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Sample Joint Planning Commission Agreement/Ordinance

Following is a sample of an ordinance that can be adopted by legislative bodies wishing to create a joint planning commission in Michigan. This sample is based on Public Act 226 of 2003, as amended, (being the Joint Municipal Planning Act, M.C.L. 125.131 et. seq.), and recommendations of the author and reviewers of this pamphlet (see box, below).

The Joint Municipal Planning Act is a statute, that provides for any two or more Michigan local governments – municipalities – to get together to create a single planning commission. As used here “municipalities” means a city(ies), village(s), and township(s). It does not include a county(ies). The joint planning commission can be created to have jurisdiction for:

- All of the territory of two or more participating municipalities
- Selected territory within two or more participating municipalities (such as around a lake, along a highway corridor, or some other feature held in common by two or more local governments).

The joint planning commission can be created to have powers and duties which include any one or combination of the following for the territory or jurisdiction:

- Joint planning (creation of a single joint master plan)
- Joint zoning ordinance and administration
- Joint capital improvement program (CIP)
- Infrastructure reviews
- Joint subdivision (and other land division) ordinance, regulation, and reviews.
- Joint planning and zoning coordination activities with neighboring planning commissions and county planning commissions.

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The authors would like to thank the Land Information Access Association's Partnerships for Change: Sustainable Communities for assistance with this publication. This organization facilitated creating many Joint Planning Commissions and cooperative planning efforts in Michigan. The sample joint planning language used here takes advantage of LIAA's experience and is the starting point for the language presented here.

The authors would like to thank the following individual for their review and assistance with this publication:

Harry Burkholder, AICP, Community Planner II, LAND INFORMATION ACCESS ASSOCIATION (LIAA), Traverse City
• Other powers and duties that a municipal planning commission may have (such as hiring staff, receiving grants or gifts, and so on.

The joint planning commission can be set up to emulate the procedural operation of a city/village planning commission or a township planning commission or a township planning commission organized under the old Municipal Planning Act. Also the joint planning commission can be set up to

Related Publications

- There are also separate procedural checklists for performing other planning and zoning functions. They are:
  - Land Use Series: “Check List #1A; To Create a Planning Commission or Amend an Existing Planning Commission Ordinance.”
  - Land Use Series: “#1B; Sample Ordinance to create a planning commission”
  - Land Use Series: “#1C; Summary of changes between new Michigan Planning Enabling Act and the three old planning acts: Municipal Planning Act, County Planning Act, and Township Planning Act.”
  - Land Use Series: “#1D; Steps to Transition an Existing Planning Commission to Comply with the Michigan Planning Enabling Act”
  - Land Use Series: “#1E; Sample Bylaws for a planning commission.”
  - Land Use Series: “Checklist #1F; What Should be in a Master Plan”
  - Land Use Series: “Checklist #1G; For Adoption of a Plan in Michigan”
  - Land Use Series: “Checklist #1H; The Five Year Plan Review.”
  - Land Use Series: “Checklist #1I; For Adoption of an Amendment to a Plan”
  - Land Use Series: “Checklist #1J; Adopting and Updating a Capital Improvement Program”
  - Land Use Series: “Checklist #1K; Review of Infrastructure and Public Capital Expenditure”
  - Land Use Series: “Checklist #1L; Adoption or Amendment of Subdivision Rules”
  - Land Use Series: “#1M; How Governments Make Submissions on a Neighbor’s or County’s Proposed Plan”
  - Land Use Series: “#1N; How a Planning Commission Should Respond to Submissions”
  - Land Use Series “#1O; Sample Joint Planning Commission Agreement/Ordinance.”
  - Land Use Series, “Checklist #2; for Adoption of a Zoning Ordinance in Michigan.”
  - Land Use Series, “Checklist #3; for Adoption of an Interim Zoning Ordinance in Michigan.”
  - Land Use Series, “Checklist #4; for Adoption of a Zoning Ordinance Amendment (Including Pud) in Michigan.”
  - Land Use Series, “Checklist #5; for Processing a Special Use Permit (Including Pud) Application in Michigan.”
  - Land Use Series, “Checklist #6; for Processing a Zoning Appeal and Variance in Michigan.”

All of these are available at www.msue.msu.edu/lu.

Glossary

The following terms are used in this publication, and have the following specific meanings.

§ means the section number of Public Act 33 of 2008, as amended, (being the Michigan Planning Enabling Act, M.C.L. 125.3801 et seq.).

Chief administrative official means the manager or other highest nonelected administrative official of a city or village.

Chief elected official means the mayor of a city, president of a village, supervisor of a township, or chair of a county board of commissioners.

Ex officio member means a member of a planning commission, with full voting rights unless otherwise specified by city or village charter, by virtue of holding another office for the term of that office.

Legislative Body means the county board of commissioners of a county, the board of trustees of a township, the council of a city or village, or other similar elected governing body of a county, township, city, or village.

Local Unit of Government means a county or municipality.

Municipality means a city, village or township.

Plan means any plan adopted under the Michigan Planning Enabling Act or one of the three former planning acts, regardless of what it is titled.

Planning Commission means the local unit of government planning commission created under the Michigan Planning Enabling Act or one of the three former planning acts, regardless of what it is titled.

Planning jurisdiction means the area encompassed by one of the following:

• For a city or village, the legal boundaries of a city or village, respectively, and any area outside of the city or village boundary that the planning commission deems related to the planning of the city or village;
• For a township, the legal boundaries of a township outside the limits of a city(ies) and village(s);
• For a township whose planning commission was formed under P.A. 285 of 1931, as amended, (M.C.L. 125.31 et seq.), the legal boundaries of a township outside the limits of a city(ies) and village(s), and any area outside of the township boundary that the planning commission deems related to the planning of the township. (See §31(1)(b))
• For a county, the legal boundaries of a county outside the limits of a city(ies) and village(s); or the county including any city(ies) and village(s) which has adopted the county plan (See §31(1)).
emulate the procedural operation of zoning as though it is a city/village zoning system or a township zoning system.

