

Portage Township Planning Commission - Nov. 12, 2014

The regular quarterly meeting of the Portage Township Planning Commission was called to order at 7:05 PM on Wednesday, November 12, 2014 chair Rob Wittig. Present were Rob, Ted Soldan, Dave Rulison, Peggy Anderson, Dean Latendresse, Jim Stingle, and Melanie Kueber Watkins. There was one visitor -- Bruce Petersen.

The commission welcomed our new member, Jim Stingle (dsranch@up.net) to the commission.

The minutes from the previous meeting were deferred until the next meeting.

The main purpose of this meeting was to talk about issues relating to the zoning ordinance, which is currently in the process of being updated. Secretary Soldan brought up several:

Local food, and the encouragement of its consumption and production in the township. Dave mentioned there is an organization called the UP Food Exchange that was working on local food in the UP. During the discussion, we also talked about locally produced products of all sorts, not just food. It was thought that a statement could be added to the zoning ordinance that the planning commission was, "supportive of locally produced materials."

Tiny homes, and the ability to allow such structures to be built and lived in within the township. It was noted that there is a growing movement of people that want to build and live in very small houses, and that our zoning ordinance seems to prohibit such structures in residential zones. Bruce Peterson suggested that we pose the question to Pat Coleman, to see if there is a structure we could put in place in the zoning ordinance that would allow for such construction and living situations, while avoiding the pitfalls.

We also briefly discussed encouraging and expanding non-automobile trails for use within the township. It was mentioned that the trail between Houghton and Chassell could be a model for future development for bike/pedestrian travel.

We also talked about encouraging alternative energy production within the township, so as to lessen our dependence on outside sources of energy. Some topics included biofuels, and solar panels.

Soldan brought up an item on page 67 of the working draft of the zoning ordinance. The statement said "The presence of three members shall constitute a quorum, but the concurring vote of a majority of the members of the Zoning Board of Appeals shall be necessary to reverse

any order, requirement, decision, or determination of any administrative official or to decide in favor of the applicant in any matter which is required to pass under this Ordinance or to effect any variation in such Ordinance."

Soldan said that in his experience with Robert's Rules of Order, that a quorum should be a duly constituted meeting of the board, and should therefore be able to conduct any business, and not be limited as the wording suggests in the above. There was a lengthy discussion about this, at the end of which it was decided that Soldan would email supervisor Peterson the text, and that Peterson would bring it up with our contact at the MTA (Michigan Township Association.)

The next meeting with Pat Coleman to continue work on the zoning ordinance will be December 3, 2014. The next regular meeting of the commission will be January 7, 2015.

A motion to adjourn was made at 8:10 pm by Melanie, second by Peg Anderson, and passed.

Respectfully submitted,



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Ted Soldan, Secretary