be pro-active with buffers, setbacks, timing of some operations, etc.
   C: Success in #3 is key.
7. Legal Process: A: Agree
   B: However passage of amendment #201 continues as a stain on the process and abuse of power. WE CAN DO BETTER!
8. Agritourism: A: Current Ops-None, though we try to present a pleasant front to passers-by.
   B: Next Gen: Sales opportunities.
9. Protocols: A: MAEAPs: Yes, for 20+ years.
   B: Basic tenants of FSMA
10. Attendance: A: Yes
    B: Exceptions: July, January & February

Sent from my iPad

John Kroupa

Questions for the Agricultural Advisory Committee Applicant- John Kroupa, Kroupa Farms

1. Please describe your farm operation. We are interested in understanding what you farm, how large the farm operation is, etc.

   Kroupa Farms is a diversified farm operation spanning over 300 acres of both PDR and non-PDR land. The commodities, and approximate quantities grown, per year, are as follows-

   Cherries- 1,250,000 pounds
   Grapes- 300,000 pounds
   Apples- 225,000 pounds
   Plums- 50,000 pounds

   I sell fruit to multiple processors in the region, as well as process some of my fruit in house, into wine and cider, for sale at my tasting room, local shops and restaurants, and throughout the state. The farm is a certified centennial farm, which means that it has been owned by the same family for over 100 years, and I am the sixth generation to operate the farm.

2. What do you see as the greatest threat to farming on the peninsula?

   Future generations not having an interest in farming on the peninsula due to the economic pressures and regulatory restrictions that exist today. New operators coming in from off the peninsula face a very high barrier of entry in land prices, and scope of allowed business. In addition, commodity prices and industry stability, are not favorable to anyone looking at farming as a lifestyle.

3. How is your farm operation being affected by Township ordinances? What specific changes would you suggest that would make your operation more viable?

   Township ordinances need to be more flexible to allow farm operators to be creative in making their businesses successful. A specific example of a change that would help any farm be more viable, would be allowing farm space rentals. Allowing a gathering, of any type, that could generate income to the farm operator for allowing people to come onto the farm, would help the farm be more profitable. Examples would be weddings, reunions, birthday parties, etc, etc.

4. Should any segment of agricultural production get "special treatment"?

   Yes. I think the more land someone is trying to keep in farming, the more help they will need in succeeding. I think that someone trying to farm 100 acres should have access to less restrictive rules then someone trying to farm 10 acres, for example.

5. Do you support the PDR program? Why or why not?

   Yes. It gives farmers an opportunity to take some cash out of their land without selling the farm.

6. When are the interests of agricultural operators in conflict with the interests of residents, or vice versa, and how do you envision balancing these competing interests?

   Farmers are in conflict with residents whenever their activities become a bother to the residents. Some people are tolerant of what farming requires, others are not. As far as balancing these interests, there is no easy way to do this. In order to make farming viable, more creative uses of the land need to be allowed, which will be unacceptable to a certain percentage of residents that don't want these changes to happen. So the balance becomes- is the perceived hardship the resident feels, worth the farmland that is "preserved" and doesn't become a subdivision.

7. Do you support the legally required process for amending the zoning ordinance to alter any component of the ordinance for agricultural uses or otherwise?

   Yes.

8. How do you see Agri-tourism affecting your farm operation?

   Agri-tourism would provide another revenue stream that would help diversify the farm, and make it profitable. It would also provide a challenging and exciting opportunity for creating new roles within the organization, and require the hiring of different people with new ideas to become involved in the farm, who would otherwise have no interest in being part of the operation.

9. Is your farm MAEAPs and/or GAAMPs certified?

   Yes.

10. Can you commit to attending, with few if any exceptions, all meetings of the agricultural advisory committee? (The committee will meet 6 times per year, day and time TBD based on what is best for the majority of the committee.)

    Yes.

Marc Santucci

Marc Santucci
11789 Center Road
Traverse City, MI 49686

1) I have a ninety acre farm. At one time I had fifty acres of tart and sweet cherries, 11 acres of grapes, 2 acres of chestnuts a partial acre of hard cider apples and twenty acres of hay. Now the cherry portion of the farm is down to twenty acres. Over the years I have also grown hemp and various vegetables both in open spaces and in a hoop house. Currently a neighbor is using four acres of former cherry land to grow pumpkins. I have also raised mangalitsa pigs, lamb, goats, and chickens on the farm. With regard to the variety of farm products I think it is safe to say I have one of the most diverse farms on the Peninsula. While I sell the grapes and cherries to processors I also have a pick your own operation which is open during cherry and chestnut season.

2) The greatest threat to farming on the Peninsula is the inability to change as the nature of farm marketing changes. The days of growing apples and cherries for processors are going away for growers on the peninsula. The cost of land, availability of labor, cost of gas and chemicals make it unprofitable to farm in that manner. The fact that fruit trees last for thirty years or more hide this fact as farmers will continue to farm as long as they can meet their variable costs. Over time as trees age they will not be replaced if the fruit is only sold to a processor. When even the variable costs cannot be covered then the trees will be taken out. We are seeing this happening now.

