

MEMO

To: Peninsula Township Planning Commission

From: Elise Loud, Placecraft

Date: May 6, 2025

Re: Agricultural Advisory Committee – Signage Ordinance Recommendations

Introduction to Agricultural Advisory Committee Signage Recommendations

The Agricultural Advisory Committee (AAC) has made several recommendations for updating the zoning ordinance related to agricultural signage for Planning Commission review.

The AAC recommendations are attached verbatim and summarized below (I've combined some of their recommendations based on how the zoning ordinance is organized):

1. Acknowledge that GAAMPs also provide a right to signage for farm markets.
2. Allow off-premises signage for agricultural operations.
3. Tighten up the timeframes for seasonal harvest signage.
4. Continue enforcement moratorium on harvest-related, directional signage.
5. Allow agricultural signage to be larger and taller.

Right to Signage GAAMP	Amend the ordinance to acknowledge that one roadside sign is allowed per farm market, per the Generally Accepted Agricultural Management Practices (GAAMP). Current zoning standards do allow for roadside stand signage, consistent with right to farm, as follows: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• allowed in any zoning district• do not require a sign permit• maximum of one sign• maximum of 9 square feet and 6 feet height• outside the road right-of-way• cannot be lit
Off-Premises Signage	Amend the ordinance to allow off-premises signage for agricultural operations, with approval of landowner and same size regulations as for on-premises signage. Off-premises signage (event directional signage) currently requires approval by Township Board.

Agricultural Product Signage / Temporary & Seasonal	<p>Amend the ordinance to better define rules around temporary & seasonal signage for agricultural products, requiring removal 7 days after product is unavailable. Current zoning regulations for seasonal ag signs reference product season more generally.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • allowed in any zoning district • do not require a sign permit • must be on-premises • may be two-sided • may change by product season • maximum of two signs • maximum of 6 square feet • maximum of 4 feet height • outside the road right-of-way • cannot be lit
Enforcement Moratorium	<p>Continue enforcement moratorium on harvest-related, directional signage.</p>
Entrance Way Sign	<p>Amend the ordinance to increase the size of agricultural entrance way signs to 40 square feet (20 square feet of sign + 20 square feet of seasonal placards). Current zoning regulations for entrance way signage:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • allowed in any zoning district • requires a sign permit • maximum of 1 sign • maximum of 9 square feet • maximum of 6 feet height • 15 foot setback • Can be lit
Signage Size	<p>Amend the ordinance to increase the size and height of agricultural signage to 20 square feet and 8 feet in height. See content-neutral comments below. Current zoning regulations for ag-related / commercial signage, for comparison:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agricultural products: 6 square feet, 4 foot height • Farm-processing facility: 9 square feet, 6 foot height • Roadside stand: 9 square feet, 6 foot height • Billboard: 30 square feet, 10 foot height • Business Identification: 30 square feet, 10 foot height

Content Neutrality & AAC Recommendations

- Signage zoning regulations must be content-neutral, per relatively recent court findings. [Case summary available from Township law firm here](#).
- The current zoning ordinance signage standards are not content neutral and need to be addressed. This has been flagged by previous planning staff.
- If you have to read the sign content to regulate the sign, your regulations are not content-neutral. Content-neutral sign regulation focuses on physical characteristics of the sign, e.g. location, size, electronic or print, permanent or temporary, placement on building, etc.
- There was some thought that off-premises signage might also fall into not content neutral, but courts have upheld government ability to regulate off-premises signage by categorizing as a land use.
- **Bottom line:** We can achieve the intent of most, if not all, of the AAC recommendations with careful drafting (with attorney support) and consideration of impacts beyond only agricultural signage.

