

**MORTON TOWNSHIP
PLANNING COMMISSION MINUTES
REGULAR MEETING – June 17, 2020**



Call to Order at 6:00 P.M. by Chairman- Alan Sackett

Pledge of Allegiance by all

Members Present: Alan Sackett, Jeff Ratledge, Larry Lenon, Lisa Thompson, Dennis Morawa

Members Absent: None

Others Present: Fritz Pins- Zoning Administrator, Vicky Esch- Recording Secretary

List of Public present: Stephanie McNeal- Clerk, Yulanda Bellinger- Trustee, Larry Bunker, Steve Brandt, Ann Wrobbel, Pat Sundquist

Due to no agenda items at the beginning of the year, and then the Covid-19 restrictions, this was the first meeting of the Planning Commission for 2020.

Approval of Minutes from November 19, 2019, Regular Meeting

Motion by: Dennis Morawa

To approve the November 19, 2019, Regular Meeting minutes as presented.

2nd by: Larry Lenon

Vote: 5 Ayes 0 Nays 0 Absent Motion Carried

New Business

A. Election of Officers

Chairman Alan Sackett began by commenting that he had planned on stepping down from the Planning Commission effective January 1, 2020. The township board asked if he would be willing to stay on longer. He is willing to commit to 3 months this summer.

Motion by: Dennis Morawa

To re-elect Alan Sackett, as Chairman of the Planning Commission for 2020.

2nd by: Larry Lenon

Vote: 5 Ayes 0 Nays 0 Absent Motion Carried

Motion by: Jeff Ratledge

To re-elect Dennis Morawa, as Vice-Chairman of the Planning Commission for 2020.

2nd by: Lisa Thompson

Vote: 5 Ayes 0 Nays 0 Absent Motion Carried

Motion by: Dennis Morawa

To re-elect Lisa Thompson, as Secretary of the Planning Commission for 2020.

2nd by: Larry Lenon

Vote: 5 Ayes 0 Nays 0 Absent Motion Carried

B. Capital Improvement Plan review

Jeff Ratledge shared with the commission members some background on the Capital Improvement Plan; why we have one, the process involved with each project, what types of projects/improvements are done through the CIP, and some of the projects that are planned for the future. The plan is to be reviewed annually and he asked that everyone take time to read through it and bring back any questions, concerns, or changes to the July meeting.

C. Political Signs: Section 7.3.10

Jeff Ratledge commented that questions have been raised as to how soon the political signs can go up.

Fritz Pins handed out a copy of a letter he had received from Grant Township Supervisor about the placement of political signs which he read.

Discussion by the commission members to follow included:

- Fritz Pins commented that our ordinance does not allow signs to be placed in the road right-of-way and people have asked why they are not being removed.
- Jeff Ratledge commented that the township board had previously looked at the issue of real estate signs in the road right-of-way and the concerns of the township board, that the signs encourage business in the area and draw people to the community to see where homes are for sale.

Comments from public in attendance:

- Larry Bunker asked how you can allow political signs to be placed in the road right-of-way, but not real estate signs.
- Stephanie McNeal commented that we want to encourage economic development. How can we allow one to happen and not the other?
- Steve Brandt referenced the minutes for the Planning Commission meeting of November 19, 2019, where the topic of the real estate signs was addressed under Old Business.

Alan Sackett read Section 7.3.10A – Political Signs, which states in #2, that the signs shall not be in the road right-of-way.

Dennis Morawa read Section 7.3.10B – Real Estate Signs, which states in #2, that the signs shall not be in the road right-of-way.

Jeff Ratledge read the section from the November 19, 2019, minutes that was referenced by Steve Brandt.

Fritz Pins asked for direction (instructions) from the commission as to what they want him to do about the signs in the road right-of-way; should he start removing them or not.

Upon further discussion the commission members recommended that Fritz do the following:

- Send a letter to all with signs in the road right-of-way informing them that the ordinance does not allow and that they have 10 days to remove or they will be removed.

D. Building size on lots.

Fritz Pins expressed concern about pole barns:

- That are being built with lofts in them where plumbing has been added and the building becomes a cabin instead of a storage building.
- In other communities they have put a limit on the height.
- Casey Smith (Canadian Lakes) has shared with him that she has been getting applications for them.
- Do we want huge buildings on small lots?

The commission members asked Fritz if our ordinance is good enough to manage it and do we have the right ordinance in place. Should the ordinance be changed to only allow one story?

The commission members asked Fritz to look into the issue further and bring back his findings to the next planning commission meeting.

Old Business

A. Travel Trailers

Fritz Pins shared with the commission members a letter he had received from a resident concerned about the amount of camper trailers appearing on WSSL Drive.

Fritz explained about travel trailers and the permits needed, or not needed, with what our ordinance states right now.

With further discussion, the commission members suggested that Fritz look into whether or not there are any deed restrictions regarding travel trailers in the area of concern. He will report back to the commission members at the next meeting.

Comments by citizens in attendance:

Stephanie McNeal commented that people buy their property to enjoy it. We should not be changing our ordinance just because one person has complained. She also asked if all would be getting a letter about the signs and if not, why send, if not going to send to all.

Larry Bunker asked a question about building sites: if he was right in assuming that if he has a vacant lot, he can't build a two-story and have it as a home. Fritz explained that yes, he can if it is a home, inspected as a home. If it is a pole barn, it is not a dwelling.

Reports – Building Department (Fritz Pins)

- Building permits have picked up.
- Working on spring clean-up complaints in the village. Letters have been sent.
- Water sampling being done at the township hall. Went to seminar last year. He takes samples from the tap to health department and a report is emailed back to him when tested.
- Pure Michigan directional sign for Bluegill Campground was approved. Our ordinance does contain the language needed to meet requirements.

Reports – Board of Trustees (Jeff Ratledge)

- Spring Clean-up date was been rescheduled for August 22. The May date was cancelled due to Covid-19.
- Supervisor Dick Wheeler submitted his letter of resignation effective June 30. The board appointed Mark Klumpp to fill the remainder of Dick's term effective July 1. Mark is running unopposed for the position in the November election.
- An email was received from Linda Thompson which was forwarded to the board asking for the township to adopt a firework ordinance. Jeff will send a response.

Reports – Village of Mecosta (Larry Lenon)

- Clean-up in the village is going in the right direction with the help of Fritz working on it.
- Asked if he would be allowed to have more than one load for the clean-up day. He will check with the village and let the township board know as soon as he can so that they can order an additional bin to accommodate as they ordered based on what was received last year.

Correspondence

Letter received from Randy Vetter, Grant Township Supervisor, regarding political signs. (read earlier by Fritz Pins)

Letter received from Donna Deeb, regarding camper trailer homes appearing on WSSL drive. (read earlier by Fritz Pins)

Email received from Linda Thompson, regarding fireworks. (read earlier by Jeff Ratledge)

Adjourn Regular Meeting

Motion by: Jeff Ratledge

To Adjourn regular meeting

2nd by: Lisa Thompson

Vote: 5 Ayes 0 Nays 0 Absent Motion Carried

Meeting adjourned 8:00 P.M.

Respectfully Submitted:

Vicky Esch

Vicky Esch, Recording Secretary