

Burr Oak Township Planning Commission Meeting
October 16th, 2023 at 7:00 pm

Commission Members Present: Tim Peterson, Rick Ultz, Allen Kasdorf, Kevin Wickey

Guests Present: George Boss, Donna Boss, Kimberly Sikorski, Alvin Bontrager and family members.

Call to Order—Acting 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 Secretary presented the July 17th, 2023 Planning Commission meeting minutes for review. A motion was made by Ultz with support by Kasdorf to approve the minutes as presented at the meeting. The motion passed.

Chair's Report—The Acting Chair reported on various activities and inquiries since the July meeting.

New Business

Special Use Exception Request – The Commission heard a request from Alvin Bontrager for the operation of a sawmill at his farm at 66520 Halfway Rd., Burr Oak, MI 49030. He intends to sell lumber and sawdust as animal bedding material. Concern was raised about the private school operating at the entry to his farm. Mr. Bontrager informed the commission the school yard was fenced and that he would post a speed limit on the private lane to his farm. Mr. Bontrager was referred to the Zoning Ordinance for regulations regarding signage advertising his business. A motion was made by Ultz with support by Kasdorf to approve the request as presented. After discussion, the motion passed.

Special Use Exception Request – The Commission considered a request from Dalton and Molly Smith for the operation of a childcare facility at their residence 65288 Big Hill Rd., Sturgis, MI 49091. The Smith's were not present, nor were any neighbors. A motion was made by Peterson with support by Ultz to approve their request as submitted. After a brief discussion the motion passed.

The Commission heard from George and Donna Boss regarding their desire to split their current property at the end of White Pine Drive on Prairie River Lake into multiple parcels. The Boss's have not been able to split their parcel as desired because White Pine Drive is a private easement and not a public or private road as required in the Township Zoning Ordinance (Article 13, Section 13.1, Paragraph A). A lengthy discussion ensued in which the Commission was unable to satisfy the Boss's request or their understanding of why their desired action was not able to be granted via a variance to the Township Zoning Ordinance. The Commission gave them several options: 1) Enjoy or expand their current residence on their parcel as a single parcel, 2)

Work with the existing easement description and accomplish what splits they are entitled to within the current Township Zoning Ordinance, or 3) Work with their neighbors to request the establishment of White Pine Drive as a private road as outlined in the Township Zoning Ordinance. The Commission also encouraged the Boss's to work with their own legal counsel to determine if any other options existed. Still not satisfied with this response, the Boss's requested that the Commission work with the Township legal counsel to determine a path for their desired action. The Acting Chair committed to working with the Township Board of Trustees to determine if this was advisable.

2024 Meeting dates and times – After discussion a motion was made by Ultz with support by Kasdorf to adopt the following dates for regular scheduled Planning Commission Meetings in 2024: The motion carried.

January 15, 2024

April 15, 2024

July 15, 2024

October 21, 2024

Zoning Board of Appeals (ZBA) vacancy – The Township Supervisor requested the Planning Commission fill the vacancy on the ZBA left by Tim Hahn from within the membership of the Planning Commission. A motion was made by Kasdorf with support by Ultz to appoint Peterson to the ZBA. The motion carried.

Election of Chair - The Township Supervisor requested that the Commission select its own Chair in the absence of former Chair Tim Hahn. A motion was made by Ultz with support by Peterson to appoint Wickey as the Chair. The motion carried.

Wickey requested that the Commission consider the appointment of Secretary at its January meeting.

Adjournment - Having no other business and with all guests already departed, Chairman Wickey adjourned the meeting at 8:45 pm.

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