

**MARION TOWNSHIP
PLANNING COMMISSION
REGULAR MEETING
JANUARY 23, 2024 / 7:30PM**

PC MEMBERS PRESENT: **JIM ANDERSON – CHAIRPERSON**
 CHERYL RANGE - SECRETARY
 BOB HANVEY
 BRUCE POWELSON

PC MEMBERS ABSENT: **LARRY GRUNN**

OTHERS PRESENT: **DAVID HAMANN - MARION TWP. ZONING ADMINISTRATOR**
 ZACH MICHELS – TOWNSHIP PLANNER

CALL TO ORDER

Jim Anderson called the meeting to order at 7:30 pm.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Jim Anderson requested to add “PDR Ballot Language” to the agenda.

Bruce Powelson made a motion to approve the January 23, 2024 agenda as amended. Cheryl Range seconded. **4-0**

MOTION CARRIED

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Bruce Powelson made a motion to approve the December 19, 2023 Planning Commission minutes as amended. Cheryl Range seconded. **4-0 MOTION CARRIED**

CALL TO PUBLIC

Cheryl Range talked about the recent studies about utility-scale solar power plants. The study stated that a solar plant may require between 4 and 7 acres per megawatt hour of generating capacity. This means in order for the United States to produce enough solar power (using solar panels) to meet our current electrical needs, we would need 3-4 times more land than we currently have within the United States. When referring to wind turbines, the amount of land required would be even greater.

NEW BUSINESS

REVIEW FLOWCHART DRAFT FOR TEXT AMENDMENT CHANGES

Bruce Powelson mentioned spelling errors on page 2 & 3.

Zach Michels suggested adding numbers or letters to each of the steps, making it easier for members of the public to follow, and so people can identify the order of operation from start to finish.

Bob Hanvey suggested adding a footnote stating that Commissioners may not always go in this exact order and that the flowchart is to be used as a guidance tool. Bob asked Zach Michels if this flowchart would require Board approval.

Zach Michels suggested getting Board Approval because this process results in spending money. Zach also recommended not officially adopting the flowchart unless Commissioners plan on following this exact process with every text amendment change. Officially adopting the flowchart would prevent any deviation for extenuating situations.

Jim Anderson does not think that we need to get Board approval for the flowchart because the Board has already approved a budget for the Planning Commission; as long as we do not exceed that budget, we should not need to get approval for the flowchart. This is simply a form of guidance for the Planning Commission when making text amendment changes.

DRAFT

Jim Anderson stated that he would make the following changes to the flowchart.

- Add the footnote suggested by Bob Hanvey.
- Add numbers/letters to each step to help create an order of operation.
- Make changes to the wording in some of the steps.

Dave Hamann asked if changes need to be made in Article XX, section 20.01, once this flowchart is finalized. Zach Michels said that we do not have to make any changes to that language.

NEW BUSINESS

REVIEW MASTER PLAN GOALS FOR ZONING ORDINANCE CHANGES

Zach Michels said that the Township is approaching the five-year mark for our Master Plan. He suggested that we review some of our current goals to make sure that we are following them. Zach discussed some of the essential characters that we emphasize in our Master Plan.

Zach asked the Commissioners if they thought we should modify the Zoning Ordinance to help reflect the goals and objectives outlined in the Master Plan.

Jim Anderson suggested that Zach make some suggestions of what language should be modified in our Zoning Ordinance, so we can review and discuss at our next Planning Commission meeting.

Zach and the Commissioners discussed current goals outlined in the Master Plan.

NEW BUSINESS

PDR BALLOT LANGUAGE

Bob Hanvey would like to remove the word “land” and replace it with “purchase of development rights”.

Bruce Powelson made a motion to extend the Planning Commission meeting past 9:30 pm. Jim Anderson seconded. **4-0 MOTION CARRIED**

Jessica Timberlake will talk with Tammy Beal about the legal implications of discussing the PDR ballot language with residents prior to the election.

Bob Hanvey inquired about the language under #2 referring to the “Deputy Clerk”. Jessica asked for her title to be removed from this section unless Tammy Beal decides otherwise. Jessica explained that she is the Clerk’s Deputy and her duties and responsibilities come from the Clerk.

Bob Hanvey would like to add the word “option” to the section that discusses matching funds from the State.

Jim Anderson said that he will continue to look for more examples of PDR applications. Zach Michels suggested looking at Webster Township’s PDR application.

Jim Anderson asked if the Township should form a committee to handle any PDR applications that get submitted. Zach Michels said that Webster Township has a committee and it works really well for them.

OLD BUSINESS

CONTINUE DISCUSSION ON SIGN LANGUAGE

Cheryl Range made a motion to postpone discussion on this item until the next Planning Commission meeting. Jim Anderson seconded. **4-0 MOTION CARRIED**

OLD BUSINESS

CONTINUE DISCUSSION ON AFFORDABLE HOUSING PROJECT

Bob Haney asked the Commissioners to take a look at the documents in the packet about affordable housing projects and bring back suggestions and ideas to the next Planning Commission meeting.

Zach Michels said that he would bring back some restrictions that other communities used that may be helpful.

SPECIAL ORDERS

Zach Michels said that currently the State of Michigan's language regarding solar farms is a hot mess. Zach said that currently the Township has a few options:

- EXTREME PATH: create language that follows the State’s rules.
- MIDDLE PATH: create a workable ordinance that could be less or more restrictive.
- LESS INVASIVE PATH: create language that is more general about the restrictions.

DRAFT

- WAIT: keep our current Solar language and wait to see what happens with the State.

Jim Anderson said that we should not spend any more time discussing our Solar language unless we receive direction from the Board. They need to decide which direction we should go and then provide the Planning Commission with some instruction on what they want us to do.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Jessica Timberlake asked if any of the Commissioners would like to attend any of the MTA classes that are coming up in April. Jim Anderson and Bruce Powelson both said “no”. Cheryl Range said that she may be interested in taking some of the virtual classes and would email Tammy Beal and Jessica.

CALL TO PUBLIC

Les Andersen resides at 4500 Jewell Road. Les made a suggestion about the PDR Ballot language. Les also stated that the Board is currently stuck regarding our Solar language because we are waiting to see exactly what the State comes up with. Les mentioned that members of the public have told him that the video quality for our virtual meetings is pretty terrible.

ADJOURNMENT

Bruce Powelson made a motion to adjourn the Planning Commission meeting at 10:20pm. Cheryl Range seconded.

4-0 MOTION CARRIED

MINUTES TAKEN BY: Jessica S. Timberlake

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