

**Township of Wayland
Minutes of a Planning Commission Meeting
Held on May 13, 2026**

A special meeting of the Wayland Township Planning Commission was conducted on May 13, 2026, commencing at 6:30 p.m. at the SS. Cyril & Methodius Catholic Church, 159 131st Ave, Wayland, Michigan.

Call to Order

The Chairman called the meeting to order at 6:30 p.m. and welcomed those in attendance.

Present were:

Larry Brenner, Jerry Ross, Rodney Standish, Jim Stoddard, Matt Miner

Absent was:

Scott Sprague

Also present was Township Zoning Consultant, Rebecca Harvey, Township Attorney Seth Koches, and at least 80 members of the public.

Approval of the Agenda

The agenda was accepted as presented.

Minutes

The April 8, 2026, draft meeting minutes were accepted as presented.

Public Comment

None.

New Business – Public Hearing Blazing Star Solar

The next item on the agenda was the public hearing of the request from Blazing Star Solar, LLC, an indirect subsidiary of Apex Clean Energy Holdings (the “applicant”), for approval of a special land use and site plan for a 125 MW Solar Farm located on thirteen (13) parcels located entirely within the project area as specified in the notice of public hearing incorporated herein (the

“project”); all parcels are located in the Township’s “A” Agricultural District Zoning Classification. The Chairman opened the public hearing.

Attorney Mike Vogt addressed the Planning Commission on behalf of Apex. Vogt thanked everyone in attendance. Vogt said that he represents Apex for this project and is available to answer questions that may come up during the meeting. Vogt introduced the team from Apex to discuss the application and answer questions regarding their application. Vogt said that Apex has been attending Planning Commission and Township Board meetings over the past year to be available to discuss the project. Vogt said that Apex brought several subject matter experts to discuss environmental issues, sound impact and emergency response.

Colin Kummerfeldt, a representative of Apex, thanked the Planning Commission and public for attending. Kummerfeldt said that he is from Howell, Michigan and wants to preserve the rural way of life and maintain it. Kummerfeldt said that Howell has become developed and likely won’t revert to agricultural uses, unlike the proposed solar farm project that is proposed before the Planning Commission. He said that his family opened a dairy farm and then a sod farm and some neighbors sold off the farm to support retirement. Kummerfeldt described how the project is designed to protect the quiet seclusion of the community. He discussed community benefits to the Township, the County and landowners. He said that the applicant will be a partner with the community for years to come and took the additional step to amend the site plan to increase setbacks beyond what was required in the Zoning Ordinance (noting that it is 300’ from the edge of the residence to the nearest solar panel coupled with extensive screening). Kummerfeldt said that the applicant also doubled setbacks from 50’ to 100’ to ensure quiet seclusion. Kummerfeldt discussed economic benefits, which included annual income for host properties and that the land will be kept agricultural while hosting solar panels. He said that over 30 years the project will pay approximately \$24 million in property taxes, which will benefit the schools, fire department and library. The community host agreement also included a community benefit of \$250,000 that may be used for any public purpose, in addition to the Renewable Ready Community Award of \$5,000 per megawatt, assuming the Township is eligible and the state replenishes the award fund. Kummerfeldt said that a decommissioning expert is available to answer questions and Apex provided a complaint resolution process to resolve any issues or concerns for resolution with Blazing Star. Kummerfeldt noted that the application is not a rezoning request and that Apex is only requesting special land use and site plan approval

Ryan Henning, the senior Vice President of Apex, addressed the Planning Commission to discuss screening and setbacks. Henning referenced poster boards depicting the screening plan. Henning said that he manages the Apex environmental team and has been with Apex for nine years and worked in the energy field for 30 years. Henning discussed the project siting and design. Henning said that the goal is to design a project that minimizes impacts to sensitive and natural features. Henning said that the project will have wildlife fencing to allow small animals access and smooth wire, so deer don’t get injured. Henning said that hunting is not permitted within the fenced-in area of the project. Henning discussed the strength of solar glass which is designed to spider-crack like a car windshield, so the panel is encapsulated if it is damaged. Henning increased setbacks on Patterson Road to protect residential areas. Henning said that Apex hired a landscape architect and designed a plan that exceeds ordinance standards which include more native deciduous trees that provides more localized value. Tetra-tech prepared visual simulations

of the project with the proposed landscaping plan and how it grows over the years. Apex concluded the presentation.