One of the major characteristics of the Joint Municipal Planning Act is that there is flexibility in the different ways a joint planning commission can be set up. The number of ways a Joint Commission can be composed is almost infinite. This is a strength, because the intent is to provide a group of municipalities the maximum amount of flexibility to work out a system that best suits each municipality and accommodates a greater chance of communities working together to form a Joint Commission. There is flexibility in the appointment of joint planning commission members. For example: which members come from which municipalities, if they are elected or appointed by the legislative body of the municipalities, whether there are staggered terms or not, and the number of years of term of office.

Similarly, there is flexibility to determine how the costs of the joint planning commission are shared between the participating municipalities.

Finally, there are provisions to accommodate an additional municipality to join with the joint planning commission after it has been created and for a participating municipality to withdraw from an existing joint planning commission. There are also provisions for the transition from existing planning commissions to the newly formed joint planning commission.

Creation of a joint planning commission is a two step process. The first step is to negotiate the terms of the agreement. This is where the broad flexibility can be valuable. The second step is for each municipality to adopt an ordinance which adopts the negotiated agreement. The sample provided in this flyer incorporates the terms of the agreement into the ordinance that may be adopted by participating municipalities. One benefit of doing it this way is that if the participants decide to modify the agreement in the future, they will be reminded that any change to the agreement, like its original adoption, must be accomplished by ordinance.

Why Create a Joint Planning Commission?

There are many reasons to consider creating a joint planning commission. The main reason is that the best and most effective way for planning to be successful is for the planning activity to take place for the same geography as the issue being addressed. For example, if watershed protection is the issue, then the best planning approach is to do planning for the entire watershed. That often is not the same territory as a municipality's political boundaries. Likewise if the main issue is the economy, or a city/village hinterland, then the best planning approach is to do planning for the entire labor market area or the city/village hinterland. That often is not the same territory as encompassed by any one municipality’s political boundaries.

Thinking and planning for larger geographic areas than that of one municipality is increasingly important for the global New Economy—increasingly seen as vital for Michigan’s economic recovery. Benefits of a joint planning commission can include:

- Planning at the same scale as the issue at hand (watershed, lake, hinterland, labor market area, river corridor, highway development corridor, and so on).
- A strategy to move toward the global New Economy, and aid Michigan’s economic recovery within the local region.
- Economies of scale resulting in cost savings by sharing the costs of planning and zoning activities among two or more municipalities.
- Efficiency of scale resulting in a volume of activity and business where the joint planning commission, and support staff, become better and more proficient, where higher skilled people and consultants can be attracted to do work for the area.
- Benefit of a public image of local governments cooperating and working together.
Help

Michigan State University Extension members of the Land Use Team can assist with sample materials, providing meeting facilitation services and otherwise coordinating efforts to create a joint planning commission involving Michigan municipalities. This assistance could also be provided by professional planning consultant firms. This option is especially appropriate if two or more of the jurisdictions is already working with a single firm. Assistance by an intermediary could be the difference between success and failure, as a neutral party can serve as the coordinator and buffer as each jurisdiction works through the challenges of creating a joint planning commission.

Important Notes

This sample is not designed as a substitute for reading and understanding the Michigan Planning Enabling Act (MCL 125.3801 et seq.), Michigan Zoning Enabling Act (MCL 125.3101 et seq.), and the Joint Municipal Planning Act. This outline is not a substitute for legal advice or for professional planning services.

It is important to document each step of the process in planning and zoning a community. Keep detailed minutes, affidavits of publication and mailing, open meeting notices, letters of transmittal, and communications all on file so years from now they are still available.

The following sample ordinance incorporates and constitutes an agreement to create a joint planning commission in Michigan. This sample attempts to cover most needs that may occur. Before adoption it should be reviewed, and selections should be made in sections which present choices. Sections which are not pertinent should be omitted. Text which appears in brackets ( [ ] ) should be replaced with the specific name, number, date, as indicated. Material in a sidebar, or box, includes additional discussion and alternatives to consider.

This sample ordinance is available in a word processor document (Microsoft Word™ and WordPerfect™) at the web site www.msue.msu.edu/lu. The material in sidebars, or boxes, in this pamphlet are not in the word processor version of the sample.

Joint Planning Commission Ordinance

[City/village/township] of [_____Name of Municipality_____]

Ordinance No. ___

Ordinance Approving an Agreement to Establish the [_____Name_____] Joint Planning Commission

AN ORDINANCE TO APPROVE AN AGREEMENT ESTABLISHING THE [name] JOINT PLANNING COMMISSION CONSISTING OF [list participating municipalities]; TO SET FORTH THE TERMS OF SAID AGREEMENT; TO TRANSFER ALL THE POWERS AND DUTIES OF A PLANNING COMMISSION UNDER THE MICHIGAN PLANNING ACT, 2008 PA 33 (MCL 125.3801 ET SEQ.) TO THE [name] JOINT PLANNING COMMISSION; TO TRANSFER ALL OF THE POWERS AND DUTIES OF A ZONING BOARD OR A ZONING COMMISSION UNDER THE MICHIGAN ZONING ENABLING ACT, 2006 PA 110 (MCL 125.3101 ET SEQ.) TO THE [name] JOINT PLANNING COMMISSION; TO DESCRIBE THE JURISDICTIONAL AREA OF THE [name] JOINT PLANNING COMMISSION; AND TO COMPLY WITH THE PROVISIONS OF 2003 PA 226 (MCL 125.133 ET SEQ.);

THE [City/Village/Township] OF [name] HEREBY ORDAINS:
**Section 1. Approval of Agreement; Purpose.**

Pursuant to the authority of 2003 PA 226 [MCL 125.133] the [___City/Village/Township___] of [___name___] hereby approves an agreement with [___names of other participating municipalities___] to form a joint planning commission for the purpose of cooperating on joint planning and joint zoning for the participating municipalities; to act jointly in these matters so as to coordinate said activities in the respective municipalities; in order to avoid duplicative efforts and duplicative expenditures of funds; and to plan and regulate land use in a larger geographic area; to better manage valuable public resources; to foster collaborative efforts in land use programs in order to preserve natural resources; to ensure that land uses are situated in appropriate locations and relationships; to limit inappropriate overcrowding of land and congestion of population; to facilitate adequate and efficient provision for transportation systems, sewage disposal, water, energy, education, recreation, and other public service and facility requirements; and to promote public health, safety, and welfare.

The terms and conditions of the agreement between the participating municipalities are set forth in Sections 2 through 15 herein.

