

MINUTES BIG RAPIDS CHARTER TOWNSHIP PLANNING COMMISSION

Tuesday, October 8, 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, October 8, 2019 at 7:30 p.m.

II. ROLL CALL:

Present: Carman Bean, Mike Bigford, Mary Davis, Gordon Oliver, Mark Sweppenheiser and Amanda Wethington. Zach Cook is 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 members to review the minutes of the September 10, 2019. Mr. Bean made a motion to approve the September 10, 2019 minutes as submitted. Mr. Oliver supported the motion. There was no further discussion. The motion passed unanimously with six ayes.

V. PUBLIC COMMENT:

Mr. Mason advised the Planning Commission members that he would be leaving employment with the Township at the end of the month. There was no other public comment.

VI. OTHER BUSINESS:

Mr. Dave Bee from the West Michigan Regional Planning Commission is attending tonight following the Board of Trustees approval of his services to assist the Planning Commission in the review of the 2020 Master Plan. Mr. Bee began by thanking the Planning Commission members for supporting his offer and recommending his proposal.

Mr. Bee started by giving the PC members some homework. He would like the PC members to undertake a review of the Community Survey that was sent out back in 2003. It asks for input on strengths, weaknesses, land use, community services and brief demographics of the respondents. He requested that members make suggestions to be used in the new survey. Mr. Bigford asked if a comment section could be included that would allow for additional input. Mr. Bigford asked how the analytical information would be ranked and weighted so that the information would be more usable and applicable. Mr. Bee stated that all those concerns would be taken into consideration.

The second homework assignment is to pick two days for interviewing residents and members of the public. Mr. Bee requested that lists of names and contact information be forwarded to him for key persons to interview. It was determined that the dates would be November 6th and 7th from 10 am to 8 pm.

Mr. Bee explained how he would run the interviews, defining terminology and processes so that the participants would be responding to open ended questioning.

Mr. Bee also requested to schedule public input workshops after the individual interviews. After a brief discussion, the Planning Commission members agreed that Wednesday, December 4th from 1 to 4 pm and 6 to 8 pm would likely be a good date. Mr. Stanek said he would reserve the Mecosta County Services meeting room.

Mr. Sweppenheiser asked about the demographic section questions and wondered if they could be modified so that they weren't so cumbersome. Mr. Bee stated that the rationale was to make sure that entire township was represented fairly. The members made several suggestions that could streamline the process and maintain the information gathering process so that the data would represent the township citizens accurately. Mr. Bee went through some of the results from the 2003 survey and said that he would look at modifying some of the questions.

The PC members and Mr. Bee briefly discussed the Industrial Park. Mr. Bee advised that he found out the property needed to remain an industrial park for 20 years.

Mrs. Davis asked Mr. Bee how many individuals he was looking to interview. Mr. Bee replied that he wanted a total of approximately 40 people. The Township Board and Planning Commission members are included in that number. Mr. Bee requested contact information also be included so that he doesn't have to track it down.

Mr. Bigford asked how the citizens would be able to access the survey. It was suggested that the survey be accessible online via the township website and through social media, such as Facebook. Mr. Mason stated that developing a fillable survey form was doable and it could be placed online in those sites. Mr. Bee advised that paper surveys have worked well for most jurisdictions and that in 2003, there were over 220 surveys returned in Big Rapids Township representing over 18 percent of the households. Mr. Bigford suggested that we were missing a large opportunity for connecting with the public if we didn't have an online social media presence.

Mr. Bee reiterated that the dates of the interviews would be November 6 & 7 and that we would continue to work on the survey questions and distribution methods. Comments were made about survey monkey, how it works and whether it would function for us.

Mr. Bee mentioned the Old US 131/Northland Drive corridor committee from Howard City to Reed City will be starting up this fall to discuss the development along that roadway and look at traffic flow issues. The Rural Task Forces will also be starting soon as well.

The members of the Planning Commission thanked Mr. Bee for his time and talent. Mrs. Wethington and the other members thanked Mr. Mason for all the work he did for the Planning Commission. Mr. Mason acknowledged the recognition and thanked the

members for allowing him to serve them. He offered to assist in any way he could during the transition period.

VIII. ADJOURNMENT:

Hearing no further business for the Planning Commission, Mrs. Wethington adjourned the meeting at 8:20 p.m.

Motion to approve the Planning Commission minutes of October 8, 2019 by: Mr. Bean.
Seconded by: Mr. Sweppenheiser. Roll call vote carried with six ayes.

_____,
Timothy Kleinheksel, Recording Secretary
BIG RAPIDS CHARTER TOWNSHIP
PLANNING COMMISSION

January 14, 2020
Date Approved