Becky Harvey, the Township's Planning and Zoning Consultant, prepared a staff report and summarized it to the Planning Commission. The staff report is incorporated by reference into the public hearing record and these meeting minutes.

Harvey conducted a review of the application, noting that the 13 participating parcels are mostly located in the A district, some of the property is located in R1. Harvey said that the applicant could rezone, but instead decided to remove the project panels from R1 and that the R1 zoned property remains unchanged. Harvey said that the A district is the only district in the Township that allows solar farms. Harvey said that there are different areas of the Zoning Ordinance that dictate the standards of review because it is a special land use. Harvey said that a special land use is a use identified by the Township that requires compliance with design standards and allows the Planning Commission to evaluate the impact of the project on the community.

Harvey briefly discussed Section 3.49 of the Zoning Ordinance which contains the design standards specific for solar farms, noting that these standards were updated over the past year. Harvey said that Section 18.02 discusses special land use impact criteria to be considered by the Planning Commission, and Section 17.07 covers site plan review. Harvey said that all special land use requests require site plan review and approval.

Harvey began to review her staff report. Harvey described several standards and whether they are satisfied. Harvey said that the first step is determining whether the application is complete, and concluded that the application is generally complete. Harvey confirmed that all metrics are met for setbacks, height limitations, inter-connections and fencing.

Harvey discussed the requirements for screening and landscaping. Applicant provided an alternative plan, which the Zoning Ordinance allows the PC to consider. The Applicant stated that their alternative plan will provide more screening along non-participating lots. Harvey discussed master plan standards and asked the Planning Commission to review the application to determine compatibility. Harvey discussed lighting which is limited to the substation, noting that the Zoning Ordinance requires specific types of fixtures, which need to be addressed as a condition. Harvey said that sound level standards will be satisfied.

Harvey stated that the applicant had to satisfy 3.49 and 18.03, which are impact based standards. Discusses the standards regarding impact and compatibility (i.e. AG area with low density residential development; land meets SB; compliance with decommissioning needs to be confirmed).

Harvey said that her findings should be paired with the Township Attorney recommendations. Harvey said that the fire chief reviewed relevant fire response plans and is satisfied. Harvey said that the Township Engineer reviewed the decommissioning plan and storm water management plan, and stated that Apex may need to supply more information.

Harvey reviewed the engineer report, which is incorporated by reference into the record and these meeting minutes, noting that some of his comments were addressed in the site plan. She

said that the Engineer wants more information on required permits from EGLE and whether county road commission approval is required. The Engineer needs more information regarding storm water management. The engineer reviewed the site plan to confirm runoff is contained on site, but needed more information for well locations, among other things. Harvey concluded her presentation.

Township Attorney Seth Koches addressed the Planning Commission to generally discuss the solar farm application. Koches said that decommissioning plans must reflect the actual cost of decommissioning and that a surety bond must be in place at all times. Koches said that the Zoning Ordinance requires the bond amount to be reviewed every several years and adjusted as needed. Koches discussed the complaint resolution procedures and ability to enforce the Zoning Ordinance. Koches discussed emergency response plans. Koches discussed that the county road commission and drain commissioner may require the applicant to enter into agreements, but the Township does not have control over that. Koches said that reasonable conditions may be attached to a special land use application and that he'd review the application to determine recommended conditions for the Planning Commission to consider during deliberations. Koches said that the special land use permit and any attached conditions should be recorded in the County Register of Deeds Office, if the project is approved. Koches said that the Planning Commission may require the applicant to submit a list of all non-Township issued permits and dates of expected approval. Koches said that he'd prepare a finding of fact that contains each ordinance standard. Koches said that the Planning Commission needs to explain its decision when it makes a decision. Koches concluded his presentation.

The chair invited any interested person to speak in support of or in opposition to the proposed project.

Vinny Daugh said that he works at a training facility and teaches various skills including solar installations. Daugh complimented Apex and working with them and said that he supports the project.