Scenic Byway / AAC Signage Recommendations

- The M-37 Scenic Heritage Route Management Plan mentions signage in two places in the goals, objectives and actions section.
 - **Page 93-94:** Under the goal *“Preserve and enhance the scenic, agricultural, and rural qualities of the route”* and objective *“Utilize both regulatory and non-regulatory ways to deal with signage. Peninsula Township Zoning Ordinance regulates signage throughout the Peninsula which does not include the MDOT right-of-way.”*, the following actions are listed:
 - The Committee will encourage the Township to maintain and enforce the ordinance that restricts large billboards and to maintain low impact ordinances on outdoor advertising.
 - Encourage signage that blends with the local character and does not detract from the traveler’s experience.
 - The Committee will also work closely with MDOT to replace or remove unnecessary signs and oversized signs with more discrete signs that will assist the traveler along the Scenic Heritage Route and reflect the natural, rural character of the route.
 - **Page 97:** Under the goal *“Encourage community involvement in monitoring of the route”*, the plan includes the following objective: *“Hold public meetings to discuss such topics as road improvements, signage, traffic congestion, and future developments. This type of public forum will allow all who attend the opportunity to articulate concerns and render direct support for particular concepts or projects.”*
- **Bottom line:** The scenic byway plan discourages “large billboards” and encourages “signage that blends with the local character and does not detract from the

traveler's experience". Given that many travelers are likely expecting and/or hoping to see agricultural-related land use on Old Mission Peninsula, the AAC recommendations on signage appear consistent with the intent of the scenic byways plan. The Planning Commission may wish to discuss what "large billboards" are and how that size compares to the size recommendations of the AAC. A [quick Google search](#) suggests that "large billboards" are those measuring 200 sf or larger.

Enclosed:

- AAC March 18, 2025 meeting minutes with signage discussion/recommendation.
- AAC signage recommendation approved for Planning Commission review.
- [2012 M-37 Scenic Heritage Route Plan](#) (not printed in packet due to length)

Farm Signage Ordinance	Recommendations	Explicit Language	Relevant Citations
Right to Signage	Recommend amending the ordinance to acknowledge standards included in Generally Accepted Agricultural Management Practices for Farm Markets.	"A minimum of one roadside sign is allowed."	2025 Michigan Commission of Agricultural & Rural Development, Definitions
Off-Premises Signage	Recommend allowance for off-premises signage for agricultural operations. Approval from the landowner should be required. Signs should match on-premises sign size and align with the season of operation. Permanent signs are preferred over temporary, for ease of use and aesthetics.	"Off-premises signage shall be permitted for agricultural operations with written consent from the landowner. Such signage shall not exceed the size limitations of on-premises signs and must be removed at the end of the operational season."	Banks Twp. §4.21.3(d); Bingham Twp. §3.13.5(A); Elmwood Twp. §6.6.2(G)
Temporary & Seasonal Signage	Support signage based on product seasonality, requiring removal when the product is no longer available. Suggested continued moratorium on enforcement for harvest-related, directional signs. Defined "temporary" as signs displayed only during the season of operation.	"Temporary signage for agricultural operations shall be permitted during the active season of the advertised product. Such signage must be removed within seven (7) days of product unavailability. Enforcement moratorium shall be in effect for harvest-related signs."	Bingham Twp. §3.13.4(B); Elmwood Twp. §6.6.6(A)
Agricultural Signs	Discussed whether to integrate temporary signs into the existing ordinance or create a new section. Artistic signage (e.g., painted images) should be categorized under temporary signage. Signs should be permitted if they advertise an in-season product for sale.	"Agricultural signage, including artistic representations of products, shall be categorized as temporary signage and permitted during the season of availability. Such signage shall not exceed 20 square feet."	Bingham Twp. §3.13.5(A); Elmwood Twp. §6.6.5
Seasonal Signs	Suggested seasonal placards in addition to permitted signage, as long as they stay within the signage limit. Recommended one main entrance sign, with additional seasonal signs. No sandwich boards.	"Agricultural operations may display one primary entrance sign, not exceeding 20 square feet, with additional seasonal placards that do not exceed an additional 20 square feet. Sandwich boards shall not be permitted."	Banks Twp. §4.21.3(f); Bingham Twp. §3.13.6(B); Elmwood Twp. §6.6.8
Size Requirements	Establish clear visibility guidelines for agricultural signage to ensure readability for passing motorists while maintaining aesthetic harmony with rural landscapes.	"No larger than 20 square feet, with a maximum height of 8 feet above grade."	Banks Twp. §4.21; Bingham Twp. §3.13.8(F); Letter Visibility Chart (VisualPro)