

**MORTON TOWNSHIP
PLANNING COMMISSION MINUTES
REGULAR MEETING – November 17, 2021**



Call to Order at 6:30 P.M. by Chairman- Dennis Morawa

Pledge of Allegiance by all

Members Present: Dennis Morawa, Larry Lenon, Jeff Ratledge, Steve Brandt, Lisa Thompson, Steve Stratton

Members Absent: None

Others Present: Cory Zandstra- Zoning Administrator; Vicky Esch- Recording Secretary

List of Public present: Wanda Ratledge, Brent Kramer, Tom White, and one other

Approval of Minutes from September 15, 2021, Regular Meeting / Public Hearing

Motion by: Steve Brandt **2nd by:** Lisa Thompson

To approve the September 15, 2021, Regular Meeting minutes as presented.

Vote: 4 Ayes 0 Nays 1 Absent Motion Carried (Jeff Ratledge arrived late)

Open Public Hearing

New Business

Chairman, Dennis Morawa, read the Special Land Use permit request for a motor cross park with camping.

Applicant: Brent Kramer

Property Owner: Mark & Pam Clark

Parcel #5411 003 025 000, located at 8636 11 Mile Road.

Zoning: A-2

One letter opposing the request was received from a resident in opposition to the request. Commission members were all given a copy prior to the meeting.

Applicant Brent Kramer presented a drawing to the commission members showing how the park would be laid out on the property. He further explained what the plans are for the property and answered questions presented to him by the commission members.

- There would be a parking pit area & place to park their haulers/campers.
- Would only be using about 1 acre for the campground.
- Track would in on the back corner of the property using 7-8 acres. Track will have a fence around it.
- People would bring their own campers, giving them the ability to park there and camp overnight.
- No hookups for electricity. No showers or bathrooms. Port-a-johns.
- Property will have a fenced around it.
- There will be a registration building, bleachers for viewing, and offer concessions.
- Will start as a practice track. Long term goal is to host races. On a race day could be as many as 100-150 bikes.
- Races will be held during the day. No night races.
- Track would not be restricted to just stock bikes.
- To help with noise, an earth berm with trees on top, would block the noise to the houses next door.
- Has not closed on the sale of the property. Will depend on approval of the special land use permit. Does not want to buy if not able to use property. Looking to close in December and start work in the spring.

Concerns of the commission members:

- Is close to the airport. There will have to be 100 feet of runway clearance from the property line.
- Can a special land use permit be approved for someone who does not own the land at the time the permit is approved?
- Why go with a special land use permit instead of asking for a rezoning of the property? Property is zoned A-2 and what they are asking for is a commercial business.
- Need to consider the concerns from the neighboring property owner who sent in a letter opposing the approval of the permit. Too much noise, fearful of questionable strangers, traffic, change in property value, pollution.

Cory Zandstra, Zoning Administrator commented that an earth berm would definitely help with the noise. If done right, it could work.

Close Public Hearing

Discussion points/concerns by commission members for request:

- Berm, trees, fence are all good.
- Resident who submitted letter, their concern is important, they live there.
- Still not sure that we have enough information. Is there a better spot for it Does it fit in with our Master Plan?

Motion by: Steve Brant **2nd by:** Jeff Ratledge

Motion to recommend to the Morton Township Board of Trustees to approve the Special Land Use permit request for a motor cross park with camping on parcel #5411-003-025-000, located at 8636 11 Mile Road, contingent on the following:

1. Fence around the entire property.
2. Earth berm with trees to minimize noise to adjacent residents.

Roll Call Vote:

Dennis Morawa - Aye; Steve Brandt - Aye; Jeff Ratledge – Aye; Larry Lenon – Aye; Lisa Thompson - Abstain

Vote: 4 Ayes 0 Nays 1 Abstained 0 Absent Motion Carried

B. Potential Trail Ordinance

Jeff Ratledge reported that the walking trail owned by the township that was part of the CSX railroad is being used by motorized vehicles. Its intent was to be only used for walking or bicycles. The township board asked him to bring it to the planning commission for discussion. Should an ordinance be adopted to try and stop the use by motorized vehicles. A letter has been sent out to those property owners that are using the trail with the vehicles.

Dennis Morawa had provided each of the commission members in their agenda packet a draft ordinance that could be adopted to address the issue.

At this time the commission members decided to table the issue. Wait and see what the response is as a result of the letters being sent. The draft ordinance will be kept on file to review, if needed, at a later date.

C. Solar Energy Systems – Section 7.10.C.3

Cory Zandstra reported that a property owner had contacted him about wanting to put ground mounted solar panels on his property, but in the front yard. He is 500 feet off the road. The zoning ordinance does not allow them to be placed in the front yard.

Dennis Morawa provided a draft ordinance change that would allow for the placement of the solar panels in the front yard. (see attached)

The commission members agreed with the proposed change. The draft will be held for a public hearing of ordinance changes at a later date to be determined.

D. Storage Buildings – Section 5.14.3

Dennis Morawa reported on the recent ZBA hearing where a property owner wanted to build a storage building larger that was is allowed in the ordinance. He provided a draft ordinance change that would allow for an increase in size. (see attached)

The commission members agreed with the proposed change. The draft will be held for a public hearing of ordinance changes at a later date to be determined.

E. Greenbelts

Jeff Ratledge reported on a letter that was received by the township board regarding people abusing a green belt area. It involved a park that was established long before the ordinance. After investigation, it was determined that there is nothing at this time that the township can or should do about it.

Old Business

A. Food Vendor Ordinance: No further action to be taken at this time. Discussion is tabled.

Comments by citizens in attendance: None

Reports – Building / Zoning Department (Cory Zandstra)

- Receiving many calls with questions from property owners regarding projects that they are wanting to start next year; procedures, what they need to do, etc.
- Issued another new house permit today.

Reports – Board of Trustees (Jeff Ratledge)

- The Verizon tower is up and fully functional.
- Two more lots have been sold in the business park. Closing has been scheduled. The remaining unsold lot, the township has received an offer on it.

Correspondence: A letter was received from a neighboring property owner opposing the special use permit request.

Adjourn Regular Meeting

Motion by: Jeff Ratledge **2nd by:** Steve Brandt

To Adjourn regular meeting

Vote: 5 Ayes 0 Nays 0 Absent Motion Carried

Meeting adjourned 8:50 P.M.

Respectfully Submitted:

Vicky Esch

Vicky Esch, Recording Secretary