

Colfax Township, Weldon Township and Village of Thompsonville
Community Joint Planning Commission
14731 Thompson Avenue, Thompsonville, MI 49683
Minutes – September 1, 2016 Regular Meeting

Sue Meredith declared the meeting open at 7:02 P.M. following the Pledge of Allegiance.

Present at roll call: JPC members Shelley Greene, Peg Minster, Irene Dunham Thayer, Sue Meredith, Sally Bobek, Don Suchocki, Debra Franke and Mike Foust; and Zoning Administrator Craig Meredith. Absent: Eugene Allen and Pat Shaeffer (both excused).

Guests: Frank Post, Mike Flynn, Dave Hanchuk, Carrie Aldrich, Rob Aldrich, Chuck Syer, Fran Griffin, Ron Hitesman, Chris Bobek, Kent Stevens.

Agenda Additions/Corrections. Motion by Don, Sally seconded to approve agenda. Ayes: all; motion carried.

Citizen Matters

Antenna for Emergency Communications - Frank Post, Benzie County Office of Emergency Management, presented an application for wireless communications equipment recently installed on an existing structure at Crystal Mountain. The equipment is for emergency communications; what is installed in Benzonia and Frankfort did not give adequate coverage. Installation on the mountain now reaches Traverse City and Manistee. Mr. Post's interpretation of the zoning ordinance was that it did not apply to the county and, therefore, he did not contact the zoning administrator in advance and apologized for any oversight. He welcomed the opportunity to bring this to the public's attention. It will operate in all conditions unless a tornado takes it down. Craig Meredith's initial concern was with the PUD approved by Weldon Township. He was satisfied no issues exist and recommended the fee be waived. The application was reviewed and questions were answered. Motion by Shelley to approve the application for the project for the emergency antenna and waive the permit fee; Sally seconded the motion. Ayes: all; motion carried. Craig needs the original application from Mr. Post to issue a zoning permit.

Letter to Kent Stevens – Chair Sue Meredith stated Mr. Stevens wanted to discuss a letter from Craig Meredith. First, regarding a list of questions he previously gave the JPC, she informed him the JPC is not a 501(c)3 entity. Concerning the letter, he felt he was being treated differently than others; apparently there have been complaints for five years and he has not received copies. Sue said the zoning ordinance only became effective last year. Sally stated she believed the complaints in the letter are two different issues and sees the complaints as a township issue and the other is a business in a residential area which is what the JPC is addressing. Mr. Stevens disagreed stating it is not a business, it's residential which is private property with his personal property. He said the (Weldon) special use permit applied to the detail business and not his cars. Mr. Stevens said when he was asked by the (Weldon) board to clean up his yard, he built a fence and moved everything out back but was told he could only have three cars. He said he owned seven and that's not changing; he built a fence, moved the cars out back and everyone was happy. He told Craig Meredith if he says brownsite one more time about his property we're going to have a problem. Sue said he needed to remain civil and asked how many licensed vehicles he owns; Mr. Stevens said it doesn't matter, he can own as many as he wants, and the letter implies he is dumping oil in a field. Following Mr. Stevens departure, the board felt the letter combined township blight and zoning ordinance issues. The JPC had several questions for Craig on the special use permit but the answers required research. Shelley asked about grandfathering of special land use permits and believed they went with the land unless conditions applied. The number of vehicles allowed and state licensing requirements were discussed; Peg suggested researching the subject. Debra

felt it is a township blight issue if the special use permit expired. Peg said he no longer meets the conditions of the special land use permit if the detailing business is gone, and the JPC needs to determine if there a violation of the zoning ordinance. Sally said Mr. Stevens' statement of not having a business takes the JPC out of it. Motion by Debra, Peg seconded to table the Kent Stevens Lindy Road property until October. Ayes: all; motion carried.

Approval of Minutes. Motion by Debra, Sally seconded to approve the August 4 regular meeting minutes as presented. Ayes: all; motion carried.

Unfinished Business and Reports

A. Impound Lot Comments. Copies were distributed. Shelley handed out a Spot Zoning document and suggested it be used as a reference tool. Sally noted there were a number of opinions given, and Sue added that the disruption that took place didn't help. She said the JPC should listen to the issue and take time to research it and then address it at another meeting. Debra commented on the need to be open to amendments so the area can grow. Craig spoke about Village policy on vacating its property. He gave Mr. Kagy information on several properties to investigate for purchase in the Industrial District. It was agreed that all communities, including those with planning departments, need time to research.

