

**WILLIAMSTOWN TOWNSHIP
PLANNING COMMISSION MEETING
MINUTES – JANUARY 24, 2018**

CALL TO ORDER

The Williamstown Township Planning Commission convened at 7:30pm at the Township Hall, 4990 Zimmer road, Williamston, MI. Chair Eidt called the meeting to order and reviewed the agenda.

PRESENT: Chair Eidt, Commissioners Brown-Timm, Giese, Weston, Stanford, LaMore and Davis.

ABSENT: Trustee Eyster. Quorum established.

ALSO PRESENT: Planning Consultant Mike Deem of McKenna Associates and Jim Howard, Planning Assistant.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Supervisor Bloomquist introduced Mike Deem from McKenna Associates. Chris Doozan is retiring and Mike will be taking over as the Township's Planning Consultant. While the Planning Commission expressed that they were sorry to see Chris go (~ 29 years with the Township) they welcomed Mike and looked forward to working with him.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Motion by Davis, second by Brown-Timm to approve the minutes of November 9, 2017 with a grammatical correction.

Motion approved 6 – 0 (Weston abstained as he was absent.)

PUBLIC COMMENT (continued)

None.

PUBLIC HEARING

Chair Eidt opened the Public Hearing on Solar Energy Systems.

Consultant Mike Deem reviewed the draft language and went through Chris Doozan's memo dated 11/27/17 that included: commercial is considered a special use; the landscaping requirements especially shrubs and the necessity for ground cover; utility grade and community solar treated as a special use; and the removal requirement as outlined. Commissioner Weston inquired about the R-1 and other clustered developments and the utilization of unsold, open lots. Also mentioned utilization of the flood plain.

Clarification was provided that such facilities not be located within flood plains.

Correspondence from Kurt Guter was reviewed. Points addressed in the letter were:

- Placement of facilities in the front yard on appropriate lots
- Screening for the racking and the use of fencing and boulders
- In Planned developments (PDs) the plan could be amended
- 6 months vs. 12 months regarding removal if not in use

Further discussion included:

- 80% of area not eligible and are we being too restrictive
- What about schools and the use of public buildings
- Use of solar should be encouraged
- Setbacks for utility grade abutting residential
- Utilization on Township property

Chair Eidt then called for public comment in favor of the proposal.

Edward Brown, 2145 Haslett, stated that he has solar, and is worried about being too restrictive, that landscaping could be a problem (due to shading) and that the 10' height is a bit too low (his already exceeds that).

Richard Lunt (& wife), 1400 Trotters Lane, who develops solar panels, questioned how panels are assessed. He would suggest that they not be. He strongly supports the Township's efforts for solar and other alternative fuels.

Leo Sheets, 1495 Moyer, has solar panels on 10 acres, said placement of panels should be determined by the site and sun location. Has concerns about screening, favors allowing panels in front yard. Also has concerns about height requirement, and that the 10K restriction is a little undersized (he has 24K). Also stated that the building permit requirement is a good thing.

Ener Almanza, 5070 Zimmer, has 5 acres and asked whether the 10Kwt limit would be removed.

Krishnan Sudharsan, 2197 Haslett, asked whether they would be allowed in the front yard.

R. Barkham mentioned that old barns, currently in place but not used, could be redeployed for solar use rather than being torn down.

Supervisor Bloomquist mentioned that the current regulations for private solar, though brief, are less restrictive.

Chair Eidt stated that because of all the comments and discussion, written comments would be received at the Township until Friday, 1/26/18 until 5:00pm. He also stated that the Planning commission needed more time, and thanked all those who attended and spoke during public comment.

Brief discussion ensued regarding the current language – allowed in front yard, height of 14'.

Motion by LaMore, second by Davis, to close the public hearing.

Motion approved 7 – 0.

Mike Deem stated that the 10Kwt requirement can be changed. Perhaps language discerning whether the power is used on-site or off-site would be more useful. Also mentioned that the definitions cover all systems discussed, and the difference in visibility between a 10 acre site vs. a ½ acre site.

Commissioner Weston had further questions about screening.

Mike Deem discussed the screening as it relates to visibility from adjacent properties.

Also discussed was how fluid the situation is as it relates to advancements in technology.

There was consensus among Planning Commissioners for a 15' height.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

Chair Eidt stated that due to the discussion and revisions to the amendment, there would be no recommendation to the Township board at this time, and that the PC would review the revised language at the March meeting.

