

# **PRINCETON TOWNSHIP PLANNING COMMISSION MINUTES**

**August 3, 2026**

In Attendance: Town Board Liaison David Patten, Chair Dave Persing, Vice Chair Jim Kusler, Dave Hagstrom, Cheryl Schimming, Kathy Stoeckel, and Amanda Hayford

## **Public Hearing – (6:00 pm)**

East Central Energy for a New Electric Substation at Long Siding in Section 8 of Princeton Township between Highway 169 and 100th Avenue, South of 55th Street. **Jerod Stamper** from East Central Energy was present in the event questions or concerns were raised.

Commissioner Kusler motioned to close the Public Hearing, Second by Commissioner Schimming, Motion carried 6-0.

## **Regular Meeting**

**Chair Commissioner Persing called the regular meeting to order at 6:10 pm, followed by the Pledge of Allegiance.**

## **Approve Agenda**

Commissioner Schimming motioned to approve the agenda as presented, Second by Commissioner Hayford, Motion carried 6-0.

## **Ben Wikstrom, Newly Appointed Zoning Administrator**

Ben comes to the Township with good experience and background. He is eager to get on board and collaborate here. Welcome!

## **Open Forum**

Jim Orton raised a personal dispute involving a neighbor, alleging false accusations and legal retaliation, including a felony charge based on video evidence. He claimed the Township's permitting decisions exacerbated the conflict by allowing a garage and doors to face his property.

Jean Loscheider questioned sewer approval status for a separate development, clarified to be unrelated—sewer applications are typically submitted during the building phase, and individual lots must include both primary and alternate septic system spaces.

Brittany Jirik raised concerns about confusion between the original resolution and the amended CUP for Serenity Meadows, calling for public clarification on HOA status, rental vs. ownership, and management.

Al Bekius stated that single family dwellings are not allowed on commercial property.

## **Approve Minutes of Meeting – July 13, 2026**

Commissioner Kusler motioned to approve the minutes as presented, Second by Commissioner Stoeckel, Motion carried 5-0. Chair Commissioner Persing abstained due to not being present at this meeting.

## **Consider an Application from Serenity Meadows**

To review public comments and consider an amendment to the conditional use permit (CUP) for the Serenity Meadows senior housing development in Princeton Township, specifically changing from 22 duplex units to 11 single-family homes and allowing individual lot sales under a newly proposed homeowners association (HOA) structure.

## **Serenity Meadows Senior Housing Development**

### **Background and Application Status**

1. The Planning Commission reviewed an amended conditional use permit to modify the already-approved Serenity Meadows senior housing project.
2. Originally approved on **January 20th** by the Town Board, the project allowed for **22 duplex rental units** managed by a single entity under a long-term property management agreement.
3. The current amendment proposes converting the 11 platted lots from duplexes to **11 single-family homes**, each on its own parcel, and shifting from rental to individually owned units under a proposed HOA.

### **Key Concerns Raised**

4. **Lack of Documentation:** The developer has not submitted draft restrictive covenants or HOA bylaws, preventing proper review by the Planning Commission and Township attorney.
5. **Management Uncertainty:** There is confusion over whether units will remain rental or become owner-occupied. Developer statements have been inconsistent.
6. **HOA Feasibility:** Commissioners expressed skepticism about the viability of an HOA with only **11 units**, noting such small associations often fail due to lack of governance structure and enforcement capacity.

7. **Enforcement Liability:** The proposed restrictive covenants list the Township as an enforcer of age restrictions, raising concerns about unintended municipal responsibility.
8. **Developer Credibility:** The applicant has submitted **four different proposals** for the same land, leading to frustration over instability and lack of clarity.

### **Planning Commission Decision**

9. The Commission voted to **deny the amended conditional use permit** due to insufficient documentation and unresolved structural concerns.
10. The Planning Commission voted to deny the amended conditional use permit for Serenity Meadows due to unresolved concerns over the proposed homeowners association (HOA), lack of restrictive covenants, and uncertainty about ownership and management structure.

Commissioner Kusler motioned to deny the amended CUP stating the project is poorly constructed, Second by Commissioner Stoeckel, Carried 6-0.

### **Next Steps and Timeline**

11. The original approval remains in effect, allowing the developer to proceed with the **22-unit rental model** if they choose.
12. The developer must provide a property management agreement and comply with prior conditions if reverting to the original plan.
13. Forward the Planning Commission's denial of the Serenity Meadows amendment to the Town Board on **August 18th**.
14. The developer has until **September 29th**—the 120-day review period—to resubmit revised documentation, though no extension was requested.
15. Any future application would require full review, including HOA documents and updated covenants.
16. The Planning Commission emphasized the need for transparency and consistency in future submissions.
17. Encourage the Serenity Meadows developer to resubmit a complete application with HOA documents, restrictive covenants, and property management agreement if pursuing changes.
18. The original approved plan—22 rental duplex units under single-entity management—remains valid, and the developer may revert to it.

# East Central Energy Substation Application

## Project Overview

19. East Central Energy has applied for a conditional use permit to construct a new electric substation just south of the existing substation near the meeting location.
20. The new facility is necessary to meet growing electricity demand and modernize aging infrastructure in the area.
21. Once completed, the existing substation will be decommissioned and removed.

## Design and Site Details

22. The new substation will be located on property accessible from 100th Avenue, with a dedicated driveway.
23. Structure height will range from **15–20 feet** for most components, with the tallest elements reaching **45–50 feet**.
24. All setbacks comply with local zoning ordinances.
25. The site will include gravel-surfaced parking within the fenced area, on the west side of the substation.
26. No signage has been proposed.

## Regulatory and Engineering Input

27. Todd McLouth, Township engineer, provided feedback on the grading and stormwater runoff plan, emphasizing the need for erosion and drainage controls.
28. Access permitting may be handled through the County highway department.
29. A fence **nine feet above grade** with barbed wire overhang and animal guard will enclose the site, consistent with standard substation security.

## Conditions for Approval

30. Site lighting must conform to municipal ordinance requirements; downcast lighting is recommended to minimize light pollution.
31. Lighting will be controlled remotely by East Central Energy's system control center in Braham and used only when necessary for security.
32. Grading, drainage, and erosion control plans must be approved by Township engineer before implementation.

## **Timeline**

- 33. If approved, site work is expected to begin in the fall, with substation construction scheduled for the following summer.
- 34. Delivery of the transformer is projected for mid-**2048**, indicating a long-term infrastructure timeline.

Commissioner Kusler motioned to approve the application to East Central Energy for a new Electric Substation in Long Siding, Second by Commissioner Stoeckel, Carried 6-0.

## **Administrative Items**

- 35. Audio concerns were raised by attendees, citing poor sound quality and difficulty hearing speakers. The system, repurposed from a **COVID-era setup**, was acknowledged as inadequate. Upgrading it would require budget allocation.

## **Adjourn at 6:40 pm**

Commissioner Stoeckel motioned to adjourn, Second by Commissioner Hayford, Motion carried 6-0.