**Section 2. Name.**

The joint planning commission established by the Agreement shall be referred to as the "[___name___] Joint Planning Commission," (hereinafter, the "Joint Commission.")

**Section 3. Jurisdictional Territory of the Joint Commission.**

The jurisdictional area of the Joint Commission shall comprise all of that area within the corporate limits of the [___City(ies)/Village(s)/Township(s)___] of [___name municipalities___].

**Section 4. Powers and Duties**

a. **Planning powers and duties.** Pursuant to 2003 PA 226 (MCL 125.135(2)) all the powers and duties of a planning commission under the Michigan Planning Enabling Act, 2008 PA 33 (MCL 125.380 et seq.) ("MPEA") are hereby transferred to the Joint Commission, and the Joint Commission shall have the sole power and duty under the Michigan Planning Enabling Act (MPEA) to develop a joint master plan with respect to the jurisdictional area of the Joint Commission. In exercising this power and duty the Joint Commission shall follow the procedures of: [[Choose one a designation of which of these 3 categories of municipalities' powers, duties, and procedures will be applicable to the joint planning commission.]

**Note on Section 3., jurisdictional territory:**

If only a portion of an area of a participating municipality is going to be included in the jurisdictional area of the joint commission, that area needs to be described. For example: “All of the area within the corporate limits of ABC Township except for the area in sections ___ and ___, or except for the area south of ___ and east of ___.”

Some communities may consider excluding lands under another jurisdiction, such as state-owned land, federally-owned land (national park, forest, military facilities etc.), and tribal lands. However one should plan and zone for all the area in the jurisdiction, regardless if it currently comes under local zoning jurisdiction or not. If in the future those lands transfer to other ownership as does happen from time to time, the community then has territory that is then not subject to zoning or planning at all. Certain state-owned land is subject to zoning, even if it is state owned.

**Note on Section 4:**

The participating municipalities can agree to have the Joint Commission do just planning, just zoning, or both planning and zoning. This sample ordinance assumes the parties want the Joint Commission to do both planning and zoning.

Likewise, the participating municipalities can agree to have the Joint Commission also exercise a planning commission’s duties under the Michigan Planning Enabling Act with respect capital improvement programs, infrastructure reviews and subdivision review. If these responsibilities are not assigned to the Joint Commission, each municipality will have to decide who is going to perform that function in that municipality. This sample ordinance assumes that those functions will also be performed by the Joint Commission.

**Note on Section 4.a., planning Powers and duties:**

Since the procedures under the MPEA may vary depending on whether a municipality fits under one of the above categories, when you have more than one municipality, to avoid a conflict in the governing procedures, you must choose which category you want to govern for the Joint Commission.

Additional Note: In deciding which option to choose, you need to make an analysis of the differences between the different categories. For example, PA 285 allows planning for certain areas outside of the jurisdiction, but PA 168 does not. There could be other differences.
1) a city or village that on September 1, 2008 had a planning commission created under former 1931 PA 285.

1) a township that on September 1, 2008, had a planning commission created under former 1959 PA 168.

Further, any joint master plan developed and adopted by the Joint Commission shall be subject to review and approval by the legislative bodies of the participating municipalities.

b. Zoning powers and duties. Pursuant to 2003 PA 226 (MCL 125.135(2)) all the powers and duties of a zoning commission or a planning commission under the Michigan Zoning Enabling Act, 2006 PA 110 (MCL 125.3101 et seq.) ("MZEA") are hereby transferred to the Joint Commission, and the Joint Commission shall have the sole power and duty under the MZEA to develop a joint zoning ordinance with respect to the jurisdictional area of the Joint Commission. In exercising this power and duty the Joint Commission shall have the sole power and duty under the MZEA to develop a joint zoning ordinance with respect to the jurisdictional area of the Joint Commission. In exercising this power and duty the Joint Commission shall have the sole power and duty under the MZEA to develop a joint zoning ordinance with respect to the jurisdictional area of the Joint Commission.

Note on last sentence of Section 4.a. Joint Master Plan Review:

Note: This last sentence is optional, and only required if the legislative bodies wish to retain the right to approve the master plan. Otherwise, the final approval belongs to the Joint Commission.

Additional Note: The members may decide to include less than all of the duties of a planning commission under the MPEA. For example, a planning commission also has certain powers and duties with respect to the capital improvement plans, infrastructure reviews, and subdivision reviews. The agreement needs to state if all of these powers and duties are to be assumed by the Joint Commission or which, if any, are to be retained by the member municipalities. If it is not done by the Joint Commission, then this ordinance/agreement needs to specify who does have that duty, or other documentation by the respective municipality needs to specify how those additional duties are done.

Note on Section 4.b., zoning powers and duties:

Since the procedures under the MZEA may vary depending on whether a municipality is a city, a village or a township, to avoid a conflict in the governing procedures, you must choose which category you want to govern zoning procedures for the Joint Commission. Whichever entity is selected, there must be at least one such entity among the participating municipalities.

Additional Note: This provision is optional. You are not required to transfer the zoning powers and duties to the Joint Commission. Those powers and duties can be retained by a municipality. In making the decision as to which unit of government to emulate, you must analyze the differences between the different units. For example,

- A joint commission set up to emulate a township is subject to county planning review of zoning amendments unless the county board has waived that process.
- A joint commission set up to emulate a village/city does not have county review of zoning amendments.
- A joint commission set up to emulate a township has voter referendum for adoption or amendment of all or part of zoning.
- A joint commission set up to emulate a village/city has Protest petition (abutter's challenge) process for adoption or amendment of all or part of zoning.
- A joint commission set up to emulate a township cannot have use variances.
- A joint commission set up to emulate a village/city has the option to have use variances or not.

There may be additional differences.

Note on Section 4.c., Capital Improvement Review:

Assigning these duties to the Joint Commission is optional, but if not assigned to the Joint Commission, the participating municipalities will have to retain its planning commission in order to perform this function.

Additional Note: this is another area which is impacted by your selection under section 4(a), above, because the Michigan Planning Enabling Act provides for an override of a planning commission decision to disapprove a public project. The vote of the legislative body needed to overrule such disapproval is ½ for a city, a village, or a township organized under former 1931 PA 285. For all other townships, a simple majority vote of the legislative body is necessary to overrule the Joint Commission's disapproval of a public project.

