

MINUTES BIG RAPIDS CHARTER TOWNSHIP PLANNING COMMISSION

Tuesday, November 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, November 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: Zoning Administrator and Recording Secretary, Brent Mason and Supervisor Bill Stanek.

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.

IV. MINUTES:

Mr. Keating asked the Commission to review the minutes of the October 10, 2017 regular meeting. Mr. Bean made a motion to approve the October 10, 2017 minutes as submitted. Mr. Sweppenheiser seconded the motion. There was no further discussion. The motion passed unanimously with seven ayes.

V. PUBLIC COMMENT:

There was no public comment.

VI. OTHER BUSINESS:

New ordinance books were presented to the Commission, but Mr. Mason still needed to insert the dividers between the sections for easy reference. All members opted to leave the new copies so Mr. Mason could finish the divider insertion. The new books will be distributed at the December meeting.

Mr. Keating asked Mr. Mason to review the updated information about the 2017 Planning Commission Annual Report. Mr. Mason stated that the report was progressing well, and would be ready for approval at the January meeting. The paragraph format was chosen for readability and because the document is relatively short. Mr. Keating wondered if the report could be finalized and approved at the December meeting so that it could be presented to the Board of Trustees at their January 2, 2018 meeting. Mr. Mason said that if no major business occurs during the December meeting, the action to accept this report could be taken at the end of the December meeting, and the Report could be presented to the Board of Trustees at their January 2nd meeting or the joint meeting on

January 9th. The Planning Commission concurred that they would like to finalize the report at the December meeting.

Mr. Mason is requesting that the proposed fee schedule for Zoning and Planning department business functions be recommended by the Planning Commission so that they can be forwarded to the Board of Trustees for action at their December Meeting. The proposal was developed in order to recover some of the costs associated with providing these services to the users of said services. Mr. Mason stated that the fee schedule will have an effective date of January 1, 2018. This will allow time for the fee schedule to be posted on the Township website. Mr. Mason explained how the cost of providing the listed services were calculated, and why he would like to recover some of those costs. Mr. Keating expressed his thoughts that the engineering reviews are very beneficial and should be continued. Currently, the Township pays for these reviews, and the developers are not charged for the service. Mr. Bean asked about the projected revenue figures, and Mr. Mason replied that they are based on an "average" year's requests. Mr. Keating started discussion by asking why a property owner should have to pay for these services when they are already paying property taxes to the township that should supposedly cover these services. Mr. Sweppenheiser mentioned that the services do present a liability to the township. He further said that no one appreciates services that are provided for free and unfortunately, there is a segment of the population that will take advantage of the service if it is provided at no cost. Discussion of the different fee structures occurred and Mr. Keating asked several questions about how the fees were determined. Mr. Mason explained that some were based on actual costs involved in zoning and planning processes, and others were arbitrary, such as the special meeting fee, which is meant to be a deterrent to requests for special meetings. Mr. Sweppenheiser mentioned that he thought that a higher fee for a special meeting was appropriate because the benefit of a special meeting was negligible, given that almost all projects rarely begin immediately after the approval process is complete. Mr. Keating asked for a motion to recommend the fee proposal to the Board of trustees. Mr. Bean made the motion to recommend that the Board of Trustees approve the Zoning and Planning Fee schedule with a change to the Zoning Compliance Letter/Research fee to \$30.00 per hour. Mr. Sweppenheiser seconded the motion. Mr. Keating asked that a roll call vote be taken. Those in favor were: Mr. Sweppenheiser, Mr. Oliver, Mr. Cook, Mrs. Davis and Mrs. Wethington. Mr. Keating was opposed and Mr. Bean abstained as he will vote on the proposal at the Board of Trustees meeting. The motion passed with 5 ayes, 1 nay and 1 abstain. Mr. Keating thanked everyone for their input.

Mr. Mason shared information about a training opportunity being provided free of charge by the City of Big Rapids for Planning Commission and ZBA members. This will be held at City Hall on December 7th from 5:30p.m. until ~8:00 p.m. and is being facilitated by Eric Williams. Mr. Keating stated that he was interested. Mr. Mason will be sending out a reminder email to the Planning commissioners and to the ZBA members around the 1st of December. Mr. Mason mentioned that he would let Mr. Sweppenheiser know how many Township members would be attending. Mr. Keating asked when the City held their Planning Commission meetings. Mr. Sweppenheiser replied that they meet on the third Wednesday of the month at 6:30 p.m. Mr. Bean mentioned that the Citizen Planner class put on by the MSU Extension contains some very valuable information and wondered if we could request a class be presented locally, so that people from the area could attend without having to travel a great distance. Mr. Mason will get together with

Mr. Sweppenheiser and look into getting the Citizen Planner program here in the near future.

Mr. Keating asked if there was any other business for the Commission, and Mr. Stanek stated that a gentleman came into his office this afternoon asking about tiny-houses and possibly wanting to develop a tiny-home cluster community/campground on a 20-acre parcel in the south end of the Township. These dwellings would have plumbing, heating and electrical so that they could be rented out by the day, week or month. The gentleman wanted to know if the Planning Commission had ever considered anything like this before, and whether it would be possible in Big Rapids Township. Mr. Bean relayed that Harbor Springs has a small home development along the waterfront near downtown and he thought that it was extremely nice. Mr. Mason responded to questions about the zoning ordinance language and what is currently allowable in the Agricultural district, where this particular parcel is located. He briefed the commissioners on lot size, road frontage, setback and floor space requirements for single family dwellings, and on allowable changes that could be considered if this project were to be undertaken as a PUD or Condominium project. He also shared some of the language that had been worked on earlier but never completed because there have been no actual requests for mini-cabins or small homes in the township. Mr. Mason requested some direction from the Commissioners for the mini-cabin proposals. He stated that he would prepare some language for future consideration. Mr. Keating wanted to make sure that the information about the available options would get forwarded to the gentleman. There was more discussion about supplemental dwelling units on parcels that are already used for a primary residence. No action was taken during this meeting, but further discussion will need to occur so that the Planning Commission can pursue action that will be in the best interest of the residents of the Township.

Mrs. Wethington asked about the status of the Freiberg property on 14 Mile Road. She is currently concerned about the accumulation of excess vehicles. Mr. Mason stated that he and George Dietrich stopped by the residence and talked to Pauline Freiberg earlier in May, and they were told that the semi-trailers would be leaving the property later in the summer. Also, the camper was for sale and the car was supposed to be removed. The Freiberg property is claimed to be agricultural, because they are raising 4-H animals for their children. Mr. Mason will write a letter and send it to them with a carefully worded request that they clean up the property or a civil infraction ticket will be issued.

VII. ADJOURNMENT:

Hearing no further business for the Planning Commission, Mr. Keating entertained a motion to adjourn at 8:40 p.m. The motion was made by Mr. Sweppenheiser and seconded by Mr. Bean. The motion carried unanimously with seven ayes.

Motion to approve the Planning Commission minutes of November 14, 2017 by: Mr. Oliver, Seconded by: Mr. Sweppenheiser. Roll call vote carried with 6 ayes.

Philip Keating, Chairman
BIG RAPIDS CHARTER TOWNSHIP
PLANNING COMMISSION

Date Approved