

The regular meeting of the Portage Township Planning Commission (PC) on August 18, 2022 was called to order at 7:00 by then acting chair Ted Soldan. Present were Ted Soldan, Peggy Lee Anderson, Melissa Boerman, Will Cronin, Connie Sherry and Jeff Koski.

Soldan first suggested a change to the order of the agenda to move the public comments section to follow immediately after the site plan review of Onagaming resort development site. A motion to change the order of the agenda was made by Anderson and seconded by Boerman and passed.

A motion to approve the minutes of the June 9, 2022 minutes was made by Sherry and seconded by Boerman and passed.

The owner of the resort being discussed is listed on the site plan as:

Pilgrim Point Houghton, LLC

W9622 KO Swanson Drive

Iron Mountain, MI 49801

Barry Polzin, architect of the Onagaming project was absent but a representative of the firm, Megan Hornbogen attended to answer questions about the site plan.

She first walked the people present through the site plan review A through U on the list that was sent to the PC before the meeting.

Comments A through U were comments by the architectural firm regarding specific requirements of the zoning ordinance addressed by the Polzin firm.

The comments from Polzin A through U are listed in abbreviated form below:

A. Vicinity Map

B. Date site plan was prepared (also submitted to PC on 8-2-22).

C. Name, address of site plan preparer.

D. North Arrow (indicates direction on map).

E. Legal description of the property.

F. Topographic elevations.

G. Direction of storm water drainage and collection areas.

H. Location and purpose of proposed buildings and their intended uses.

I. Locations of abutting streets and driveways.

J. Location and size of sanitary sewer lines and utility easements.

K. Location of sidewalks and bike paths.

L. Location and size of fences and screening walls or fences.

M. Location of proposed landscape materials and size and types of plantings.

N. Location of significant landscape features, trees etc.

O. Location of accessory structures, light poles and other fixtures.

P. Proposed parking areas and access drives, number of parking spaces.

Q. Location and type of existing vegetation, drains and man made surface drainage ways and wetlands.

R. FEMA information, parcels are in an unmapped flood zone per FEMA.

S. Present zoning of site. Site has two zoning classifications, B2 and R2.

T. Present zoning of adjacent sites.

U. Location for any existing storage sites for chemicals or hazardous materials. There will not be any storage facilities for hazardous materials on site.

Boerman asked Hornbogen if there were any designated wetlands on site and the answer was no.

Cronin was concerned about pedestrian safety, as people would be having to cross a major highway, US 41.

Boerman asked about designated pedestrian crossings. Hornbogen said the development company will work with MDOT about a safety crossing.

Koski, referring to item G on the list, asked if the company had any figures or calculations about the amount of storm water run off on the site. In the past this information has been part of the site plan reviews submitted to the PC. Hornbogen said sufficient storm water retention basins would be built and the company is working with the drain commissioner on that.

There was some discussion as to whether or not that information is required on a site plan review. The PC has been closely attentive to

run off on new developments especially since the big Houghton Father's Day flood of 2018.

Cronin asked about the arbor vitae plantings and whether or not they would be sufficient to shield surrounding residences from the noise of an RV park. The answer was that the arbor vitae would be six feet when planted.

Koski asked about a time frame on the proposed development and was told that the company hoped to start the development this fall.

PC member Boerman complemented the company on having submitted a comprehensive site plan review.

In answer to another question by Koski, Hornbogen said the parking lot across US 41 would be paved. Also answered Koski's query about the bike path right away and was told that it would remain the same as it is now.

Soldan then opened the floor to public comments, limiting each speaker's time to three minutes. There were many comments from the public in person and via speaker phone. Soldan explained that the scope of the PC was only to vote as to whether or not the site plan review met the specifications outlined in the zoning ordinance and that there would be other agencies weighing in on the project down the line.

Greg Makela expressed concern about the eagle's nest and suggested that the construction hold off until the baby eagles have left the nest. Hornbogen said that construction would start well after fledglings have left the nest.

Scot Juntikka had only just become aware of the project and questioned a wide range of aspects of the project. Hornbogen replied that they are complying with all rules and regulations.

Jolynn Pietila wondered how it is that the development is allowed to build cabins so close to the water – twenty feet?

Will Cronin read from the information page supplied to the PC by John Ollila, township zoning administrator, in which he includes a quote from the zoning ordinance from PP. 7 & 8 about the setback of waterfront lots. Ollila's opinion is that the site plan meets these requirements.

Jeffery Loman from the Keweenaw Bay Indian Community is troubled by the project and the possible future sea plane traffic on this site. Loman says that the tribe ceded land to white people in exchange for retaining the right to hunt, fish and gather.

It was stated that only residents of zone B2 can request a change of zoning in the B2 district and Soldan reiterated that the PC is only voting on whether or not the site plan complies with the zoning ordinance.

This secretary does not have the names of the many people who made comments on the Onagaming project by phone.

Among the comments were concerns about the highway congestion that this project would cause on US 41 and the resulting hazard to people driving, walking and biking there.

A resident who is a close neighbor to the project is concerned about the noise next to his property from the RV park and also questioned whether or not this is really a medium density project.

A phone caller suggested that the whole project needs to be subjected to professional scrutiny addressing some of the concerns of the local residents.

Sherry asked what avenue is left to the people's concerns regarding environmental issues. Soldan said EGLE deals with environmental concerns and that, for example, property owners are allowed to cut the trees on their own property.

At 8:00 the floor was closed to public comment with a motion by Boerman moving to close the public hearing and Anderson seconding that motion which passed.

Boerman made a motion to accept the site plan as presented and it was seconded by Anderson. Discussion followed.

There was some discussion by the PC members about the site plan and public comments.

Koski suggested waiting until the PC could be provided with more information on storm water runoff.

Cronin was still concerned about public safety and remembers a bicycle/car crash recently resulting in the death of a local resident. He thinks the nature of the neighborhood should also be considered and the close proximity of the houses to the RV park.

The PC asked Hornbogen about the possibility of a berm or more of a screen between the closest house and the RV park and Hornbogen said that a berm would not be added. She pointed out that some people along US41 have hedges to shield them from traffic noise.

The issue was put to a vote of the PC and the motion to accept the site plan passed with three members voting for it and two dissenting.

Anderson, Boerman and Cronin voted yes and Koski and Sherry voted no. Motion carried to accept site plan review.

Soldan then opened the floor to nominations for officers.

Peggy Anderson nominated Sherry for the position of secretary and Sherry declined.

Anderson then nominated Boerman for the position of secretary. Boerman accepted the nomination and Anderson then nominated Soldan to be the new chair of the PC and Soldan accepted. The nominations for officers was seconded by Koski. The new slate of officers passed with a unanimous vote.

Thanks to the new officers for accepting these positions.

Soldan then thanked Melanie Kuber-Watkins for her strong leadership as chair of the Planning Commission for so many years. She will be missed!

Soldan also thanked Peggy Anderson for her time and efforts helping him prepare for his new position as chair of the PC.

Melissa Boerman, our newest member of the PC added her thanks to Anderson saying that Anderson sent her updated information and helped her so much getting her up to speed on the latest Planning Commission issues as she prepared to attend her first PC meeting on 8-18- 2022.

The next scheduled meeting of the PC is on October 13, 2022.

A motion to adjourn was made by Sherry and seconded by Boerman,
motion passed.

Respectfully submitted by acting secretary, Constance Sherry.