

# MINUTES BIG RAPIDS CHARTER TOWNSHIP PLANNING COMMISSION

Tuesday, March 14, 2017 --- 7:30 p.m.

Big Rapids Township Hall, 14212 Northland Drive, Big Rapids, MI 49307

## I. CALL TO ORDER: 7:30 P.M.

Chairman Philip Keating called the regular meeting of the Big Rapids Charter Township Planning Commission to order at the township hall on Tuesday, March 14, 2017 at 7:30 p.m.

## II. ROLL CALL:

Present: Philip Keating, Carman Bean, Zach Cook, Mary Davis, Gordon Oliver, Mark Sweppenheiser and Amanda Wethington. The record shows a quorum is present. Also Present: Supervisor Bill Stanek and Zoning Administrator and Recording Secretary, Brent Mason.

## III. CONFLICTS OF INTEREST:

Mr. Keating asked if any of the Commission members had known conflicts of interest with any item on the agenda for this meeting. No one indicated that a conflict of interest existed. Mr. Keating thanked Mr. Sweppenheiser for running the Planning Commission meeting last month.

## IV. APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

The minutes of the February 14, 2017 regular meeting were reviewed. Mr. Bean made a motion to accept the minutes as presented. Mr. Oliver seconded the motion. Mr. Stanek asked to comment on a change that was made to the Junk Accumulation ordinance before it was passed by the Township Board of Trustees. Essentially, the board removed the requirement that a parcel between 5 and 40 acres needs to generate some income to qualify as a farm. Now the Ordinance reads that any property of 5 acres or more will be considered a farm if it is being used for an agricultural purpose. A voice vote to approve the minutes was unanimous with 7 yeas. Mr. Stanek also updated the Commission on the status of the Cemetery Building Task Force. The Task Force will consist of 14 members and once he has the membership finalized, he will be setting up the first meeting. The Planning Commission discussed options for the possible sale and removal of the building at no cost to the Township. Mr. Keating mentioned the upcoming MTA Planning and Zoning training session in White Cloud. Mr. Bean stated that he was interested in attending the White Cloud Session. Mention was made of the notice from Norwich Township regarding the upcoming review of their Master Plan.

## V. PUBLIC COMMENT:

None

## VI. OLD BUSINESS:

1. Continued discussion about the Capital Improvement Plan (CIP). Mr. Stanek gave background information on the CIP that he started when he became Supervisor four years ago. He went through the old information that was sent out in early 2013, but

nothing was ever done with the information that was gathered. Unfortunately, there was never a good list of the assets that the Township owned. This made it difficult to determine when an asset might need to be replaced, since the Township didn't know what it owned or the age of those assets. A form was sent out at that time, but nothing ever really materialized for a capital improvement plan. The request form has been modified to meet current needs, and Mr. Stanek requested that a letter from the Planning Commission be sent out to each department head with the request forms so that the process can get underway. Mr. Stanek reviewed each capital expense for the last several years to determine which departments need to be included in this process, and presented that information to the Commissioners. Mr. Stanek requested that any input from the Planning Commission would be appreciated in finalizing the documents to be sent out. Mr. Bean suggested in relation to the Capital Improvement policy (4.11 – 4.15), that a rating system for the CIP be defined for the Planning Commission in order to prioritize the requests, especially for the items that are funded from the general fund. Mr. Bean believes that an aggregate capital fund should be developed to monitor the total capital expenditures that have been made and approved during a budget year, as recommended by the Planning Commission. Mr. Bean also mentioned that the MTA doesn't recommend using operating millage funding for capital improvement projects. Discussion about operating millage v. capital improvement millage took place, and the end result was that language for future millage requests should include statements that allow the funds to be used for improvements as well as operating. Mr. Keating recommended that the request form be modified to reference only \$5,000.00 limits since that is the amount that the Board of Trustees has previously set for capital improvements in policy. Mr. Stanek advised that the Township Ordinance on Capital Improvements references \$10,000.00, and the ordinance is the legal basis the township must adhere to. Mr. Bean, Mr. Stanek and Mr. Keating discussed the \$5,000.00 v. \$10,000.00 difference and determined that any request over \$5,000.00 would be considered a Capital Improvement request. Mr. Bean voiced his concern that every month the Board of Trustees is receiving requests for Capital improvements without knowing what balance is available for total capital expenditures. Mr. Keating stated that the Planning commission will be sending out the letters to the various department heads, some of who are in charge of more than one department. Mr. Stanek gave a brief list of department heads that oversee more than one departmental budget. Mr. Keating stated that from his perspective, he has a concern with overall ranking of requests from multiple departments and determining which requests should take priority over another. Mr. Stanek stated that he has included a supervisor's ranking line to assist in this process. Mr. Bean said that the Commission should have a defined ranking system based on criteria, such as "is it required by law?" or "is it a safety issue?", etc. This will help in the overall ranking since each department head will believe that their needs should supersede any other department. Mr. Stanek also stated that the wish lists can be cut down with this system. Mr. Bean said that we will have to discern between needs and wants. Mr. Keating asked when the letters would go out. Mr. Stanek stated that they would go out before the end of this week. Mr. Bean suggested that the letter be authored by the Chairman. Mr. Keating agreed with that idea. He will sign the letters before they are sent out. Mr. Sweppenheiser suggested that a time estimate for each project be added to the letter, included a proposed start time. He stated that those were items the state wanted to see in the plan for possible grant applications. He also said that any statement that shows how projects could be combined or improved in order to save money would be important. Mr. Keating asked why there has to be a public hearing on the CIP. Mr. Stanek replied

that the law says so. Mr. Sweppenheiser said that it was required by law for the City of Big Rapids. Mr. Sweppenheiser said that the reason is to get public input on the CIP. Mr. Bean believes that the hearing should occur after the plan is finalized, not so that every item can be discussed for its relevance or for prioritizing. Mrs. Davis asked about if the forms need to change based on a proposed ranking system and time line information. Mr. Stanek advised that the ranking will be done by the Planning Commission. Mr. Sweppenheiser suggested that the ranking system be kept very simple, such as a one to three ranking on each criterion, with a minimal number of different criteria to consider. Mr. Bean and Mr. Sweppenheiser reiterated the items; Is it required by law? Is it a safety issue? and Is it expected by the citizens/residents? There was a brief discussion on the Master Plan and when it will need to be reviewed. Mr. Keating asked if the Commissioners were happy with the request form and the letter that will be going out. More discussion about the ranking process occurred. Mrs. Davis asked that the rankings be placed on the form in a standardized manner so that review will be easy. A method for ranking should be determined based on a priority per year. Mr. Keating asked if it is expected that the narrative on the request forms address all items listed in Sec. 4.15 of the CI policy. The discussion determined that was a good idea, and would be expected if applicable. Mr. Stanek thanked the Commissioners for their input. Mr. Bean also stated that he liked this plan because it is repeatable.

#### **VII. ADJOURNMENT:**

Mr. Keating entertained a motion to adjourn at 8:20 p.m. The motion was made by Mr. Bean and seconded by Mrs. Davis. Motion carried with 7 yeas.

Motion to approve the Planning Commission minutes of March 14, 2017 by: Mr. Sweppenheiser, Seconded by: Mr. Bean. Roll call vote carried with 7 yeas:

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Philip Keating, Chairman  
BIG RAPIDS CHARTER TOWNSHIP  
PLANNING COMMISSION

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Date Approved