

MINUTES OF THE AUGRES TOWNSHIP PLANNING COMMISSION

Zoning Ordinance Review Meeting

June 26th, 2023
9:00 A.M.

IN ATTENDANCE: Chairman Jesse Young, Ross Maser, Patricia Tremble and Donna Wilson

ABSENT: Barbara Luberta and Zoning Administrator Art Gallop

PUBLIC IN ATTENDANCE: Jim Herzog and Michael Oxley

CALL TO ORDER: The meeting was called to order at 9:00 am with the Pledge of Allegiance

APPROVAL of AGENDA: Motion made by Patricia Tremble to approve the agenda as presented. Motion supported by Ross Maser. Voice vote. All Ayes. No Nays. One Absent. Agenda approved.

APPROVAL of MINUTES: Motion made by Maser to approve the minutes of the May 23rd, 2023 Planning Commission meeting. Motion supported by Tremble. Voice vote. All Ayes. No Nays. One Absent. Minutes approved.

PUBLIC COMMENT: Clerk Oxley reported on absent board member Barbara Luberta, saying she came by in order to be sworn in as she has been convalescing since the first of the year.

BOARD COMMENT: None at this time.

TOWNSHIP ORDINANCE REVIEW: Last meeting the board members wrapped up the ongoing township zoning ordinance review. There were several points yet to be agreed upon in order to hold a public hearing which would ratify the updates. Wilson brought up lawn mowing, specifically Chapter 4.23 Lawn Maintenance, which stated grass had to be under 7" in height. It was questioned whether this only applied to Lakeshore/Residential as in agricultural or forest it may not apply. There was discussion on how to designate how much of a property is to be cut - just around a home, what shows from the road, backyards, ditches. Ross suggested contiguous residential properties as a designation. Topic was tabled for more research (MTA, other ordinances). There was discussion on contacting residents when someone complains, and how it has worked in the past - just asking a resident to mow their lawn (i.e. Howard Sheppard on Court Street and Nathan Childs on Booth Road).

Maser made a motion to table (Agenda item #7) any decision on when to hold a public hearing. Motion supported by Wilson. Voice vote. All Ayes. No Nays. One Absent. Motion approved.

SOLAR FARMS: Oxley presented a map of 'possible' acreage in the township which might be used for solar farms. Starting with 80 acre size cleared parcels, mostly farm fields, though not all being farmed. The total available for solar farms was estimated to be under 3470 acres. Chairman Young expressed his thoughts on using up such parcels for solar, which the Master Plan survey showed that most residents wanted more housing. Young's suggestion was to ban solar entirely in the township. His logic being that Consumers Energy was looking for 500-600 acres at a time, and the township (using Oxley's map) just doesn't have the capacity. Discussion ensued to place a 5 year ban on solar farms. Maser requested there be a date flagged so that the topic can be revisited. It was suggested that when the Master Plan gets reviewed (less than 5 years) then would be a good time to look at solar farms again. Tremble stated that if a landowner was interested in using property for a solar farms, then the PC board could meet to discuss the request. Wilson expressed her concern about decommissioning a facility, if a company went bankrupt would they really clean up a site, even if an ordinance stated it was an obligation to do so.

Motion made by Maser to place a five (5) year ban on commercial solar farms in Au Gres Township, in order to study long term effects, at the same time not to stifle companies wishing to approach the Planning Commission with solar projects. Motion supported by Wilson. Voice vote. All Ayes. No Nays. One Absent. Motion approved. Oxley to inform the township board at an upcoming meeting.

HOLLAND FARMS PROCESSOR APPLICATION: Oxley presented copies of Holland Farms processor application, asking Wilson to review it for validation. Stating that this time the application was done by the Pollicella attorneys, the outfit who did Holland Farms' original grow applications. As the application was not yet reviewed by the clerk, there was no decision as to a public hearing date made at this time.

BOARD COMMENT: Planning commission members compared their date books/calendars and decided to meet next on Monday, July 17, 2023 - 9:00am.

PUBLIC COMMENT: Supervisor Jim Herzog commented on the progress made a resident violating the trailer stay limit in a lakeshore/residential area (Green Drive). Further reporting on the residents on Swenson road living in a trailer for more than a year. Wrapping up with the structure footprint violation (VanSickle) on Swenson road being tentatively resolved with an updated zoning permit showing a 2nd floor addition (as of yet to be started).

Herzog also spoke on water sewer in the township, something which would be required for any housing projects. A massive expenditure which maybe the state would fund.

NEXT MEETING DATE: Monday, July 17th, 9:00am. Oxley to post the meeting sign.

ADJOURNMENT: TIME – 10:05am. Motion made by Tremble to adjourn the meeting. Supported by Maser. Voice vote. All Ayes. No Nays. One Absent. Meeting adjourned.

Minutes approved at the Planning Commission Meeting _____

Jesse Young, Chairman _____

Michael Oxley, Clerk _____