

MINUTES
BIG RAPIDS CHARTER TOWNSHIP
PLANNING COMMISSION

Tuesday, April 11, 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, April 11, 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. Supervisor Bill Stanek is excused.

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. APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

The minutes of the March 14, 2017 regular meeting were reviewed. Mr. Sweppenheiser made a motion to accept the minutes as presented. Mr. Bean seconded the motion. A voice vote to approve the minutes was unanimous with 7 yeas.

V. PUBLIC COMMENT:

None

VI. NEW BUSINESS:

1. The Public Hearing for SUP 17-001 Goodwell Outdoor Advertising Sign was withdrawn from the agenda tonight at the request of Robin and Eric Goodwell.

2. Site Plan Review for Goodwell Storage: Mr. Keating asked Mr. Mason to present a summary of the Site Plan for SUP 16-002, Goodwell Storage. Mr. Mason reviewed the previous Commission action approving the special use on August 9, 2016, subject to a site plan approval for the property on 220th Avenue approximately ½ mile south of 15 Mile Road. The Mid – Michigan Engineering Site Plan for Job No. 16227 dated 2/28/2017 was presented to the Commission and displayed for those present. Mr. Mason mentioned his findings on his review of the plan, and stated that the only concern was that the driveway as indicated on the plan is not directly across from the existing driveway to Goodwell Auto Service and that it is not separated by 200 feet from the driveway on the opposite side of the street. Mr. Mason also mentioned that this site plan is being reviewed by the Mecosta County Drain Commissioner because the property is in the Tonkin Drain District. Mr. Keating asked Mr. and Mrs. Goodwell if they had any comments, and they indicated that they did not. Mr. Jerry Gray also gave a very brief

summary of the site plan in regards to storm water and to the driveway needing to be approved by the Mecosta County Road Commission. Mr. Bean asked about lighting and fencing. Mr. Mason explained that the plan is for the site to be fenced and gated at a later time, and Mr. Goodwell advised that the building will have motion activated lighting on the inside of the storage units. Mr. Mason advised that once access to the property is controlled by fencing and a gate, there would not be a need for site lighting unless clients can access the property after dark. Mr. Keating asked someone to make a motion regarding the site plan. Mr. Oliver motioned to accept the Site Plan #16227 revised 2/28/2017 as presented. Mr. Bean seconded the motion. Mr. Keating asked if there were any other comments or questions. Hearing none, he called the question and the motion passed unanimously on voice vote with 7 yeas. Mr. Keating thanked Mr. and Mrs. Goodwell and Mr. Gray for the work they have done on this project.

There was a discussion about the language in the zoning ordinance regarding driveways in the Highway Interchange district. The Ordinance specifies that the driveway needs to be either directly across from or separated by 200 feet from a driveway on the opposite side of the street from the proposed driveway. Mr. Sweppenheiser expressed concern about the approval of a site plan that does not meet the provisions of the zoning ordinance. Mr. Keating also mentioned a concern about that issue. He continued by stating that any request that does not meet the requirements of the ordinance can be taken to the Zoning Board of Appeals for clarification of the ordinance or for a variance. Mr. Keating feels that the Commission needs to come to a consensus about how they will handle other requests that may come before them in the future. Mr. Sweppenheiser mentioned that decision making is difficult on a small board that is trying to do what it feels is in the best interest of the community, even though that decision may not be fully compliant with the ordinance. Once you step out-of-bounds, it is difficult to justify not stepping over the line in another circumstance. He stated that he is a "black and white" guy, so he likes codes because they keep everyone on the same playing field. Mr. Keating suggested that Mr. Mason should not give his opinion in his report to the Commission, and strictly present findings of fact. Mr. Bean also echoed that opinions should not be presented in the staff report. He further advised that a statement prefacing Planning Commission motions should be made; based on the ordinance and the finding of fact. Mr. Mason did agree that he would comply with the request to keep opinions out of his staff reports. Mr. Keating asked if there was any other discussion and hearing none, moved on to the next item on the agenda.

Mr. Keating asked if the Planning Commission could get the opinion of Eric Williams or Kathryn Kaufmann about these kinds of decisions.

Mrs. Davis asked about what level of approval the Planning Commission has regarding the appearance of the buildings that they approve. She was advised that the Zoning Ordinance does not have any language about the appearance of buildings, including heights, and those items are not taken into consideration during the approval process.

VII. OLD BUSINESS:

1. Continued discussion about the Capital Improvement Plan (CIP). Mr. Keating asked if all the responses had been received from the various departments. Mr. Mason stated that Mr. Stanek delivered the packet of CIP information to him before Mr. Stanek left town, but didn't elaborate about whether it was complete or not. Mr. Mason forwarded