Additional Note: You can also provide that any override would be up to the legislative body or bodies in which the public project is located; or, alternatively, if the project affects the entire Joint Commission's jurisdictional area, by any one, or only by all of the legislative bodies.
Commission shall follow the procedures of the MZEA which are applicable to: ([choose one])

1) a city or a village. [or]
1) a township.]

c. **Capital Improvement Review (Public Project Review).** The Joint Commission shall be responsible for the review and approval function of public projects as provided in sections 61 and 62 of the Michigan Planning Enabling Act (MCL 125.3861; 125.3862)

d. **Capital Improvements Program.** The Joint Commission shall be responsible for the preparation of a capital improvements program for the Joint Commission's jurisdictional area as provided for in section 65 of the Michigan Planning Enabling Act (MCL 125.3865).

e. **Subdivision Review.** The Joint Commission shall be responsible for the recommendation of a subdivision ordinance and approval of subdivision plats as provided for in section 71 of the Michigan Planning Enabling Act (MCL 125.3871).

f. **Zoning board of appeals.** The joint zoning ordinance adopted pursuant to this Agreement that zoning ordinance

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**Note on Section 4.d. Capital Improvement Program:**

Assigning the Capital Improvement Program (CIP) duties to the Joint Commission is optional, but if not assigned to the Joint Commission, the participating municipalities will have to each assume CIP responsibilities on their own. If CIP is not done by the Joint Commission, then this ordinance/agreement needs to specify who does have that duty, pursuant to section 65 of the Michigan Planning Enabling Act.

Additional Note: this is another area which is impacted by your selection under section 4(a), above, because the Michigan Planning Enabling Act provides that the preparation and adoption of a CIP is mandatory for a county, city, village, and a township if the township, alone or jointly with one or more other government(s), owns or operates a water supply or sewage disposal system. If there is such a water supply or sewage disposal system located in and owned by only one participating municipality, it is recommend that the Joint Commission be authorized to prepare and approve a CIP, or at least is actively engaged in the process of preparing a CIP.

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**Note on Section 4.f., Zoning Board of Appeals:**

This provision is optional. The Agreement may provide for a joint zoning board of appeals, but that is not required. If there is one ZBA, then the issue if use variances are to be considered or not also needs to be resolved. The participating municipalities may agree to retain individual ZBAs.

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**Note on Section 4.g., Administration:**

This provision is optional. The Agreement may provide for a joint zoning administrator, but that is not required. The participating municipalities may agree to retain individual zoning administrators and retain authority to hire, fire, evaluate their staff that provides services to the Joint Planning Commission. For example one municipality may have staff already. So this agreement could create an agreement where the other participating municipalities contribute to the costs of that staff, and the municipality with staff continues to be the employer in all respects. Regardless of which staffing system is used a single zoning administrator and other staff will help ensure uniform application of the joint zoning ordinance throughout the joint jurisdictional area. When staff is hired by one municipality, but does work for the Joint Commission another option to consider may include: The management of planning staff, if any, including any zoning administration staff, if any, shall be supervised by the county planner.

i. The joint commission shall manage and direct the planning director for purposes of prioritization of projects, planning and zoning policy, planning, annual work plan, subdivision review, capital improvement program and reviews, other matters of business which come before or are assigned to the joint commission, developing a joint commission budget, and evaluation of performance in these areas.

ii. The management of the planning director shall be under the general supervision and control of the governmental unit employing the planning director, or its designee, for purposes of being the sole employer, including but not limited to payroll, benefits, department head administrative and managerial duties, non-joint commission budget, and compliance with the employee policies and evaluation of performance in these areas.

iii. The management of the planning director shall be under the general supervision and control of the governmental unit employing the planning director, or its designee, who shall have exclusive authority to hire or fire the planning director.

iv. The governmental unit, and its designee, shall carry out its general supervision of the planning director with full consultation with the Joint Commission which shall be afforded the opportunity to consult on any planning staff management decision.

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shall [chose one: ___ provide for a joint zoning board of appeals as created pursuant to the joint zoning ordinance, [or] shall provide for a zoning board of appeals for each member municipality ___].

g. **Administration.** This Agreement provides for a joint planning department with staff consisting of an individual(s) whom perform the duties of a planning director, planner, zoning administrator, and enforcement officer. These positions may be full or part time, and may be combined together as one job or separate jobs, as deemed necessary from time to time by the joint planning commission and within budgetary appropriations and other funds available to it for such purposes.

1) The Joint Commission shall hire a planning director who shall be under the supervision and control of the Joint Commission, or its designee
2) Only the Joint Commission may hire or fire the planning director.
3) The management of other staff, if any, including any with planner, zoning administrator, and enforcement officer duties shall be supervised by the planning director.

h. **Professional services.** The Joint Commission shall, within budgetary appropriations and other funds available to it for such purposes, have the authority to retain the services of such planning, legal, and other professional consultants as it deems necessary.

### Section 5. Composition of the Joint Commission.

a. **Composition.** The Joint Commission shall be comprised of [__number__] members and [__number__] alternates as provided in this Ordinance. [___Specify how many members are appointed by each participating municipality ___].

b. **Alternates.** An alternate member may be called to serve as a member of the Joint Commission in the absence of a regular member if the regular member will be unable to attend 1 or more meetings. An alternate member may also be called to serve as a member for the purpose of reaching a decision on a case in which the member has abstained for reasons of conflict of interest, will be absent, or the regular seat is vacant. An alternate member serving on the Joint Commission has the same voting rights as a regular member.

### Note on Section 4.h., Professional services:

This is optional, but some provision should be made so that the Joint Commission can have access to appropriate and consistent professional services when necessary.

### Note on Section 5.a., Composition:

If an odd number of members is desired, specify who gets to appoint the extra member and whether the right to do so rotates among the other municipalities. See examples below. These are only examples; the number of ways a Joint Commission can be composed is almost infinite. The intent is to provide the group of municipalities the maximum amount of flexibility to work out a system that best suits each municipality and accommodates a greater chance of communities working together to form a Joint Commission.

Example 1: The Township Board of the Township of ABC shall appoint three (3) members and one (1) alternate, and the Township Board of the Township of XYZ shall appoint three (3) members and one (1) alternate.

