

Approved by: _____
Larry Grunn, Chair

**MARION TOWNSHIP
2877 W. Coon Lake Rd., Howell MI 48843
PLANNING COMMISSION
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES
AUGUST 22, 2017
7:30 P.M.**

MEMBERS PRESENT: LARRY GRUNN, CHAIR; BOB HANVEY; BRUCE POWELSON, VICE CHAIR; CHERYL RANGE, SECRETARY; CLAIRE STEVENS

MEMBERS ABSENT: NONE

OTHERS PRESENT: DAVE HAMANN, ZONING ADMINISTRATOR

CALL TO ORDER

Larry Grunn called the meeting to order at 7:30 p.m.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

INTRODUCTION OF MEMBERS

The members of the Planning Commission introduced themselves.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Claire Stevens motioned to approve the agenda as submitted. Cheryl Range seconded. **Motion carried 5-0.**

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

July 25, 2017 Regular Meeting

Cheryl Range motioned to approve the minutes as presented. Claire Stevens seconded. **Motion carried 5-0.**

CALL TO THE PUBLIC

No response.

OLD BUSINESS

Witkowski Aq-Tourism Public Hearing

Sally and Jim Witkowski were present to discuss this item, and to present their ideas and plans for their property located at 3111 Pinckney Road in Howell. They are requesting permits for five different events:
Farm Market—selling meat using their own livestock and other farm products.
U Pick Operations—the consumer would pick their own fruits, vegetables, flowers and any other produce offered.

Equine Therapy—A company called “Horses Power People”, that is currently training with their son and daughter, would use their farm/facility to run their program.

Farm Tours—Taking people for tours around the entire farm and property.

School Visits and Classes—Allowing schools to take field trips to the farm and hold classes at the farm. The main entrance and exit for these events is located off of D19.

Marcia Tamasko, 578 Coon Lake Road, expressed her concern regarding people over-using the other driveways, located off of Coon Lake Road and Davis Road. Mrs. Witkowksi stated that she cannot anticipate the type of traffic that may occur in the future on the other driveways located on the property. At this time, they are not planning on making those driveways a main entrance/exit point, but if they needed to in the future, then they would do so. For now, she can only speak to what their current plan is, which is using the driveway off of D19 as the main entrance/exit and using the other driveways as needed.

Jack Field, 3816 Winterwood Drive, asked Mrs. Witkowksi if they would be slaughtering their own animals. Mrs. Witkowksi stated they are not doing so currently, but it is a possibility in the future. Mr. Field asked if the property had proper fencing to keep the animals contained. Mrs. Witkowksi explained that they currently have high-tension electric fencing around all the pastures and they are working on putting up fencing around the perimeter of the entire property.

Bruce Pfister, 3875 Southwoods, asked how they plan on keeping the animal waste out of the Shiawassee River. Mrs. Witkowksi explained that the high-tension electric fencing contains the animals to their designated areas which is at least 100 feet away from the Shiawassee River. Mr. Pfister is also concerned about the odor from the animal waste and its long-term effects. Mrs. Witkowksi explained that rotating the cows throughout the property helps minimize the odor. The odor is also monitored by GAMPS.

Debra Peven, 4001 Southwoods, asked if they planned on having pigs and if so, how many? Mrs. Witkowksi said that they hope to get 2-4 pigs in the future.

Mrs. Witkowksi assured everyone that anything they may want to do in the future would require a permit from Marion Township and they would follow all guidelines and restrictions enforced by the township.

Susan Schooley, 459 E. Davis Road, is concerned about the noise during some of the events that have taken place in the past and events that may take place in the future. Mrs. Witkowksi explained that the noise ordinance states that the noise may not exceed 65 decibels at the lot line. They tested this during their friend’s wedding that took place on the farm and all of their readings came in under 50 decibels.

Jodie Saum, 1366 E. Coon Lake Road, is worried about all the extra traffic on Coon Lake Road along with the noise past 10:30-11:00pm. Ms. Saum also stated that the word “Entertainment” concerns them and they worry what the future might bring. They don’t want the rural environment of Marion Township to change because of the Witkowski’s farm. Mrs. Witkowksi explained that everything that they are asking for are things that Marion Township allows.

Carole and Fred Barnes, 1038 E Davis Road, expressed their concerns about a recent event with fireworks and is concerned about future events. Mrs. Witkowksi stated that LACASA hosted a fundraiser which they do every year, and it’s called Denim & Diamonds. They pull all of the appropriate permits from the township for their event, including a permit for their fireworks. Mr. Barnes had a concern about liquor being served on the farm. Mrs. Witkowski said that liquor is not part of the permit they are currently requesting, but if they wanted it in the future, then they would pull a permit for that specific event, not for everyday use.

Jack Field, 3816 Winterwood Drive, asked if they have to apply for anything with the DEQ for wellhead protection. Mrs. Witkowski stated that they are not required to pull a permit with them. Robert Hanvey confirmed that the Witkowski farm is not in a wellhead protection area.

