

Colfax Township, Weldon Township and Village of Thompsonville
Community Joint Planning Commission
14731 Thompson Avenue, Thompsonville, MI 49683
Minutes – February 1, 2018 Regular Meeting

Peggy Minster opened the meeting at 7:00 P.M. followed by the Pledge of Allegiance.

Present at roll call: Commissioners Peggy Minster, Shelley Greene, Irene Dunham Thayer, Sally Bobek, Chris Bobek, Debra Franke and Eugene Allen; zoning administrator Craig Meredith.

Absent: Don Suchocki and Gene Houghton (excused). Rob Aldrich arrived at 7:06 P.M.

Guests: Fred and Mrs. Knoll, Bryce Gibbs, Mark Draeger, Sue Meredith, Fran Griffin, Ron Evitts.

Agenda Additions/Corrections: Irene added election of officers. Motion/second by Chris/Debra to accept agenda with the addition; motion carried.

Approval of Minutes: Motion/second by Irene/Chris to approve the January 11 special minutes as presented; motion carried. Motion/second by Chris/Irene to approve the January 22 special minutes as presented; motion carried.

Public Comment: None.

Requests to Address the Commission: Fred Knoll presented concerning property he and his wife wish to purchase in Colfax Township to build a home and a private campground with approximately ten treehouses, some ADA compliant. He explained his ideas for the campground, provided photos of other treehouse cabins and wants it to be permitted as a private campground. Sally asked about lengths of stay. Mr. Knoll said it would be short-term rental only and not living quarters for an extended period. He looks to the JPC to regulate that. Mr. Knoll shared his idea for water and septic, and as a builder he is familiar with DEQ requirements. The JPC looked at the zoning ordinance for permitted uses in the RC-1 zoning district that would best match this project. It appeared private campground was the closest, but the standards do not include treehouses. Peggy felt this would need to be researched, possibly involve a variance, and that a site plan would be helpful. Shelley believed a petition to amend the ordinance for private campgrounds may be appropriate. This would require the JPC to develop standards for treehouses in private campgrounds. Mr. Knoll was informed of an optional preliminary site plan procedure in the zoning ordinance and that the article on Special Land Use would also apply. The unique concept received positive support.

Bryce Gibbs presented his desire to combine the square footage of a garage with a dwelling in an effort to make the dwelling similar to a “tiny” house in size. The property is the Crystal View subdivision with 23 lots in the Village. Mr. Gibbs was informed the ordinance has a minimum standard of 720 square feet for a dwelling and that garages are accessory structures not calculated as part of the living space. The creation of a new zoning district and standards may be an option to explore. Mr. Bryce was informed his proposal will take time to research. He was asked to prepare a site plan including square footage parameters for further discussion with the JPC. Rob asked about a variance. He was informed variances apply only in certain cases such as a hardship. The JPC will research how other communities may be addressing the issue and discuss further in March.

Unfinished Business and Reports

A. Violations/Citations: Peggy said both the Lindsay and Johnson citations have been issued and asked what the next step was. Sally said the court only collects fines. When asked about the missing fine amount on the Lindsay citation, Craig said the court called him and he gave them the amount. Extensive discussion regarding the court and also the citation as it relates to the violations of accessory structures and a travel trailer on vacant property. Peggy addressed the commission on how it wishes to administer the zoning ordinance regarding the violations, that it is an issue of

credibility and fairness to the community and referenced the attorney's letter of November 28 to Craig. Motion/second by Chris/Irene to issue a second citation immediately for the trailer and specify it is in violation of Section 18.12. Roll call: Minster – yes; Greene – yes; Dunham-Thayer – yes; Aldrich – no; Sally Bobek – no; Chris Bobek – yes; Franke – yes; Allen – no. Absent: Gene Houghton. Motion carried.

B. 2018-2019 Budget: Sally said according to the attorney Weldon Township will be exiting the JPC prior to April 1. After considering amending some amounts, it was decided to leave it as is. Under the circumstances, the JPC has no option other than to proceed with the budget as presented. Motion/second by Chris/Debra to accept the proposed 2018-2019 budget as presented; motion carried.

C. Weldon Withdrawal Timeframe Letter: Letter was sent to the Weldon Township board requesting a response to the Colfax Township board, the Village council and the JPC with a timeline of events related to withdrawal from the JPC.

D. Zoning Administrator Report: Written and oral reports provided. Craig is still waiting for checks from Arrow Homes and Silverwood Enterprises (\$40 and \$80). Received a call from Traverse Engineering about building a home near Longstreet/Manistee County Road. Shelley asked Craig if only a number or an actual permit was issued because she was confused about the issue. He said it was just a number. Sue Meredith explained she assisted with these on behalf of Craig. Peggy said going forward nothing is to be issued without a permit fee at time of application in accordance with the ordinance.

