

**ESCANABA TOWNSHIP PLANNING COMMISSION MEETING MINUTES
MARCH 1, 2021 HELD VIA ZOOM CONFERENCING 23 PEOPLE ATTENDED**

Chairperson Dean VanLoon opened the Zoom meeting at 7:30 PM then lead all by reciting the Pledge of Allegiance. Mr. VanLoon then took the opportunity to welcome the newest members to the Planning Commission, Theresa Norton and Greg Faust.

Brandon Lanenfeld requested to be added to the Agenda. Request was granted.

Verbal Roll call: State name and where you are joining the meeting from: Theresa Chenier Escanaba Township, Delta County. Ray Hughes Escanaba Township, Delta County. Theresa Norton Escanaba Township, Delta County. Renee Richer Escanaba Township, Delta County. Norman Fleury Escanaba Township, Delta County. Greg Faust Escanaba Township, Delta County. Dean VanLoon Escanaba Township, Delta County. All members are present for meeting.

Motion to approve February 1, 2021 Planning Commission minutes as written was made by Ray H. Second Theresa C. Verbal vote: Ray YES Theresa C YES Theresa N YES Renee R YES Norman YES Greg F YES Dean V YES. Motion carried to approve minutes.

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION: Dean gave instructions how to unmute. Announced public participation is open. No responses. No public participation.

Dean asked for motion to approve agenda with the addition of Brandon Langenfeld under new business. Mr. Langenfeld would like clarification on what zoning classification the property he purchased from the township 40N R22W Section 18 is zoned. When purchased it was R1. He owns 57 acres and not allowed to put a trailer on property. He would like to have a trailer on the property to live in for 2 to 3 years while he constructs his new house and garage. Dean said he would converse with Al Gareau, Zoning Administrator and ^{Tom} Tom Rymkos, Supervisor and contact Mr. Langenfeld with his options.

Cmc
Norm F made motion to approve agenda with additions. Ray H second. Verbal vote: Norm F YES Ray H YES Theresa C YES Theresa N YES Renee YES Greg YES Dean YES. Motion approved.

Zoning Administrators report and Blight updates: Al Gareau informed commission there are no new permits. No new updates on LaBumbard blight case. He did respond that R1 is the zoning for Langenfeld property. Dean informed that in order to re-zone there will need to be a site plan and Public Hearing. Norm inquired if a conditional use permit could be obtained. Al will look into that as an option and present his findings at next planning commission meeting.

Commission reviewed and proof read the Planning Commission bylaws that have been a work in process. Dean asked members to state any wordings, typos or verbiage that needs editing or changes. Items were reviewed and final draft will be given to attorney for review before commission can approve and publish. **Theresa C made motion to approve bylaws with changes. Renee second motion. Verbal vote: Ray YES Norman YES Theresa N YES Theresa C YES Greg YES Renee YES Dean YES. Motion passed.** Dean thanked everyone for all the hard work the last few months.

Nominations were requested for Planning Commission Vice Chair. Renee nominated Theresa C but Theresa felt as the liaison for the Board, she could not accept. **Ray nominated Greg Faust. Greg**

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accepted the nomination. Theresa N second motion. Verbal vote: Ray YES Norman YES Theresa C YES Theresa N YES Renee YES Dean YES. Motion carried. Greg Faust voted in as Vice Chair.

Nominations were requested for Secretary of Planning Commission. Dean explained this position works closely with Recording Secretary to be sure postings and notifications are complete, etc. Renee Richer said she would accept the position if no other interest. Ray made motion to nominate Renee as secretary. Greg Faust second nomination. Verbal vote: Ray YES Norman YES Theresa C YES Theresa N YES Greg YES Dean YES. Motion carried. Renee Richer voted in as Planning Commission Secretary.

Commission reviewed Ad Hoc Committee Report Section 4 **Loss of Farmland/Clean Energy**. Renee noted that one of the key recommendations that was made is the township should incorporate the Michigan Dept Agriculture & Development requirements in regards to solar development on farmland. Section E there is a typo that makes the recommendations slightly unclear. Clarification is needed in regards to that section. An important point to bring up is whether the district's agriculture production should be allowed for solar and there was a descent. The committee was not unanimous in their recommendation that the area for agriculture should be permitted for solar. Dean added that was a good point regarding taking prime agricultural land out of consideration for utility solar use. We could still accommodate both things. There are other locations that would still work. We will want to discuss and look at map overlays to see what areas could be beneficial without taking away agricultural land. Paragraph E pg 20 states the number of acres of agriculture land is 37 ½ %right now. To take out 1000 acres that is roughly 2.6% of total township land. That is not taking into consideration the agricultural land. Looking at agriculture land for each 1000 acres for industrial solar. When looking at the #s they put together the #s jump a bit. Theresa C. informed that when you look at our masterplan book approx. 56% of Escanaba Townships 38850 acres agricultural district covers 16% , wetlands 13.7% can not put solar on 85.7% not including districts C3, I, and RP areas. When you do an amendment to a solar ordinance and are using a special land use permit, once you made that amendment to the zoning district allowing a solar facility that means that all of that district is subject to that use. That means that whole district could be consumed. There are other companies other than Orion approaching nearby townships also. When we open up districts and looking at how much land and the numbers presented. It could potentially be the whole township. Norm F: Orion got about 1500 acres under a 30 year lease . He researched this a couple years ago and the lease states they have the right to assign to somebody else. They are supposed to be coming back with a different program with less acreage and have panels that get more juice out of the panels. People who signed these leases were looking for some action because when they put in solar panels their rental agreement allows them to get a bump on their lease payments. Theresa C. Regarding Farmland and MDARD that needs to be returned to farmland. Sometimes when the land has become very hard it can become very difficult to return to prime farmland due to decommission. Renee R: solar ^{soil} compaction depends on how the base of the solar panels are constructed. Dean inquired where the information on paragraph K (*The solar resource (isolation) in Escanaba Township is among the best in Michigan, thereby reducing the production costs of USSPV projects there compared to most in the state*) He would like to know where is statistic is coming from.

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Theresa Chenier gave a Power Point presentation in line with completion of her Master Planner Certification through MSU "Citizen Planner Program." The "Capstone Presentation" started at 8:41 PM on the *Basics of a Township*. To be a Master Citizen Planner she had to complete 6 sessions, pass a competency based exam of 40 questions and deliver a Capstone Presentation to the community. To maintain the certification she will continue with her education by completing 6 hours of education annually. Her goal is to educate herself and help provide resources to other members of planning commission and the board. Chenier stated that in doing so, "my hope is that our township will someday earn the Township Excellence Award." The presentation also explained board member positions and duties. Works of the bylaws and Master Plan, ZBA and Zoning ordinances. The most valuable lessons for the township are the boards to remember: a) discuss in front of people. b) Invite public in for discussion, it is their township c) everyone deserves to be heard. Presentation concluded at 9:05PM. All members found the presentation very helpful, informative and presented professionally.

Dean gave information how to unmute for Public participation. Public Comments: Fred Minor has a CUPPAD township zoning Map he will email to members.

Al G mentioned he has extra zoning books if anyone is interested in a copy at no charge.

Motion to adjourn meeting made at 9:10 PM by Theresa C. Second Ray H. Verbal vote: **Ray YES Norman YES Theresa C YES Theresa N YES Renee YES Greg YES Dean Yes. Motion to adjourn approved.**

Next meeting of the Escanaba Township Planning Commission is scheduled for April 5, 2021 7:30 PM

Minutes prepared by Cathy Culliton, Recording Secretary

Approved April 1, 2021
Cmculliton