

ROME TOWNSHIP PLANNING COMMISSION MEETING MINUTES

May 22, 2025
Rome Township Hall

Rob Apoian called the meeting to order at 8:00 pm. and led the Pledge of Allegiance to the flag.

ROLL CALL: Pat Bournes, Scott Peters, Rob Apoian, Kevin Fisher, and Sheri Wilt were present. Leo Oswald and Matt Minnick were absent.

OTHERS PRESENT: Rome Township Supervisor. Rome Township Deputy Supervisor, Rome Township Treasurer, and numerous Rome Township residents. Michael Homier from the law firm Foster Swift attended the meeting via Zoom.

APPROVAL OF MEETING MINUTES FROM APRIL 25, 2025: Rob Apoian made a motion to approve the April 25, 2025, meeting minutes, Pat Bournes seconded the motion. Motion carried 5-0.

APPROVAL OF MEETING MINUTES FROM MAY 1, 2025: Scott Peters made a motion to approve the May 1, 2025, meeting minutes, Sheri Wilt seconded the motion. Motion carried 5-0.

ADDITIONS TO AGENDA: Scott Peters made a motion to add the Solar zoning ordinance and Battery energy storage ordinance to the agenda following the public hearing. Pat Bournes seconded the motion. Motion carried 5-0

APPROVAL OF AGENDA: Kevin Fisher made a motion to approve the agenda for May 22, 2025. Motion seconded by Pat Bournes; Motion carried 5-0.

PUBLIC COMMENT: Public comments/questions regarding the proposed CREO ordinances were heard, and feedback from the PC was that these would be better addressed during the Public Hearing to follow.

REPORTS:

1. Township Board Representative: Leo Oswald was not present.
2. Planning Commission Chairperson: Nothing to report

ORDER OF BUSINESS:

1. Public Hearing for CREO Ordinances(s): At 8:13, Pat Bournes made a motion to close the regular meeting, which Scott Peters seconded. Motion carried 5-0.
 - a. At 8:15, the public hearing for CREO was called to order by Rob Apoian. Rob introduced Mike Homier (Legal counsel hired to represent Rome Township) and asked Mike to give an overview of PA233 and the Solar and Battery energy storage CREO Ordinances.
 - b. Mr. Homier first addressed the concern raised by Rob Apoian about the legality of Mr. Homier's attendance via Zoom.
 - c. **Mr. Homier provided an overview of the firm's experience working with townships across Michigan, including PA233, as well as the two proposed**

CREO ordinances and the renewable energy overlay district. He explained:

- i. Without CREOs, the township risks having no input regarding industrial-scale installations.
- ii. Having prohibitive ordinances would allow companies installing commercial wind, solar, or battery energy storage to go to the MPSC for siting, and the township would not have any input on where or how much land could be used for these installations.
- iii. The rationale for the location of the Renewable Energy Overlay (REO) district with regards to high power transmission lines, proximity to homes, and upholding the commitment to the preservation of farmland and open spaces as called for in the Rome Township Land Use Plan.
1. The rationale for the land allocation in the REO district is determined by the township's energy consumption and the solar panels' output.
- d. Following Mr. Homier's comments, the floor was opened for public comment.
 - i. None in attendance expressed support for any renewable energy or battery energy storage in the township. Many residents spoke, expressing concern and strong disapproval of commercial solar fields. They specifically talked about the following concerns:
 1. Potential decline in property values
 2. Fear that solar fields would negatively impact wildlife and wildlife habitat
 3. Viability of ever returning the land to valuable farmland
 4. Decommissioning costs are running higher than projected, and the township is having to pay the difference
 5. Potential soil and water contamination
 - e. Rob Apoian made a motion to close the public hearing, and Scott Peters seconded the motion. Motion carried 5-0
 - f. Pat Bournes made a motion to reconvene the regular PC meeting, and Rob Apoian seconded the motion. Motion carried 5-0.
2. Solar and Battery Energy Storage ordinance
 - a. Scott Peters made a motion to approve the Solar ordinance as written. Motion supported by Pat Bournes. Roll call vote: Pat Bournes – Yes, Rob Apoian – Yes, Sheri Wilt – Yes, Scott Peters – Yes, Kevin Fisher – Abstain
Motion carried 4-0
 - b. Scott Peters made a motion to approve the Battery Energy Storage ordinance as written. Motion supported by Pat Bournes. Roll call vote: Pat Bournes – Yes, Rob Apoian – Yes, Sheri Wilt – Yes, Scott Peters – Yes, Kevin Fisher – Abstain
Motion carried 4-0

Public comment: The Public expressed appreciation for Mr. Homier verbally and with a round of applause. No further comments.

MEETING DATES: The next Planning Commission meeting will take place on June 26th at 8:00 pm

ADJOURNMENT: Scott Peters moved to adjourn at 9:15 pm. Pat Bournes seconded the motion. Motion carried 5-0.

*Sheri Wilt recorded minutes in the absence of PC Clerk Minnick.