Tom and Shari Marvel, 161 E. Davis Road, do not want the entrance that is right in front of their house. Robert Hanvey stated that the road commission decides how many driveways each parcel is allowed to have and where these driveways are to be positioned.

Karl Swan, 4147 Westhill Drive, is very concerned about the animal waste. He has a farm in Novi and has experience with this potential issue. Mr. Witkowski explained that the state regulates and inspects farms and the odor that is a result of owning livestock. The Witkowski's have 80 cows spread throughout 300 acres. They also rotate their cows regularly to help minimize future odor issues with the surrounding community.

Velma Gordon, 990 E. Davis Road, explained her concern regarding the increased numbers of flies in the community this year and believes it is because of the farm that this has happened. Mr. Witkowski explained that the cows have recently moved locations and with more rotational grazing, this will hopefully help minimize the affects to neighbors close by.

Mrs. Witkowski expressed their desire to begin Ag-Tourism, which will hopefully help grow their existing business. They do not want to anger or upset anyone. They just want Ag-Tourism to help keep their farm afloat and they want their business to become a more profitable company for themselves and their family.

Larry Grunn informed the public that there is a copy of the Witkowski's proposal on Marion Township's website, or they may pick up a copy from the office during normal business hours.

Robert Rochowiak, 133 E. Davis Road, wanted to thank the Witkowski's for addressing everyone's concerns and trying to make everyone happy.

Bruce Powelson, Planning Commission member, asked if he was allowed to make a statement. Larry Grunn granted Mr. Powelson's request. Mr. Powelson shared with everyone that, if sewer/water were available throughout the Witkowski's property, then it would allow up to 750 homes to be built throughout the Witkowski's 350 acres.

Witkowski Ag-tourism Special Use Permit and Site Plan Review

Robert Hanvey wanted to remind everyone that issues relating to the farm itself was not on the agenda. Denim & Diamonds was not on the agenda. Possible future permits are not on the agenda. The items that were on the agenda for this meeting were *Farm Market, U-Pick Operations, Equine Therapy, Farm Tours, and School Visits and Classes*.

Cheryl Range wanted to discuss the concerns and letters that were in response to the original application. She would like to send this revised application to those same departments so they can determine if the prior issues have been resolved (Health Department, Fire Department, Road Commission, DNR, Department of Agriculture, Drain Commission, Health Department, Carlisle/Wortman, and Spicer.) Cheryl does not think their concerns have been addressed or resolved. Mrs. Witkowski stated that most of these concerns were based on the previous scope that has since been revised. Therefore, most of these concerns do not apply. The Road Commission's concern still applies and we will soon be performing a traffic study which will hopefully provide more answers on the need for a left-hand turn lane. Cheryl stated that the health department concerns still apply if you are going to have more than 10 people visiting your facility at a time, such as a school bus of children. The fire department's concerns still apply as well. Cheryl asked if Marion's planner helped with the verbiage in the application packet. Robert Hanvey said the planner did not help with the verbiage.

Robert Hanvey motioned to recommend approval of the revised application, subject to review by the agencies involved, without prior recommendations because they are no longer applicable. Claire Sevens seconded. Roll call vote: Stevens—yes; Range—yes; Grunn—yes; Hanvey—yes; Powelson—no. **Motion carried 4-1.**

NEW BUSINESS

Zoning Ordinance Amendment to allow Vehicle Storage—requested by Township Board

Robert Hanvey asked if this is something that we should allow throughout the entire township or just for Highway Services. Robert Hanvey then asked if anyone thought there was a need/want for this type of ordinance within

the community and should we have the Township planner review this? All said yes.

Develop Standards for Special Use Permits for Landscape Operations—requested by Township Board

Les Andersen, 4500 Jewell Road, thought that in regard to Howell Landscape Supplies (located on 2961 Pinckney Road), their scope was too wide and that the planner, John Enos, should review and give some input. John should help the Planning Commission with any special use permits in rural areas. Greg Durbin, 4389 Sundance Crossing, stopped by Howell Landscape to visit the owner and see his operation. The owner is selling landscaping products, but doesn't appear to be growing anything himself. The owner said that he doesn't have a lot of nursery stock right now because when they started this business, it was too late in the season to start growing a lot of nursery livestock. Greg said the owner said they are not a trucking company but use their own trucks to pick up and deliver material/product. Dave Hamann cited Marion Township's definition for a "nursery". Tim Ryan, 459 E. Davis, is only concerned about a business operating in a rural area. The owner of Howell Landscape Supplies did say to Tim Ryan that he was trying to be considerate to those around him.

CALL TO THE PUBLIC

No response.

ADJOURNMENT

Cheryl Range motioned to adjourn the meeting at 9:30 p.m. Claire Stevens seconded. **Motion carried 5-0.**