

**Whitewater Township Planning Commission
Minutes of Meeting held on April 1, 2009**

Call to Order

Vice-Chairperson Mangus called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. at Whitewater Township Hall, 5777 Vinton Road, Williamsburg, Michigan.

Roll Call

Members Present: Boyd, Courtade, Lyons, Mangus, and Savage.

Members Absent: Miller and Zakrajsek (both excused).

Also attending: Planning/Zoning Administrator Meyers, Planning Intern Akers, Recording Secretary Pulver, and 6 others.

Set/Adjust Agenda

The agenda was adjusted as discussed.

Approval of Minutes of 03/04/09 Regular Meeting

Moved by Savage, seconded by Boyd, to approve the 03/04/09 Regular Meeting Minutes.

Motion approved 5-0.

Approval of Minutes of 03/11/09 Special Meeting

Moved by Boyd, seconded by Savage, to approve the 03/11/09 Special Meeting Minutes.

Motion approved 5-0.

Declaration of Conflict of Interest

Savage declared a conflict of interest on the minor site plan amendment for Renee's House of Quilting.

Public Comment

Karin Beery, Elk Rapids Newspaper

Introduced herself and stated she plans to attend the Planning Commission's monthly meetings.

Public Hearings

None.

Reports

Correspondence--O.I.L. Letter to Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)

Meyers wrote a letter of concern to the EPA regarding the O.I.L. draft permit (MI-055-11-C002, see attached letter). She later received a notice of public hearing for 04/27/09 at Mill Creek School as follows: informational meeting 5-7pm; Hubbell well permit public hearing 7-8pm; and a hearing on another permit, the Cherry Berry well in Acme, 8-9pm. The hearing on the Acme project may be rescheduled which may affect the O.I.L. hearing. Meyers will update the Planning Commission on any changes in the date of the hearing and will also post the information on the Township website.

Zoning Administrator--February 2009

Meyers provided her written February report dated 03/17/09 (attached to minutes). She also stated Marty Dillon will attend the 05/06/09 meeting to discuss windmills and wind energy. Mr. Dillon's discussion will be presented as Continuing Education.

TC/TALUS Representative--03/04/09 Meeting

Meyers reported that the TC/TALUS road analysis for the Grand Vision project was returned for a rewrite as it was unacceptable. The report was re-presented today (04/01/09); Meyers was unable to attend but received information that it was improved. Meyers will report on the road analysis next month. Mangus requested copies of both reports for comparison purposes.

Township Board Representative

Boyd stated many issues were discussed at the recent budget meeting. He encouraged everyone to attend, listen and become educated on the budget and the budget process.

Boyd also reported that he attended an Introduction to Planning and Zoning in Gaylord which included 79 in attendance from all over the state. It was a good program with much information presented. A few comments he gleaned from the conference to share with the Planning Commission:

- keep zoning issues simple so that everyone can understand them;
- keep attorneys away from zoning; and
- zoning is not sustainable.

Boyd also participated in a question-and-answer session which suggested that master plans are not law; he shared with the participants that has not been his experience in this area as the judges take a different view.

Chair

Mangus referenced some interesting articles that were relevant to our township relating to the Michigan Township Association surveys of people's preferences in housing in the latest issue of the *Michigan Township News*.

Mangus also stated 5 people will be attending Citizen Planner training on 04/16/09 at 6:30pm and suggested carpooling.

Mangus also suggested keeping a running tally of items that have been tabled and include it on meeting agendas. The item was raised at the open house by citizens who had asked about the status of certain issues. Meyers will also ask Akers to add it to the web site.

New Business

Minor Site Plan Amendment--Renee's House of Quilting

Savage left the table at 7:21pm.

Meyers presented her report on the request (see attached memo dated 03/23/09). The Savages wish to enclose their existing front porch to use year-round for their business. The footprint will not change, additional parking and landscaping will not be required, nor will drainage calculations need to be verified. Meyers stated she has interpreted the request to be a minor amendment for Planning Commission review without a fee or need for a public hearing.

Boyd moved, seconded by Courtade, to approve the minor site plan modification as presented by the applicants based on the following findings:

1. The proposed modification requires no updates other than changing a label from "existing covered porch" to "enclosed structure."
2. Fire review is not necessary for this application.

