

The Knox County Regional Planning Commission
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August 20, 2026

The regular meeting of the Knox County Regional Planning Commission (RPC) was held on Thursday, August 20, 2026 at 7:30 p.m. in the Knox County Service Center 117 E. High St., Suite 161, Mount Vernon, OH.

Chairman Steve Bratton called the meeting to order. Darrel Severns, Secretary for the Commission, called the roll.

The following voting representatives were present:

James DeChant	Berlin Township	Chase Cochran*	Milford Township
Steve Bratton	Brown Township	Joey Moore*	Miller Township
Joe Fritz	Brown Township	Brian Frazier	Morris Township
Robert Jameison	College Township	Jim Hughes	Pleasant Township
Bob Elliott	Harrison Township	Juston Streby	Wayne Township
Jason Rogers	Hilliar Township	Andy Fox	Fredericktown
Greg Lawson	Howard Township	Ray Brewer	Fredericktown
Monica Severns	Jefferson Township	Elizabeth Bonaudi	Gambier
Darren Lee*	Liberty Township	Barry Lester	Commissioner

Others present:

Darrel Severns	Knox RPC	Cheryl Splain	Knox Pages
Bill Pursel	Commissioner	Ed O'Connell*	College Township

**Alternate*

A quorum was present with 18 voting representatives.

Approval of Minutes – Steve Bratton

Mr. Streby moved to approve the July 2026 minutes. Ms. Severns seconded the motion. A voice vote was taken with a unanimous aye vote. Motion carried.

Financial Report – Jason Rogers

Mr. Rogers presented the Financial Report for July 2026. The expenses were \$2,451.38. Income for the month was \$865.00. The month began with \$106,238.45 and ended with \$104,652.07.

Mr. Fox moved to approve the July 2026 financial report as presented. Mr. Fritz seconded the motion. A voice vote was taken with a unanimous aye vote. Motion carried.

Old Business

RPC Meeting Time – Jason Rogers

After discussion, we decided to move the RPC meetings to the second Tuesday of the month at 7:00 p.m.

Mr. Fritz moved to approve the day of the RPC meeting change to the second Tuesday of the month. Mr. Streby seconded the motion. A roll call vote was taken with a 10 aye votes and 7 nay votes. Motion carried.

This vote was rescinded later in the meeting.

Mr. Rogers moved to approve rescind the previous motion and vote and to leave the RPC meeting day and time on the Third Thursday of the month at 7:30 p.m. Ms. Severns seconded the motion. A voice vote was taken with a unanimous aye vote. Motion carried.

New Business

Mr. Severns Leaving RPC – Steve Bratton

Mr. Severns is leaving RPC, as of Friday, August 21, to work for Jefferson Township as the Road Supervisor. The previous Supervisor resigned June 10th. The posting was put out and didn't get much of a response. Ms. Severns has turned in her letter of resignation as Trustee effective August 23, 2026. She has told them she is willing to be put back on the Zoning Board or Zoning Appeals Board. She cannot remain as a Trustee as it would be supervising Mr. Severns. She did agree to staying on as a Representative of RPC.

KSWCD Agreement – Rob Clendening

After much discussion on dissolving the working agreement with KSWCD which has been in place since 2013. The way it is right now is that KSWCD is his main employer. This brings forth a whole other issue, as Darrel is employed not only by RPC, but also by Knox Soil & Water Conservation District (KSWCD). Each year KSWCD bills RPC for a portion of his wages based on his duties as Executive Secretary for RPC. It amounts to about 24 to 25 percent of his position. Mr. Severns had worked with KSWCD before going to the RPC. KSWCD was in the position of where we could still use his services and expertise on some things we needed as part of our responsibilities as conservation district. At the time, it was advantageous for the RPC because it reduced the RPC overhead costs for his employment, and it shifted it to the KSWCD. The reason that worked out well for the county overall is that the KSWCD budget is matched on a dollar basis by the Ohio Department of Agriculture. This year, for example, for every dollar the county Commissioners put in to the KSWCD budget, the Ohio Department of Agriculture matches that at 84.5 cents to the dollar. Essentially what we've been doing for the last 13 years, is we've been getting the Ohio Department of Agriculture to pay for part of the position of the RPC Director in Knox County because the position is funded through KSWCD.

