

July 16, 2020

The Portage Township Planning Commission (PC) July 16, 2020 meeting was called to order at 7:36 PM via Zoom by Chair Melanie Watkins. Present were Watkins, Ted Soldan, Jeff Koski, Connie Sherry, John Ligon, Dave Rulison, and Peggy Anderson. Guests John Ollila and Brian Irizarry were also present. No signup sheet was available since it was a Zoom meeting, so the chair and secretary made a strong effort to make sure everyone was accounted for before the meeting started.

Peggy Anderson made a motion to accept the May 7 and June 24 planning commission minutes. The motion was seconded by Koski. Chair Watkins asked for discussion. Koski asked if the circumstance in Hurontown with the ditches had been mentioned in the minutes. Secretary Soldan looked through the minutes and found the paragraph, which was read aloud to the meeting participants. Koski said he hoped that something would be put in writing as to who takes responsibility for the ditches in Hurontown. Koski offered to draft a letter and send it to Trustee Ollila, who would proof it and pass it along to Supervisor Peterson for the appropriate signatures.

Soldan made a motion to adopt the stormwater ordinance (as amended) discussed at the public hearing preceding the July 16, 2020 meeting, and to pass it along to the township board with a recommendation for adoption. The motion was seconded by Ligon. There being no discussion, the motion was put up for a vote, and it passed unanimously.

Ollila addressed the planning commission regarding progress on the proposed soccer complex development in the Dodgeville area. This development includes an indoor arena roughly the size of the Dee Stadium in downtown Houghton, and several outdoor fields. Work has begun on the outdoor fields even though the size of the project exceeds the 1 acre limit at which point the planning commission should have been involved. This breach was the result of a misunderstanding, the details of which the planning commission were apprised.

Brian Irizarry, who is the point person for this project, next spoke. He said his company purchased the property for an indoor arena with a synthetic field. He had researched the situation, and found a lot of support in the area for such a facility among the two universities and local groups. Irizarry showed wetlands delineation maps for the fields and the structure, and talked about the steps necessary to mitigate the wetlands that will be lost due to the construction. (See attached)

Irizarry said there were no plans yet available for the structure, but that they had a good idea of the size they wanted (similar to the Dee Stadium in downtown Houghton.) In general they are looking at a design that would handle the snowload from Copper Country winters, and that a mezzanine is being discussed. Connie Sherry asked if the building would be unheated. Irizarry said it would be heated. He went on to say he was working on the 3 outdoor fields at this time. Stormwater runoff from the construction would be downhill to the west. The 3 fields would encompass 1.8 acres, exceeding the threshold of 1 acre, at which point the planning commission should have been involved in the approval process. The site is zoned B2.

According to Irizarry, two site plans will be presented to the planning commission, one for the outdoor fields and one for the building. Ollila asked if the planning commission would consider reviewing the stormwater plan for the whole project when the plans for the building are more developed? The rationale being that the outdoor soccer fields will not have much of an effect on stormwater runoff, but the building and parking lot will. This would allow Irizarry to submit one stormwater management plan rather than two. The planning commission saw no problem with this concept. No motion was felt to be necessary at this time, and none was made.

Next on the agenda was a project that board trustees Ollila and Bingham were working on. He was responding to some confusion regarding the zoning of some land parcels in the Hurontown/Dodgeville area. Ollila presented a map showing the zoning classifications as they currently exist in the area under consideration (attached). Ollila drafted a letter (attached) to the planning commission that details his concerns about the discrepancies between the zoning district restrictions and the tax classification specified on the property tax bills paid by the property owners. PC members read the letter and asked Ollila questions about his proposal for a new B-3 "Quiet Business District". A discussion followed after which no action was taken. The planning commission decided to table this issue until a future meeting.

Peggy Anderson then asked the planning commission (PC) members if they were ok with her submitting the paperwork for payment for PC members without their signatures? The commission agreed this would be ok until we can start meeting in person again.

Koski made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 9:07 pm. The motion was seconded by Anderson and passed.