Example 2: The Township Board of the Township of ABC shall appoint three (3) members and one (1) alternate, and the Township Board of the Township of XYZ shall appoint four (4) members and one (1) alternate.

Example 3: The Township Board of the Township of ABC shall appoint three (3) members and one (1) alternate, and the Township Board of the Township of XYZ shall appoint three (3) members and one (1) alternate.

The seventh member of the Joint Commission shall be appointed by the participating municipalities on a rotating basis with the Township of ABC initially appointing the seventh member to serve a term of [__number__] years. Thereafter, the Township Board of the Township of XYZ shall appoint the seventh member to serve a term of [__number__] years, after which the appointment of the seventh member shall rotate between the participating municipalities for equal [__number__] year terms.

### Note on Section 5.b., Alternates:

While the act permits the appointment of alternates in MCL 125.135(a), having alternates is not required, and not recommended.
c. **Continuation of Service.** Regular and alternate members shall continue to serve until their replacement is appointed and assumes the duties of his or her position on the Joint Commission. When a regular or an alternate member serves on a case involving a site plan approval, special land use permit request, planned unit development which is not a zoning amendment for a specific property, such member shall continue to serve in said case until a final decision is made, even if said member's term has expired.

Section 6. Terms and Qualifications of Office

a. **Residence.** All members of the Joint Commission shall reside within the jurisdictional area of the Joint Commission as defined in this Ordinance. If a member changes his or her residence to another location within the jurisdictional area of the Joint Commission municipality but outside of the municipality from which that member was appointed, that member may complete the appointed term but would not be eligible for re-appointment from his or her original jurisdiction.

b. **Terms.** The initial members of the Joint Commission appointed by each participating municipality shall be appointed for staggered terms with one third of the members appointed to a three-year term.

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**Note on Section 5.c., Continuation of Service:**

You are not required to have members serve beyond their term until a replacement is appointed and assumes the duties of the office. You can, for instance provide that a member does not continue to serve beyond the expiration of the member's term. You run the risk in that situation, however, of having a vacant seat if the new member is not appointed in a timely fashion. Likewise, you run the risk of losing continuity if a new member takes over in the middle of an ongoing site plan approval or special land use permit proceeding. If a regular member is not replaced immediately and there is an alternate member, the alternate could sit in until a regular member is appointed and takes office.

**Note on Section 6.a., Residence:**

Where the participating municipalities include a township and a village located within that township, they may want to add the following requirement (but they are not required to): "Members appointed by the Township shall reside in the township outside the corporate limits of the Village, and members appointed by the Village shall reside within the corporate limits of the Village."

Additional Note: The act also provides for the possibility of election of Joint Commission members, (MCL 125.135(b)). We do not, however, recommend that option for several reasons, some of which are:

- Elections are costly and time consuming;
- Elections bring politics into play;
- Zoning is not a popularity contest and elections are;
- Planning and zoning decisions should be based on legal, not political considerations and failure to adhere to that principle can result in costly litigation.

**Note on Section 6.b., Terms:**

The act does not require staggered terms for Joint Commission members (M.C.L. 125.136(b)), but we believe staggered terms are a good idea for the following reasons:

- It's easier to replace 1 or 2 members at a time as opposed to the entire panel;
- Staggered terms help assure more continuity in the Joint Commission's decisions and actions;
- Staggered terms avoid undesirable wholesale changes in membership for political reasons;
- Staggered terms provide for a more orderly flow and transition from old to new members, helping to insure the retention of an experienced commission.

This sample uses three-year terms of office. In creating a Joint Commission one may choose to have a term of office with a different length of time. When Planning Commissions were first created in Michigan the term of office was three years, and township board and county board terms of office were two years -so members of planning commissions served 1.5 times longer than the elected body which appointed them. In the 1980s township boards of trustees' terms of office were changed from two to four years, but the planning commission terms were never adjusted.
and one third of the members appointed to a two-year term, and one third of the members appointed to a one-year term. After the initial terms, all appointed members shall serve for terms of three years ending on [__date__] of the applicable year.

c. **Existing Planning Commission Members.** Each of the members originally appointed to the Joint Commission by a participating municipality shall be members of the municipality's existing planning commission if one exists and such member is willing to except appointment to the Joint Commission.

d. **Interests Represented.**

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**Note on Section 6.c., Existing Planning Commission Members:**

This section is optional.

**Note on Section 6.d., Interests Represented:**

The section 5.d. has two example presented on the following pages. The Municipal Joint Planning Act, MCL 125.131 et seq. does not require the representation of "important segments", but the Michigan Planning Enabling Act (MCL125.3815(3)) does. The language on the following pages follows the “important segments” representation concept from the Michigan Planning Enabling Act as a starting point for discussion.

The different ways membership for a joint planning commission can be set up is almost infinite. Thinking about this part should not be limited to only what is presented here.
d. **Interests Represented.** The membership shall be representative of the important segments of the community, such as the economic, governmental, educational, and social development of the jurisdiction of the Joint Commission, in accordance with the major interests as they exist in the jurisdiction of the Joint Commission, as follows:

1. Agriculture;
2. Natural resources;
3. Recreation;
4. Education;
5. Public health;
6. Government;
7. Transportation;
8. Industry;
9. Commerce;
10. [___other___] ____________________.

The membership shall also be representative of the entire geography of the jurisdiction of the Joint Commission to the extent practicable, and as a secondary consideration to the representation of the major interests.

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**Representation**

One will need to review what the specific “major interests” are in the community. The task is picking from the list provided here (including additional “major interests” which might also be considered.)

The ordinance should specify the actual “major interests” chosen and assign each one (or two, or three) to one of the seats held by members of the Joint Commission, so that changing the list of “major interests” and seat assignments requires amending the Ordinance.

The text here, is relatively general and provides an unstructured appointment process, and likely best suited for a small rural township. However a more structured approach may be desired. If that is the case consider the approach recommended on page 12.
d. **Interests Represented.** The membership shall be representative of the important geographic and interest segments of the jurisdiction of the Joint Commission, as follows.

1) One citizen at-large member representing interests of the jurisdiction of the Joint Commission shall be appointed for a three year term of office, or remainder of an unexpired term of office who meet the following conditions:
   i. shall be appointed from names submitted in response to advertisements in a newspaper with paid circulation in jurisdiction of the Joint Commission, and;
   ii. shall not hold any elected office or employment position in any member municipality other than by virtue of membership on the Joint Commission.

