



BETHEL TOWNSHIP, MIAMI COUNTY OHIO ZONING COMMISSION & BOARD OF ZONING APPEALS MINUTES

THURSDAY, MARCH 26TH, 2026 – 6:30 P.M.

TOWNSHIP MEETING ROOM, 8735 S. SECOND STREET, BRANDT, TIPP CITY, OHIO

1. **Call to Order:** Time: 6:38 pm Presiding: Josh Wilkerson, Acting Zoning Admin
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|-------------------------|----------------|--------------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|
| Roll Call: Ron Corbett: | <u>Present</u> | Gary Cornish: | <u>Present</u> | Jerry Hirt: | <u>Present</u> |
| Janice Royle: | <u>Absent</u> | Jess Underwood: | <u>Present</u> | | |
| Donna Hughes: | <u>Absent</u> | Rachael Kiplinger: | <u>Present</u> | Jim Leskowich: | <u>Present</u> |
| Nikki O’Quinn: | <u>Present</u> | Zach Staudter: | <u>Absent</u> | Pete Mannheim: | <u>Absent</u> |
| Michael Statesman: | <u>Absent</u> | | | | |
| Josh Wilkerson: | <u>Present</u> | Cathy Fortunato: | <u>Present</u> | | |

2. **New Business**

Public comments on items on the agenda

- No public input was given

Zoning Resolution Update Items

- Acting Zoning Administrator Wilkerson-Bienick distributed a written executive summary covering the proposed zoning text amendments. The amendment tracker now contains sixty-nine (69) total items: thirty (30) proposed text changes (twenty rated “OK,” ten rated “CAUTION”) plus thirty-nine (39) open policy items still requiring discussion.
- A historical review was provided, reflecting the period 2003 to present. Approximately 1,700 zoning cases were identified across that timeframe. Building permit activity has nearly doubled since 2010, with peaks in 2006 (62 certificates) and 2021 (60 certificates). Construction has shifted toward accessory buildings (pole barns, outbuildings, swimming pools) outnumbering new home construction roughly three to one in recent years. Enforcement activity has also increased; 2018 had 44 violations and 2025 had 55, with current-year totals on track to exceed that.
- It was noted that the Comprehensive Land Use Plan has not been updated since 2010 and that emerging issues (short-term rentals, cannabis facilities, distillery operations, disaster-relief warehousing, solar installations, home-based businesses operating at commercial scale, agritourism, and barndominiums or alternative residential structures) were not contemplated in the existing plan.
- A discussion was held on township direction and the appropriate role of the Zoning Commission, BZA, and Trustees in setting that direction. It was acknowledged that the absence of an updated Land Use Plan has been a contributing factor to the difficulty of the present rewrite, and that completing the rewrite without a current guiding document has placed the cart before the horse. A renewed effort on the Land Use Plan was supported.
- It was recommended that the application process be tightened. Specifically, applications should be required to be complete at the time of submission, including the seven required variance criteria responses and scale drawings rather than freehand sketches. Members supported the development of a checklist-based approach.

