

WRIGHT TOWNSHIP
PLANNING COMMISSION PUBLIC HEARING MEETING MINUTES
April 17, 2023 - 7:30 PM
Township Office 1565 Jackson St. Marne, MI 49435
www.wrighttownshipottawami.gov

1. The meeting was called to order at 7:30 p.m. by Chair Rich Dausman. Also present at the meeting were Commissioners Brad Anderson, Steve Gray, and Ken Zahm. Evelyn Coxon was present to take minutes of the meeting, and Planner Julie Lovelace from Fresh Coast Planning was present. Absent: Vice Chair Steve VanTimmeren. Dausman opened with leading the Pledge of Allegiance and a word of prayer.

2. Dausman announced no parking in the reserved Fire Department spaces.

3. No additions to the agenda.

4. Dausman motioned to approve the March 20th, 2023, meeting minutes with the following changes:

Item #6 replace the “shared drive” wording with “**driveway**” and Item 7A. the last sentence was: With updated wording the April 20th, 2023, P.C. meeting will be a Public Hearing for the Solar Ordinance, to be accepted and sent to the Township Board for approval, should read:

With updated wording the April 17th, 2023, P.C. meeting will be a Public Hearing for the Solar Ordinance, after which the P.C. will consider sending to the Township Board for approval.

Anderson supported, all ayes, motion carried.

5. Public Comment: Lisa Potts was at the meeting to ask if you could amend the Special Use clause to the 10/11/1978 home based business. Geri Chaidez commented in favor of Lisa. Definitions says a home business is defined for a home occupation. Lisa’s plan is to build a pole barn on property to run a business out of and wants to do it in compliance. Dausman suggests changing the ordinance with Public Hearing at the May 15, 2023, Planning Commission meeting. Lovelace will come up with wording, get with the clerk and will check on publication dates for notices of the public hearing. The Planning Commission would like the full text of Polkton and Chester Township’s home-based business emailed to the commissioners for review. Will discuss more at future meetings when more information is available.

6. New Business: Public Hearing to approve a Zoning Amendment to Section 200. Solar Energy Systems. Dausman went over the amendment for a review before opening the Public Hearing. Lovelace explained that Section 328 is the text that addresses Commercial Solar Energy Systems including the definitions. Dausman opened the Public Hearing at 8:29 p.m. This has to do with solar farms to be considered in the commercial definition we’ve indicated that it would be primarily solar farms that would be selling to the power companies not to be confused with solar farms for private or agriculture use, which will be discussed at a future meeting.

In public comment, Board Member Zahm brought up a news article from a week ago that state leadership talking about doing an executive order to override township ordinances in regards to solar farms. Dennis Umlor brought up that it was on the news tonight that legal referendum to put on ballot to ban all solar farms in Michigan and energy companies have to meet their green energy targets by certain dates and they will be using Eminent Domain to meet those targets. Steve Quirk asked if ordinance is an all-out ban on commercial sites? Dausman answered no and these companies don't want small amounts of land, they want 100 to 200 acres. Dausman also stated that there are certain permits uses in certain areas in the township so if someone sells to someone who wants to put in a commercial solar farm, they have to understand that anything they use the land for has to be a permitted use for that parcel. This meeting is to discuss what the community wants and what is good for the community. Steve Quirk brought up that it gets down to 'at the end of the day, it would be good for us to work with them instead of having them take the land without the township having any say'. Steve Quirk brought up the previous talk about using solar to supply the township building and how does that apply to this. Dausman answered that that would be under the private use and the township would not be selling the extra energy created by solar. Dennis Umlor: the current ordinance bans all solar applications in AG district and that is why he is against a lot of zoning ordinances because it takes away a lot of property owners' rights. Dausman explained it is only a permitted use in commercial district. Lovelace brought up that it will be discussed if we would want farmers to use solar for their own personal use. Discussion from several of how much of the township is zoned industrial. There is a difference between commercial and industrial and these commercial solar farms can only be put in the industrial district and only if the owner is willing to sell to these power companies. There is not guarantee that the energy that is sold by these companies would stay in Wright Township or even benefit Wright Township if the power goes out. Wright Township is an agricultural area and the people want to keep the agricultural land as it is. Rick Schoenborn brought up that we all need to educate ourselves with what comes with wind and solar including the life of these turbines and panels and the negative aspects of the disposal of these lead-based panels. It is all our jobs as a local jurisdiction to protect our communities. Setbacks will be important in this ordinance. Lovelace discussed changes in the previous ordinance. Lovelace will make one change on setback and amend it and then send to the Board. Dausman gave public one more chance to comment. No other comments. Public hearing closed at 9:11pm. Zahm moved to recommend the board approve this ordinance, Anderson supported. All ayes, motion passed.

7. a. Approve Distribution of Master Plan copy to same entities as the Notice of Intent to Plan Letters. Lovelace will make the two changes that the board suggested and will check on the Notice of Intent to Plan and see if we can electronically send or if we have to send hard copies and then will send. Anderson made a motion to approve the distribution, Gray second, all ayes, motion passed.

b. Discussion on wording of Farm Labor Housing Ordinance: asked the attorney about the abandonment or is used for more than **60 months** for housing other than farm labor and to clarify the word **substantial**. Answer from attorney's office was not clear.

Page 3, (j) 60 months was 36 months prior but commissioners thought 36 months with a possible extension was fair. Lovelace will work on the wording, page 3 (1) the word substantial needs clarification but this only applies to farm labor housing if it exceeds 100 person per lot. The owner will need to bring to the current board at the time and use their best judgement to approve.

Dausman suggested to bring this to Public Hearing at the May 15, 2023 meeting. Lovelace will check on deadlines for publications.

c. Discussion regarding Conditional Zoning—was decided to take off agenda as no one sees a need to put in the ordinance.

8. Commissioners Comments: Lovelace brought up that there is a land division and a special use coming up at the next meeting. The land division is on Arthur St. The Special Use is also on Arthur St. that is zoned agricultural, and a potential buyer would like to put in a dog arena for training and dog shows. She will not live on the property and no dogs would be kept there overnight. Commissioners feel that this is not similar to kennels and are not interested in amending the ordinance to allow this business in the AG district. Lovelace will contact the applicant with this information. She can still apply for the Special Use.

9. Anderson reported that the board was satisfied with the ordinance for shared driveways.

Anderson motioned to adjourn the meeting at 10:01pm with Zahm support, all ayes, motioned passed.

Respectfully submitted by Evelyn Coxon, Township Deputy Clerk.

(Any documents referenced in these minutes are on file in the Clerk's office).