that information to all the Planning Commissioners. Mr. Mason noted that some of the requests for sewer department projects did not have dollar amounts for those requests. Mr. Mason also advised that the Fire Department requests for 2 fulltime personnel did not fall into the definition of a Capital Improvement. Mr. Bean mentioned that at the last Township Board of Trustee meeting, the Board discussed the format for the Capital Improvement Plan determination documents, and he presented the documents to the Planning Commissioners. Mr. Bean stated that Mr. Stanek was aware of the format that had been discussed at the Township Board Meeting and adopted at that time. Mr. Bean explained the format of the new sheets to the Commissioners and offered to populate the new documents with the information from the requests so that the Planning Commission would be able to use the adopted format at the next meeting, then it will be the Planning Commission's responsibility to maintain the documents. Mr. Bean continued with concerns about the 2017 requests and the current Budget which did not have any provisions for those CIP requests, namely the Fire Department Building at \$250,000.00 v. an allocation of \$30,000.00 for Capital Improvements. Mr. Keating asked for clarification of the various documents and how they interrelate to each other. Mr. Bean further explained that the documents and summary are for the entire six-year plan and who's responsibility it is to provide what information. This is an effort to provide a standardized methodology for reviewing the requests. Mr. Bean also mentioned that the Board of Trustees requests that the Planning Commission provide their rankings for review at the June 6, 2017 board meeting. Ranking information was discussed. Mrs. Davis asked for some clarification on how the rankings should be weighed, such as a request for ADA bathroom modifications being ranked low and 6 years out by the requesting department when it might be a legal requirement and therefore a higher ranking by the Planning Commission. Mr. Bean explained that the departmental ranking is only for the department head to rank their various projects against each other, where the Planning Commission might need to look at an overall picture of what is in the best interest of the entire township and future development of the community. There were some questions about the requests that didn't have costs or priorities associated with them. Another concern was the cost of the Fire Department Addition was not part of the approved 2017 budget, but it is still being requested for that budget year. Mr. Bean wondered where the money is going to come from, so the budget will have to be revised. The discussion continued about the fire budget and whether the operating millage fund balance should be used for capital improvements or if the millage rate should be decreased. In the future, should the millage language be modified to state operations and improvements. Mr. Sweppenheiser asked about the plan for 17 Mile Road since he lives there. Mr. Mason stated that the Road Committee makes the recommendations for road repairs to the Board. Mr. Bean said that, as a trustee, he would never advocate to have the road he lives on be on the list to be repaired. That being said, Madison was #1 on the list for repair last year. One citizen called and complained about Madison being on the list, so it didn't get done. Mr. Keating asked Mr. Mason if there are any items on the agenda for the May Planning Commission Meeting. Mr. Mason said that at this time there is nothing on the agenda for May. Mr. Keating requested that either a special meeting be held to discuss the CIP material or that the Planning Commission extend the next regular meeting by at least an hour in order to discuss the ranking of the items so they are ready to be forwarded to the Board of Trustees. Mr. Bean reiterated that he would take all the CIP information and compile it in the adopted format, then send it to all the Planning Commissioners so that it can be reviewed before the next meeting. The Commissioners discussed how they wish to deal with this review, and Mr. Keating voiced the agreement

to have an extended meeting on May 9, 2017, starting at 6:00 p.m. Mr. Sweppenheiser asked how the future available funds will be determined in the future. Mr. Bean said that future will be discussed by the Board of Trustees and that they will have to be flexible because the needs change as time goes on, but you have to have a number to work with. Revenue and development coming down the road will need to be taken into account. Mr. Keating and Mr. Bean both requested that any information that hasn't been provided be requested so that good decisions can be made regarding the project requests. The Planning Commission functions as an advisory committee to the Board of Trustees for Capital Improvement spending. Mr. Sweppenheiser mentioned that he was a little surprised that there wasn't a request for the Cemetery Building, regardless of which direction the task force recommends. Mr. Bean gave a statement that the Cemetery building doesn't appear to have been maintained (at all?) by either the City or the Township since it was built, whenever that was. Mr. Sweppenheiser feels that the building should at least be put on the CIP project list for future consideration. Discussion shifted to the Cemetery Building Task Force and their recent first meeting. Mr. Bean said that all but one of the individual at the first meeting were in favor of saving the building. A lot of that is predicated in the belief that it is an 1885 building, and while it may not have historical significance, there isn't much background about the history of the building. It is considered important because its appearance is unique and its location is prominent, being near the entrance of the cemetery. The materials used in the construction of the building do not indicate that the building is from 1885. Mr. Bean believes that it may actually be from the 1940's, due to the construction and the materials used. A photograph from the turn of the century suggests that the current building is not the same one in the photograph, as the current building is larger than the one in the photo. Task force members are continuing to do research to determine the exact age of the current building. Mr. Bean gave information about the dates that the materials were invented, and expanded metal was invented in England in 1903, Belden brick started operation in 1903 in Ohio, and angle iron was invented in 1918.

Mr. Mason asked if any other members of the Commission were interested in attending the MTA Planning and Zoning Session at The Shack in White Cloud on May 31. As of now, Mr. Keating, Mr. Oliver, Mr. Bean, Mr. Stanek and Mr. Mason will attend. Mr. Mason will forward the registration information this week.

VII. ADJOURNMENT:

Mr. Keating entertained a motion to adjourn at 8:27 p.m. The motion was made by Mr. Bean and seconded by Mrs. Davis. Motion carried with 7 yeas.

Motion to approve the Planning Commission minutes of April 11, 2017 by: Mr. Bean,
Seconded by: Mr. Oliver. Roll call vote carried with 7 yeas:

Philip Keating, Chairman
BIG RAPIDS CHARTER TOWNSHIP
PLANNING COMMISSION

Date Approved