

**ROSS TOWNSHIP  
PLANNING COMMISSION  
MINUTES  
March 26, 2008**

The regular meeting of the Ross Township Planning Commission held on **March 26, 2008** was called to order by **Vice-Chairman Fry** at approximately 7:15 pm at the Ross Township Hall.

**ROLL CALL OF MEMBERS**

Those present were:           Robb Blain  
                                          Russell Fry  
                                          Garry Lane  
                                          Diana Langshaw

Absent was:                     Sandra Kiger  
                                          Jim Lauderdale  
                                          Jeff Price

Also present were:            Rebecca Harvey, Planning Consultant  
                                          Bruce Dean, AGS

**APPROVAL OF AGENDA**

Fry indicated that the time schedule published in the agenda will be adjusted based on the late start. On motion by Lane, seconded by Langshaw, the agenda was unanimously approved.

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES for January 23, 2008**

On motion by Lane seconded by Blain the minutes of **01/23/2008** were unanimously approved.

**PUBLIC COMMENT on non-agenda items - None**

Bob Oudsema provided the members with an update on the Hillcrest project. He stated that the project is definitely not going forward in 2008, and will be evaluated for progress for 2009. The last impediment has been sewer and water, but these issues are not actually holding up progress. Rather the present market conditions are causing the hesitation. The project is being placed “in the warming oven” as far as the substantial capital investment required to proceed. The estimated cost of the sewer and water component is approximately four to five million dollars. A possible alternative, one-acre lot development, which would not be on open space preservation development, may eventually be considered.

Jon Scott introduced the topic of Wind Energy Systems. A document from Michigan Department of Labor & Economic Growth, dated 3/05/07, had been provided to the members. Jon would like to incorporate wind energy systems into the Cranes Pond Development. He asked that the Township look at this issue and create standards to allow this type of development. He is hopeful of considering such installation within the next year.

Scott added that the Township should also consider development of landscaping requirements for commercial developments. He stated that his background is in landscaping, and he feels that the development in Richland Township along M-89 should not be duplicated in Ross Township.

There was general discussion of potential locations for wind energy systems. Scott indicated that the Cranes Pond area is not rated as “ideal”, but that consultants have indicated that energy can be produced at this location. There was additional discussion of the manner of connection of such systems “to the grid”, or as a stand-alone system.

Roy Kemppainen, 260 East Gull Lake Drive, was present regarding enforcement on dock issues. He has been in discussion with Bruce Dean and Jeff Bither. He indicated that he is not satisfied with enforcement of the Township Ordinances. He seeks direction on the next step.

Dean indicated that Mr. Kemppainen has appeared before the Township Board, and the matter has been referred to the Township Attorney. The Planning Commission is not the appropriate forum for any consideration of the matter.

Scott addressed Mr. Kemppainen from the audience, identifying himself as a Township Board member. He indicated to Kemppainen that the issue would be evaluated in due course.

## OLD BUSINESS

Text Amendments – letter from Attorney Craig Rolfe dated 03-21-2008 was considered.

Harvey provided an overview indicating that in January, there were four issues to be resolved. She and the Township Attorney have communicated regarding all necessary adjustments to incorporate the changes that have been under consideration. The memo from Rolfe also includes some procedural changes that have been under general consideration for some time.

The four issues were:

- 1) RR – keeping of horses has been modified to comply with the Right to Farm Act, and the RR Section in the present package incorporates changes previously discussed.
- 2) R-4 – Mobile Home Park District – The requirements are stricter than the administrative guidelines published by the State of Michigan. This requires

formal approval by the State, and the proposed changes have been approved, but with comments in some of the expanded area. The language presented is now in compliance with the State requirements.

- 3) Billboards – the one change in this area is clarification of the limitation of billboard to “wall signs”. Based on research and discussions, the State of Michigan presently has a cap on all new billboard construction. The new language of 9.2 will incorporate the wall sign limitations previously discussed.
- 4) Lighting – minor changes have been incorporated to make the language consistent with other portions of the ordinance. All proposed changes have now been incorporated.

The proposed changes in the document include definitions and reconciliation of the terms and titles. The table of contents has also been revised. The discussions between Harvey and Rolfe made it clear that this was an important component to the adoption of the changes.