We are okay with it either way, if the RPC decides it wants to go a different direction, if they want to Planning Director to be solely for RPC. As for the finances for that, we don't bill for the executive duties until the end of the year. Obviously, Mr. Severns will not be here through the end of the year. What we will do, is after his last day tomorrow, we will figure out the pro-rated portion of the executive billing will be instead of being based on 26 pay periods, it will be based on 17.5 pay periods. On top of that, that 25 percent of his duties is the Executive Secretary will be pro-rated charged for his leave payouts, based on that 24 percent.

Right now, there is a working agreement between KSWCD and RPC. As Mr. Severns exits, the Executive Committee has met with the Commissioners and others from the county staff, going forward we don't foresee that that agreement will be necessary going forward. He was in a unique position where he could fulfill both responsibilities with his position. We do not foresee that we will be able to replace Mr. Severns with those same abilities and do both jobs. If not tonight, at some point we need to dissolve that agreement with KSWCD. We can vote to give our 60 days' notice tonight. That will give Mr. Clendening 60 days to get the documentation on the balance to settle up. If we do it tonight, it would speed up the process.

Mr. Rogers moved to approve the 60 days' notice to dissolve the KSWCD agreement with RPC. Mr. Fox seconded the motion. A voice vote was taken with a unanimous aye vote. Motion carried.

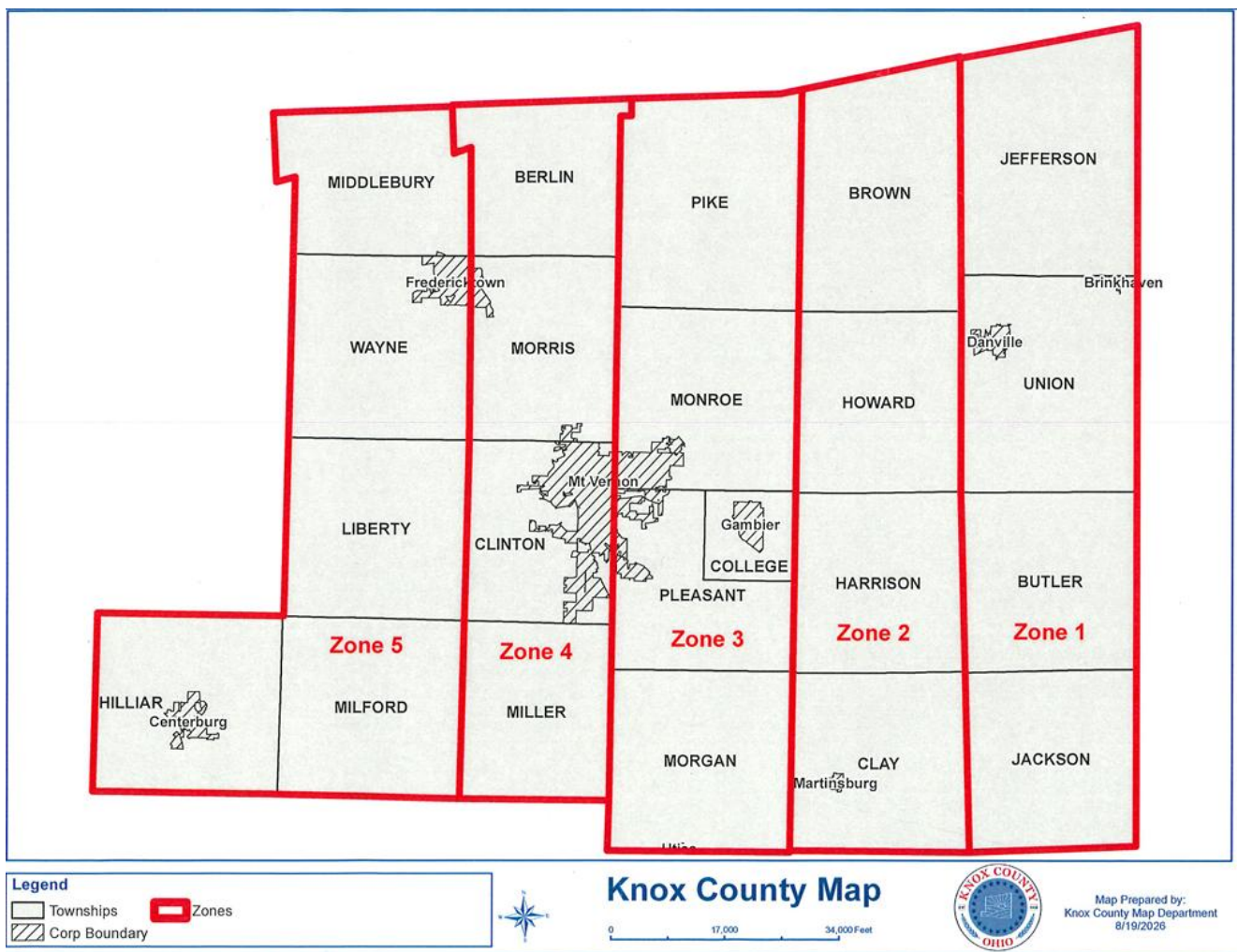
Executive Committee Report – Steve Bratton

