

**ROSS TOWNSHIP
PLANNING COMMISSION
MINUTES
August 23, 2021**

CALL TO ORDER/PLEDGE

Chairperson Lauderdale called the regular meeting of the Ross Township Planning Commission to order at 6:00 p.m. at the Ross Township Hall.

ROLL CALL

Present: Chairperson Lauderdale
 Michael Bekes
 Steve Maslen
 Michael Moore
 Pam Sager
 Sherri Snyder

Absent: Mark Markillie

Also Present: Rebecca Harvey – Township Planning Consultant

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

The agenda was approved as presented.

APPROVAL OF PRIOR MEETING MINUTES

The Commission proceeded with consideration of the **July 26, 2021** regular Planning Commission meeting minutes. Bekes moved to approve the minutes as presented. Maslen seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

NEW BUSINESS

Chairperson Lauderdale noted that no New Business or Public Hearing Item was scheduled for consideration.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

1. Master Plan Action Plan (Section VIII) – Technical Review of Zoning Ordinance

Chairperson Lauderdale stated that the Planning Commission initiated a Technical Review of the Zoning Ordinance in June. He noted that the Commission had effectively completed review of Goal 1 (and the six related objectives) at the June meeting and then proceeded through a review of Goals 2 through 8 (and their related objectives) in July. The discussion of the remaining two goals and their related objectives was scheduled for the August meeting.

Goal 9: Provide Adequate Public Services and Facilities

Objectives:

- a. *Adopt levels of service standards that best fit the needs of the Township and continue to monitor and amend those levels of service as development occurs. Avoid providing enhanced levels of service that will promote undesirable development.*
 - Existing service standards in the Zoning Ordinance are adequate.
- b. *Require the provision of utilities on the basis of ‘concurrency’ where public utilities are necessary for any particular development within the Township.*
 - Existing development standards in the Zoning Ordinance effectively achieve ‘concurrency’ in the provision of public utilities.
- c. *Require electric, communications, and cable utilities for all new residential and nonresidential development to be placed underground.*
 - This requirement exists as a standard for planned residential and nonresidential development.
 - The current site plan review criteria and the method of application of those criteria by the Planning Commission can also be used to achieve this objective.
- d. *Increase the use of technology in the day-to-day operations of the Township.*
 - Not a Planning Commission or Zoning Ordinance issue.
- e. *Encourage underground utilities where practical to enhance rural character.*
 - This requirement exists within the C-1 and I-R Districts, and for OSPDs . . . and can be applied outside of these districts through the site plan review process.
 - Outside of these districts, and for uses that do not require site plan review, there is no mechanism through which to achieve this objective.
 - **Requested to be placed on PC Work Plan.**

- f. *Acquire 'state-of-the art' equipment when determined to be cost-effective to facilitate improved operations.*
 - Not a Planning Commission or Zoning Ordinance issue.
- g. *Retain high skill levels among Township staff and committees through adequate and appropriate continuing education efforts.*
 - Not a Zoning Ordinance issue.

Goal 10: Assure a Planned, Concentrated Approach to Commercial and Industrial Development

Objectives:

- a. *Identify specific areas suitable for commercial and industrial development, and restrict development to such areas.*
 - Periodic review of the Future Land Use Map (MP) by the Planning Commission would help achieve this objective.
 - The Zoning Ordinance does not currently set forth review criteria for rezoning decisions that would serve to connect zoning decisions with the Future Land Use Map and MP.
- b. *Restrict commercial development to planned, concentrated clusters and discourage strip 'sprawl' commercial development.*
 - The Future Land Use Map (MP) demonstrates a land use arrangement consistent with this objective.
 - The C-1 and C-2 Districts were designed with specific reference to this objective.
 - The Zoning Ordinance does not currently set forth review criteria for rezoning decisions that would serve to connect zoning decisions with the Future Land Use Map and MP.
- c. *Integrate commercial and industrial land uses into their surrounding environment through appropriate and attractive architecture and signage, setbacks, site design, and sensitivity to the natural environment.*
 - The C-1, C-2, and I-R Districts were designed with specific reference to this objective.
 - The current site plan review criteria and the method of application of those criteria by the Planning Commission also assist to achieve this objective.

d. *Incorporate site design standards into the Zoning Ordinance that will facilitate aesthetic and functional commercial and industrial developments.*

- Not a Planning Commission or Zoning Ordinance issue.

e. *Maintain up-to-date and appropriate signage requirements.*

- Not a Planning Commission or Zoning Ordinance issue.

Chairperson Lauderdale offered a compilation of the results from the Planning Commission's three work sessions (June, July, August). Harvey was directed to prepare a work plan that effectively sets forth the items identified for Planning Commission consideration for review/prioritization in September.

Bekes requested the addition of the following two items identified by the Township Board to the work plan:

: Cultivation of a Planning Commission member to actively participate with the 4TWRC

: Identify the need for amendments to the Zoning Ordinance related to medical marihuana given the recent State Supreme Court decision related to 'caregivers'.

Planning Commission members agreed with the additions to the work plan.

2. Master Plan Action Plan (Section VIII) – Fences/Sight Lines

Chairperson Lauderdale stated this item is on the agenda as a 'continued item', placed on hold pending further direction from the Township Attorney.

REPORT FROM TOWNSHIP BOARD

Bekes reported the following:

- The August Township Board meeting was well attended with the majority of the public input related to the Kalamazoo County Sheriff Department matter.
- Ordinance #161 was repealed to open up the option to establish a township police force again.
- A transfer of property from Richland Township into Ross Township was approved.
- The Township Office is now fully staffed.

REPORT FROM ZONING BOARD OF APPEALS

Chairperson Lauderdale reported that the ZBA met on August 4, 2021 and continued consideration of an appeal of the determination made by the Zoning Administrator that the berms with rows of trees established by the applicant along the property's side lines are unlawfully located within the setback and must be removed.

He stated that the ZBA affirmed the Zoning Administrator's decision that the berms and rows of evergreen trees located along the property's side lines are structures under the Zoning Ordinance and that the structures must be removed from the waterfront setback area as provided for in Section 17.3 of the Zoning Ordinance. He explained that the ZBA reasoned that the berms and rows of evergreen trees are a structure specifically constructed or assembled or erected with attachment to the ground in a manner that violates the intent of the waterfront setback requirements in Section 17.3 by impairing the reasonable consistency of horizontal sightlines with respect to the development of waterfront lots and that the structures impede the intended viewshed.

PUBLIC COMMENT

No public comment was offered.

MEMBERS, CONSULTANTS, ADVISORS

Snyder encouraged Planning Commission members to participate in an on-line survey currently being conducted by 4TWRC. Regarding recent discussions of the value in connecting with 4TWRC, she suggested that perhaps the Township should look to the 4TWRC membership when appointing to fill the next Planning Commission vacancy. Snyder stated that such an appointment would facilitate a more consistent partnership.

Sager suggested that reciprocal attendance at meetings of the Planning Commission and the 4TWRC is another option that could be employed to further that partnership.

Sager added that she appreciated receiving a copy of the Gull Lake Watershed Resource Protection Guidebook that was referenced at an earlier meeting. She added that she found the guidebook to be well done and full of good information.

ADJOURN

There being no further business to come before the Commission, the meeting was adjourned at 7:15 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,
Rebecca Harvey, AICP, PCP
Township Planning Consultant