

**MINUTES**  
**BIG RAPIDS CHARTER TOWNSHIP**  
**PLANNING COMMISSION**

**Tuesday, February 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.**

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

**II. ROLL CALL:**

Present: Carman Bean, Mary Davis, Gordon Oliver, Mark Sweppenheiser and Amanda Wethington. Zach Cook and Philip Keating are excused. 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. Sweppenheiser 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.

**IV. APPROVAL OF MINUTES:**

The minutes of the January 10, 2017 Joint meeting were reviewed. Mr. Bean made a motion to accept the minutes as presented. Mr. Oliver seconded the motion. A voice vote to approve was unanimously with 5 years

**V. PUBLIC COMMENT:**

None

**VI. NEW BUSINESS:**

1. Mr. Sweppenheiser requested discussion about the 1886 Cemetery Building. A slide show from the construction trades students of Ferris State University showed some possible uses of the building as a Columbarium, Chapel or outdoor/open memorial garden was shown. Discussion continued about the potential uses and which might be the best option for Highland View. Mrs. Davis asked if demolition of the building was an option, and everyone agreed that while it is one option, it may be the least acceptable and the most likely to bring on public disagreement. Mrs. Davis asked if all the proposals used the existing walls. Mr. Stanek said that the walls are concrete and are in pretty good shape other than the brick veneer. Mr. Bean stated that it should be looked at as a preservation as opposed to looking for a return on an investment. Mr. Stanek stated that we would never get our money back on this building. Mr. Sweppenheiser asked about looking into grants or fund raising to pay for improvements. Discussion about the cost of the renovations occurred. The cost will depend on what direction we choose to go. Mr. Sweppenheiser asked if there was enough property to allow for memory tree plantings for certain cremains burials. There was a brief discussion of green burials. Mr. Bean believes it would be beneficial for the Cemetery Committee to do some more

investigation and make some suggestions as to what they would like to see happen with the building. Discussion about all options including demolition should be taken and determination of the costs for each option. Mr. Bean asked if a subcommittee needs to be formed to tackle the details and determine the costs for acceptable options. Another item for discussion was putting a fence on the west end of the building to keep people off the roof. Currently there is a temporary snow fence up. Mr. Stanek mentioned contacting Gary Gerber and asking him to make suggestions for the adaptive reuse of the building. Mr. Bean made a motion to form a subcommittee to investigate the cost of renovation options, including demolition of the 1886 Cemetery Building, collect the information and report back to the Planning Commission. Seconded by Mrs. Davis. The motion passed unanimously.

2. The next item for discussion is the MMFLA. The township doesn't have to take any action at all if they choose to not allow Medical Marihuana facilities into the township. Mr. Stanek went into detail about the various types of licenses the state can issue, and the right of the township to allow any, all or none of the license types to operate in the township. There is revenue to be made from the permitting process and revenue sharing from the state licensing fees and taxes that could potentially come back to the township if we opt in. The decision to opt in is at the Board of Trustee level. The Planning Commission will need to be involved to determine what districts will be zoned for the various facilities if the township moves in that direction. We have been approached for information on whether we are going to participate. Mr. Stanek requested that everyone become informed and be prepared to recommend action depending on which way the township board chooses to go.

3. Discussion about the Capital Improvement Plan (CIP). Background on the CIP was given including the definition of Capital Improvement. The Board of Trustees defined a capital improvement as an item costing more than \$5,000.00 and having a life span of greater than 5 years. Mr. Bean read information from the township policy book about Capital Improvements. We need a 6 year CIP to be eligible for grant funding for projects. Mr. Bean stated that it is cumbersome to develop but necessary to assist in the budgeting process. Mr. Bean suggested that a request form needs to be filled out for each item being requested and a ranking system be put in place to assist in determining which items will be budgeted for and which year it will be budgeted. Mr. Stanek and Mr. Bean presented the Commission members with sample documents that could be used in the CIP process. Discussion continued about the items that should be on our list, especially in the cemetery budget, but also for the growth of the township such as roads, sidewalks, sewer and water expansion projects. The road committee has worked very hard to come up with a plan for improving our roads. Mr. Sweppenheiser offered to send copies of the City of Big Rapids Plan to the Commissioners as a reference. Mr. Stanek has also been preparing a draft list for the CIP and will continue to work on it.

4. Discussion on the Junk Ordinance, specifically about the definition of a farm. Mr. Bean is concerned about someone owning and keeping a horse, etc. on their property and using the land to raise feed for the horse but because they don't sell any of the crops, they aren't making any income from the property, then they don't meet our definition of a farm. Should we determine changes in farm revenue requirements in order to allow any property over 5 acres to qualify as a farm? The consensus of the committee was that the current language is a good starting point, and if we find later on that it is not

working, we can amend it later. Mr. Sweppenheiser asked if there was any more discussion required on this topic, and everyone agreed that we are done.

**VII. ADJOURNMENT:**

Mr. Sweppenheiser entertained a motion to adjourn at 8:54 p.m. The motion was made by Mr. Bean and seconded by Mrs. Davis. Motion carried with 5 yeas.

Motion to approve the Planning Commission minutes of February 14, 2017 by: Mr. Bean, Seconded by: Mr. Oliver. 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