- The Architectural Review Board option authorized by the Ohio Revised Code was discussed. Such a board would require a licensed architect or engineer and would review architectural design, landscape, and buffer aspects of applications. The Trustees were reported to be open to the idea. Concerns were raised about volunteer availability and possible compensation.
- Item #2 – Conditional Use Invalidation (Section 2.06 C.4): It was noted that the current language stating a Conditional Use Permit ceases to be valid upon ownership change is inconsistent with ORC §519.14, which provides that conditional uses run with the land rather than with the person. The proposed simplified language was reviewed. Members discussed whether to include an additional notification requirement or non-use sunset provision; the matter remained open pending verification of ORC text.
- Item #3 – New Definition: Junk Vehicle (Article 3): The proposed definition was reviewed. Adoption was supported with a clarification that “valid license plate” be defined to mean current registration.
- Item #4 – New Definition: Religious Place of Worship (Article 3): The proposed denomination-neutral definition was reviewed. Members noted the need to cross-check parking requirements in Article 35 for equal treatment with secular assembly.
- Item #5 – New Definition: Massage Establishment (Article 3): It was noted that a Trustees’ resolution adopted in July 2024 regulates massage establishments but the zoning text is silent as to where such establishments are permitted. The proposed addition was discussed; it was suggested that the use be folded into the existing Office (Medical/Dental) definition and permitted in B-1 and B-2 districts. Sexually-oriented business language is to remain unaffected.
- Item #6 – Home Occupation Definition Enhanced (Article 3): The proposed cross-reference to Section 30.27 was reviewed. The same cross-reference is to be added to Articles 5, 15, and 16.
- Item O-32 – Auto Body Shop / Auto Repair contradiction: It was noted that the existing Article 3 definition of “Automobile Repair Garage” expressly includes body work, frame work, welding, and painting, while standalone Paint and Body Shops are listed as a Conditional Use in the industrial districts. Members discussed several options to resolve the contradiction, including stripping body work and painting from the auto repair definition, carving out a “minor incidental” allowance, or tying any incidental body work to a dealer license. The matter remained open.
- Item O-20 – Truck Definition (light vs. heavy): It was discussed that the current zoning text contains no definition distinguishing light from heavy truck repair. Reference was made to other townships using a Gross Vehicle Weight Rating threshold (Class 7/8, ≥26,001 lb) as the most administrable line. Axle count was discussed as an alternative or backstop. The matter remained open.
- Items #10, #11, and #27 – Business District restructure: The proposal to eliminate one of the existing B-districts (with its uses absorbed by B-1 as conditional uses, see Item #11) was discussed in conjunction with the proposed new Article 41 (Legacy Zoning Classifications, Item #27) providing transition mechanics for affected parcels. It was noted that the Bethel Township GIS map identifies approximately four parcels currently zoned in the affected category, but that the GIS map is out of date and a current count should be obtained before voting. Members supported moving the three items together as a package rather than separately.
- Items #15 – Industrial setbacks (I-1 and I-2): The proposal to make the rear yard setback identical across the two industrial districts (15 feet → 25 feet) was reviewed. It was noted that this change will create non-conforming parcels and that a grandfather clause should be included. Members supported counting the affected parcels prior to vote.
- Item #17 – Stables and Riding Academies: It was confirmed that the prior consensus to remove Stables and Riding Academies as a principal permitted use in the F-1 Flood Plain District remains. The use will remain a principal permitted use in A-1 and A-2.
- Item #20 – Minimum Residential Floor Area in A-1: The current 1,500 square foot minimum was discussed. It was noted that the resolution does not currently define whether the minimum applies to gross floor area,

livable area only, or includes attached garages, porches, and unfinished basements. Members supported defining the minimum as livable area only, exclusive of garages, porches, and unfinished basements (Item O-30). A separate question regarding barndominiums and where residential is permitted in such structures (Item O-31) was also raised.

- Items #24, #25, and #26 – Article 40 Enforcement expansion: It was noted that the current Article 40 consists of three short paragraphs and does not utilize the full enforcement authority granted to townships under the Ohio Revised Code. Two attorney-prepared OTA presentations on junk vehicle and nuisance property enforcement were referenced; both confirm that townships may, after notice and a public hearing, abate nuisances and assess cleanup costs against the property’s tax record. Members supported folding the existing draft Junk Motor Vehicle Resolution and Nuisance Abatement Resolution language into an expanded Article 40.
- Item O-26 – Short-Term Rentals / Airbnb: It was noted that three cases involving short-term rentals were identified on Rudy Road in 2018 and that a recent complaint had also been received. The Township is eligible for three percent (3%) of the hotel tax (and potentially up to 7% if not collected by Miami County). Members supported developing a comprehensive short-term rental framework consistent across R-1AAA, A-1, and A-2 (Items #7 and #21).
- Manufactured Homes, Mobile Homes, and Tiny Homes: The current resolution defines manufactured and mobile homes but contains no definition for tiny homes, and none of the three are listed as a permitted use in any district. Fair housing requirements were raised as a reason to permit such structures somewhere. The matter remained open.
- Website / Online Application Platform: The Township website must be ADA-compliant and cybersecurity-compliant by next year. A platform that supports required-fields enforcement was discussed; quoted costs of approximately \$6,000 for site overhaul plus \$1,000 per year for hosting were referenced (Kathy Shoemaker / Cincinnati-area provider). Members supported building the application portal into the website rebuild.
- GIS Map Currency: The Township’s GIS map has not been actively maintained since the prior administrator transition. The current software is approaching end-of-life. Members supported establishing a regular update process before relying on the map for any further restructuring decisions.
- Email Addresses for Board Members: The need for individual board-member email addresses was reaffirmed for both cybersecurity compliance (HB 96 / R.C. §9.64) and litigation protection.
- Discussion concluded due to a National Weather Service severe thunderstorm alert. The next working session was scheduled for Thursday, April 30, 2026.

3. **Old Business**

None.

4. **Other**

Communications and Reports
Comments

5. **Adjournment**

Time: approximately 8:30 PM (severe weather)