

ISABELLA COUNTY
PLANNING COMMISSION

March 14, 2013

A Regular Meeting of the Isabella County Planning Commission was held on March 14, 2013 in Room 225 of the Isabella County Building, 200 North Main Street, Mt. Pleasant, Michigan.

MEMBERS PRESENT: Cheryl Jindeel, Gordon Gilchrist, Jerry Neyer, Evelyn Kent, Heather Turner, Kelly Bean, Christine Alwood, Jim Horton.

MEMBERS ABSENT: Bob Thompson

SUPPORT STAFF PRESENT: Tim Nieporte, Community Development Director
Allison Langworthy, Recording Secretary

The meeting was called to order by Chairperson Neyer at 7:00 p.m.

The Pledge of Allegiance was recited by the Commission.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Mr. Nieporte stated that Planning Commission By-Law Review- Discussion on the agenda needed to be removed.

A motion was made by Mr. Gilchrist, supported by Ms. Kent, to approve the agenda as amended.

Yes: Jindeel, Gilchrist, Neyer, Kent, Turner, Horton, Bean, Alwood.

No: None.

Motion carried.

PREVIOUS MINUTES

Minutes of the February 14, 2013 regular meeting were circulated to the Commission prior to the meeting for their review.

Ms. Alwood stated there were minor corrections that needed to be made and forwarded them to staff.

A motion was made by Ms. Alwood, supported by Mr. Horton to approve the minutes as amended.

Yes: Jindeel, Gilchrist, Neyer, Kent, Turner, Horton, Bean, Alwood.

No: None.

Motion carried.

LIAISON REPORTS

Zoning Board of Appeals – Mr. Gilchrist stated that ZBA did not meet so he had nothing to report.

Parks & Recreation – Ms. Alwood stated that she had missed the Parks and Recreation meeting because she was out of state. She did bring some copies of the Director's Report and passed them around to the Commission.

The parks are doing a reservation credit card system update to make it easier for the park users.

There will be a Isabella County Parks and Recreation round table meeting on March 15th at the Mount Pleasant Discovery Museum.

Tim Wolff (Village of Lake Isabella Supervisor) contacted Sue Ann regarding a walking trail in the village by Gilmore Park, no other information at this time but Ms. Alwood will keep us updated.

The parks will be making some capital purchases: 2 trucks, 2 Gators, and 2 Toro mowers

Board of Commissioners – Mr. Horton said that the Board of Commissioners met on Tuesday March 12th for a strategic goal setting meeting. He mentioned that he thinks that zoning will be revisited this year.

Mr. Horton said that he thinks zoning and planning are important, and not something that we can cut. The Board of Commissioners will also be looking at county services and local townships, and also asking the sheriff to make a proposal looking into the jail and what the jail funding is.

Mr. Horton also mentioned Chairman Green has brought up several times the make-up of the Planning Commission. He would like the Planning Commission board members to be from townships that currently have County zoning. Mr. Horton believes that members should be selected as the best person for the position, not necessarily what township they are from.

TOWNSHIP CONCERNS

Jackie Curtis – Denver Township – Ms. Curtis stated that Denver Township is standing well!

Bob Neeland – Isabella Township – Mr. Neeland stated that Isabella Township had no concerns.

Tom Gibbs – Gilmore Township – Mr. Gibbs stated that Gilmore Township had no concerns.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Alex Eyssen – Director of Development for Campus Crest Communities – Mr Eyssen stated that Campus Crest Communities had been looking at the area for a long time. The area is currently zoned commercial, and they are looking to get it rezoned to residential. There are two issues that they are focusing on: the traffic in the area, and the law enforcement. Mr. Eyssen believes traffic will not be a problem. They brought in a traffic engineer and they looked at the adjacent intersection and they did not think anything needed to be changed. He said that multi family and student housing have different traffic types. A traffic study came out that looked at both multi family traffic and student housing traffic and it was found that student housing has a 33% less traffic impact than multi family housing.

The next issue is law enforcement. They received a letter from the Isabella County Sheriff and he commented on the increase in density of residents in the area. Campus Crest Communities are sensitive to their resident's safety. It will be a gated community where the gates will be open during the day and closed at night where the residents will have to use a keypad to get in. Management and staff will be on-site 24/7 which will minimize the need for law enforcement. They also partner with local police officers and sign a contract with them to intensify monitoring of the property during busy weekends. The buildings will have no balconies, and the amenities will be centralized. They would like to stay in the area for a long time. Mr. Eyssen will provide us with the traffic study that was done.