Chris Cornelly said that he opposes project and is concerned about the environmental cost of the project. He cited the Zoning Ordinance standard that the proposed use can't have an adverse impact on the environment and expressed negative impact on wildlife. He objected to the fencing and that the project contains 680 acres of fenced land which he said is the size of central park in New York City. He discussed the master plan and its emphasis on Wayland Township being a farming community. He discussed the proposed landscaping plan, noting that the screening will not be mature and functional for its intended purpose for at least 5-10 years.

Scott Bexport said that he is the owner of a new construction home across from the project location and objected to project. He discussed the dangers such as shattered glass and exposure to harmful chemicals. He discussed concerns regarding contaminated water and potential Township liability. He discussed the limited sunny days in Michigan during the year. He discusses PA 233 and said that the applicant will bypass the Township and go directly to the MPSC if there is a denial. He demanded intervener fees if they go to the MPSC. Bexport expressed concerns with negative property land value impact.

Apex said that they look for open room on open transmission lines and this location has open land and transmission lines. Apex said that they are only able to use land if they have agreement with a property owner in place.

Lisa Evans said that she is the executive director for Allegan County and is dedicated to supporting low-income families. She said she works with the department of energy and discussed increased costs and inflation which is expected to continue. She said that utility costs have increased and programs at Allegan County review utility assistance and there that isn't much money due to increased costs. Evans said that 9% of people in the county are living in poverty and others are living on fixed income (26%). She said that in 13 years of experience that this is the first time a private corporation came to them asking to support families in crises. She said that Apex expressed interest to assist everyone in the County.

Scott Havens discussed the location of solar project and asked whether adjacent properties are receiving a stipend. Apex confirmed that all residential members abutting the project have been offered an agreement and that 16 agreements have been signed.

A neighbor of the project states that he didn't receive notice of the public hearing and discussed concerns with hail storm and impact on decreased land values. He requested information on property value impact.

An unnamed party wondered why the applicant came at this time and discussed nearby Gaines and Dorr townships where there is a proposed data center. He said that is a heavy coincidence that this solar farm is coming in when there may be a data center nearby. He said that the solar project will power a data center, which is an environmental impact.

The Planning Commission Chair said that data centers are coming and the Township is looking at developing an ordinance to prohibit data centers.

Apex said that electricity works like city water and that the solar energy isn't connected to specific area. Apex said that the project connects into the Wolverine substation and the electrons are distributed from there. Apex said that the project will power local areas and generally western Michigan. Apex discussed the glare study and impact on airplanes – no negative impact was uncovered by the study.

A resident wanted to understand the impact of the project and wanted to know the benefit to the community other than financial.

Case Kittle from Apex discussed construction and said that he is a civil engineer and partners with a local contractor to build the project, if approved. Kittle said that they will try to minimize construction impact and construction will take between 9-12 months to build. Vogt discussed development agreements which address the fine points of how the construction occurs. Apex said that access roads and piles go first and described project construction phases. Vogt said that Federal law requires standards for fencing. Vogt said that Apex can't apply for any approvals until they have a legal interest in the real property. Vogt said that if the project isn't approved then there is no need for a lease.

An unnamed person asked whether the applicant will go to the MPSC if the PC denies the application. Vogt said that the project is being pursued locally by choice and that the applicant could have applied to the state over the past year, but didn't. Vogt said Apex wants to permit the project locally and that the process is designed for local permitting. Vogt noted that Apex sent a PA 233 letter and they will go to the MPSC if they cannot obtain a local approval.

Kelly McQue said that she is from a 3rd party engineering firm not employed by Apex, but is a subject-matter expert to discuss the project and answer questions. McQue said that she helped prepare the decommissioning plan and is familiar with hazardous materials. McQue said that Calbium telluride does exist in the industry but is not used in these panels. McQue discussed leaching and said that there is no liquid in the panels. McQue said that tests on panels on the market pass leaching tests and that panels can break but don't shatter. Apex discussed storms and referenced a Branch County project which was damaged by a tornado. Apex representative, Jason Connelly, said that he's been a safety professional for 20 years and addressed hail which occurs all over the USA. He said that the panels are designed to operate if possible. He said that out of 285,000 panels about 500 – 1,000 panels were damaged and that the project remained largely operational. He said that severe weather cannot be prevented, but Apex tries to plan for it. Apex confirmed that the electrons go into the grid and they have no control over electricity rates. Apex said that the project will provide power to over 22,000 homes annually. Apex representative, Eddie Ducan, discussed noise generation. He said that he is a board-certified engineer and discussed the sound study. He said that the inverters are the primary source of sound from the project. He said that the sound emissions are 20 – 50 decibels and said that background sound levels during the day are around 40-50 decibels. He said that the inverters only produce noise during the day and not at night when the project is not operational. He confirmed that the majority of steel is from the USA and other components are sourced from the USA.