3. The footprint will remain the same as what has been previously approved on two occasions.
4. The site will remain in compliance with all applicable Township, County, and State requirements.

Discussion:

Mangus asked if the perimeter is currently enclosed under the flooring. Savage stated the porch sits on a 4" concrete slab built on 5 rows of blocks and 8' x 16' reinforced footing. Boyd suggested that although fire review is not necessary for the application, it would be a good idea for Meyers to include a letter from the fire inspector for the file stating such.

**Roll call vote: Courtade, yes; Lyons, yes; Mangus, yes; Boyd, yes (Savage abstained).
Motion approved 4-0.**

Savage returned to the table at 7:26pm.

Meyers also updated the Planning Commission on a presentation made last month by Tara Colby, Creative Canine Solutions. She stated Ms. Colby's offer was turned down on the building on M-72. She worked with Ms. Colby and her realtor and found that she could go by right in Agricultural zoning with no site plan and there is a lot of available land on M-72. They are considering that option as she wants to be in the township. Ms. Colby may build or purchase an existing building.

Year-End Report

Meyers presented a draft report covering the period 04/01/08-03/31/09 for review as required by the Planning Enabling Act.

Discussion:

Mangus noted that the Planning Commission spent substantial time on several items that were not completed. The report accurately reflects the accomplishments; Meyers stated she summarized the work and activities of the Planning Commission.

Savage moved, seconded by Lyons to approve the draft to submit the Year-End Report to the Township Board.

Roll call vote: Lyons, yes; Mangus, yes; Savage, yes; Boyd, yes; Courtade, yes. Motion approved 5-0.

Skype Rules for Usage

Planning/Zoning Intern Akers presented proposed Skype rules and procedures for web casting meetings (copy attached to minutes).

Discussion:

- Need way to manage and control people speaking beyond the time limit, disruptive or abusive speakers, or excessive background noise.
- Use of Skype and web casting could be Continuing Education topic.
- Could Planning Commission purchase a microphone to loan out to people who don't have or cannot afford one? Cost is approx. \$10-\$15.
- Would like to notify citizens that comments and questions can be submitted by e-mail or instant message to be addressed at the Planning Commission meeting.

Meyers suggested the minor changes to the rules and procedures be made and begin using Skype. She would like to let people know it is available and see how it will work.

Boyd moved, seconded by Savage to adopt the Skype Rules and Procedures for Planning Commission meetings with the following changes:

--Paragraph 1: add that if a resident wishes to participate in public comment, a microphone is needed to transmit audio; otherwise e-mails or instant messages may be sent.

--Paragraph 6: add warning if they go over time that they may be disconnected. This will also be included in the agenda as part of the public comment portion. Also add that e-mails/instant messages will be accepted for public comment.

Roll call vote: Mangus, yes; Savage, yes; Boyd, yes; Courtade, yes; Lyons, yes. Motion approved 5-0.

Facebook Account

Meyers also raised the topic of including the Township on Facebook, a social networking website (see Akers memo attached to minutes). This is a topic that has been raised a few times, requested from the open house, and also is another way to interact with the public. Akers discussed some possibilities of how it could be used. Redford Charter Township's Facebook site includes meeting notices, records meetings, and posts videos, among other things. The benefit of adding a Facebook account is that it could possibly reach a younger audience in the Township and get more people involved.

Discussion

--Duplication of the current Township web site.

--Will need to be maintained beyond the Intern's time at the Township;

--Could include a changing question of the day that people could respond to; would include more timely topics.

--Possibly ask on the current Township website what people think about Facebook and if it would be a good way to solicit input and information.

--Boyd noted that a website for Elmwood Township at www.elmwoodtownship.com includes some interesting features that could be considered as a model (this site appears to be a commercial site rather than the official township site).

The consensus of the Planning Commission was to get more information prior to consideration of adopting Facebook and to concentrate efforts on other priorities. Meyers noted that use of Skype for web casting for 3-4 months will also provide some insight as to the interest and involvement of residents.

Old Business

Open House Discussion

Mangus suggested setting a special meeting to discuss the open house and to set the course for next actions with regard to the Master Plan and Zoning Ordinance. Generally, input from the open house was positive--30 people attended, 9 letters with comments were received, and 6 letters were sent with messages stating that they could not attend but looked forward to the next open house.