The committee has met several times since we were notified of Mr. Severns leaving. Now the issue is where we are heading going forward, how we are going to replace Mr. Severns and what that is going to look like. We've discussed keeping the RPC as it is and hire a planner to fill that position. It would be somebody that would have services the entire county. A planner would be able to help with zoning resolutions, planning throughout the county, lot splits, and the same things that Mr. Severns does, but more. They would help with comprehensive planning, zoning verbiage, zoning bylaws, and would be a complex position. A lot of cities, towns and bigger counties have that in place already. It would be a direct representative of each one of your townships and villages. Right now, a

lot of entities inside the county that have hired an outside planner, Ms. Wendy Moeller from Compass Point. Right now, she is in the process of doing our subdivision regulations, zoning resolution for Howard, Pleasant and Hilliar Townships. Our intent with hiring a planner would take on some of those responsibilities that we are currently hiring somebody from outside to do. The RPC would be the sole responsible party for funding that employee's salary. This is some of the discussions that are currently happening. We sat down and discussed the structure of the organization; where the oversight will be, who's going to manage the new planner, and who will be their direct superior? As a regional planning commission, we operate outside of the county offices, even though our office is here. We don't have legal representation from the Prosecuting Attorney. We have outside legal counsel. The RPC cannot be overseen by the County Administrator. That was our original thought processes and it got shot down. We have come up with a couple other plans with how we can move forward, fund this position and keep the townships and the local government involved in what's going on here.

If we hire someone stay with what we have now with RPC, we have to completely fund the planner's salary. With what we currently have in our funds, we have two years. The RPC membership fee is 25 cents per capita. Every township and village will be paying significantly more to be a member in RPC to support the salary and benefits of this position, the planner. Is it possible? Yes. So, if any of the townships/villages have smaller budgets, decide they do not have the funds, may decide to not be members of RPC, leaving the other townships/villages trying to make up for that loss.

Another option is instead of a Regional Planning scheme to go with a County Planning scheme. We would dissolve what we have now, Regional Planning Commission and go to board of eleven (11) person members. Of the board, consisting of six (6) appointed Township Trustees that are taken the townships divided up into zones (see map), all three (3) commissioners, and two (2) others. In the Bylaws, the townships have majority on the board. On the board, the ORC requires that three (3) of those be the County Commissioners, or representatives of the County Commissioners. The other eight (8) positions can all be at-large depending on how we write the Bylaws. Delaware and Richland counties still have Regional Planning; Ashland and Licking have County Planning. We would still have the meetings with the board, and the Trustees can come to the meetings and have a say in what is going on. The map we discussed:



