

June 2nd, 2026 Mendon Township Board of Trustees General Meeting

Public Comment:

Good evening. My name is Robin Burpee. Before I begin, I am handing a physical copy of my full statement to the clerk, and I explicitly request that the entirety of these remarks be entered verbatim into the **permanent public record** of tonight's meeting.

I am here tonight to remind this board and the Mendon Township Planning Commission that your Zoning Ordinance is a binding legal contract with the residents of Mendon Township—not with industrial developers.

I am speaking tonight because our agricultural heritage is under immediate threat across southwest Michigan. We are all aware of the rumors surrounding the recent sale of a large portion of the **Haas farmland**. While no official project has been submitted to my knowledge, we must get ahead of this threat before developers try to permanently split our community.

We need to look no further than **Fayette Township**, where resident Michelle Bianchi — speaking as a citizen, not as the Hillsdale County Probate and Family Court Judge — urged her planning commission to recognize that their first duty is to the **health, safety, and general welfare** of the residents, not to the convenience of industrial developers. Concluding her remarks by stating, "We are done here". This statement emphasized that community standards regarding industrial encroachment were non-negotiable and that further compromises would not be accepted.

Our ordinance mirrors this exact philosophy. **Section 20.05 (L)** mandates that any use "*must comply with all*" applicable requirements. As we look at the potential industrialization of the Haas land—whether for data centers, manufacturing, or energy storage—the Commission has a strict legal obligation to hold developers to the absolute letter of the law.

We must recognize that different industrial threats require different legal strategies under Michigan law:

1. **Data Centers & General Heavy Industry Are 100% Bound by Us:** If the Haas land is being eyed for massive, fan-cooled data storage facilities, commercial manufacturing, or heavy warehousing, the state gives these corporations zero shortcuts. They are fully subject to our local rules. Under **Section 20.05 (B)**, these heavy industries—with their constant noise, heat, and heavy truck traffic—are fundamentally incompatible with agricultural and residential zones. The Commission has the absolute right and duty to deny them.

2. **We Must Guard Against PA 233 Exploitation:** If a developer intends to exploit **Michigan Public Act 233** to build a massive, utility-scale Battery Energy Storage System (BESS) or industrial solar array to bypass our township, we cannot just sit on our hands. While PA 233 attempts to strip local control for projects over 50 megawatts, it does **not** take away our voice.
3. **Safety and Harmony Are Still Non-Negotiable:** Under **Section 20.05 (A)**, our ordinance requires a "harmonious design." There is nothing harmonious about dropping high-voltage battery facilities prone to thermal runaway, toxic gas releases, or sprawling industrial complexes next to family farms and residential homes. Even under the state's PA 233 rules, the Michigan Public Service Commission (MPSC) is legally forced to look at local impact.

The lesson from Fayette Township and over [80 other Michigan townships fighting this overreach](#) is clear: we must stand firm right now.

I ask this Board to do two things tonight:

- **First**, publicly pledge to strictly enforce Sections 17.02 and 20.05 to deny any data centers or heavy industrial zoning changes on the Haas property or any large mass of farmland in our community for lease or sale.
- **Second**, proactively look into adopting a **Compatible Renewable Energy Ordinance (CREO)** or maximum safety setbacks allowed by law, so state-level energy developers cannot catch Mendon Township unprepared.

If an industrial developer cannot prove compliance with every single local standard, our law states you must deny the request. We expect you to protect our farmland, our residents and our community.

Again, I request that the clerk record this full statement in the official minutes to reflect the community's expectations of this board.

Thank you.