NEW BUSINESS

-Set Public Hearing: Barkham Creek Farms

Mike Deem mentioned that he will have his review letter finished tomorrow, and that many items were missing from the site plan.

Chair Eidt suggested that the PC set the public hearing for the March 28, 2018 meeting and that the applicant have until February 28 to get complete information and site plan to the Township.

It was mentioned that the site photo from the assessing program is old and that the farmhouse shown was razed approximately 5 years ago.

R. Barkham discussed his proposed operation and stated that a new well and septic would be installed. He also indicated that they have had a corn maize in the past and that they have a "pumpkin pickin' party" annually with tractor hay rides that draws upwards of 250 people. He has talked with the Road Department (ICRD) and will have to upgrade the driveway to asphalt.

Questions for the applicant included:

- hauling in apples -would it be through back of cider mill?
- Traffic concerns - however most of the traffic is on weekends

Mr. Barkham mentioned that they have had an employee direct traffic as needed.

Motion by Stanford, second by LaMore, to set the public hearing for Barkham Creek Farms for the March 28, 2018 meeting, with complete information due in to the Township by February 28.

Motion approved 7 – 0.

-Review of Roads Policy and Funding:

Supervisor Bloomquist discussed the Roads Policy the Township Board has been working on.

The Township strives to maintain a \$1 million Fund Balance, and that it will be reduced to \$800,000 with the \$200,000 going toward roads. In 2018 the County match will be \$45,000. Road priorities are established using the PASER scores and recommendations from the Road Department (ICRD). ICRD tries to work on a 4-year cycle, and the Township Board is stretching that to 6 years. The township has 27 miles of neighborhood roads, that gravel roads are not paved and that there are a couple of roads that need to revert back to gravel. The Zimmer Road bridge was done with Federal funds. The Township is developing a neighborhood road policy to assist neighborhoods with road maintenance.

-Review draft language: Small Wine Makers/Hard Cider Producers/Small Distillers

Mike Deem reviewed the language in Chris Doozan's memo.

Discussion:

- Whether a winery and distillery could be located on the same site
- The 300' requirement from an existing commercial establishment or an AG-C district
- The definition of hard cider producer being limited to apples, and the inclusion of other fruit

Motion by Brown-Timm, second by Davis, to hold a public hearing at the 3/28/18 meeting to consider the ordinance language.

Motion approved 7 – 0.

-Review of Master Plan:

It was discussed that the Recreation Plan needs to be updated to incorporate the new house and property, as well as page 7.7, #5, of the M.P., that roads need to be included, and there needs to be a new classification for "subdivision" roads.

Commissioner LaMore mentioned that the existing land use map needs to be updated.

Commissioner Stanford offered to have the other commissioners send him their issues about the Master Plan and he will compile a list.

PLANNING AND BOARD REPORTS AND REVIEW

Planning Staff: Howard mentioned the list of training opportunities included in the packet and that he would be updating it as the year goes on.

Mike Deem mentioned that McKenna can do customized training.

Commissioner LaMore mentioned the impact of advancing technology.

Commissioner Brown-Timm reviewed her attendance at the Citizen Planner program. It was a 7-week program and was very interesting, and very good, and she would definitely recommend it to anyone.

CORRESPONDENCE

The additional correspondence in the packet was mentioned – the letter from Meridian Township notifying commissioners that the new Master Plan has been adopted, and legislation introduced that would provide for punitive damages regarding a financial conflict of interest by planning commissioners voting on an issue.

CITIZEN COMMENT

None.

REVIEW

Chair eidt reviewed the Planing Commission’s actions at tonight’s meeting:

- Held a public hearing on draft Solar Energy Systems language and will review the revised language at the March 28th meeting;
- Set a public hearing for the Barkham Creek Farms project at the March 28th meeting, with complete information to be submitted by February 28;
- Reviewed the Township’s Roads Policy;
- Set a public hearing for the March 28th meeting to review draft language for a Z.O. amendment regarding Small Wine Makers/Hard Cider Producers/Small distillers;
- Started an initial review of the Master Plan to determine whether significant revisions are needed.

ADJOURNMENT

Motion by Davis, second by Weston to adjourn.

Meeting adjourned at 10:03pm.

Jim Howard

Recording Secretary

Secretary Brown-Timm