The question is how we try to maintain fair representation across the county moving forward. The last discussion was on vertical lines and that all representatives don't come from all the big names from those townships/villages and the townships have a majority of the seats (6 Trustees: 5 Trustees and 1 at-large. Mr. Lester suggested that there be a representative from Water/Sewer and the Engineer's office on that board. The map is not set in stone. They were divided up via regional aligned. The eastern side are all unzoned except for Jefferson Township. So, instead of a democracy it would be more of a republic. Each one of the sections would have a representative. All the trustees from each zone would have a meeting and vote on who would be their representative. The terms would mirror their elected term. You would have to be elected to be on the board. We are a month into this transition, and we don't feel as though we can maintain funding things as we are right now. We cannot turn this over to the county unless the townships have the majority representation on that board. Mr. Bratton stated that the people that are here at these meetings on a monthly basis, and this carries over into the months going forward, we are going to see a whole bunch of people that we call the roll every month and start showing up and saying, "Hey we don't like what you are doing." Or "We don't agree with what you are doing." Then, they should have showed up to the RPC meetings and made sure they were heard. There is only about one-third of the representatives here. Each township is paying \$0.25 per capita right now to get access to what is going on. The price per capita has never increased since it started. If they are not a member, they do not have access to the planner, unless it is written into the Bylaws that we bill them an hourly fee. If Centerburg, Brinkhaven, and Danville want to use somebody, we need to come up with a rate.

So, with the County Planning option, it is only the townships and not the villages? Originally, we were under the impression from Mr. McConville that it would be a nine (9) member board with three (3) Commissioners, so we decided to make it five (5) townships. There is nothing saying that when we write the Bylaws that can't say it is six (6) township trustee members, plus one (1) at-large member (village trustee or council member). There is nothing that says we can't do those things. We can include those villages into the section they are in. It will have to be addressed. There are five (5) villages and 22 townships who need representation. We have to hire a good planner;

the salary and benefits will be between \$150,000 to \$185,000. RPC membership dues amount to about \$15,000, and \$26,000 comes from the Commissioners, and about \$30,000 comes from KSWCD, that all goes to the salary. RPC can't hire a planner and maintain the same dues as it is now. The benefit for the townships is that they will have a planner available to help with issues you may have planning for business districts, zoning resolutions, villages, and comprehensive plan, instead of hiring someone from outside like we have had in the past. We would also pickup our County Prosecutor as our legal counsel instead of having someone from outside.

If we hire a planner, more than likely they will be coming from outside of Knox County and there will be a big learning curve. We have three (3) options; 1) Continue as we are now as long as we can, 2) Try and find a planner and go to the County Planning with three (3) Commissioners who can help fund this townships with the township majority on the board, or 3) try to go as long as possible until it fails, we may not have three (3) Commissioners and people sitting in this room that want to try and put together a good plan and it gets taken from the townships. There is the option of contracting this out. The board of directors will be part of the hiring process. Mr. Rogers stated that they have talked to a couple of counties that are willing to come in and help with the interview process. Both Licking and Ashland Counties have County Planning. Mr. Clendening stated to keep in mind that the Certified Planner or Credentialed Planner is just credentials, they may have ideas but are still under the rule of the board that still calls the shots. Any help with the zoning resolutions, they have to write to how the townships want it.

Secretary's Report —Darrel Severns

Mr. Severns stated the update on the Subdivision Regulations is getting closer to being completed. We have had two (2) meetings in the last week with Ms. Moeller and Mr. Keaton and things are getting tweaked. It should be coming within the next month. It will be a document with four (4) parts, Subdivision Regulations, floodplain regulations, storm water regulations, and an impact study section. Since Mr. Severns will not be here after Friday, the point of contact will be Mr. Keaton then he will contact Mr. Bratton.

If you look at the back of this report, there is a quarterly lot split report. It shows that our office has been very busy this year. We've had many big lots, many building lots all over the board. It doesn't look like it is slowing down any.

Mr. Severns thanked everyone for the opportunity to be the Secretary of RPC for the last 18 years. He appreciated all the support that he has received with all the friendships and relationships he's had.

