

Charter Township of Portage

Planning Commission Minutes

July 12, 2018

Members Present: Peggy Lee Anderson, Melanie Kueber Watkins, David Rulison, Constance Sherry, Bruce Peterson

Public Present: John Ollila (Portage Township Board), Anne Newcomb, Kali Katerberg, and Zane Hyrkas

Planning Commission Chair Melanie Kuber Watkins called the meeting to order at 7:03 P.M.

The minutes from the meeting on April 19, 2018 were approved with a motion by Dave, supported by Peggy.

Discussion Items:

1) A discussion about the proposed duplex/townhouse development in Portage Township was added to the Agenda and moved to the top to accommodate Zane Hyrkas and John Ollila. Zane is a Civil Engineer working for OMH located in Hancock. OMH was hired by the developer, KRB, to survey the site and draw up plans for the development. KRB purchased the property in the fall/winter of 2017 and advertises as providing student housing in Michigan's Upper Peninsula. Zane tendered a check from KRB for \$250.00 to the P.C. for Site Plan Review.

The proposed site is across Gunlach Road from the LJJ owned building and southwest of the Houghton High School. This area, described as "undesirable", is presently undeveloped and historically has been used for mining purposes.

John Ollila said that he and Bill Bingham spoke on the phone with the company several times and made a site visit with Zane Hyrkas and Louis Meyette, both of OHM company. Both Bill and John, the Twp's. Co-Zoning

Administrators, made it clear during those meetings and discussions that the site is zoned R3, meaning that it is zoned for no more than one or two-family occupancies in each one of these dwellings. The R-3 zone does not allow for multiple students to be housed in each duplex – the duplexes will just be able to house single and multi-family rentals. The expectation is that the townhouses will attract graduate students and professional people. One and a half parking places per duplex is required; the plans call for two parking places per unit, two units per building.

Zane described several minor issues that have come to light upon the completion of the survey by OHM. Three encroachment issues were found. (1) The Houghton School is only 4” offset the property line. KRB will be dealing with the Houghton/Portage School District for the purchase of a small strip of land adjacent to the school. (2) The Twp. presently has one sand pile and one spoil pile sited on the KRB property adjacent to the DPW Office/Storage Building. KRB indicated that they would be willing to trade a small piece of land were the piles are sited for a 6” dia. gate valve and one fire hydrant installation for fire protection in their proposed duplex development. The Supervisor indicated that that additional land acquisition could also possibly be used by residents for a yard waste vegetative composting site. The P.C. looked favorably on that proposal. (3) There are (10) homeowner driveways along First Street that have encroached on this homeowner’s property. The proposal that will be made to these (10) homeowners and was supported by the Supervisor and P.C. was that they would pool their money and complete a survey to so each encroachment can be individually identified by a meets-bounds description. Then KRB would give each homeowner that described, small, encroached on piece of land.

Zane gave each member of the PC detailed plans of the proposed duplex/townhouse development. KRB hopes to start building a few pending approvals as early as this fall.

Melanie and others questioned the company’s’ plans for storm water run-off, Connie noted the history of mining and caving ground in that area. A suggestion was made to Zane to contact the Houghton County Mine Inspector, Murray Gillis if there were any subsidence questions. Zane said the area has shallow bedrock and the houses would be on slabs. The blue prints indicate up to eleven duplexes are being proposed for the site.

Conditional approval was given by the PC for the development based on resolution of issues raised at the meeting. Melanie made a motion, supported by Peggy that the project be conditionally approved pending review of additional information concerning storm water flows and the submittal of a storm water plan. Motion passed.

2) The next item on the agenda was the Storm Water Runoff Ordinance. Bruce passed out copies of the draft ordinance, the last modifications to the existing ordinance were made 4-14-2011. The P.C. thought it wise to continue towards the Twp's. Runoff Ordinance's completion and the ultimate presentation to the Board of Trustees for ordinance acceptance. The Twp.'s ordinance was patterned after the Traverse City runoff ordinance. The City of Houghton has a runoff ordinance in place that states any new development/ construction must meter out storm runoff at the pre-development rate. The PC will begin a series of workshops to review the runoff issue. Peggy will set up the meetings with the first one tentatively set for Thurs Aug 16, 2018.

3) Bruce said that there is a telephone conference set up on the 24th of this month with the DEQ to tell us what may be available and how to apply for Non-Point Source Grants. The DEQ is presently investigating flood damage to rivers and creeks in the area. Melanie indicated that she will be able to attend that WEBINAR. The recent floods have scoured some waterways down to bedrock and deposited several feet of gravel and rock downstream.

4) Bruce reported that a meeting is set up for August 17, 2018 to make sure that the Zoning and Blight Ordinances are coordinated with the Civil Municipal Infraction Ordinance. The Board of Trustees will conduct a Special Meeting on July 17, 2018 at 3:00 P.M. to discuss any semantics changes still needed to the Rental, Zoning and Civil Infraction Ordinances. The Board will also review how procedurally they will mesh together. A Bureau will be set up to accept the Civil Infractions Payments. If a citizen chooses to contest the infraction citation they must go to 97 District Court to air their grievances.

5) Bruce reminded us that the Master Plan needs to be updated and that it would not be a daunting task to do this. We are in year 4th year of the 5 year cycle so we need to update the Twp's. Master Plan.

The next regular meeting, excluding workshops is scheduled for October 11 at 7:00 at the township office.

Peggy made a motion supported by Dave to adjourn at 8:07 P.M.

Respectfully Submitted,

Constance Sherry
For Ted Soldan