

# MINUTES BIG RAPIDS CHARTER TOWNSHIP PLANNING COMMISSION

Tuesday, April 9, 2019 --- 7:30 p.m.

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

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

Chairman Amanda Wethington called the regular meeting of the Big Rapids Charter Township Planning Commission to order at the township hall on Tuesday, April 9, 2019 at 7:30 p.m.

## II. ROLL CALL:

Present: Gordon Oliver, Mark Sweppenheiser, Carman Bean and Amanda Wethington. Zach Cook, Mary Davis and Bob Hampson are excused. The record shows there is a quorum. Also Present: Zoning Administrator and Recording Secretary, Brent Mason.

## III. CONFLICTS OF INTEREST:

Mrs. Wethington asked if any of the Commission members had known conflicts of interest with any of the items on the agenda for this meeting. No one indicated that a conflict of interest existed.

## IV. MINUTES:

Mrs. Wethington asked the Commission to review the minutes of the March 12, 2019 regular meeting. Mr. Sweppenheiser made a motion to approve the March 12, 2019 minutes as submitted. Mr. Bean seconded the motion. There was no further discussion. The motion passed unanimously with four ayes.

## V. PUBLIC COMMENT:

There was no public comment.

## VI. NEW BUSINESS:

The Planning Commission reviewed the draft 2020 – 2025 Capital Improvement Plan presented by Mr. Mason. He gave a summary of funding information to the PC members because the 2020 budgeted CIP funds will be larger than normal due to sewer fund and Cemetery Building Fund additions. Mr. Mason gave a brief overview of the plan and updated the changes in information for the members. New individual request items were mentioned and rankings were discussed. Mr. Mason did provide additional information about the replacement fire engine and a proposed sidewalk from the High School to Aldi. The members acknowledged that the plan was ready to move forward to the public hearing stage. Mr. Bean made a motion to set a Public Hearing for the 2020 – 2025 Capital Improvement Plan for May 14, 2019, during the Planning Commission regular meeting. Mr. Sweppenheiser seconded that motion. The motion carried unanimously with four ayes.

## VII. OTHER BUSINESS:

Mr. Mason updated the members about the Master Plan and his concerns for the process. He feels that even though our current plan is rather minimal in content, it is

fairly comprehensive and does a good job of describing our goals. It still might need a few additions to bring it into compliance with the State of Michigan's requirements, however. He said that further mention of the Muskegon River, parks and recreation opportunities, including Michigan's Dragon at the Hardy Dam should be incorporated, since it will definitely have an impact on our economic growth, even though the trail isn't in Big Rapids Township. Mr. Mason wondered about the language that talks about the development of an alternate north-south travel route through the township, since there really isn't an apparent need for this route, and there has never been any action taken to pursue one. The language for this route and for another bridge across the Muskegon river east to west will remain in the plan as both items will provide for future growth and facilitate better travel options for the residents of the region. Mr. Mason stated that he feels it should be a priority for the Master Plan to provide for extension of sewer and water utilities to the west side of the U.S. 131 Highway Interchange District. He also mentioned that some of the language that mentions items that have already occurred could be removed (Waldron Way). Demographic information will need to be updated and the information from the 2020 U.S. Census won't be available until 2021 at the earliest.

Mr. Mason introduced new data and drawings regarding Roben-Hood Airport and a proposed future expansion of the main runway from 4,300 feet to 5,000 feet, in order to accommodate larger aircraft and expand travel service options to the region. This item is a high priority for the City of Big Rapids, and he feels that it should be a high priority for Big Rapids Township as well. This would be a benefit to economic development.

Mr. Mason would like to form a Citizen Action Committee or a sub-committee of the Planning Commission to handle further review of the Master Plan. Mr. Stanek requested that an official request be submitted to the Board of Trustees before any action is taken to form a Master Plan review committee. Mr. Mason stated that he would make a request to the Board.

Mr. Mason reviewed the future land use map with the Commission, and mentioned that he would like to recommend that we don't pursue use changes from agricultural to residential, since our area is still very rural and the agricultural designation offers more options for land usage that are beneficial to the development of the area and still provide for the values that we desire. Mr. Sweppenheiser thinks that we do need to review the future use map regularly. He stated that we are a regional destination, and need to continue to provide for those commercial uses and development. He acknowledged that determining land use area it is a juggling act because those uses can change and move rapidly.

Mr. Sweppenheiser commented on his concern that Mecosta County doesn't plow their roads on weekends and evenings in the winter due to overtime pay issues. He feels the impact on the regional economy is huge (potentially millions of dollars) and we should be pushing to rectify that situation. The members had an informal discussion regarding winter road maintenance and the economic impact it might be having on our community. Mr. Sweppenheiser reiterated his point that the County Road Commission is providing terrible service by not plowing the roads on the weekends for the citizens of the area. He feels that everybody needs to get together and come up with a solution for this problem, whatever that might be.

Mr. Mason gave the Commission members some more background information on the proposed expansion of the airport runway and went over the drawings that were provided by Steve Schroeder, Airport Manager. The time frame for this project is still at least five years out, but it will have a large economic impact on the area.

Mr. Mason informed the Commission the Michigan Department of Licensing and Regulatory Affairs has written a letter to the Owners of Circle Drive Mobile Home Park informing them that they are operating without a valid license. He gave a brief rundown of the conditions at the park, and the efforts that are being taken to rectify the situations.

Mr. Mason reviewed current legislative information and educational opportunities that are coming to the area.

Mr. Sweppenheiser asked Mr. Stanek about the need to opt out from providing for recreational marijuana establishments. It was affirmed that the local jurisdictions do have to opt out of the provision of recreational marijuana establishments. Mr. Stanek gave some background information about the political atmosphere in the state and local zoning concerns regarding marijuana.

**VIII. ADJOURNMENT:**

Hearing no further business for the Planning Commission, Mrs. Wethington adjourned the meeting at 8:26 p.m.

Motion to approve the Planning Commission minutes of April 9, 2019 by: Mr. Bean.  
Seconded by: Mr. Oliver. Roll call vote carried with six ayes.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Brent R. Mason, Recording Secretary  
BIG RAPIDS CHARTER TOWNSHIP  
PLANNING COMMISSION

\_\_\_\_\_  
May 14, 2019  
Date Approved