

**MINUTES**  
**BIG RAPIDS CHARTER TOWNSHIP**  
**PLANNING COMMISSION**

**Tuesday, September 12, 2023 --- 7:00 p.m.**

**Big Rapids Township Office, 14212 Northland Drive, Big Rapids, MI 49307**

**I. CALL TO ORDER: 7:00 P.M.**

Chairperson Amanda Wethington called the regular meeting of the Big Rapids Charter Township Planning Commission to order at the township hall on Tuesday, September 12, 2023, at 7:00 p.m.

**II. ROLL CALL:**

Present: Carman Bean, Zach Cook, Mary Davis, Gordon Oliver, Jeff Oosterhouse, Mark Sweppenheiser and Amanda Wethington. The record shows there is a quorum. Also present: William Stanek, Supervisor and Timothy Kleinheksel, Zoning Administrator and Recording Secretary.

**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. Mrs. Davis indicated that a conflict of interest existed with the Johnson special use permit.

**IV. MINUTES:**

Mrs. Wethington asked the Commission members to review the minutes of the August 8, 2023 meeting. Mrs. Davis made a motion to approve the August 8, 2023 minutes as submitted. Mr. Cook supported the motion. There was no further discussion. The motion passed unanimously with seven ayes.

**V. PUBLIC HEARING SUP23-005 CARMEN CURRIE:**

SUP23-005 is an application by Carmen Currie to construct and operate a child care facility in the Commercial zoning district at the existing property at 19880 14 Mile Road, Big Rapids Township Parcel # 5405-023-013-950. Mrs. Wethington called the public hearing to order at 7:04 p.m. Mrs. Currie introduced the project to be a daycare center for up to 80 children at the proposed 5,680 sqft building. Mrs. Wethington asked if there were different classes or grades. There is planned to be separate areas for Toddler, Tiny Tots, Preschool, Infants and after school programs. Mr. Leonard Schebil, owner of the storage facility adjacent to the property stated that he is in favor of the project as it would be a good addition to the neighborhood. Mr. Schebil also stated that the speed limit on 14 Mile Road should be reduced and that there are many times that drivers will pass in the no passing zone. Ms. Patty Downey inquired as to why this is a request for a Special Use Permit and not a re-zoning of the property. Mr. Bean responded that the request is proper due to the fact that the Commercial zoning ordinance allows this

project as a special use. There was no public opposition at the public hearing. Hearing no additional public input, Mrs. Wethington closed the public hearing at 7:10 p.m.

**VI. ACTION ON SUP23-005 CARMEN CURRIE:**

The Commission members reviewed the drawings submitted. After review, Mr. Bean made a motion to accept SUP23-005 request for Special Use Permit in the Commercial zoning district. Mr. Oliver supported the motion. The motion passed unanimously with seven ayes via roll call vote. The Curries were congratulated with their approved project.

**VII. SITE PLAN REVIEW CARMEN CURRIE:**

The site plan review for the daycare project was removed from the agenda due to the fact that the details were not completed by the architect in time.

**VIII. ACTION ON SUP23-004 MICHELLE JOHNSON:**

SUP23-004 is an application by Michelle and Jeremiah Johnson for a special use permit to allow an outdoor drone course in the agricultural zoning district, as well as expanding hours to 24/7. The location of the property is 12185 Northland Drive, Big Rapids Township. This application was tabled at the August 8, 2023 Planning Commission meeting. Mr. Oosterhouse made a motion to take the motion off the table. Mr. Bean supported the motion. The motion passed with no opposition. Being an adjacent property owner, Mrs. Davis secluded herself from the meeting. Mrs. Wethington stated that in the past, someone had been staying overnight at the property. Mr. Bean asked if the photos in the packet were actual photos of the drone course. Mr. Johnson stated they were. Mrs. Wethington presented copies of flyers from Facebook that announced outdoor drone flying. The flyers were dated January 22, 2023 and July 24, 2023. When asked about the postings, Mr. Johnson stated "No comment." Mr. Bean reminded the commission members that SUP18-002 was approved to allow only indoor flying of drones and made a motion that SUP23-004 be denied. Mr. Cook supported the motion. Mr. Bean then revised his motion to be that SUP23-004 be approved. Mr. Cook supported the revised motion. The motion was unanimously denied with six nays via roll call vote. Mrs. Davis returned to the meeting.

**IX. REVIEW A-1 AUTO:**

The Planning Commission reviewed the details of SUP21-003 which was approved on June 8, 2021 for Paul Naseman to operate a Small Engine and Auto Repair Business at 14315 Northland Drive. The question of excess vehicles staged in the parking lot in front of the property – a number of them without license plates. Mr. Bean asked if Mr. Mark Baker owned the parking lot. It was confirmed that he does. Mr. Oosterhouse stated that cars parked in parking lots are expected – that is what a parking lot is for. Mr. Sweppenheiser stated that if there were to be a citation issued, it could be either to the owner of the property, or the owner of the business. He also stated that remedy is possible and that we could inquire at the sheriff's office regarding unlicensed vehicles. Mrs. Davis stated there were lots of spaces

in the parking lot for vehicles. Mr. Sweppenheiser said this could fall under “blight”. Mr. Kleinheksel confirmed that the junk ordinance prohibits more than two unlicensed vehicles without being a licensed junk yard. Mr. Naseman stated that the business works on vehicles 7 days a week and there can be vehicles that remain in the parking lot for three weeks. The State of Michigan has inspected the business recently and everything appears to be okay according to Mr. Naseman. Mr. Naseman said that he is sorry if the vehicles bother some people. He does not feel that this issue is problematic. He has previously talked with Mr. Baker about a fenced yard for vehicles, but it would be costly and he would not be able to afford it. He stated that there are several vehicle owners that have not paid their repair fees. He also asked the Commission to work with him on the parking issue. Mr. Oosterhouse stated that the Commission members are aware of the situation and will continue to monitor the cars in the lot. Mr. Naseman thanked the Commission for their time.

**X. PUBLIC COMMENT:**

Mr. Johnson asked if the Township regulated air space and are they able to specify no-fly zones. He asked if the Township can regulate him flying a drone over his own house and if he can have friends that want to fly drones. Mrs. Johnson stated that there was maybe one time or two times that someone was at the property overnight. Mr. Johnson asked again if he could fly drones at his own property. Mr. Bean stated that this is a time for public comment and that the Commission does not need to answer questions. Mr. Sweppenheiser stated that one reason the Commission denied the application is the brochures announcing outdoor flying and that if needed, the Commission could revoke the previous decision to operate the indoor flying business. Mr. Johnson asked about approval thru the FAA. There was no further comment by the Commission members.

Ms. Downey stated that it was frustrating to her that public notices are mailed only to those properties within 300 feet. She stated that some neighbors received notices and some did not. She stated that she hopes the Commission researches diligently regarding next week’s special meeting regarding WISE. She said she has been calling neighbors regarding the meeting. She also stated that it is frustrating that they cannot ask questions and that she is still waiting for a response on the agricultural land Mr. Schebil stated that he supports Ms. Downey’s concern of the parcel WISE is considering. He stated that it is fancy and expensive and it would be a poor use of their money.

**XI. ADJOURNMENT:**

Hearing no further business for the Planning Commission, Mrs. Wethington adjourned the meeting at 7:53 p.m.

**APPROVAL:** Action taken at the regular meeting of October 10, 2023: Motion to approve the Planning Commission minutes of September 12, 2023 by: Mr. Bean. Supported by: Mr. Oliver. Motion carried with seven ayes.

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

October 10, 2023  
Date Approved