Land Use – Steve Bratton

We met Tuesday, August 18th to discuss and make recommendations on zoning amendments for Pike Township and Jefferson Township. There is a handout for this.

Pike Township Zoning Resolution Revision – Steve Bratton

Pike Township is proposing to add the definition for Data Center to their Resolution and the following statement to 7.4 Prohibited Uses in the R-1 District: Any use not listed as permitted or conditional is prohibited. No specific use which is defined by this Resolution shall be construed as being included within the definition of any other defined use.

The Land Use Committee recommend approval of these revisions.

Mr. Streby moved to approve the Land Use Committee recommendation to approve the Pike Township Zoning Resolution revisions. Ms. Bonaudi seconded the motion. A voice vote was taken with a unanimous aye vote. Motion carried.

Jefferson Township Zoning Resolution Revision – Steve Bratton

This is the second time this has come before the Land Use Committee. Originally, they had made some revisions to their zoning resolution and were approved by the committee. They were adding some verbiage to the resolution concerning Data Centers and solar. Some of the definitions were lacking and it was sent back for further review. They have resubmitted it and added the verbiage as outlined by the County Prosecutor.

The Land Use Committee recommended to approve the proposed revisions to the Jefferson Township Zoning Resolution.

Mr. Lee moved to approve the Land Use Committee recommendation to approve the Jefferson Township Zoning Resolution revisions. Mr. Moore seconded the motion. A voice vote was taken with a unanimous aye vote. Motion carried.

Also, in that meeting the committee discussed changes to the Subdivision Regulations, which was pretty much what Mr. Severns discussed in the Secretary's Report.

Ms. Severns moved to approve the Land Use Committee Report. Mr. Fritz seconded the motion. A voice vote was taken with a unanimous aye vote. Motion carried.

Social Improvement and Economic Development Committee – Darrel Severns
Null

Education and Outreach Committee – Darrel Severns
Null

Transportation Committee – Jim Hughes
Null

Knox County Commissioner – Barry Lester

The Water/Wastewater Office is moving over to close to the entrance of Apple Valley and is under construction. The completion of the Knox Building Conference room will be utilized for larger groups of people for meetings like this. A question was asked about how many townships had banned Data Centers. Mr. Bratton stated that there were six townships: Wayne, Liberty, Clinton, Jefferson, Pike, and College.

Per Mr. Pursel, in the courthouse there is an issue with the elevator where people have been stuck in it. We have been working over a year to figure out how to fix it, as there are no parts available for this elevator. It was put in in the 1960s. There are no parts, and any new type of elevator is too big, and it is in a historical building. This is being worked on.

Knox Public Health – Kyle Shackle
Null

Knox Area Development (ADF) – Sam Filkins, President of Knox Area Development Foundation
Null

Knox Soil and Water Report – Rob Clendening

We appreciate the working relationship we have had with RPC the past 13 years. We were involved in the RPC prior to the agreement. We will be available in the future when you need us. The map of the county divided up into zones is not set in stone and it was something RPC came up with over the last couple of days. Mr. Bratton stated if you have suggestions, just let us know.

The KSWCD annual meeting is set for September 15th at The Barn in Sunset Valley in Danville at 5:00. Dinner will be provided as donation at the door instead of the purchase of a ticket. Call the office to RSVP. Dinner will be half a BBQ chicken with sides.

County, City and Village Reports

Brinkhaven/Gann – Christopher Wyant
Null

Centerburg – Daniel Hardwick

Null

Danville – Lee Meyers

Null

Fredericktown – Ray Brewer

We just finished up with our water improvement project.

Gambier – Elizabeth Bonaudi

Null

Martinsburg – Robert Collins

Null

Speaker – None

Null

Others from the floor

Null

Mr. Lawson moved to adjourn. The meeting was adjourned at 8:20 p.m.

The next meeting of the Knox County Regional Planning Commission will be September 15, 2026 in the Knox County Service Center 117 E. High St., Suite 161, Mount Vernon, OH at 7:30 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Steve Bratton
RPC Chairman