

Colfax Township, Weldon Township and Village of Thompsonville
Community Joint Planning Commission
14714 Lincoln Avenue, Thompsonville, MI 49683
Minutes – November 7, 2013 Regular Meeting

Sue Meredith declared the meeting open at 6:40 p.m. following the Pledge of Allegiance.

Present at roll call: JPC Members Jack Richter, Shelley Greene, Peggy Minster, Irene Dunham-Thayer (alternate), Sue Meredith, Chris Jones, Don Suchocki, Mike Foust (alternate) and Zoning Administrator Craig Meredith. Absent: Debra Franke (excused) and Pat Workman (unexcused). Eugene Allen arrived at 6:43 p.m. Guest Ron Evitts also attended.

Citizen Matters/Public Comment. None.

Agenda Additions/Corrections. Approved as presented.

Approval of Minutes. November 2 special meeting minutes will be approved December 5.

Joint Zoning Ordinance Initial Draft. Sue felt the review with Mark Eidelson went well. She said nothing has been received yet on the last portion and expects it will be sent by the December meeting.

Unfinished Business and Reports

A. Zoning Board of Appeals Structure/Next Steps.

Sue said this was briefly discussed Saturday and asked for suggestions. She felt we should decide on a recommendation to take to the next board/council meetings. The attorney suggested seven members -- two from each entity, one from the JPC and one alternate from each entity. It was agreed the townships would select from outside the Village. If Sue were choosing for the Village it would be one from the Weldon side and one from the Colfax side. It was decided the townships may choose alternates from within Village limits. Also, one member must be from the JPC and one may be from a legislative body. If the JPC representative is from a legislative body then no other may be chosen. Eugene asked about recruiting and Irene suggested advertising. Jack felt one ad could be placed for the boards/council; Shelley suggested the JPC handle the expense from the joint funds. After discussion it was agreed to run display ads in the Record Patriot and GT Insider with a week off between each run; responses are to be sent to the JPC; tell the entities about this so they don't duplicate efforts. Sue asked for a motion on the ZBA structure. Jack moved, seconded by Don that the ZBA structure consist of seven members with two from each entity, one from the JPC plus three alternates. Discussion on motion; Jack asked how the JPC member would be selected, options were considered and Shelley volunteered. Since she is also from a legislative body, the entities must appoint members outside the boards/council. Sue said next steps are to inform entities of the structure, tell them an ad will be run and responses will be forwarded for review because ultimately they make the appointments. Eugene asked the term length and how often the ZBA meets. No term is set but will probably be staggered; meetings occur when there is an appeal. Sue said organization meetings will be necessary as well as training to understand their function. Eugene also asked about ZBA members attending JPC meetings especially as the zoning ordinance is being developed. It was agreed participation would be very beneficial and strongly encouraged.

B. Zoning Administrator Update.

Craig received one land division application on the Townsend property and has been working with Equalization and the assessor; he expects to present it soon to the township board. Craig felt that creeks not under Natural River Zoning should be addressed as greenbelts. He said new rules take effect December 3; a variance is scheduled for review on Carmean Road for a nonconforming dwelling. All Crystal Mountain permits have been filled out and work is underway to complete before snow falls. Shelley asked about enforcement of greenbelts due to the area it could cover. Craig said

other communities have greenbelt restrictions with setbacks not as stringent as state requirements. He said it helps protect property owners from floods or ice dam buildups on the river that may affect other waterways. Don asked how would it be based – off a 100-year floodplain? Craig said the state has most of floodplains mapped. Discussed waterways and how some creeks can be dry depending on time of year. Craig felt Mark is probably familiar with greenbelts. He said Dair Creek and the Little Betsie River are the only named waterways besides the Betsie River under Natural River Zoning. Craig said wording could be strong or less restrictive. Don recalled Chuck Syler’s concern about us going over and above what the state requires. Shelley felt we could find out what others do to help us make the best decision because we don’t want to go back and revise the ordinance. Ron Evitts asked about the Money property on CR669. Craig said a driveway permit has been applied for.

C. Budget.

Sue asked Don, Jack and Gene if they would be willing to form a budget committee; they agreed. Jack said the balance sheet is required; Sue will get it from Lee Kane. She said the proposed budget is needed by January 2 so it can be included in the annual report to be presented in January.

D. Expense/Compensation Approval.

Sue said Weldon Township is going to QuickBooks and should make tracking JPC expenses easier. She submitted the \$28 P.O. box renewal fee for payment by the October 31 due date. Shelley said she has expenses to submit for supplies and mileage. Shelley asked for approval to shop for a digital voice recorder for the JPC because her micro recorder is not working properly. Jack moved, seconded by Peggy that Shelley shop for and purchase a recorder not to exceed \$100. Motion carried.