3) The township ordinances affect my farm in a variety of ways. First, the ordinances limit what I can do to add value to my farm through processing. Not only is the amount of acreage needed to set up a processing facility too high, but the fact that I cannot buy fruit from other farmers makes it uneconomical for many processing activities. To top it off the number of visitors at any one time is limited to again negatively affect the profitability of the operation. The way the land use ordinance is being applied is also a hinderance. Some rural townships don't require a fee for a land use permit. Here the fee has been increased and in some cases enough to discourage the building of a building. There is more but that is better left to the committee discussion.

4) What do you mean by "special treatment" To me it sounds like you are implying that wineries are getting special treatment. Do you mean one segment is being picked on or given more benefits? Thefood processing related ordinances passed in 2023 extended the limitations the wineries operate under to other food processing operations. I consider that special treatment in a negative way.

5) I do not support the PDR program. At the same time I do not have a problem with it. While land costs are a big part of the cost of farming they are still only a part. My concern is that the Township and the PDR supporters are not seeing the whole picture. As stated earlier farming as we knew it for the past fifty plus years is slowly leaving us. What happens to the land when we no longer can profitably farm in the traditional way. The land will go back to nature and become unproductive and the viewshed will change in a negative way. The PDR land will become less valuable and tax income will decrease. Others may argue with me but that is what I believe.

6) The interests of either party is in conflict with the other party when one party's interests prevails over the other party and negatively affects the other party's quality of life or ability to operate profitably. The best way to balance the interests is to make sure that whatever the Township decides is

not in conflict with any state or federal law and constitution. It is also very important to recognize the long term affects of any rules and regulations. If limiting a farmer's ability to farm leads to the farmer selling his land for development, then the interests of both parties are not achieved.

7) I do support the legally required process for amending the zoning regulations. However, included in that process is the ability to appeal to the court for any perceived illegal actions taken by the township. For example when the moratorium on new food processing operations was put in place there was a thirty day period where the township was required to accept applications. When the township refused to do so, the only alternative available to the applicant was the court. I support the right to petition the court.

8) I think agri-tourism can be very beneficial to my and other farm operations. The growth in wine tours and visitors to wineries has had a very positive affect on my pick your own operations. I also believe that there are activities I and other farmers can do to increase the income we get from our land. These activities would be incidental to farming.

9) Yes

10) I can commit to all meetings with a few exceptions. We live in an age where there are a number of alternatives to in person meetings. In those few cases where being there in person is not possible I would make sure that I have the communication tools and software necessary to be an active participant.

Lew Seibold

Date: Oct. 10, 2024

To: Township Board

From: Lew Seibold 3195 Cherry Hill Rd.

Re: Response to solicited questions for Agriculture Advisory Committee, FYI

1. Farm Operation…

I am retired from active cherry farming but Kathleen and I help our daughter and son-in-law in their enterprise of growing and selling cut flowers and blueberries. The farm is 75 acres with about 50 acres tillable in active production, fallow, or cover crop rotation.

2. Threats to farming…

Historically there have always been "threats" to the accepted ways of farming. Some of these threats are local and some are global. Therefore there are things you can do and things that are beyond the scope of individual and local control. One has to be adaptable and nimble in the way you approach the enterprise of farming. The code should be simple, modest, and reflect this reality. However, it should always treat all farming endeavors the same with no preference. Instead of "threats" look for opportunities.

3. Viability and the code…

Our operation is viable under the current state and local codes.

4. Special Preferences…

Every agricultural endeavor should be treated the same under the code regardless of type or size. No preference or favor!

5. PDR…

I am in support of the current program and think that it works pretty well.

6. Conflict with residents…

I do not see this conflict going away but increasing as the imbalance of competing interests will increase. This could lead to an increasingly hostile environment. However, leaders on Old Mission, administrators, as well as citizens should continually be reminded that our differences need to be resolved through discussion that is civil and motivated by an appreciation for this narrow piece of ground we are blessed to call home and share together. Find areas of mutual interest.

7. Zoning…

Yes. Current zoning statutes (Euclidean Zoning) has about a 100 year precedent in this country. There may be better ways to protect personal and economic interests but no one has demonstrated a better way, especially as it relates to agriculture, commerce and residential living.

8. Agri-tourism…

Modes of transportation is the biggest issue on OMP. There is an increasing need for pedestrian, bicycle, car, and truck traffic to be safely integrated together, including agricultural equipment and transport. At the same time residents, guests, and visitors should be welcomed with hospitality and with an environment that is not compromised by incompatible uses, crowding and a lower quality of life for everyone.

I would advocate for a market or label that lets visitors and customers know that they are buying a pure Old Mission product that is produced completely and exclusively from OMP (eg. Pure Michigan - Pure Old Mission Peninsula).

9. MAEAP or GAAMP certified…

No! Unnecessary for our family's endeavor.

10. Commitment to attending…

This may be a problem. Recently I have to deal with some family health issues that will demand some time away from OMP. My wife and I have just recently purchased a seasonal home in the panhandle of Florida, which could limit participation as well.