Respectfully submitted,



Ted Soldan, Secretary

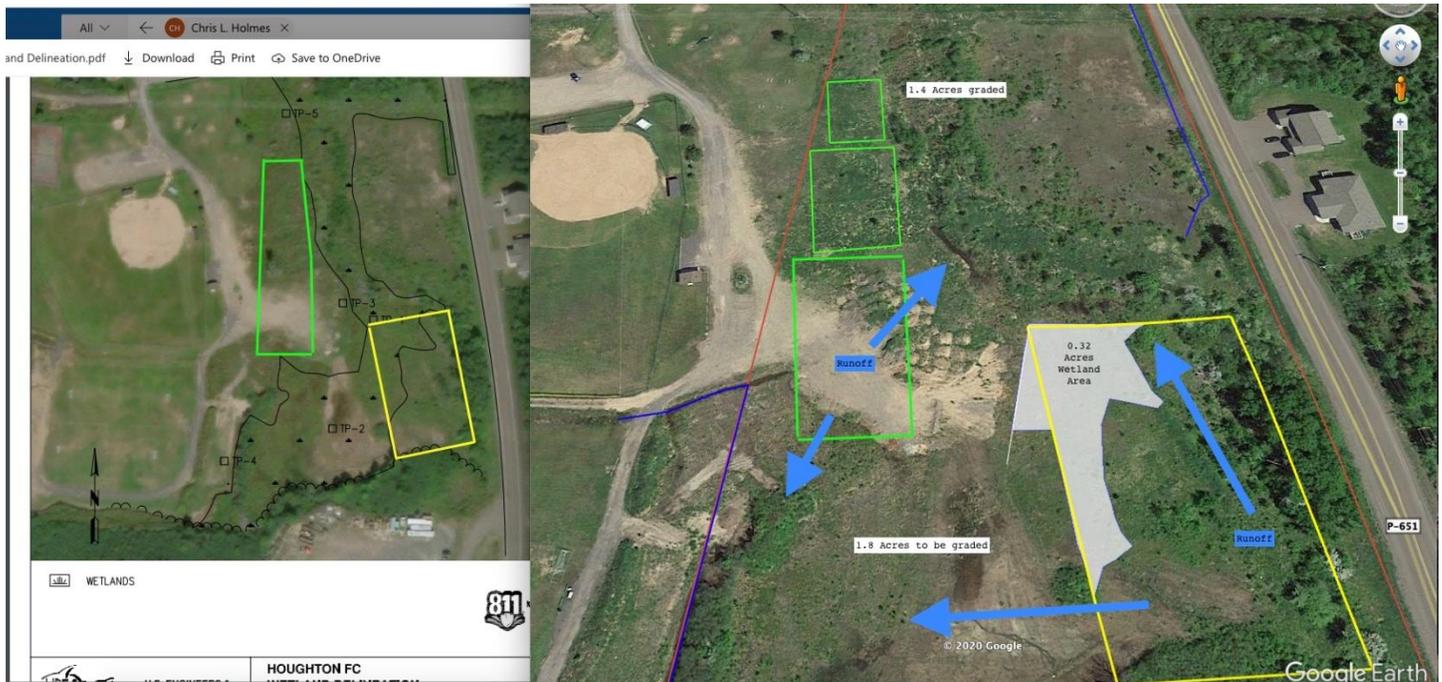


Figure 1. proposed soccer field and building development

**Property Class
Superior Rd
Portage Twp**

Draft

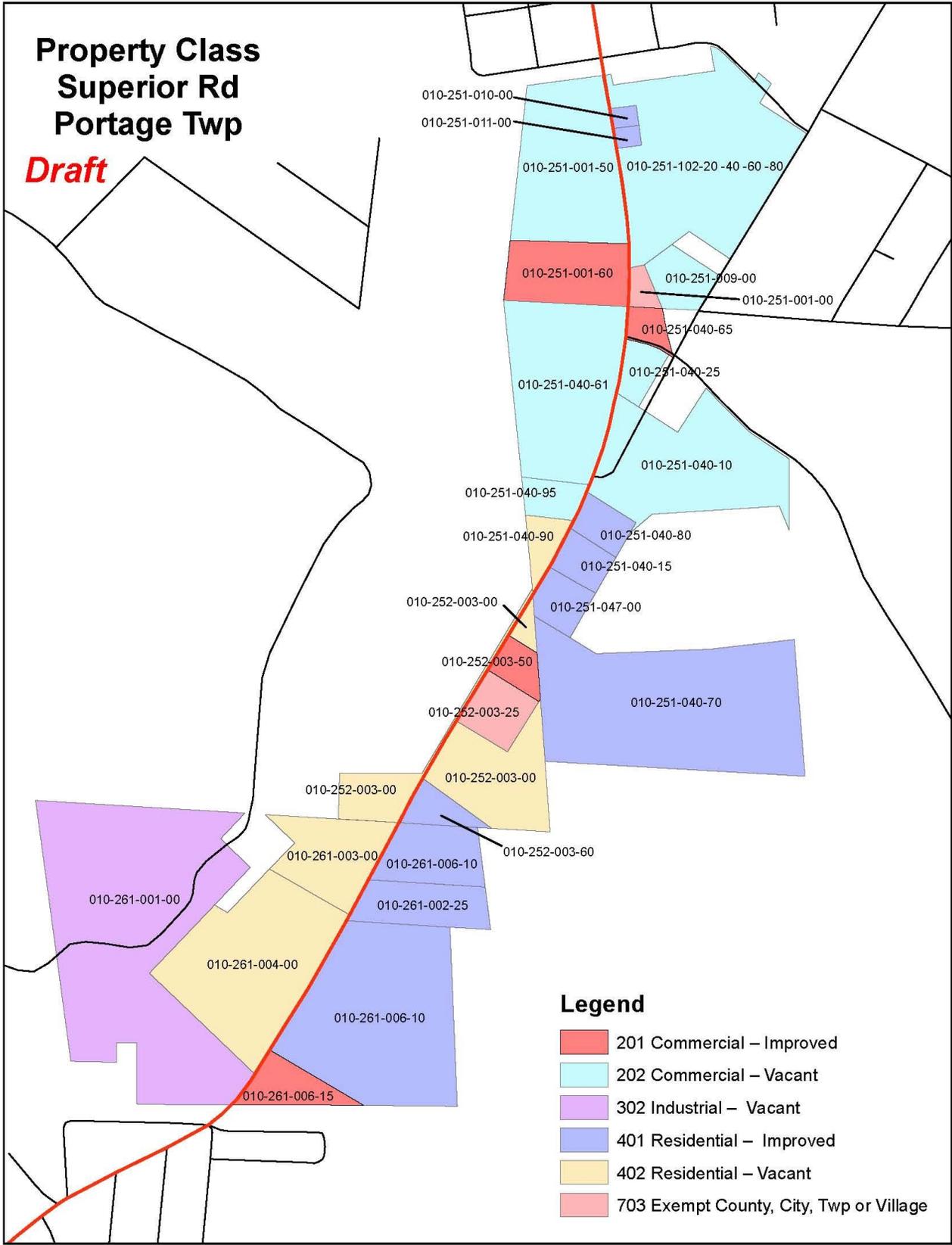


Figure 2. Property Class Superior Rd Portage Twp

PROPOSED B-3 ZONED DISTRICT – for JULY P.C. Meeting

Some properties between Hurontown and Dodgeville, for unknown historic reasons, have long been assigned the tax classification of Commercial or Commercial Vacant. However, since the early 1980s when Portage Township adopted zoning, the area has been zoned RUR, Rural Residential. This has led to confusion since the Commercial classification implies businesses, and RUR zoning does not permit stand alone businesses. Recently, a woman purchased a parcel to construct an office for her tax business, only to learn that she could not build on her site. A different individual also had the same fate in a prior year.

We assume that all P.C. members have seen the signs at the junction of Paradise Road and Main Street coming south of Hurontown – the signs boldly state commercial land for sale, the owner's and purchasers' understanding based upon the longtime tax classification category. Bill & I are proposing a solution: create a new B-3 Zoning District along Main Street south towards Dodgeville which would essentially be dedicated for quiet office space.

We suggest a limited number of permitted uses gleaned from RUR, B-1, and B-2: Single family dwellings, Churches, Home occupations in a single-family dwelling provided that such use is incidental to the main use as a dwelling and further provided that such use is limited to the person actually residing in the dwelling, Finance offices, Day care nurseries, Photographic studios, Dentist, Doctor, & Veterinarian offices (Bill & I disagree about Vets), Tax preparation businesses, Accounting offices, and Engineering offices. The list of permitted uses should also include a final statement which reads “Any other quiet, low traffic professional or business office which is determined by the Zoning Board of Appeals to be of the same general character as the preceding permitted uses.” Setbacks would be the same as in RUR, and properties would have to front on Main St. (the highway).

Perhaps B-3 could be named “Quiet Business District” an area to accommodate single family dwellings and quiet businesses with low traffic and no illuminated signs, no retail businesses! We are in the process of generating a specific map from information provided by the assessor, county equalization, and property owners (The map is a tougher issue than I had anticipated). Notices will have to be mailed to adjacent landowners, and a public hearing held with a 15 day posting.

Figure 3. John Ollila letter to planning commission re "Quiet Business District"