New Business

A. Capital Improvements.

1. Joint Ordinance/MPEA. Sue read the two Capital Improvement items from the ordinance that required attention. Shelley noted that section 62 and MCL 125.3862 do not exist and did not when the ordinance was drafted; it should be section 63 according to the Michigan Planning and Enabling Act (MPEA). Sue confirmed it doesn’t exist. Shelley moved, seconded by Don to take to the entities an amendment to the Joint Ordinance, Section 4 Powers and Duties, item c to remove section 62 and MCL 125.3862 and replace with section 63 and MCL 125.3863. Motion carried. Sue said we need to formulate a Capital Improvements Program (CIP) according to the ordinance. She asked Peggy to talk about how it should be approached given her familiarity with it in county planning. Peggy said a committee is usually formed to work on a plan to put together projects in the community. Most will be structural improvements with a dollar amount and certain time period. The plan is updated every year and is a statutory obligation. She will bring the county plan in December; it is also on the website. Sue asked how we become aware of projects and used Craig as an example when he brought Production Industries to the JPC. Peggy said the county planning commission sends a letter every year to government entities asking for capital improvement proposals. Sue questioned who receives it; Peggy will check but believes it is county entities only. She said a plan is developed first, then a letter and form are sent each year for input to update the plan (the county’s is 20 years). She offered to do a presentation in December and lead a committee. Peggy gave examples of possible public projects and said the plan would involve both townships and the Village including all departments such as the DPW and fire department. She said it is fun to create a wish list of wants and needs and is what a planning commission does but it’s a lot of work. Some projects are completed over several years and funding sources are identified. It can also include needs of citizens and lead to grant opportunities. Peggy will chair a committee including Eugene and Chris and email them related documents. Sue said we need to inform our entities the committee has been formed.

2. Library. Under the Capital Improvement Review (public project review) a few items recently came up on the new library. Several residents were not aware the remaining maple tree was to be removed; Shelley spoke with Debra and she said the Council was aware it may happen. Sue said what brought this to the forefront was replacement of the sidewalk. Shelley checked the minutes and there was no

discussion on it last December. She said a new sidewalk is great but is not part of the library; it is an improvement on public property which ties in to the review responsibility of the JPC. Eugene asked if it was covered in the site plan. Shelley said the JPC never saw a site plan and that is the issue. Russ Smith gave a Power Point presentation in December and has not been back to the JPC. Given the timing she said it is a moot issue at this point. Peggy said reviews are the JPC's responsibility under the MPEA and the Joint Ordinance once a master plan is adopted, and that may be where the confusion lies. The thinking may be that nothing is effective until zoning is done and that is not the case. Shelley said we can't find fault for a project not coming forward since we just became aware, but we need to know the process in light of the potential ball field project. Peggy felt it would be in order to prepare a letter explaining the process; also notify the entities when the zoning ordinance is adopted. Shelley will draft a letter on Capital Improvements. Jack agreed that sending a letter for the record will inform everyone when zoning is in effect even though the ordinance must be adopted by all. Sue also agreed and felt something got lost in the translation; Weldon has been bringing projects for review to the JPC. Jack asked about the flagpole and landscaping on the agenda. Shelley said these are examples of other items the JPC has not reviewed. A flagpole may not be an issue but landscape plans, as an extreme example, could unknowingly include invasive species. Eugene thought anything could be done on the entire lot related to the library. Shelley said that's the difference between public and private. A private individual does what they want subject to current zoning and the administrator's review; planning commissions review public property projects. Sue said this is just a step in the review process, not a dictatorship, so the group can ensure the master plan is being followed. Shelley said an entity could override the JPC's decision to not approve.

3. Ball field. Eugene said the Webber Foundation is interested in making changes to the ball field but there is no site plan yet; ideas and costs are being gathered. Does the Foundation present to the JPC, he asked. Shelley said that is the Council's responsibility. He said a letter will clear things up. Sue said it's a learning curve for everyone.

B. Designated Zoning Administrator Backup

Sue said this was discussed at the special meeting, and she did not see anything in the ordinance. For enforcement, Craig said Weldon has the township supervisor, the zoning administrator and one other designated by the board. He was under the impression an assistant was not permitted. For zoning, Dean Rhodes covered him in the past and has arranged for Ron Hitesman to call if necessary and gave him land use permits. Craig said most issues can wait 7-10 days; Marilla Twp. has one ZA and no assistant and the Homestead Twp. ZA has office hours Wednesday morning only. Don felt we need to think about succession planning, Eugene suggested appointing someone, Sue offered to contact the attorney and Shelley asked about a reciprocal agreement mentioned in a workshop and what other townships do. Craig will contact a few and Ron will ask Benzonia Twp. It was decided to wait for feedback, not contact the attorney now and put the item on the December agenda.

C. Post Office Box for ZA

This will be revisited when the Joint Zoning Ordinance nears completion

Correspondence

Shelley received copies of ParPlan News. She noted many of their grants were related to security – something to think about going forward. Peggy said this could be in the CI plan as an avenue for funding. Shelley gave Mark Eidelson a risk control questionnaire early this year that was part of the insurance proposal. She will follow up to be sure items are addressed in the zoning ordinance.

Other Business

Sue said election of officers will be held the first meeting next year. Sue, Craig and Shelley attended a Brownfield Redevelopment Authority conference in October. Sue would like Mark Florian, consultant to the Authority, to attend one of our meetings and will check his schedule. Craig read a list of categories under the Right to Farm Bill that require Generally Accepted Agricultural

Management Practices (GAAMP) certification. He is assisting a Lindy Road resident who needs to get certified. Craig is working to invite Jerry Dobek to a JPC meeting. Mr. Dobek is head astronomer at Northwestern Michigan College and is writing several night sky regulations nationwide and in Michigan. Craig said a Weldon Twp. resident has an observatory and almost did not get registered because of lights at Crystal Mountain. Other than that, he said the night light in this area is excellent. Back to the Farm Bill, Shelley asked if it covered hobby farms and Peggy asked about produce stands. Craig said all farms are included that do something commercially covering feed, food, fiber or fur.

Adjournment. Next meeting is December 5 at 6:30 p.m. Jack moved to adjourn, second by Don at 8:29 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Shelley Greene

Secretary

Minutes are proposed until approved at the next meeting.