2) One citizen member representing the environmental interests of jurisdiction of the Joint Commission shall be appointed for a three year term of office, or remainder of an unexpired term of office, who meet the following conditions:
   i. shall be a member in good standing of one of the non-profit corporation(s) with their corporate office in jurisdiction of the Joint Commission whose bonafide purpose is to be an environmental organization; and
   ii. shall be appointed from names nominated by non-profit corporations with their corporate offices within jurisdiction of the Joint Commission whose bonafide purpose is to be environmental organizations; and
   iii. shall not hold any elected office or employment position in any member municipality other than by virtue of membership on the Joint Commission.

3) One citizen member representing the agricultural, forestry, land use interests of jurisdiction of the Joint Commission shall be appointed for a three year term of office, or remainder of an unexpired term of office, who meet the following conditions:
   i. shall be
      a) a member of the County Conservation District Board, or
      b) a member of the board of the local Chapter of Farm Bureau, or
      c) a professional forester with his or her business office in the jurisdiction of the Joint Commission, or
      d) an employee of the United States Forest Service, or Michigan Department of Natural Resources; and
   ii. shall be appointed from names nominated by the County Conservation District Board, County Chapter of Farm Bureau, the United States Forest Service, Michigan Department of Natural Resources, professional foresters in the jurisdiction of the Joint Commission; and
   iii. shall not hold any elected office or employment position in a participating municipality other than by virtue of membership on the Joint Commission.

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**Representation**

One will need to review what the specific “major interests” are in the community. The task is picking from the list provided here (including additional “major interests” which might also be considered.)

The list includes:
1. Agriculture;
2. Natural resources;
3. Recreation;
4. Education;
5. Public health;
6. Government;
7. Transportation;
8. Industry;
9. Commerce;
10. other ___________________.

The ordinance shall specify the actual “major interests” chosen and assign each one (or two, or three) to one of the seats held by members of the joint commission, so that changing the list of “major interests” and seat assignments requires amending the Ordinance.

The ordinance text here, is relatively detailed, and provides a very formal system of appointment, and is likely best suited for a area with a larger population. However a more informal less structured approach may be desired if the community is very rural and small in population (less than 10,000). If that is the case consider the approach recommended on page 11.
4) One citizen member representing the governmental municipal interests of the jurisdiction of the Joint Commission shall be appointed for a three year term of office, or remainder of an unexpired term of office, who meets the following conditions:
   i. shall be appointed from names nominated by the Chapter of the Michigan Townships Association; and
   ii. shall not hold any elected office or employment position in a participating municipality other than by virtue of membership on the Joint Commission.

5) One citizen member representing the educational interests of the jurisdiction of the Joint Commission shall be appointed for a three year term of office, or remainder of an unexpired term of office, or an initial two year term of office, who meets the following conditions:
   i. shall be appointed from names nominated by school district board(s) of education included, in whole or in part, within the jurisdiction of the Joint Commission; and
   ii. shall be a member of a public school board or an administrative employee of a school district included, in whole or in part, within the jurisdiction of the Joint Commission; and
   iii. shall not hold any elected office or employment position in a participating municipality other than by virtue of membership on the Joint Commission.

6) One member representing recreational and tourist interests of the jurisdiction of the Joint Commission shall be appointed for a three year term of office, or remainder of an unexpired term of office, who meets the following conditions:
   I. shall be:
      a) a member of the board for a Visitor and Convention Bureau whose corporate office is in the jurisdiction of the Joint Commission, or
      b) who shall be a member in good standing of one of the non-profit corporations with its corporate office in the jurisdiction of the Joint Commission whose bonafide purpose is to be a tourist promotion organization; and
   ii. shall be appointed from names nominated by Visitor and Convention Bureaus whose corporate offices are in the jurisdiction of the Joint Commission or a non-profit corporations with their corporate offices in the jurisdiction of the Joint Commission whose bonafide purpose is to be a tourist promotion organization; and
   iii. shall not hold any elected office or employment position in a participating municipality other than by virtue of membership on the Joint Commission.

7) One citizen member representing the industrial and economic interests of the jurisdiction of the Joint Commission shall be appointed for a three year term of office, or remainder of an unexpired term of office, who meets the following conditions:
   i. shall be a member in good standing of one of a non-profit corporations with its corporate office in the jurisdiction of the Joint Commission, or a County funded agency, whose bonafide purpose is to promote business, commerce, and industry in the county; and
   ii. shall be appointed from names nominated by non-profit corporations with their corporate offices in the County whose bonafide purpose is to promote business, commerce and industry in the county; and
   iii. shall not hold any elected office or employment position in a participating municipality other than by virtue of membership on the Joint Commission.

8) One member representing the transportation and communication interests of the jurisdiction of the Joint Commission shall be appointed for a three year term of office, or remainder of an unexpired term of office, who meets the following conditions:
   i. who shall be appointed from names nominated by the County Board of Road Commissioners.

9) One member representing sanitation, environmental health, housing, and human services interests of the jurisdiction of the Joint Commission shall be appointed for a three year term of office, or remainder of an unexpired term of office, who meets the following conditions:
   i. shall be
      a) an employee of the environmental health division of the public health department, or district, which has jurisdiction in the County, or
      b) a member of a county housing commission or county-wide housing organization, or
      c) a member in good standing of a county-wide human services coordination organization; and
ii. who shall be appointed from names nominated by the environmental health division of the public health department, or district, which has jurisdiction in the County, the housing commission, a housing organization, and a human services coordination organization.

10) One member shall be a member of the a participating municipality legislative body.
e. Continuing Education. When funds are budgeted or otherwise available for such purposes, appointed members of the Joint Commission shall in their first year of being appointed to the Joint Commission attend no less than 16 hours, and annually thereafter attend no less than 6 hours of education programs designed for training members of Michigan planning commissions. Nothing in this paragraph shall prevent a member who has not had training from finishing his or her term of office unless the member resigns or is otherwise removed by as provided by law. Unless the appointing municipality finds that such member has special skills desired for service on the Joint Commission, a member who fails to attend any training made available shall be ineligible for reappointment at the conclusion of his or her term.

