

MINUTES
BIG RAPIDS CHARTER TOWNSHIP
PLANNING COMMISSION
Tuesday, November 10, 2015 --- 7:30 p.m.
Big Rapids Township Hall, 14212 Northland Drive, Big Rapids, MI 49307

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

In the absence of the Chairman, Vice-Chairman Philip Keating called the regular meeting of the Big Rapids Charter Township Planning Commission to order at the township hall on Tuesday, November 10, 2015 at 7:30 p.m.

II. ROLL CALL:

Present: Gordon Oliver, Vivian Smith, Philip Keating and David Hamelund. Michael Hults, Jim Shane and Carman Bean are excused. 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 October 13, 2015 meeting were reviewed, and Mrs. Smith made the motion to approve the minutes as submitted, seconded by Mr. Oliver. The motion carried unanimously with 4 yeas.

IV. PUBLIC COMMENT: None

V. WORK SESSION:

Mr. Keating opened the work session by reviewing each of the suggested items for the township capital improvement plan:

1. Sewer System
2. Water Supply System
3. Roads and Sidewalks
4. Fire Department Building

Brief discussion about the water and sewer systems determined that any future expansion will be based on need at that time.

Mr. Stanek began the discussion about sidewalks. The Perry Avenue sidewalk project is pretty well set. It was suggested to the Planning Commission that the future need for other sidewalks should be taken into consideration, and at this time, the Planning Commission is of the opinion that development of other sidewalks should occur only if a need arises. Mr. Stanek requested that the Planning Commission offer guidance for the future to him.

Mr. Keating asked Mr. Stanek where the Township is at with the future expansion of the Fire Department building. Mr. Stanek advised that the Fire Department has had drawings done and has estimated prices. Mr. Stanek suggested that he would like to have an open house where he can give a "State of the Township" address to the citizens. He

would like to do that at the Fire Hall in January as a joint meeting of the Township Board and the Planning Commission. Afterwards, there would be an open house of the Fire Department and a chance to talk to the citizens about the Fire Department expansion. Mr. Stanek asked the Commissioners for their opinion on that type of meeting. Mrs. Smith said that Mr. Stanek could try it and see what kind of turn out we might get, and that possibly might get some other people interested in township government. Mr. Keating asked what the result would be if the public commentary was negative. Mr. Stanek responded that if it is negative, the township would have to take another look at it. Mr. Keating asked if it would still be open for consideration. Mr. Stanek said it would. Mr. Keating replied that if you ask people to give their opinion, they need to be listened to and used to weigh in on the process. Mr. Stanek advised that the Township Board hasn't made any decisions on the Fire Hall Expansion except to allow the Fire Department to have plans drawn up. Now the Board is waiting to find out what it will cost to build. Mr. Stanek advised that currently there should be enough money to build the addition in the Fire Department Fund.

Mr. Keating changed the subject to roads. With the road millage passed for five years, Mr. Keating asked Mr. Stanek if he has a master plan for roads. Mr. Stanek stated that there is not a master plan, and the road committee currently reviews the road needs each year, and he needs to get that committee together to review 2016 needs. The process involves a drive through of the township roads. The committee is very helpful because they have a great deal of knowledge in engineering and prior road experience. Mrs. Smith stated that she is aware that several township roads need attention, and she wonders what criteria is used to determine which roads are selected for repair. Mr. Stanek advised that for the first year, the committee wanted to get the most work done that they could for the money. Mr. Hamelund asked how the township is going to deal with traffic concerns on Gilbert Drive and on 14 Mile Road entering onto Northland Drive. He feels that future traffic needs should be planned for now. Mrs. Smith and Mr. Hamelund discussed the need for a possible traffic signal at either 14 Mile or Gilbert in order to allow entrance onto Northland Drive. Other options were discussed, including a designated right turn lane from 14 Mile Road onto a designated lane on northbound Northland Drive or a rotary (roundabout) at that intersection. Any of these suggestions would need to be reviewed and approved by MDOT. Mr. Hamelund is very concerned about the potential increase in traffic coming off Gilbert and going north on Northland Drive once the new apartment complex is occupied. Mr. Hamelund asked if we know when MDOT is going to do the intersection work at Perry and 215th/Waldron Way. Mr. Stanek advised that the project is on hold due to lack of funds. Mr. Hamelund wondered what that means for the sidewalk project. Mr. Stanek advised that we need to wait and see what MDOT will do. Mr. Stanek stated that Mike Oezer has been talking with MDOT, and we are waiting to hear back. We don't know if the pedestrian crossing signals and curb cuts will still be part of the project. It was mentioned that the Road Bill has been signed by the Governor, and that it will be 2 years before any changes are seen. Mrs. Smith expressed concern with the east entrance to Wal-Mart as being the most dangerous pedestrian crossing along the Perry Avenue sidewalk route.

Mr. Keating asked if Mr. Stanek had been in discussion with Mr. Hults regarding the capital improvement project items. Mr. Stanek advised that he just came up with the list of items today so that the Planning Commission had some business to discuss at tonight's meeting. It is felt that Mr. Hults should have input into the Capital Improvement

Plan discussion, and Mr. Stanek will talk to him about the subject. There was discussion about the terms of the current Planning Commission members and where the commission will be heading for the future. Mr. Keating advised that the decisions made by the commission have to follow the law, and having a lawyer on the commission helps with the decision making process. Future discussion of the CIP items will take place after the Department heads have an opportunity to make their requests.

Everyone agreed that a joint meeting of the Township Board and the Planning Commission in January with an open house of the Fire Department afterwards would be good to pursue. Mrs. Smith also stated that the supervisor's newsletters are a very good forum for getting information out to the citizens. Mr. Stanek commented that he likes to make sure that the people know what the township is doing.

Mr. Keating moved on to the ordinance issues. Mr. Stanek started with a brief statement of the mini-cabin ordinance that Mecosta County has in place. Mr. Keating asked about the AF (Agriculture/Forestry) zoning district in the Mecosta County ordinance, and it was explained that it is similar to our AG district. Mr. Keating asked what requirements are there as far as zoning is concerned for tents, trailers and RV's in the AG district. It was explained that a camping permit was required to use a vehicle or trailer for a stay of more than 21 days per Sec.3.11 of the Big Rapids Township Zoning Ordinance. Substantial discussion continued about several aspects of the county's ordinance. Many questions were raised about the definitions, and how we might define them. Discussion continued on what requirements may be in the best interest of Big Rapids Township, and how we should determine them. Mrs. Smith brought up the issue of the small home movement, and that there are many people around the country building small houses on trailer frames and living in them full time. There was much more discussion, then Mr. Keating asked Mr. Stanek what he wanted the Planning Commission to do. Mr. Keating asked for a couple other versions of cabin/mini home ordinances to review at the next meeting.

Mr. Stanek wants to visit the sign ordinance and determine what direction the township wants to go. Is there a particular direction we want to go, and what will that be? He hopes that we can develop a sign ordinance that will help the township move forward in a more orderly fashion.

Mr. Stanek advised the commission about the meeting he had earlier in the day about marijuana growing and provisioning centers, and the current bills before the legislature.

VI. ADJOURNMENT:

Mr. Keating entertained a motion to adjourn at 8:40 p.m. The motion was made by Mrs. Smith and seconded by Mr. Oliver. Motion carried with 4 yeas.

Motion to approve the Planning Commission minutes of November 10, 2015

by: Mr. Keating, Seconded by: Mrs. Smith. Roll call vote carried with 7 yeas:

Michael Hults, Chairman
BIG RAPIDS CHARTER TOWNSHIP
PLANNING COMMISSION

Date Approved