

Burr Oak Township Planning Commission Meeting
January 15th, 2024 at 7:00 pm

Commission Members Present: Matt Craven, Rick Ultz, Allen Kasdorf, Kevin Wickey

Guests Present: No guests were present.

Call to Order—Commission Chair Kevin Wickey called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

Pledge of Allegiance

Approval of Meeting Agenda—A motion was made by Ultz with support by Kasdorf to approve the meeting agenda as presented. The motion passed.

Secretary's Report—The minutes of the October 16th, 2023 Planning Commission meeting were presented for review. A motion was made by Ultz with support by Craven to approve the minutes as presented at the meeting. The motion passed.

Chair's Report—The Chair reported that the Township Supervisors had approved the use of a contractor to update the Master Plan and noted there will likely be some involvement necessary from the Planning Commission in this process. The Chair also reported on various activities and inquiries since the October meeting.

Election of 2024 Officers

The Chair requested that Commissioner Ultz conduct the election of the position of chair. Ultz then declared the floor open for the nomination of chair. He then nominated Wickey to serve as chair. After calling for further nominations three times. Kasdorf then moved to close nominations and cast a unanimous ballot for Wickey as Chair with a second from Craven. The motion carried. The new Chair then opened the floor for nominations for the position of Secretary. Ultz nominated Peterson to serve as Secretary. Kasdorf then nominated himself to serve as Secretary. Having called for any other nominations three times, Ultz moved that that nominations cease with a second from Craven. With Kasdorf abstaining and vacating the room, votes were cast in favor of Peterson to serve as Secretary. The Commission thanked Kasdorf for his willingness to serve.

Old Business

The Commission reviewed the need to better document Special Exception Uses (SEU) granted by the Commission. Three SEU's were granted in the period 2022-2023 and are documented in the approved minutes. However, SafeBuilt has requested documentation in some cases from applicants and although SafeBuilt was satisfied with copies of the approved minutes, the Commission has used a separate SEU Permit in the past to document decisions made in favor of granting a SEU with copies for the Commission records as

well as for the applicant. The Chair presented an updated and slightly revised version of the old form. Kasdorf moved to accept the draft form for use forward and to document the three SEU's granted in period 2022-23 using this form. The motion was seconded by Ultz. The motion passed.

New Business

Tiny Homes - The Commission was requested to investigate the addition of "tiny homes" to the zoning ordinance by the Township Supervisors. The Chair discussed the proposed project of 5 tiny homes being considered by the city of Sturgis and presented an ordinance on tiny homes from Pleasant Plains Township in Lake County, MI. A discussion ensued regarding how tiny homes might fit into the housing options available in Burr Oak Township. Commissioners felt that tiny homes on individual parcels were not a good fit. They noted that the current ordinance requires a dwelling of 1000 sq. ft. and a core area of 24x24 ft., which prevents permitting single-wide mobile homes without an attached addition. Commissioners felt favoring tiny homes but preventing single-wide mobile homes may not best serve township residents. Commissions felt possibly tiny homes in a group may be a better fit, but would require a new zoning classification similar to the current R-3 Residential Mobile Home Park district already in place which is closer to the project concept being considered by the city of Sturgis. The Chair will express the sentiments of the Commission to the Supervisors.

Current Zoning Map - The Chair handed out the current version of the township's zoning map as prepared by the County GIS department and noted to the Commissioners the number of small parcels in the township that are still zoned Ag. A short discussion ensued on the difference between the zoning of an individual parcel and how that parcel is assessed. Specifically, a parcel can be zoned as Ag and be assessed in a residential class. The township assessor bases their assessment on the current highest and best use of the parcel rather than its zoning district. The Chair noted this has implications for township residents as the current zoning ordinance favors Ag districts with additional permitted uses and special exemption uses than residential districts.

Family Businesses – The discussion on Ag versus Residential zoning led into a discussion on Family Businesses allowed as a special exception use for parcels zoned Ag. The Chair noted the recent increase of interest of residents wanting to set up businesses at their residences. The Chair also noted how the language of the current ordinance could use improvement or additional clarity to avoid potential conflict among residents. Further, the Chair noted the lack of opportunity for family businesses on parcels zoned residential creates possibilities for conflict on small parcels zoned as Ag... After further discussion, the Commission agreed to work of the language for Family Businesses this year and consider the addition of permitting lower impact family business activities on other zoning districts.

Adjournment - Having no other business and with no guests present, Kasdorf moved to adjourn the meeting with a second by Ultz. The motion carried and the meeting was adjourned at 8:15 pm.

Respectfully submitted,
Kevin Wickey, Chair
Burr Oak Township Planning Commission