Training programs which qualify to meet this requirement shall be those designed to maintain or increase the skill level of planning commission members in the area of planning, zoning and/or the law relative thereto and shall include:
1) educational programs presented by established educational institutions such as universities, colleges, or community colleges and MSU Extension;
2) educational programs presented by an established association of governmental units or governmental officials, such as the Michigan Townships Association, the Michigan Municipal League or the Michigan Association of Municipal Attorneys;
3) educational programs presented by experienced planning and/or legal consultants, or associations thereof, such as the Michigan Association of Planners or the Michigan Bar Association.

The Joint Commission and joint appeals board may add additional requirements about training, such as number of hours, sources, and other requirements in its bylaws.

Section 7. Removal from Office; Vacancies.

a. Removal.

The Joint Commission may request the removal of one of its members by submitting a written request to the appointing municipality. A member may also be removed upon the initiative of the appointing municipality. Only the legislative body of the municipality which appointed the member may remove such member.

A member of the Joint Commission may be removed for cause from office by the appointing municipality following written charges and a public hearing. "Cause" shall include, but not be limited to: performance, conduct or behavior that adversely affects the orderly or efficient operation of the Joint Commission. Examples of performance, conduct or behaviors that constitute "cause" for purposes of this provision include:
1) Conduct constituting a material breach of this Agreement;
2) Violation of established by-laws, rules, regulations and policies, whether written or oral, including conduct violating provisions regarding conflicts of interest;
3) [__number__] unexcused absences from Joint Commission meetings;

Note for Section 7.a., Removal:

The provision providing for removal by the appointing authority upon the request of the Joint Commission or upon its own initiative mirrors what is found in the Michigan Planning Enabling Act and the Michigan Zoning Enabling Act. There may, however, be other options to consider for how removal from the Joint Commission is handled.

Additional Note: The act does not require a Code of Conduct, but it is recommended that the Joint Commission consider adopting one. A Code of Conduct can be a free standing document and referenced in the Joint Commission's bylaws or it can be included in the bylaws. For a sample of a Code of Conduct, see Land Use Series: “Sample #8: Planning Commission and Zoning Board of Appeals Code of Conduct”: http://web5.msue.msu.edu/lu/pamphlet/Bclsam/pamphlet1B%20PlanComm%20Ordinance.pdf
4) Conviction of any felony or misdemeanors involving a violation of his or her oath of office or Code of Conduct.
5) Removal of residency from the Joint Commission jurisdictional area; and/or
6) Any other situation which constitutes misfeasance, malfeasance, or nonfeasance in office, as provided by law.

b. Vacancies

The office of a member becomes vacant when the member dies, resigns, is convicted of any felony or of a misdemeanor involving a violation of his or her oath of office, Code of Conduct, is removed by the appointing municipality for cause, or ceases to be a resident of the jurisdictional area of the Joint Commission. If a vacancy occurs, the vacancy shall be filled for the balance of the unexpired term by an appointment made by the legislative body representing the jurisdiction of the vacancy.

Section 8. Organization and Procedures.

a. Officers. At its first meeting of each calendar year, the Joint Commission shall elect a chairperson, vice chairperson, and secretary from its members and fill other offices, as it considers advisable. Alternate members are not eligible to serve as officers. The term of each officer shall be 1 year, with opportunity for re-election as specified in the Joint Commission's bylaws.

b. Bylaws. The Joint Commission shall adopt bylaws for the transaction of its business, and shall keep a public record of its resolutions, transactions, findings, and determinations.

c. Committees. The Planning Commission may appoint committees of its own membership or whose members may not necessarily be members of the Joint Commission.

d. Annual Report. No later than the first day of [__month__] of each year, the Joint Commission shall submit an annual written report concerning its operations and the status of planning and zoning activities to the legislative body of to each of the participating municipalities. Said report shall also include a report of activities for the current year, a work program and a budget request for the coming year. The report may also make recommendations to the legislative body of any or all of the participating municipalities regarding planning, zoning, and development. The legislative bodies of all the participating municipalities may approve or disapprove the budget, but the Joint Commission must operate within the sum of the funds appropriated by agreement of all of the legislative bodies of the participating municipalities.

e. Meetings. The Joint Commission shall hold not less than 4 regular meetings each year. The time and place of the meetings shall be established by resolution. Unless the bylaws provide otherwise, a special meeting of the Joint Commission may be called by the chairperson or by 2 other members, upon written request to the secretary. Unless the bylaws provide otherwise, the secretary shall send written notice of a
special meeting to Joint Commission members not less than 48 hours before the meeting.

f. **Open Meetings Act.** The business that the Joint Commission may perform shall be conducted at public meetings held in compliance with the Open Meetings Act, 1976 PA 267, MCL 15.261 to 15.275. Public notice of the time, date, and place of a regular or special meeting shall be given in the manner required by that act.

g. **Freedom of Information Act.** A document prepared, owned, used, in the possession of, or retained by the Joint Commission and any staff members in the performance of an official function shall be made available to the public in compliance with the Freedom of Information Act, 1976 PA442, and MCL 15.231 to 15.246.

### Section 9. Operating Budget

The Joint Commission shall be funded by the participating municipalities on an annual basis. The accounting for the funds, assets, and serving the role of the employer of record for staff of the Joint Commission shall be performed and maintained by [___name of participating unit__], but said funds shall be jointly held by all of the participating municipalities in proportion to their required contributions. Payment for goods, services and per diem member fees drawn from said account shall be approved by the Joint Commission. The Joint Commission shall establish an annual budget, which requires the approval of all of the participating municipalities. Each municipality shall transfer its share of the funds necessary for the operating budget to the fiduciary municipality no later than the first day of the fiscal year of the Joint Commission.

Each year, funding for the annual budget shall be proportionally divided among the participating municipalities as follows:

[___insert formula for funding Joint Planning Commission___]

### Section 10. Procedure for Joining the Joint Commission

A city, village, or township may file a written request with the legislative body of each participating municipality requesting permission to become a participating municipality in the Joint Commission. Such written request shall include a certified copy of a resolution adopted by the requesting municipality's legislative body supporting such request. A copy of such request shall be submitted to the Joint Commission for review and recommendation to the legislative bodies of each participating municipality. After receiving the Joint Commission's recommendation, each participating municipality shall vote to accept or reject the petition to join. If both participating municipalities vote to accept the petition to join, then the Joint Commission will develop and present recommendations concerning any revisions of this Agreement to the participating municipalities. Upon the revision of this Agreement by a duly enacted ordinance adopted by each participating municipality and the requesting municipality, the requesting municipality shall become a participating municipality.

