

ROSS TOWNSHIP
PLANNING COMMISSION
January 23, 2008

The regularly scheduled meeting of the Ross Township Planning Commission meeting on **January 23, 2008** was called to order by **Chairman Lauderdale** at approximately 7:00 P.M. at the Ross Township Hall

ROLL CALL

Those present were: Sandra Kiger
Diana Langshaw
Robb Blain
Jim Lauderdale
Garry Lane
Russell Fry

Absent was: Jeff Price

Also present were: Rebecca Harvey, Planning Consultant
Gary Webster, AGS

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

On motion by Lane seconded by Langshaw the agenda was unanimously approved

APPROVAL OF MINUTES for **November 28, 2007**

On motion by Langshaw seconded by Lane the Minutes of **11/28/07** were unanimously approved with the following change:

Page 3, paragraph last paragraph under "livestock": change "5 acres of pasture land" by eliminating "pasture"

PUBLIC COMMENT on non-agenda items - None

John Scott wanted to introduce the concept of energy conservation to the Planning Commission. He would like to see the Planning Commission encourage alternative sources of energy such as wind, green building, etc.

Cox followed up by speaking about the property rights of wind energy, so that the Planning Commission may want to address these concerns proactively.

PUBLIC HEARING Crane's Pond OSPD and Special Exception Request

On motion by Langshaw, seconded by Blain and unanimously approved the Public Hearing was opened.

John Scott was present as applicant for Site Plan and Special Exception Use approval of his Open Space development. He said that although the original plan was for 36 lots, they have now reduced that number to 35. The total area of Phase I is now 42 acres. They originally left a buffer zone for open space. That area was not considered in the total open space initially, so that they now have about 3 acres more of open space when it is included. He said that there are no substantial changes in the condominium documents.

In response to Fry, who asked about the storage building, Scott said that they are not doing changes in this phase. They may want to add buildings later.. The previously planned building would have been for combined use of the developer and property owners. He said that they might be two years away from completing Phase I, since it depends on the economy.

Fry moved to close the public hearing, which was seconded by Lane and unanimously approved.

NEW BUSINESS

Action on Public Hearing/Site Plan Amendment for Crane's Pond OSPD

Lauderdale first asked Webster to comment on the proposal from previously prepared documents by AGS. Webster said that all submittal requirements have been met, and that of the several outstanding items from the first review, all had satisfactorily addressed. The only item remaining is the suggestion that the Township Attorney review the condominium documents to ensure that they have not been significantly altered with this proposal.

Lauderdale drew the Commission's attention to the Site Plan approval criteria of the Zoning Ordinance, Section 9.83. He noted that all conditions have been complied with.

Lauderdale suggested that the Township Attorney review the condominium documents

Based on the Findings just made Langshaw moved to accept the site plan and special exception change with the condition that the Township Attorney review the condominium documents. The motion was seconded by Blain and unanimously **APPROVED.**

OLD BUSINESS

Lauderdale reported that he had asked to meet with the Township Attorney, the Township Planner, and the Supervisor with respect to the function of the Planning Commission and its chairman. When they met he was told that the Planning Commission language would generally come back from the attorney and the planner with revisions. They have both done that, and the Planning Commission will delay the public hearing previously scheduled for February.

Rebecca Harvey said that the revisions that the Commission now has can be reviewed by the Commission in February.

Attorney Rolfe's major observations regarded first the mobile home district. These are some of the standards in the proposed R-4. He said that the language will need State approval since the R-4 standards are more strict. The Planning Commission wanted to make those standards more compatible with R-3 standards. The State must have their comments completed within 60 days, which will be prior to a possible March public hearing.

Harvey said that the second area of revisions regarded the sign language. Rolfe had concern with sequencing and billboards. He will be proposing some additional language.

Livestock issues with a third topic to be discussed. Rolfe's questions regarded the 5-acre requirement, which was ultimately found compatible with State standards. The definition of "pasture" was revised, as well as a reduction of the animal unit to 1000 pounds. He was also concerned with applying this standard to the Agricultural District as well.

Fry asked what the pressing need is to have the public hearing so early. He wondered if it should be delayed, since so many Ross Township residents do not live here in the winter.

With respect to lighting, Harvey said that Attorney Rolfe and Harvey have made some revisions that Harvey will be bringing to the February meeting.

Lauderdale commented that the Attorney questioned why the Planning Commission had included the Y-Camp and the Cheff Foundation into the Agricultural Preservation District. He noted that all of the parcels, which will now be designated Agricultural Preservation District must be notified individually. He summed up that the intent was to identify an area in the Township preserved for agricultural in case someone wants to come to the Township to establish compatible

Cox offered that the Planning Commission wanted to address a situation that might occur if these parcels ever changed ownership. By establishing the district any proposed change would have to be reviewed by the Planning Commission, since there are proactive standards. It provides an undeveloped corridor north and south through the Township, and originally it also included the concept of recreational land.

Harvey discussed new owners that might come into the Township, who want to petition the Township to be rezoned into this area. Additionally, there is a question of whether this might restrict the Cheff Foundation and the Y-Center in some manner.

Langshaw believes that the Cheff Foundation and the Y-Center should be asked if they want the change as well as how the ownership is listed.

Fry wanted to know if those two properties tend more to private ownership or purely public land.

The Commission then reviewed individually the proposed permitted uses in the Agricultural Preservation District. They also discussed the proposed Special Land Uses and found no problems with the categories. Harvey observed that the uses of the Cheff Foundation and the Y-Center are currently and properly within the RR District. She wondered if the change would make those uses nonconforming in the new district. She said that being a legally nonconforming use is not ideal for an owner.

There was considerable discussion of whether recreation should be included within this district. Members discussed whether to add certain special exception use categories that would allow the Cheff Foundation and the Y-Center to be included in an Agricultural and Recreational Preservation District without being classified as nonconforming.

Lane moved to leave the Agricultural District as is and to remove the Cheff Foundation and the Y-Center of Battle Creek from the new preservation district and to add the Fort Custer Recreational Area to the Agricultural Preservation District. The motion was seconded by Kiger and unanimously **APPROVED.**

During discussion Fry had asked why the Fort Custer Recreational Area was not included in the new Agricultural Preservation District. There was general agreement that it should have been included.

REPORTS

ZBA

Lauderdale reported that the ZBA discussed a modification to a property in Midland Park by reducing all setbacks. The variance was denied.

Township Board

No report.

Workshops

There was a discussion of the request by the Water Resources Commission to have a meeting with a member of the Township Board, The Planning Commission, and the Zoning Administrator. Lauderdale will represent the Commission.

COMMISSIONER COMMENTS

Fry suggested a joint meeting between the Planning Commission and the Township Board, and Lauderdale said that that meeting has been organized for May.

Lauderdale complimented the members on the open discussion this evening.

ADJOURNMENT

On motion by Lane seconded by Lauderdale and unanimously approved, the meeting was adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,

Gary Webster
AGS