B. Amend Commercial Zoning/Signs/Master Plan Review. Mark Eidelson's commercial and master plan documents were distributed for the September 22 special meeting. Shelley has not reviewed it to know if Mark changed all commercial to mixed use but felt the entire area commercial district needs a close look to envision future use including residential.

C. Betsie River Campground. Nothing to report.

D. Mobile Home Replacement Amendment. Tabled.

E. Blighted Properties. Covered under Stevens item.

F. Capital Improvements Plan. Nothing to report.

G. Community Action Report. Nothing to report.

H. Zoning Administrator Report. Craig Meredith provided oral and written reports for the month of August. Sally questioned the foundation for the Haze/Wallin Road permit; Craig said it will need to meet county building code. Regarding solar panels for Mr. Pradeep, it is a fire department concern due to stored power so Craig will talk with Mike MacGirr. He received an inquiry before the meeting about building a dwelling and garage on property near the Colfax cemetery. Shelley asked for status on shed and fence for CR669 property; Craig said a violation notice has not yet been issued. Debra said many letters have been sent on the property at the east Village limits. The road commission wants the property owner's sign removed; apparently it's in the right of way. Fran Griffin commented a new carport there is near the road. Chuck Syer commented on the length of time this property has been an issue. Discussion was held on the handling of violations. Sue directed Craig to get the violation out that week. Shelley asked about the Reynolds Road river parcels; Craig confirmed it is a land division issue not involving him.

I. Village/Township Reports. Debra reported the county tire collection went well; had a semi full. Northflight will only be handling transfers. Village street signs will be replaced where needed. A neighborhood watch is being considered and volunteers are needed; Ron Hitesman has signs they can use. A police report was filed and insurance company is involved in a complaint that someone on 669 was pelted with rocks from the mower at the water tower which is quite a distance. The county 911 contract was signed. A one-time cleanup is being considered with enforcement afterward to address blight. The internet service contract will be for five years; JPC approval is required for equipment installation. Well was drilled; aquifer was best at 108 feet. Fire alarm is going off at noon every day and needs to be adjusted.

For Weldon Township, Sue reported that Boardman River volunteers will handle trash pickup at the Day Use Park starting next year during May-September and the township will cover the balance. Rob Aldrich opened discussion on a community garden proposal to foster education on gardening skills and sought board feedback. Chris Bobek's report on nuisance abatement said the river campground violated

the transient activity ordinance. Ron Hitesman covered the neighborhood watch and Village blight cleanup issues. Emma Pearl Baker was the logo contest winner.

Shelley reported Colfax signed the county 911 contract. The board voted to have a second brining. Theft of fire rings at Grass Lake Campground continues to be a problem.

K. Budget/Compensation Authorization. Sue passed out bills and the compensation authorization for review. She reported a balance of \$11,225.48 Motion by Irene, Mike seconded to approve the comp authorization and pay bills as presented. Ayes: all; motion carried.

New Business. None.

Correspondence. Sue read Chris Jones' letter of resignation from the JPC. Sue will take it to her next board meeting for action to seek volunteers to fill the vacancy. She sent Chris a very nice email thanking her for her service. Planning & Zoning News was distributed.

Additional Discussion.

Shelley said the JPC needs to decide if it wants Mark Eidelson to draft revisions to Article 10 – Signs of the zoning ordinance in time for the September 22 meeting. A U.S. Supreme Court decision is behind the need to amend; Mark said some communities have amended and others have not. The JPC does not know exactly how the ruling will impact the ordinance. Cost will be incurred to find out how the amendment would read; many felt the ordinance should cover signs. Don had a different view -- how much was made on signs versus the cost of amending and that there is much involved with enforcing nondiscriminatory wording of signs. Shelley's approach was to consider what the community might want; a public hearing would be held for comments. Fran Griffin commented that signs could end up having lights shining where it could be a concern. Several felt it was good to look at options. Shelley will direct Mark Eidelson to prepare a draft amendment for the September 22 meeting.

Public Input. Chuck Syer asked if the ordinance requires vehicles in yards to have current plates. Shelley said the JPC will need to research. Mr. Syer said that would take care of problems of numerous vehicles in yards; insurance is required for current plates. He also felt the zoning administrator needs help because many issues are open and new ones aren't being addressed such as horses at County Line Street. Mr. Syer feels the board should drive around and look to help Craig. Fran Griffin asked if one can keep as much trash as they want if it remains hidden. Debra stated the Village effort should address it. Shelley commented on numerous campers at Fourth and South Streets; a new brown one came in on Monday. Debra said they have been there for years.

Adjournment. Motion by Shelley, Sally seconded to adjourn at 9:15 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,

Shelley Greene
Secretary

Minutes are proposed until approved at the next meeting