Glenn Brinks says that his property is surrounded by 3 sides of panels and discussed the negative impact that the project will have on his house.

Erin Bolen said that he is a property appraiser who specializes in solar impact on land values for the past 5 years. He referenced a 2026 Virginia Tech study. He said that the study found that less than 5% decrease, but that the literature varies. He said that a University of Chicago reviewed solar projects in the Midwest in 2024 and found a small increase. He said that he spoke to county and township assessors that did not find consistent negative impacts. Apex completed habitat assessments and no threatened endangered species were found at project location.

An unnamed resident said that he is located near water runoff. He said that the property is currently a high-water table and is concerned that drainage is pointed towards his land and Gull Lake. He said that he opposes the project.

Erin Bolen says that majority of solar panels are recycled; most of the material is metal.

Apex discussed security lighting which is on the inverters which are only on when maintenance is being done.

Kent Doughty from Apex confirmed that Apex is privately funded, and that there are no grants to support the project. Apex will apply for a tax credit from the federal government for 10 years and that is the only incentive this project, which expires in 2030. Vogt discussed a power purchase agreement, noting that the power generated from the project is sold to the utility and that power agreements must be approved by the MPSC.

Ed Kuhns said that he lives in the area. He said that the applicant will be taxed and is not creating additional costs to the community. He said that a lot of money being put into the project, but there are positive aspects. He said that he supported taking on a partner that helps take on the costs.

Apex discussed economic development study which concluded \$24M over 30 years and a community host agreement of \$2,000 per MW + \$5,000 per MW, totaling \$625,000.

The public asked about what the tax revenue would be if the participating parcels were zoned residential.

Another resident said that he is not in favor and expressed impact on the Yankee Springs Recreational Area and that solar is not compatibility.

Another resident asks why Apex is here instead of going to Arizona where there is more sun. Apex said that Michigan is a suitable area for this project to be economic viable.

Hearing no additional public comments, the Planning Commission Chairman closed the public hearing at 9:20 p.m.

The Planning Commission asked questions. Miner read a prepared statement to the public, which is incorporated into the meeting minutes. He discussed Zoning Ordinance standards and impact of PA 233 and the MPSC. He said that the Zoning Ordinance is more restrictive than state standards. He confirmed that solar farms are a special land use in the "A" Agricultural District Zoning Classification

Miner discusses Section 18.03 of the Zoning Ordinance and said that the first standard, which was adverse impact, was not satisfied because he felt there would be a negative impact.

Miner discussed Zoning Ordinance noise limits and confirmation of continued compliance. Apex said that there is no low frequency waves generated from the project. Apex said that low frequency noise may be contained with barriers. Miner asked about the expected capacity the project is expected to generate. Apex said that some projects produce more energy than what was anticipated, but expects 125MW as the maximum for this project. Apex said that they track daily MW output throughout the year. Miner noted that Apex doesn't own the Coldwater solar project. Miner asked for EMP and impact on livestock and pregnant women. Apex said that overhead lines are the highest exposure that haven't shown detrimental effects. Apex said that once 250 feet away from inverter there is no EMF risk. Koches confirmed that we can't compel two parties to enter into a property value guarantee. The Planning Commission agreed that there was a lot of information to review and consider, and that the applicant still needed to supply

more information. The Planning Commission asked for a specified list of questions for Apex to answer at the next meeting.

Motion by Miner to table, seconded by Standish. The motion passed 6-0, and the meeting was adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,

/s T. Seth Koches

T. Seth Koches, Recording Secretary