

MINUTES BIG RAPIDS CHARTER TOWNSHIP PLANNING COMMISSION

Tuesday, December 08, 2015 --- 7:30 p.m.

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

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

Chairman Michael Hults called the regular meeting of the Big Rapids Charter Township Planning Commission to order at the township hall on Tuesday, December 08, 2015 at 7:30 p.m.

II. ROLL CALL:

Present: Gordon Oliver, Vivian Smith, Philip Keating, David Hamelund, Michael Hults, Jim Shane and Carman Bean. The record shows a quorum is present. Also Present: William Stanek, Zoning Administrator and Brent Mason, Recording Secretary.

III. APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

The minutes of the November 10, 2015 meeting were reviewed and Mr. Keating initiated a brief discussion about the capital improvement plan wording on the bottom of page 2, but it was decided that the intent of the language was acceptable, and no change was needed. Mr. Keating made the motion to approve the minutes as submitted, seconded by Mrs. Smith. The motion carried unanimously with 7 yeas.

IV. PUBLIC COMMENT: None

V. SITE PLAN REVIEW:

Mr. James Vanden Berge of JVB Civil & Architectural Consultation & Design Services is here to present a commercial site plan for expanding the available parking at WDS Ventures, LLC - Johnny's Shell Station, 21445 Perry Avenue. A little over a year ago, Mr. Vanden Berge presented the Planning Commission with a plan to add parking at the site in the area around the NW corner of the property, the eastern island between the driveways and in the area NE of the car wash. The Planning Commission denied that request based on visibility issues with the island location and the need for dimensional variances. The ZBA met and approved the proposed NW corner and the area near the car wash. WDS got prices on the construction of the approved changes, but the retaining wall near the car wash made that option unfeasible, which prompted them to look at other options. They recently designed a new building in Hasting with underground storage for storm water, which prompted them to consider that as an option for this location. The proposal is for underground storage in the area of the current detention pond, which would allow for an additional 20 feet of pavement to allow parking along the northern side of the property. Mr. Hults asked about the storm water calculations that were mentioned in the 2 page report from Mike Oezer. Mr. Stanek referred the Commissioners to an email Mr. Oezer sent this afternoon which referenced the fact that the calculations were acceptable. Mr. Keating asked if the 51 parking spaces will meet the needs of the location. Mr. Vanden Berge stated that when the location was originally designed, he thought that he had provided for adequate parking, but as Big Rapids grew, the need for increased parking spots has arose. The owners know their business and they came up

with this number of parking spaces and are satisfied with it. Mr. Vanden Berge stated that this will basically max out the usable space on the site. Mr. Stanek asked if they would build a parking garage if they outgrow this, and Mr. Vanden Berge stated that they would build another Johnny's if they outgrow this location. Mr. Hults asked if there were any further comments or questions, and not hearing any, asked for a motion to approve the site plan. Mr. Keating moved to approve the site plan for additional parking for WDS Ventures, LLC – Johnny's Shell as presented. Mr. Vanden Berge stated that the site lighting was referenced in Mr. Oezer's report also, and Mr. Vanden Berge visited the site earlier tonight and noticed that it is a little dark. He is going to go back to the owners and ask them if they want to add any lighting for the new parking area. Mr. Hults stated that the current plan does not include any lights, and that the inclusion of any lights would need to be approved by Mr. Stanek, but not necessarily by the planning commission. Mr. Oliver seconded the motion. Mr. Hamelund asked if there were any changes along the east (215th Avenue) side of the property, and Mr. Vanden Berge stated that there are no changes on the east side of the site. Mr. Hults asked for the vote, and the motion passed unanimously with 7 yeas.

VI. OLD BUSINESS:

Mini-Cabins: Mr. Stanek presented the 12-08-2015 draft language for Rustic Cabins for the Planning Commission to review. Mr. Mason gave a synopsis of the draft with some possible ideas for minimum lot size, primary use versus accessory use, sanitation and water, and whether it needs to meet the building code for a dwelling including health department requirements. Mr. Bean asked about larger parcels and if a cabin could exist on an 80 acre parcel that already has a primary dwelling on it. Mr. Mason advised that the determination of allowable use is the planning commissions to make, and the cabins could be considered a primary use on a parcel, or they could make it an accessory use if they chose to go that way. Mrs. Smith wondered why someone would want something like this on their property. Discussion mentioned recreational uses such as a hunting cabin, glorified deer blind and get-away cottage. There was more discussion regarding types of uses and whether it is necessary to regulate this type of use, and if a building permit would be required for this type of structure. Because it is intended for human occupation, a building permit should be required to make sure it will be safe for the inhabitants. Discussion continued about the need for a minimum parcel size and whether a parcel needs to be split to allow a cabin to exist if a primary dwelling already exists on the parcel. Mr. Hults asked Mr. Stanek to help him understand the township's concern. Mr. Stanek requested that the Planning Commission come up with something that will address the issue of recreational use cabins, so that Big Rapids Township's situation is similar to Mecosta County and the other townships. The commission members continued discussion regarding how to regulate these uses and whether they should be regulated. Mr. Stanek stated that he felt they should at least have the same regulation that a camper would have to meet for temporary occupancy. Agricultural zoning would be the only allowable district for this type of use. Mr. Hamelund asked about making the minimum parcel size be something closer to 40+ acres. Other members thought that 20 acres should be the minimum parcel size for this type of usage. Mr. Keating asked about someone putting up an 800 –1,000+ sq. ft. storage building and then converting a portion of it into a cabin type temporary dwelling. The commission considered the definition of a building versus dwelling, whether they can be regulated differently, and which category a cabin would fall in. Most of the concern may revolve around the size versus the use. Mr. Bean and Mrs. Smith discussed the current trend toward mini-homes, and whether that

use would be allowable under this provision or under our current zoning ordinance, and whether we could limit them to a certain number of days per year. Mr. Hults stated that the commission could put language in the Agricultural District under permitted accessory use that would allow maintenance of an occasional recreational shelter which will not be occupied more than x number of nights per year. That would allow the primary dwelling and a cabin on the same 20 acre parcel. As far as a large pole building being built with living quarters inside is concerned, that type of use should already be regulated as a dwelling. The intention is to promote compliance with the building code for the safety of the occupants. During the discussion of additional dwellings on the same agricultural parcel, it was determined that it is an allowable use by special use permit in the agricultural district for farm hand living on the farm. Mr. Hults feels the correct way to deal with this issue is to make it a permitted accessory use. Further action will come at a later time.

Mr. Stanek spoke to the Commission about having a joint meeting with the Township Board of Trustees during the next scheduled PC meeting on January 12, starting at 7:00 pm at the Fire Hall. Mr. Stanek would like to give a State of the Township address to the Board and The PC for the first 20 minutes, and then having a visioning session for the township after that. This will allow people to voice their opinions about different projects and items of township concern, including the library, roads and the fire department.

Mr. Mason mentioned that Menards expansion site plan may be on the agenda for next month. Creek's Edge II and Venlo have also been asking question about expansion projects, but probably won't be ready for consideration yet.

VII. ADJOURNMENT:

Mr. Hults entertained a motion to adjourn at 8:23 p.m. The motion was made by Mrs. Smith and seconded by Mr. Bean. Motion carried with 7 yeas.

Motion to approve the Planning Commission minutes of December 08, 2015

by: Mr. _____, Seconded by: Mr. _____. Roll call vote carried with ____ yeas:

Michael Hults, Chairman
BIG RAPIDS CHARTER TOWNSHIP
PLANNING COMMISSION

Date Approved