Remarks:

- 1) Step one to move the process along: establish public hearing date.
- 2) Rezoning legal descriptions are not complete yet. (A proposed noticing document has been provided to the members, this notice would include a direct mailing Township wide, rather than just notice by publication. A draft summary has also been prepared for communication purposes.)
- 3) The zoning map will also require revision, and should be available for review at the Township Hall during the review period.
- 4) Consistency with the master plan was also a topic reviewed with Rolfe. The master plan currently refers to some of the old district designations. Harvey recommends that the public hearing proceed, and that the district references be modified through the required “five-year update” of the master plan. A “zoning plan” is now a requirement within the master plan per recent revisions to the Michigan Planning Act.

Langshaw stated that as documents are revised, all documents should be dated, so the progression can be tracked. This will also allow members to discard documents as they may be replaced, or otherwise modified.

Bob Cox, 12138 N Sherman Lake Drive, asked for time to comment on the previous meeting. He was granted time, and stated that he has concerns regarding the Cheff Center and the Y-Camp, in that no one had contacted the directors of those entities about the changes being considered. He has discussed the issue with Luke Austenfeld, and Austenfeld is neutral on the reclassification. Cox expressed surprise that Fort Custer and the recreation area had been included in the AG Preservation District. The original purpose of the preservation district was to protect a variety of uses within the district.

There was discussion of the intent of including the public lands in the preservation district. The Cheff Center and Y-Camp were left out of the district to preserve the

present “special exception use” status, and not cause these uses to become nonconforming.

The discussion of the scheduling of the public continued in light of the issues surrounding the Cheff Center and Y-Camp.

Fry suggested that the public hearing could be scheduled for May, rather than April, this would allow thirty additional days to be sure information is complete and to allow additional consideration of these properties for inclusion in the preservation district. There was additional discussion of advising the entities of the option for inclusion, and allowing until the time of the public hearing for each to indicate the organization’s preference. An informal notification of the discussion held tonight was deemed appropriate, with a request that the entities advise the Township should there be interest in being included in the AG Preservation District.

In summary, Harvey stated that all the proposed language is prepared for public hearing, and the hearing could be set at the April meeting. The Commission could anticipate that representatives from the Cheff Center and Y-Camp may be present to discuss potential inclusion in the AG Preservation District.

It was the consensus of the commission that Fry and/or Lauderdale will make the communication to Cheff Center and Y-Camp.

## NEW BUSINESS

### **Set 2008-2009 Meeting Dates**

Fry stated that a proposed schedule is included in the agenda package. There was general discussion of proposed schedule, and meeting dates in relationship to holidays. On motion by Langshaw, seconded by Blain, the 2008-2009 Meeting Schedule was unanimously approved as presented.

### **Discussion on use of sliding scale for docks**

Dean explained the implications of Section 9.39, commonly referred to as the “sliding scale”, that the extent of nonconformity of a particular lot is utilized to calculate a reduction in the setbacks and allowable lot coverage. The “sliding scale” is not applicable under Section 7.13(B)(4), because this section specifies a ten (10) foot minimum setback. The “sliding scale” could be incorporated by replacing the stated minimum with a reference to the minimum side setback applicable to the particular lot or parcel.

Fry described that the same reductions are applicable to side setbacks within each particular district. There was discussion, and it was the consensus of the members, that it is appropriate that the dock should be subject to the same requirements as other structures on the lot.

There was discussion that the Commission would like to see a comparison to the requirements of the other Townships around Gull Lake. Harvey will compile a comparison for further review and discussion.

## REPORTS

### **ZBA**

No report (No meeting held in March).

### **Township Board**

Langshaw reported that the budget was approved at the last meeting, and there was discussion of mailing notices to all Township residents regarding the upcoming public hearing. There was one property division reviewed and approved by the Board.

### **Workshops**

There was discussion of the MSU Cooperative Extension training program being held at the Charleston Township Hall. The program is a series of seven (7) individual sessions, which can be taken as a complete program.

COMMISSIONER COMMENTS - none

## ADJOURNMENT

On motion by Lane seconded by Blain and unanimously approved, the meeting was adjourned at approximately 9:25 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Bruce Dean, AGS