E. Village/Township Reports: Reports were covered at the January 22 meeting.

F. Budget Review/Compensation Authorization: Motion/second by Sally/Irene to pay compensation authorizations. Roll call: Eugene Allen, Debra Franke, Chris Bobek, Sally Bobek, Rob Aldrich, Irene Dunham Thayer, Shelley Greene, Peggy Minster – yes; no – none; motion carried.

New Business

A. Insurance Renewal: Shelley received the renewal documents. Craig will provide Shelley a copy of the tracking report. The insurance effective date is April 1.

B. Zoning Administrator Agreement: Peggy spoke with Ward Kuhn about administering the zoning ordinance who said it can be administered however we want, sloppy or concise. She felt the question for discussion is how we want to do it. There have been problems with a lack of consistency, accuracy, timeliness, follow up, documentation of outcomes and resolution of violations. Peggy said if the planning commission is comfortable with the present state of administering the zoning ordinance and satisfied with the outcomes, then there is no problem. Sally said issues were raised in October when Craig wasn't present but in November he was and Peggy said she was pleased with improvement in his report. Peggy said his report did improve but had no support when she provided Craig a template as a suggestion so that the report would be outcome based. Shelley said it may not have been well understood. Eugene asked about it; Peggy said it was a format like a tracking report showing what happened the prior month, what is ongoing month after month such as status of violations and what has been resolved. She said the Marie Wohadlo issue has been ongoing for a year and a half and we don't know the status. Shelley said she doesn't know if the Archers received approval from the property owner for their sign and that the board should be updated until it is resolved. Peggy said we either need steps to make it better or just follow the status quo. Irene feels more clarity is needed and that some things have just dropped off. Sally acknowledged things have dropped off like Wohadlo and should have continued as old business. Peggy said it is the zoning administrator's responsibility, not the secretary's. Rob said a report can have a list of things that never go away until they are resolved. Shelley said the template did that. Rob asked for specifics. Peggy said the ordinance states citations may be issued for unresolved violation notices if no progress after 30 days. Some people get two violation notices with no follow up, some get one and no follow up or ticket. She cited ongoing work at the Johnson property after a stop work order. The Lindsay citation was not issued until January after the attorney for Mr.

Lindsay's neighbor wrote a letter to Craig in November; the violation notice was issued August 4. Eugene asked Craig for his response. For Mr. Johnson, he issued a stop work order and it stopped until he began again in October/November. He contacted Steve Houghton at the building department who went out there. For Marie Wohadlo, a violation notice was sent and copy of the ordinance was taken to the magistrate. He took the violation to Ms. Wohadlo and was walked off her property and told never to come back. He has not followed up with a citation because magistrate Wally Armstrong did not know what to do with it having no background in zoning and contacted the prosecutor who did not know either. They took it to Steve Houghton to act on it and get back with Craig but never did and has retired. Eugene asked the commission if this made it to the board and the answer was no. Sally recalled the FOIA request from Wohadlo and said the board's direction was to hold off on a citation. Others disagreed and Shelley said we did not have the civil infraction ordinance at that time. That is what led her to investigate and develop the ordinance in late 2016. Peggy said her opinion is that we need to beef up our credibility. Eugene said it is clear we need to be consistent and concise and told Craig it is his role to make it happen. If he has problems he needs to come back here to remove barriers. Shelley said violation notices have been sent when property owners were not in violation. Two examples are Dave Casey and Larry Neetz who do not have shooting ranges.

Sally didn't see a need to make a decision now because it will be a new board in a couple of months.

Peggy said what she had stated earlier was that we need to think about this over the next month.

Rob said it is just as much this board's responsibility to make sure things are done right. He didn't see the form but it sounded like a great idea, and setting solid expectations is something we should do. Peggy said we have job description with responsibilities and that's what she is doing now.

C. Election of Officers: Irene nominated Eugene who declined. Shelley nominated Peggy as Chair, seconded by Irene; motion carried. Shelley nominated Debra as Vice Chair, seconded by Irene; motion carried. Irene nominated Shelley as Secretary, seconded by Chris; motion carried.

Correspondence: None.

Public Comment: Fran Griffin commented on the meeting.

Adjournment: Motion/second by Irene/Shelley to adjourn at 9:05 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,

Shelley Greene

Secretary

Minutes are proposed until approved at the next meeting