

Springfield Township
Planning Commission Meeting
Minutes May 16, 2017

Call to Order: Chairperson Baker called the May 16, 2017 Business Meeting of the Springfield Township Planning Commission to order at 7:30 p.m. at the Springfield Township Civic Center, 12000 Davisburg Road, Davisburg, MI 48350.

Attendance:

Commissioners Present:

Dean Baker
Ruth Ann Hines
Dave Hopper
George Mansour

Commissioners Absent

Jason Pliska
Kevin Sclesky
Linda Whiting

Consultants Present

Matthew Lonnerstater, Carlisle Wortman, Associates

Staff Present

Collin Walls, Supervisor
Erin Mattice, Planning Administrator

Approval of Agenda:

Commissioner Hines moved to approve the agenda as presented. Supported by Commissioner Hopper. Voted yes: Baker, Hines, Hopper, Mansour. Voted no: None. Absent: Pliska, Sclesky, Whiting. Motion Carried.

Public Comment:

None

Consent Agenda:

1. Minutes of the April 18, 2017 Planning Commission Meeting

Commissioner Hines moved to approve the minutes of the April 18, 2017 meeting as amended, changing on page 2, “buildings” to “outdoor storage” and changing on page 1, “April 19” to “April 18”. Supported by Commissioner Mansour. Voted yes: Baker, Hines, Hopper, Mansour. Voted no: None. Absent: Pliska, Sclesky, Whiting. Motion Carried.

Public Hearing:

None

New Business:

None

Old Business:

1. Ordinance Amendments – Section 40-572, Building Height Measurement

Matthew Lonnerstater reviewed Mr. Lewan's memo dated May 8, 2017. He stated that the amendments are basically the same as the last version. The only change is a reduction of the maximum height for the residential districts, from 30 feet to 25 feet. They also removed the footnote denoting a maximum of 32 feet. The purpose is to keep definitions consistent with Michigan Building Code.

Commissioner Hines expressed her concern that 25 feet is not tall enough.

Supervisor Walls stated that inadvertently, the previous change of the Schedule of Regulations resulted in an increase in the height. By leaving it at 30 feet, it would have been taller than the previous 32.5 feet because of the definitions and the math. It has been historically 25 feet until the current definitions.

Commissioner Hines asked if the 32 feet was to the predominate eave; it has nothing to do with the definition of height.

Supervisor Walls stated that the grade plane is actually the average. The building department uses the same as the Township used to use. It is from the eave line to the midpoint between the eave and the highest ridge. The grade plane for a walkout is the basement floor. There are some houses that might have a fully exposed end so that the basement floor will have a rear and a side. There might be other houses that only have fully exposed rear and there are all kinds of variations as to how people are getting walkout basements.

Commissioner Hines expressed her concern that the 25 feet is not enough. New Houses are typically taller. She does not want this to cause a problem with a new house that has a full walk-out and two levels.

Chairperson Baker stated that he would gain some benefit from a diagram provided which shows examples of how this would be measured.

Mr. Lonnerstater replied that he can provide different diagrams showing different scenarios.

Commissioners agreed.

Chairperson Baker stated that the goal is for the Fire Department to respond with the equipment that they have and they are not trying to create a situation where people cannot have a walk out basement and a two-story house.

Commissioners discussed different height possibilities and how it would be measured and fire department access.

Mr. Lonnerstater agreed to bring diagrams depicting different scenarios to the next meeting. They are looking for ordinance regulations in which they can make sure that the fire department has safe access to the roof and still regulate the aesthetics. The zoning ordinance issue is trying to regulate the aesthetics and making sure that nothing is going to tower over adjacent properties and also safety, health and welfare.

Commissioners agreed.

Chairperson Baker pointed out the presence of a footnote number three that doesn't exist in the Schedule of Regulations.

Mr. Lonnerstater stated that he would remove it.

Supervisor Walls stated that it will not be difficult to prepare drawings. The worst problem that someone encountered with the prior 25 feet height is that they had to reduce the pitch of the roof.

Commissioner Hopper suggested getting some actual examples from the Building Department of plans showing the review, etc.

2. Invasive/Phragmites – Ordinance Amendments – Discussion

Mr. Lonnerstater reviewed Mr. Doug Lewan's memo dated May 8, 2017. He stated that this included an evaluation of the current ordinance language where every area is highlighted that references either native species, exotic species or invasive species to see how it currently appears. Most of the current regulations deal with native species and is talking about planting new landscaping with a new development and there are two areas where invasive species are mentioned and he outlines those areas. The only area which speaks to removing existing invasive species is on page 17, under 15 titled, "Exotic Species Removal" and it is a voluntary standard. The Planning Commission needs to identify where and how they would like address invasive species in the ordinance.

