

## Short History of the Formation of the WJPC

At the time, 14 of the county's 16 townships depended on county zoning. Two townships, two cities and three villages in the county already had their own zoning. The county made the repeal of county zoning effective at the end of 2016 despite vocal opposition.

One township decided to adopt its own zoning ordinance. During the first half of 2016, various other local governments in Wexford County attended a [Michigan State University Extension](#) training program on joint planning commissions, as well as meetings about how township might create their own [planning commission and adopt their own zoning ordinance](#). As a result of that training, 13 townships decided to explore the creation of a joint planning commission. One township decided it did not have the development pressure or potential to warrant a zoning ordinance and did not have the funds to do so.

That left 12 townships which went through negotiations to form a joint planning commission. The facilitation to help guide the townships to reach agreement on all the details was done by educator [Kurt H. Schindler, AICP](#), from MSU Extension. Legal assistance and legal review was provided pro bono by [Sarah C. Alden, Esq.](#), with assistance by [Ricard M. Wilson Jr., Esq.](#), both of [Mika Meyers PLC](#). In the end, another township did not follow up to take action to join the joint planning commission, leaving the remaining 11 townships in the Wexford Joint Planning Commission.

The creation of a joint planning commission is guided by the [Joint Municipal Planning Act](#), which requires an agreement and ordinance to create a joint planning commission. The starting point was to use the [sample agreement and ordinance](#) prepared by MSU Extension and Richard J. Figura, *Esq.*, of [Figura Law](#) (of counsel to [Simen, Figura, & Parker, PLC](#)).

The major incentive behind creating the Wexford Joint Planning Commission was (1) the desire to retain planning and zoning and (2) the cost savings of doing so cooperatively. A first year Wexford Joint Planning Commission budget of \$50,000 will cost the largest township (in population, number of parcels, and total taxable value) just under \$9,800 per year, and the smallest township will have a cost of under \$3,000 per year. The 11 townships agreed to a funding formula where everyone pays an equal amount for the first 20 percent of the total budget (fixed costs), then a proportion to the township's total taxable value for 40 percent of the total budget (ability to pay) and finally a proportion to the number of parcels in the township (an indicator of how much zoning permit activity will take place) for the last 40 percent of the total budget.

Each township appoints their own representative member to the Joint Planning Commission, and each township has one representative for three-year staggered terms – making for an 11-member joint planning commission. Others can join upon paying the costs of updating the master plan and zoning ordinance to accommodate their joining. Withdrawing from the joint commission is a long process – with intent for requiring passage of time as a possible cooling off period for a controversy that may have led to the desire to withdraw. The Wexford Joint Planning Commission will have all the powers and duties of any Michigan Planning Commission except for the creation of a Capital Improvement Program. The CIP is left to each respective township board.