

MINUTES BIG RAPIDS CHARTER TOWNSHIP PLANNING COMMISSION

Tuesday, September 10, 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, September 10, 2019 at 7:30 p.m.

II. OATH OF OFFICE:

Bill Stanek, Township Supervisor, administered the Oath of Office to the newest PC member, Mike Bigford. He will finish out the term vacated by Bob Hampson, expiring on December 31, 2020

III. ROLL CALL:

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

IV. 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.

V. MINUTES:

Mrs. Wethington asked the Commission members to review the minutes of the August 13, 2019 regular meeting. Mr. Cook made a motion to approve the August 13, 2019 minutes as submitted. Mr. Bean seconded the motion. There was no further discussion. The motion passed unanimously with six ayes.

VI. PUBLIC COMMENT:

Mr. Stanek mentioned that he would like to request that the Planning Commission make a motion to recommend that the Board of Trustees hire Dave Bee and request acceptance of the WMRPC Proposal for assistance with our 2020 Master Plan. Mr. Mason advised that this item was next on the agenda.

VII. NEW BUSINESS:

Based on the comment from Mr. Stanek, Mr. Bean made a motion to engage the services of Mr. Bee and the WMRPC to assist us in developing and updating our master plan. The motion was seconded by Mrs. Davis. Discussion followed.

Mr. Bigford asked if the motion was based on the bid that was provided. Mr. Bean mentioned that the PC recommends that the Township Board accept the proposal from the West Michigan Regional Planning Commission for services related to our 2020 Master plan. Discussion continued about the proposal and what services will be

provided. Mrs. Davis stated that she could not imagine taking on this project without the outside expertise provided by Mr. Bee. Mr. Bigford was curious who will control the process and which entity will receive the reports from Mr. Bee. Mr. Stanek advised that the Planning Commission will oversee the process and Mr. Bee will report directly to them.

Mr. Bean requested that a digital (electronic) copy of the final document be provided. Mr. Bigford asked what the first step would be after Mr. Bee is engaged. Mr. Stanek replied that Mr. Bee would start by meeting with the public to gather their input. Mr. Mason stated the public notifications have been sent out to the adjacent local jurisdictions and the public utility providers, as well as the local school districts. Mrs. Wethington asked what the timeline goal for completion of the plan is. Mr. Mason said that the goal is to be complete by December of 2020, but there is some leeway for finalizing the plan, and that the 2020 Census data will not be available until 2021. Mr. Mason continued by summarizing the items that will need to be placed into the next plan that may have been inadvertently removed when the 2015 plan was being developed. The big items to consider are implementing some sort of complete streets plan and updating the vision for the township, including the future land use map, so that it correctly represents what the residents and the planning commission members want to see.

Mr. Mason is hoping that the public will be interested in participating in the information gathering phase of the process so that we will have good information to help steer the direction of the 2020 plan. Mr. Bigford asked if we would create a vision statement, and Mr. Mason said that we would, based on the input we receive from the citizens. We will need to make sure that we provide for all the mandated items. Mr. Bigford commented that it was interesting to read the old survey results and see what the residents wanted then. Everyone is in agreement that the new survey will be a great tool for determining the direction the citizens want the township to go, as long as we get good participation.

Mr. Bigford asked who would develop the questions that will be asked during the survey process. He wondered if there was fixed format for the line of questioning. Mr. Mason replied that he believed the questions were targeted to the community and the desires of the Planning Commission. We want to make sure that we don't lead respondents in a particular direction that we want. Mr. Bean said he feels it is important for the Planning Commission to review the survey questions before they go out. Mr. Bigford would like to incentivize people to fill out the survey so that the results will be representative of the entire community. He really wants to see as much engagement as can be generated.

Mrs. Wethington asked if there was anymore discussion on the motion. Hearing none, she called the question and the motion passed with six ayes and zero nays.

In other business, Mr. Mason briefly mentioned the latest information published on legal decisions and other legislation that affects planning and zoning in Michigan. The item that may most affect us is Michigan SB 431, which is a proposed amendment to the Zoning Enabling Act that will remove most of the provisions for local oversight in the regulation of mining and gravel pits. Mr. Mason mentioned that the rest of the items in the legal section may not affect us greatly.

The Michigan Association of Planning is having their annual conference in Kalamazoo on September 25 - 27, 2019, if anyone is interested.

Mr. Mason mentioned that the MSU Extension's Zoning Administrator class will be held in Petoskey this winter, February 6 – 7, 2020. This was a very valuable program and, if his schedule will allow, he would like to take it again.

Mr. Stanek shared that the 2020 Census is coming up in April and he wants to make sure that Big Rapids Township is counted accurately, including college students, snow birds and children under school age. He stated those are the groups that are most undercounted in our area. He encouraged everyone to help make sure we get a complete count. Mr. Mason mentioned that he, Mr. Stanek and representatives from the City of Big Rapids and Ferris State University will meet Friday September 13, 2019 to discuss setting up a joint Complete Count Committee. Mrs. Wethington asked how someone gets counted, and Mr. Stanek explained the methods that will be used for the 2020 Census. Mr. Bigford asked if we could use the absentee ballot applications to assist in determining who the snowbirds are.

Mr. Bigford asked about providing an incentive for the citizens to participate in our Master Plan survey. Mr. Stanek answered that he thought that would be fine as long as the prizes were donated, because no township funds could be used in purchasing those items.

Mr. Bigford asked if he could call in for a conference call if he is not able to attend one of our meetings. Mr. Stanek replied that calling in would be fine. Everyone thanked Mr. Bigford for his willingness to become a member of the commission and welcomed him to the team.

VIII. ADJOURNMENT:

Hearing no further business for the Planning Commission, Mrs. Wethington adjourned the meeting at 7:58 p.m.

Motion to approve the Planning Commission minutes of September 10, 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

October 8, 2019
Date Approved