Commissioner Hines indicated that it should not be just one species. It seems that including it in the site plan process with an inventory would be appropriate. She suggested maybe prioritizing the species found. She asked about invasive species on existing properties; how should this be handled?

Commissioner Hopper concurred with more than one species. The list of species is ever-growing. He suggested that the language be in the zoning ordinance but he also thinks there should be a stand-alone ordinance. This would allow them to control the invasives in developments that are already done and where time has lapsed. He agrees that the zoning ordinance should be amended to look at it when a development is proposed but this misses a lot.

Commissioner Hines asked if they have the ability with a stand-alone ordinance to enforce provisions in existing wetland areas and let the resident know to take care of it or the Township will.

Mr. Lonnerstater confirmed that the commissioners were suggesting a stand-alone ordinance that would address invasive species and then once that is adopted, they could add references to it in the zoning ordinance as part of the PUD process and site plan approval process. This might make more sense to refer to the stand-alone ordinance. His concern is how detailed can they get with all the various invasive species; there are probably different removal directions for each one.

Commissioner Hines stated that they also must have the ability to enforce it.

Mr. Lonnerstater suggested that identification would be the first step. He does not know if they can get all areas but something is better than nothing.

Chairperson Baker stated that he sees the opportunity that they have with items that have a site plan. With a site plan, they can add obligations to provide an inventory and there can be a responsibility associated with that. He is challenged to think about how they would deal with ten-year-old projects and how those situations would be addressed. They do have some ordinance language regarding people managing their property with regard to abandoned vehicles and blight. There is language that says if the Township becomes aware of these things, it can be addressed through a process of enforcement.

Mr. Lonnerstater replied that Orion Township deals with it through a tiered process; one is voluntary by the property owner and the second is the Township identifies the area of Phragmites as a hazardous condition. The challenge is determining where that kicks in and where it is mandated.

Chairperson Baker questioned how far they wanted to go with the number of invasive species that are included. He stated that Autumn Olive may be on 90% of the lots in the Township currently. He wants to make sure that they would not put the Township in a police force role on every invasive because they could not manage it.

Commissioners discussed Phragmites and its presence in the Township.

Supervisor Walls indicated that the treatment starts with education. The Township gets a permit from the State that covers the entire Township so if you have Phragmites on your property and you want to treat it, you do not have to obtain an individual permit.

Commissioner Mansour asked how many species the permit covers.

Supervisor Walls answered there are three primary ones. All are primary because of their economic impact and the damage that they can do to property and buildings.

Commissioner Mansour suggested that the primary invasives should be the ones covered in the ordinance. The ordinance should be easy to adjust to the climate condition that arises so in case another species comes up in three years, they should be able to make adjustments.

Mr. Lonnerstater suggested moving forward with the species covered under this blanket permit.

Supervisor Walls stated that the Township can cover any species under the blanket permit and Natural Resources Manager, Mike Losey provided the species information to Doug Lewan. The Autumn Olive is so prevalent that you are not going to make a difference with it. He suggested attacking the things that they might have a chance to slow down or stop. Mike Losey also provided sample ordinance to Doug. He suggested that the stand alone police power ordinance is excellent because an amendment to the zoning ordinance never applies to something that was there beforehand.

Commissioner Hines asked if they would do the stand-alone ordinance first and then the zoning.

Mr. Lonnerstater answered yes. He stated that hopefully the draft ordinances that Mr. Losey has are of a broader range.

Supervisor Walls stated that the three species that the Township is working on now is what they got a grant to treat.

Mr. Lonnerstater stated that he will get assistance with the sample ordinances for guidance on how to approach it.

Commissioner Mansour asked how long it takes to get a stand-alone ordinance through the process.

Mr. Lonnerstater stated that the Planning Commission can provide a recommendation but the Township Board is strictly the body that provides approval.

Commissioners discussed the process of developing and approving an ordinance.

Mr. Lonnerstater stated that since it will involve the site plan process eventually, the Planning Commission should be able to weigh in on it.

Chairperson Baker stated that whatever they offer, it would start at the Planning Commission level.

Mr. Lonnerstater stated that he will contact Mike Losey as a starting point for the next meeting.

Commissioners confirmed that they are primarily concerned with Japanese Knotweed, Swallowwort and Phragmites currently.

Other Business:

1. Priority Task List

Commissioners reviewed and made changes to the Priority Task List.

Public Comment:

None

Adjournment:

Commissioner Hines moved to adjourn the meeting at 8:33 p.m. Supported by Commissioner Hopper. Voted yes: Baker, Hines, Hopper, Mansour. Voted no: None. Absent: Pliska, Sclesky, Whiting. Motion Carried.

Erin A. Mattice, Recording Secretary