Agreement was reached during discussion to hold another open house to maintain the momentum of public involvement and to continue to gather input on relevant issues. Possibly hold an open house every 2-3 months with perhaps half of the Planning Commission members at a time so that they don't have to attend every open house.

Meyers stated if possible, that the June meeting will focus solely on setting the course for the Master Plan and Zoning Ordinance.

Moved by Boyd, seconded by Lyons to schedule a meeting on Wednesday, 05/20/09 from 5:30pm-8:30pm to solicit input from the public regarding the Master Plan, Zoning Ordinance and any other public feedback. **Roll call vote: Savage, yes; Boyd, yes; Courtade, yes; Lyons, yes; Mangus, yes. Motion approved 5-0.**

Discussion

- Would like to get information into the newsletter (deadline has passed) to announce open house. Meyers will find out if there is a reasonable way to add a sticker to the newsletter.
- Consider purchasing sign if it will be continuing event; can buy a sign for \$300 at Sam's.
- Attendance of *Elk Rapids News* representative is a positive sign and will be a means to provide information to the public on township activities.
- Open House date will be provided for community calendars and flyers will be prepared for distribution.

Bylaws Review

Meyers presented a final draft of the Bylaws. One correction to be made is to add the word "amended" on P. 5, Section 10.

Discussion

Meyers noted that it is policy of the Township Board and not a legal requirement that the Bylaws be submitted to the Board for approval as they created the ordinance that created the Planning Commission.

Savage moved, seconded by Courtade, to submit the revised Bylaws of the Whitewater Township Planning Commission to the Township Board for their approval. **Roll call vote: Boyd, yes; Courtade, yes; Lyons, yes; Mangus, yes; Savage, yes. Motion approved 5-0.**

Sign Ordinance

Mangus stated it will be difficult for the Planning Commission to work through the entire sign ordinance to address farmer's issues for the 2009 growing season. She suggested some type of action or a subcommittee to specifically address the issue of farmer's signs at the next meeting.

Discussion

- Concern regarding 4' x 8' signs that may block clear vision or right-of-way areas.
- These particular signs are temporary; thus "grandfathering" does not apply.
- Need to support our farmers.
- Make language consistent with reference to off-site and/or off-premise.

The Planning Commission authorized Meyers to also note any appropriate adjustments throughout the text related to this amendment. The public hearing may also solicit some amendments prior to finalization.

Moved by Boyd, seconded by Savage, to hold a public hearing to consider modification of Article XXX Sign Regulations as follows:

30.14 Definitions

X. "Temporary Sign" shall mean a sign not constructed or intended for long term use. Examples of temporary signs include signs which announce a coming attraction, a sale or bargain, a community or civic project or other special events that occur for a limited period of time.

30.20 Temporary Off-Site Sign(s) for Advertising the Sale of Agricultural Products including Agritourism.

Up to ~~four (4)~~ five (5) temporary, off-premise way-finding signs ~~may~~ shall be permitted that direct travelers to seasonal sales of agricultural products and related activities. Said signs shall not be placed within road right of ways and shall adhere to traffic laws of the state of Michigan and clear vision areas. Signs shall be placed on private property with written permission from the property owner(s). Proof of permission shall be provided at the time of application.

Signs shall not exceed thirty-two (32) square feet and may be printed on both sides. Signs shall be removed immediately following the end of the appropriate season.

Temporary Off-Site Agricultural Signage shall not be counted against the hosting property owners.

~~30.21~~ 30.22 Signs Prohibited

N. Which is an off premise sign unless otherwise allowed within this Article.

Roll call vote: Courtade, yes; Lyons, yes; Mangus, yes, Savage, yes; Boyd, yes. Motion approved 5-0.

Mangus noted she expressed a concern to Meyers to expedite this particular section of the ordinance. It is an issue that comes from the community and it will directly affect the farmers. Boyd suggested contacting the farmers directly to let them know of the public hearing. Lyons will provide a list of farmers to Meyers.

The Planning Commission agreed that they will revisit the remainder of the sign ordinance at a later date.

Public Comment

Denise Kessner, 9819 Pine Needle Lane
Support the farmers; very important in this Township.

Continuing Education—Running an Effective Meeting

Meyers presented information on running an effective meeting and related it to the Planning Commission. The outline of her presentation is included in the minutes.

Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 9:20 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Patricia Pulver, Recording Secretary