


MEMORANDUM

TO: Elk Rapids Township Planning Commission
FROM: Larry Nix, PCP Consulting
DATE: February 12, 2024
RE: Master Plan Modification – Agriculture Processing



Over the past several years we have observed many changes in the agriculture industry in the State of Michigan. Most of these changes have resulted in the loss of farming activities, the number of families farming, and the loss of farmland. Elk Rapids Township has a long history in the agricultural industry and many families dedicated to this industry. Every time the Planning Commission updates the Master Plan the question is raised regarding the protection of the agricultural industry in Elk Rapids Township.

It has recently come to my attention that there are many Townships in the State of Michigan that feel the same way of protecting this important industry in the State of Michigan. My research finds other communities have added language in their Master Plan to support the agricultural industry similar to our previous discussions of supporting this industry but have never created language to do so. In an effort to support this historic industry in Elk Rapids Township, I suggest we consider adding the following language to the Master Plan.

The first location would be on page 6, Natural Areas and Agricultural, at the end of the first paragraph:

Fruit, vegetable, dairy and grain processing as defined in the Michigan Agricultural Processing Act, Act 381 of 1998, as amended (Agricultural Processing) is an important land use to citizens of the Township. Agricultural Processing utilizes raw materials produced within the Township, provides employment opportunities for Township citizens, provides tax revenue to the Township, and creates or supports downstream businesses within the Township and surrounding area. Elk Rapids Township believes that Agricultural Processing is consistent with farming activities and thus should be a permitted use, either by right or as a special land use, within all agricultural zoned districts.

The second location would be on page 13, before the last paragraph.

The Agricultural land use designation is also meant to accommodate Agricultural Processing. As noted in the Introduction, Agricultural Processing is consistent with farming activities. Without sufficient local Agricultural Processing, farming activities will become extremely difficult. There has been a trend in Michigan of Agricultural Processing facilities closing and/or consolidating. The farther away the Agricultural Processing facilities the more difficult it will be to maintain profitable farming activities within the Township. Thus, it is a goal of this plan to encourage and facilitate the presence of Agricultural Processing within the Agricultural-zoned districts and as buffers between agricultural land uses and commercial land uses.”

The addition of these two paragraphs would help bolster the Township’s commitment to the agricultural industry in Elk Rapids Township. This addition to the Master Plan can be added at the Public Hearing scheduled for March 12, 2024, at 6:30pm.