



An Open Space Community

**House Bill 500 Written Proponent Testimony
House State and Local Government Committee
March 12, 2018**

Chairwoman Anielski, Vice Chair Hambley, Ranking Member Holmes and members of the House State and Local Government Committee, thank you for this opportunity to submit written testimony in support of House Bill 500.

My name is Cara Tilford and I have the honor as serving as the Director of Planning and Zoning for Sugar Creek Township in Greene County.

Like many Townships in the State of Ohio, Sugar Creek Township has seen an increase in development proposals reviewed by our Zoning Commission and our Board of Zoning Appeals in recent years. Our Township Trustees place a great deal of emphasis on the recommendations of our Zoning Commission and our Board of Zoning Appeals provides an important service to its applicants. It is absolutely imperative that both our Zoning Commission and our Board of Zoning Appeals offer our residents and the development community a fair, timely, and comprehensive review of the development proposals submitted to them.

Section 519.04 B. of the Ohio Revised Code provides for the removal of a member of the Zoning Commission upon written charges being filed with the Board of Trustees and after a public hearing has been held. It requires service of the charges to the member at least ten days prior to the public hearing. Section 519.13 provides the same provisions for removal of a member of the Board of Zoning Appeals. Sections 519.04 B. and 519.13, however, provide no guidance as to when that public hearing must be held, nor does it speak to the status of the member against whom charges have been brought after charges have been filed. The statute establishes causes for removal including misconduct in office, a serious charge for which immediate suspension would be warranted to preserve the integrity of the board during the time in which charges are fully vetted. No such provision for suspension currently exists.

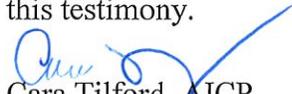
House Bill 500 would provide provisions for necessary due process to members of both the Zoning Commission and Board of Zoning Appeals upon which charges have been filed by establishing a timeline in which the public hearing must be held. Furthermore, House Bill 500 would provide for the suspension of a member by majority vote of the Board of Township

Trustees, while preserving their position, during the period of up to sixty days before the pending hearing for removal.

Zoning Commission and Board of Zoning Appeals members work closely with one another, often times with competing ideas about what is in the best interest of the Townships they serve. In our case, we had a situation wherein a member of the Zoning Commission with very strong opinions on an issue lashed out at staff and other Zoning Commission members acting in a threatening, menacing and completely unprofessional manner. This member was, at the end of the process, removed from his position but his status as an active member of the Zoning Commission remained unchanged during the period in which the public hearing on the written charges was pending. House Bill 500 will provide Township Trustees the ability to immediately suspend a member against whom charges have been filed allowing the important work of Townships to continue without complication.

Townships are engines of economic development in the State of Ohio. Development proposals are often times constrained by deadlines for due diligence and zoning approval periods. Unexpected delays can derail projects and have real, significant consequences. Establishing provisions to ensure our development review processes run smoothly, fairly and without extraneous impediments is an important job. House Bill 500 allows Townships to continue to do the important job of fostering growth, prosperity and progress in this great State.

On behalf of Sugarcreek Township and Townships in Ohio, we appreciate your consideration and support of House Bill 500. I am happy to answer any questions that you may have regarding this testimony.


Cara Tilford, AICP