

February 13, 2020

The Portage Township Planning Commission (PC) February 13, 2020 meeting was called to order at 7:00 by Chair Melanie Watkins. Present were Watkins, Ted Soldan, Jeff Koski, Connie Sherry, John Ligon, Dave Rulison, and Peggy Anderson. Guests John Ollila, Jon Julien, and John Paul Pietila were also present.

Jeff Koski made a motion to approve the August 8, 2019 planning commission minutes. The motion was seconded by Connie Sherry and passed.

Township board member John Ollila addressed the commission. He introduced guest John Paul Piettila, who has expressed interest in building a church. According to Ollila, he found some suitable property owned by Jon Julien. The property in question is zoned M1. On close examination of the zoning ordinance, it was determined that M1 does not allow churches. Since the property in question abuts R2, a possible solution was suggested to rezone the property R2, which does allow churches to be built. In discussions with the current owner, Mr. Julien was opposed to the rezoning in case he was to get the property back. He felt having that piece of property zoned R2 would not suit his goals for the property.

Ollila then told the commission that he found it unusual that churches were allowed in every zone in the township except M1, and suggested that another solution to the problem would be to add churches to M1 in the township as a special use.

Chair Watkins expressed concerns about the previous use of the property (it was mining property), and whether the potential for toxics in the soil might be incompatible with the use of a church. After much discussion, it was determined that prior to construction, the property owner would need to conduct a study to determine if there was a reasonable chance of pollution on the site.

Connie Sherry made a motion to amend the zoning ordinance to allow churches as a special use in zone M1. The motion was seconded by Koski and passed unanimously.

Ollila then addressed the commission with another concern. He noticed that tiny houses were allowed in all zones including M1. He felt they should not be allowed in M1. After a small amount of discussion a motion was made by Sherry to amend the zoning ordinance to exclude tiny houses from M1. The motion was seconded by Koski. There being no further discussion, a vote was taken. It passed unanimously.

Ollila then talked to the commission about the Mixed Use zone of the township. It has a mixture of residential, business, and manufacturing. Ollila suggested the commission might consider removing M1 from the Mixed Use zone. He also wondered if the uses from the RuR zone should be added to the Mixed Use zone. After a lot of discussion Koski made a motion to table this issue until the next meeting. The motion was seconded by Anderson and passed unanimously.

Koski asked Ollila if there had been any updates on the Meijer project? Ollila said that Meijers had published a list of projects planned for 2020, and that the Houghton project was not among them. He suggested that probably means the project will be pushed back to 2021 or 2022. It was speculated that Meijers might be waiting until the water and sewer project adjacent to their property are finished before they proceed.

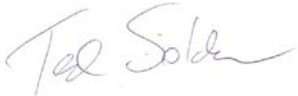
Next the Lubinski/Polosaari project was discussed. Ollila agreed to contact Mr. Pollosaari about having the final plans for the project completed and in the hands of the board by the next meeting.

Next the commission talked about potential dates for the 3 additional required meetings for 2020. The dates suggested were April 23 or May 7, July 16 or 30, and October 8 or 15.

Sherry asked township board members Ollila and Anderson why the Rental Ordinance, which had been passed up to the board some time ago, had not yet been implemented. There was a lot of discussion, much of which was centered on the difficulty of finding and hiring a suitable person to be in charge of rental inspections and certifications. It was suggested that the township board might want to take another look at the rental ordinance.

A motion was made by Koski at 8:18 to adjourn. The motion was seconded by Rullison and passed.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Ted Soldan". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned above the typed name.

Ted Soldan, Secretary

Planning Commission

2/13/20

1. TED SLOAN
2. Peggy Lee Anderson
3. Dave Rulises
4. Connie Shering
5. Melani Watkins
6. John Ligon
7. JOHN PAUL PIETILA
8. Jon Julien
9. John Ollila
10. JEFF KOSKI