

MINUTES of MARCH 25, 2014 PLANNING COMMISSION MEETING

Call to Order: The meeting was called to order at 7:00 pm by Chair Garofalo

The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

Roll Call: Members present: Harry Smith, Fred Lewis, Ron Remington, Tony Garofalo, Carol Browne and Paul Shamblin, Zoning Officer

Minutes: Harry Smith made a motion supported by Fred Lewis to approve the minutes of the February 25, 2014 Planning Commission Meeting. Motion passed.

Approval of the Agenda: Harry Smith made a motion supported by Ron Remington to approve the Agenda of the March 25, 2014 Planning Commission Meeting. Motion passed.

Old Business:

A. Citizen's Advisory Board

No further report

B. Master Plan

Chair Garofalo reported that ordinances do not have to conform to the Master Plan. The Master Plan is a description of the desired future for the Township. Ordinances reflect current policy. Several discussion topics were suggested as the Master Plan is reviewed. They include zoning that reflects the Township's concern with environmental issues such as fracking, tree cutting. While the Township has no authority to regulate these particular issues, the Master Plan can speak to desirable outcomes. Other discussion issues and suggestions mentioned were including statements with regard to use of cellular, solar and wind mechanisms; recreational use in the Township, in particular camping on private property; future need for additional fire protection such as additional dry hydrants and substations. Finally, the section on recycling needs to be updated to reflect current practice and new data from the 2010 census added. Chair Garofalo asked members to again review the Plan especially the sections on roads (4-1), review of the zoning plan (5-3) and routine updating of ordinances (5-4). Discussion of the Master Plan was postponed until April.

New Business:

None

Zoning Administrator Report:

Due to the harsh winter several roofs in the township collapsed. A property owner on Route 40 has been given warnings to repair a garage that is deteriorating. The winter snow caused the roof to completely collapse. This property is at the point of a citation for non-compliance with the blight ordinance.

Open Discussion of Non-Agenda Items:

Brad Morgan representing Morgan Composting, Inc. presented a request for rezoning of an R-1 property on 48th Street to agricultural so that his company can build a composting agribusiness. Morgan, Inc. collects dairy and chicken manure to produce high quality compost for sale as potting soil, fertilizer, etc. The plan is to purchase 40 – 80 acres (depending on

willingness of current owner to sell adjacent 40 acre plot) to build a 700 by 150 square foot tarp building on a cement slab. Mr. Morgan stated the site is a good location because there are no neighbors and will provide natural run off. There will be no leaching. No electricity or water is needed for the site. Extraction of water is minimal and ventilation is provided through natural air flow. The company uses large “turners” to manipulate the product. It will initially employ two people.

The Brink Farms trucking company used by Morgan Inc. stated 6 – 8 trucks weighing up to 145,000 pounds (11 axels) will carry animal waste in and compost out on a daily basis. Hours of operation are approximately 12 hours per day working no later than 9:00 pm. The company works with and will obtain approvals from the DEQ and the Board of Health after obtaining approval from Valley Township.

Mr. Morgan presented letters of support from various businesses, legislators and his own township supervisor speaking to the integrity of his company. Mr. Morgan stated his company solves the problem of sustainable manure management while providing a needed product for farmers. He also stated that he works closely with the Michigan Departments of Agriculture and Environmental Quality, Michigan State University and Brink Farms Trucking.

Questions asked of Mr. Morgan by Planning Commission members and Zoning Administrator: Do they ever accept human waste? Answer was no. It is possible for the future but not at this time. How do they handle odor from the manure? Answer: Use a liquid carbon process that eliminates odor and captures ammonia for use in their composting. Will they accept leaves for composting? Answer: Not at this time. They don't accept trash or garbage. If leaf composting is a high priority they will work with the township provided leaves are processed so they can maintain the quality of their products. When would their operation begin? They would like to begin building as soon as possible.

The PC will take this request under advisement. More investigation is needed before a decision can be made. Chair Garofalo thanked Brad Morgan and the visitors for their presentation.

Adjournment:

Harry Smith made a motion, supported by Fred Lewis to adjourn the meeting. The meeting adjourned at 8:33 p.m.

Respectfully submitted

Carol S. Browne, Secretary