The requesting municipality shall bear the entire cost of revising the Agreement and the ordinance, and the cost updating a joint master plan and a joint zoning ordinance, if one should exist. If either of the participating municipalities votes to reject the petition to join, then the petition shall be rejected and no further action will be taken.

### Note on Section 9, Operating Budget:

Here is where you set forth the formula agreed upon for funding the Joint Planning Commission. That formula could be an equal 50:50 ratio, or some other ratio, such as ⅜ and ⅝. It can also be a formula based on some comparative factor such as population, acreage, State Equalized Value, Taxable Value, total tax revenue collected, or it could be a combination of such factors.

### Note on Section 10, Procedure for Joining the Joint Commission:

The parties may agree on a different method for accepting or rejecting new members. For example, they may want to provide for:

- Majority vote of participating municipalities in order to reject or accept a new member,
- Super majority (e.g., 2/3) vote of participating municipalities in order to reject or accept a new member,
- Cost sharing for updating the master plan and zoning ordinance (and CIP, subdivision/land division ordinance etc.)
- Not allow additional members.
- And any number of additional possibilities.
Section 11. Procedure for Withdrawing from the Joint Commission

A participating municipality shall have the right to withdraw from the Joint Commission only upon completion of the following conditions:

1) The withdrawing municipality shall have paid its proportional share of any and all obligations of the Joint Commission, including the balance of any contractual fees, service contracts, legal and other costs;

2) The legislative body of the withdrawing municipality shall have held a public hearing on its intent to withdraw from the Joint Commission. Notice of such public hearing shall be published in a newspaper of general circulation in the local unit of government not less than 15 days before the date of the hearing.

3) Following such public hearing the legislative body of the withdrawing municipality shall have adopted a findings of fact, recitation of reasons, and its decision to withdraw from the Joint Commission.

4) Following such public hearing, the legislative body of the withdrawing municipality may enact an ordinance by which to withdraw from the Joint Commission.

5) The reasonable cost of any joint master plan amendments, joint ordinance amendments, Joint Commission ordinance and agreement remaining in effect in for the other participating municipalities, and other withdrawal costs shall be borne by the withdrawing municipality. If there are only two (2) participating municipalities at the time of withdrawal from the Joint Commission the reasonable cost of replacing any joint master plan, joint ordinance, and other withdrawal costs shall be borne by the withdrawing municipality for the remaining municipality unless another cost sharing formula is mutually agreed upon.

The withdrawal shall take effect when the above requirements have been satisfied. When there are only two (2) participating municipalities in the Joint Commission, upon the withdrawal of either participating municipality, and after division of the assets and liabilities of the Joint Commission between the two municipalities in accordance with their proportional shares, this Agreement and this ordinance shall become null and void and the Joint Commission shall cease to function and shall have no further legal authority.

Section 12. Statutory powers.

Except as may be provided in this ordinance, the Joint Commission shall have all the powers and duties provided for such joint planning commissions in the Joint Municipal Planning Act, 2003 PA 226 (MCL 125.131 et seq.).

Section 13. Transition provision.

[[Choose one.]]

a. Until such time as a joint zoning ordinance is adopted, an existing zoning commission or planning commission of a participating municipality shall continue to exercise their powers and duties under the Michigan Zoning Enabling Act with respect to the Joint Commission’s area of jurisdiction.

[Or:]

a. Until such time as a joint zoning ordinance is adopted, the Joint Commission shall exercise the powers of a zoning commission or a planning commission under the Michigan Zoning Enabling Act with respect to the Joint Commission’s area of jurisdiction.

Note on Section 11. Procedure for Withdrawing from the Joint Commission:

The above procedures for withdrawal are in use in some current agreements, but they are not the only method available. The parties may agree on any method that makes sense to them. We recommend, however that withdrawal not be made too easy. The Joint Commission cannot be successful if members can opt in or opt out easily.

Additional Note: The option also exists to include more detail in this section about how to assign proportional shares of assets and liabilities, how to track who paid for what. If such detail is included the participating governments need to decide on what those details are.

Note on Section 13., Transition provision:

Whichever option you choose, it should be understood that the powers being exercised include not just zoning and/or planning, but also a planning commission’s duties with respect to public projects, capital improvements and subdivision approval. If you do not want that, you will have to say so in this ordinance/agreement.
b. Until such time as a joint master plan is adopted, an existing master plan of a participating municipality shall continue to be the master plan under the Michigan Planning Enabling Act with respect to the Joint Commission's area of jurisdiction.

Section 14. Amendments

This Agreement and Ordinance may only be changed by an amendment to this ordinance duly adopted by the legislative body of each participating municipality.

Section 15. Effective date.

This Ordinance and the Agreement incorporated herein shall be effective on the later of the following:
1) the eighth day following the last date of publication by a participating municipality if no notice of intent to file a petition for a referendum is filed as provided for in MCL 125.139; or
2) the 31st day following the filing of a notice of intent to file a petition for a referendum if no petition for a referendum is filed within 30 days after the filing of the notice; or
3) the day following the day upon which a determination is made by the clerk of each municipality in which a petition for referendum is filed that the petition calling for the referendum is inadequate; or
4) the day the ordinance is approved by the electors in each municipality in which a referendum is held.

At a regular meeting of the [__board of trustees/city commission/village council__] of [__name of municipality__] held on [__date__], adoption of the foregoing ordinance was moved by [__insert name__] and supported by [__insert name__].

Voting for: [__insert names__]

Voting against: [__insert names__]

The [choose one: __supervisor/mayor/president__] declared the ordinance adopted.

[__________]
[choose one: __supervisor/mayor/president__]

[__________]
Clerk

CERTIFICATION

The foregoing is a true copy of Ordinance No. [__] which was enacted by the [choose one: __board of trustees/city commission/village council__] of [__name of municipality__] at a regular meeting held on [__date__].

[__________]
Clerk