Pete Lorenz – New Grass LLC Engineer – Mr. Lorenz believes that this area is a very good area for student and multi-family housing. He said that he spoke with Isabella County Road Commission engineer Pat Gaffney. Mr. Gaffney said that he had no concerns at this time, but maybe in the future they would possibly have to add a traffic signal at the Broomfield Rd and Sweeney Rd intersection.

UNION TOWNSHIP REZONING #1652 – REVIEW AND COMMENT

Mr. Nieporte stated that in his review of the minutes from the Union Township Planning Commission meeting there was nothing in the record with regard to service impacts or the Union Township Master Plan. The minutes reflected public comments, but no Board discussion. Mr. Alex Eyssen was there and made some comments during the public comment portion of the meeting. An email was sent to MDOT, Isabella County Road Commission, Isabella County Sheriff, Michigan State Police, and the Mount Pleasant Fire Chief seeking service impacts related to their individual operations. We received correspondence back from the County Administrator on March 4th and he expressed concerns on law enforcement. The Sheriff sent back correspondence on March 12th, which was passed around to the Commission. No other feedback from the other agencies was heard at the time of the meeting.

Mr. Horton expressed concern about foot traffic in area and asked if there was a plan for sidewalks in the area.

Mr. Nieporte said that Union Township has a sidewalk ordinance and a no-motorized plan.

Ms. Alwood stated that when emergency calls come in from other townships there may be a delay because of the sheriff deputies focusing on Union Township. She asked if it would be possible to recommend that Union Township provide for additional police protection if they do approve the plan for student housing.

Mr. Neyer stated that we will ask Union Township to review the traffic study that will receive from Campus

Crest Communities, review the pedestrian traffic issues and related non-motorized traffic issues, and also the fire and law enforcement issues.

Mr. Nieporte said the traffic study was just for Campus Crest Communities, and not for both of the complexes going in.

Mr. Gilchrist said that he agrees with everything that is being said. He mentioned that he believes that if the sidewalks and bike paths don't get put in when the buildings go in, there will never be any sidewalks or bike paths.

Mr. Nieporte said that the traffic study from Campus Crest Communities, a statement of the pedestrian and mass transit issue, the correspondence from the Administrator and Sheriff, and the statement from Pat Gaffney that was given to the engineer of New Grass LLC will all be sent over to Union Township.

Mr. Eyssen said that the sidewalks will go in before the buildings go in.

Ms. Turner said that Union Township needs to Law Enforcement Study that is referenced in their Plan; a lot of work went into it. Also, the township should consider all information received.

UNION TOWNSHIP REZONING #1651 – REVIEW AND COMMENT

Mr. Nieporte stated that since #1652 and #1651 are related they will be sent in a combined letter. They were separate issues on the agenda because they are separate applications.

PLANNING COMMISSION BYLAW REVIEW - DISCUSSION

Mr. Nieporte said that these were removed from the agenda because the Board of Commissioners are changing their ordinance which will affect our bylaws. We will discuss at another time.

MONTCALM COUNTY MASTER PLAN REVIEW AND COMMENT

Mr. Nieporte stated that Montcalm County has forwarded their Master Plan to us for review. One part of the Master Plan that was revised included the possibility of them looking at county zoning. The old plan stated they had no plan to adopt county zoning. The new plan says that they would like to look into it.

Mr. Nieporte said that he is considering doing a training session on the New Economy and Regionalization Activities. Staff will forward any and all comments to the Montcalm County Planning Commission.

No additional comments were heard.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Jackie Curtis – Denver Township – Ms. Curtis asked if there was an Ad Hoc committee discussing zoning.

Mr. Nieporte said that zoning was the number one issue of the Board of Commissioners Strategic Planning and Goal Setting Session and will most likely be guided through the Ad Hoc committee, just not sure when.

STAFF COMMENTS

Mr. Nieporte said that we have around 20 people signed up for the Michigan Right to Farm Act educational session on April 9th from 6pm - 8pm.

Mr. Nieporte asked if the Commission could look at their schedules for July 18th, as per a request to move the July 11th regular scheduled meeting to July 18th.

Mr. Nieporte said that he is working on a matrix that will have the township meeting dates and times so next meeting we will figure out who wants to go to which township.

Mr. Horton mentioned that Chippewa Township has just budgeted \$22,000 to hire an outside Planning and Zoning consultant.

Mr. Nieporte said that we are currently working with Sherman Township on GIS mapping and he will be speaking with them at their next meeting.

PLANNING COMMISSION COMMENTS

Mr. Gilchrist said that he liked the headlines of the Planning magazine.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned by the call of the Chairperson at 8:05 p.m.


Christine Alwood, Secretary

Allison Langworthy, Recording Secretary