

MINUTES OF THE AUGRES TOWNSHIP PLANNING COMMISSION

Zoning Ordinance Review Meeting

March 27th, 2023
9:00 A.M.

IN ATTENDANCE: Chairman Jesse Young, Patricia Tremble, Ross Maser, Donna Wilson and Zoning Administrator Art Gallop

ABSENT: Barbara Luberda

PUBLIC IN ATTENDANCE: Amanda Derocher, Aurette Gates, Adam and Lisa Gill, Jim Herzog, Michael Oxley and Derek Porritt

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

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

APPROVAL of MINUTES: Motion made by Tremble to approve the minutes of the March 6th, 2023 (1st Quarterly) Planning Commission meeting. Motion supported by Wilson. Voice vote. All Ayes. No Nays. One Absent. Minutes approved.

Chairman Young welcomed the attendees and explained the reason for today's meeting. Currently the task is to review the township zoning ordinance, and that the Planning Commission can only recommend zoning changes to the township board, after which the Township Board of Trustees can adopt changes, or send them back to the planning commission.

Further pointing out that during public comment a resident or group has two minutes to speak.

PUBLIC COMMENT: Derek Porritt (Green Drive) suggested that the township update the ordinance to use the term 'Short Term Rentals' and do away with the term Air B&B as it is outdated.

Amanda Derocher on the same topic asked that the board adopt some sort of registration system for rentals, as is done in other jurisdictions, adding that fees can be levied and would be income for the township. Board member Ross Maser replied that the board has been working on it.

Lisa Mackenzie-Gill (Swenson Road) rambled on about her life accomplishments, then reported a man coming onto her property when her and Adam Gill moved to the township last year. She stated that the person demanded information about their intentions. It was discerned that it was the township supervisor who replied that he was welcoming the new residents to the township. Lisa continued talking well past the 2 minute time period, and after being told such, resulted in Chairman Young banging the gavel on the table and saying 'You are out of order!'

BOARD COMMENT: None at this time.

TOWNSHIP BLIGHT ORDINANCE: Young made sure that all board members had a copy of the Blight Ordinance (#17) which was adopted by the Au Gres Township board of trustees in March of 1992. Young questioned whether the ordinance had ever been posted in the local paper, and was there a public hearing. Clerk Oxley explained that it would be hard to know, it having been 40 years ago.

Ross Maser stated that after review of the ordinance, he had objections to most everything on the first page, specifically, that much of the area of the township is agricultural and not in the 'high-rent-district'. A resident may have a car which does not run and may only need repair work, or a boat trailer which is rarely used - how can these vehicles be expected to be tagged every year to meet the blight ordinance. How many residents can afford insurance on their vehicles they do use, and you cannot get a car/boat tag unless you have insurance. Michigan does not have an off-road licensing system.

Chairman Young agreed with Maser, stating that this is why we are here to update the blight ordinance.

Also noting that many of the complaints received by the townships have to do with blight (junk in yards).

Maser replied that this puts a burden on some of the poorest township residents.

Donna Wilson asked Maser - How long would you suggest a vehicle can set on a property?

Young talked on interpretation of the ordinance, time to categorize, the job is to make the ordinance

enforceable. Pat Tremble added that the current blight ordinance is clearly outdated and the board needs to put their heads together, as there is no doubt there is blight in the township.

Zoning Administrator said he would start driving around the township and checking out sites which need to be addressed.

Supervisor Jim Herzog mentioned that the board look at the recent blight control ordinance adopted by Whitney Township (handout).

Board agreed to table the discussion and move onto the next agenda item...

SOLAR FARMS:

Oxley asked if the PC board members had a chance to review the solar farm guidelines document from Consumers Energy. Young stated it seemed to cover the topic very well, and that the township would only need to add allowable specifications (i.e. where and how many allowed). Limits being important as when the Master Plan survey was tabulated, a majority of residents voted for the need of more single family affordable housing or apartments.

Oxley said he would type up a working draft Solar Farm ordinance for the next meeting. All board members agreed to table the discussion until the next meeting and moved onto the next agenda item.

TOWNSHIP ORDINANCE REVIEW: The zoning ordinance review continued with Chapter 5. beginning with section 5.7.2. and continuing on to the end of the chapter. Tremble had several changes to update and some to delete as outdated. Notes were made in the member's zoning ordinance copies, for the eventual publication of said changes. Followed by discussion to incorporate short term rental definitions.

NEXT MEETING DATE: It was decided to continue with the zoning ordinance review (Chapters 6 and 7) at the next meeting to be held on Wednesday, April 12th at 9:00am.

BOARD COMMENT: Tremble suggested board members check the internet for 'Solar Farms in Michigan' as there are maps showing where these farms are located. She also mentioned that during her searches she came across articles where legal problems with solar farms came back onto a township. And we need to be aware of possible liability.

PUBLIC COMMENT: Aurette Gates (Swenson road) asked about a blight enforcement officer. Young replied that an ordinance enforcement officer (OEO) would handle unresponsive violators using the Civil Infraction procedure in the Zoning Ordinance. Amanda Derocher (Green Drive) expressed concern that Section 7 of Blight Ordinance #17 stated that lack of compliance with provisions would be deemed a misdemeanor with a \$500.00 fine, which she thought excessive. Also adding that she would be happy to provide the PC board members with 'short term rental' definitions from other ordinances. Young, thanked Derocher saying he would be happy to get the information, as we do review other municipalities' approach to local issues.

ADJOURNMENT: TIME – 10:30. Motion made by Tremble to adjourn the meeting. Supported by Wilson. Voice vote. All Ayes. No Nays. One Absent. Meeting adjourned.

Minutes approved at the Planning Commission Meeting _____

Jesse Young, Chairman _____

Michael Oxley, Clerk _____