

ESCANABA TOWNSHIP PLANNING COMMISSION MEETING MINUTES

APRIL 5, 2021 7:30 PM Via Zoom Conference

18 participants

Supervisor declared a local state of emergency due to the increase in Covid-19 cases in the area to hold scheduled meeting electronically to help ensure safety and health concerns of the residents and commission members. (See attached notice)

Meeting called to order at 7:31 pm by Chairperson Dean VanLoon. Mr. VanLoon led participants in reciting the Pledge of Allegiance.

Verbal Roll Call: Theresa Norton, Escanaba Township, Greg Faust, Escanaba Township, Ray Hughes, Escanaba Township Norman Fleury, Escanaba Township , Theresa Chenier , Escanaba Township ,Renee Richer, Escanaba Township, Dean Van Loon, Escanaba Township.

Theresa C comments: To follow compliance with the OMA our Chief Administrator Officer, which is Tom our Supervisor, did call a local state of emergency, that is why we are able to continue with Zoom meetings. Dean explained this meeting is being conducted electronically due the local State of Emergency declared by the Supervisor. Please watch for details pertaining to any upcoming meetings.

Approval of March 1, 2021 minutes with the following corrections: Renee Richer mentioned an error in previous months comments she made to change solar s/b soil.

Motion to approve March 1, 2021 minutes as amended made by Ray H. Second by Norm F. Roll call vote: Theresa N YES Greg F YES Ray H YES Theresa C YES Norm F YES Renee R YES Dean YES. Motion to approve March 1, 2021 minutes passed.

PUBLIC COMMENT (Dean announced floor was open to Public Participation and to unmute if they wished to speak) Host requested all to unmute through Zoom app. NO PUBLIC PARTICIPATION.

Dean added Mr. Langenfeld to the Agenda under New Business, item C.

Motion to approve Agenda with addition of item C made by Renee R. Second Ray H. Roll call vote: Theresa N YES Greg F YES Ray H YES Theresa C YES Norman YES Renee YES Dean YES. Motion to approve agenda with addition, passed.

Zoning and Blight updates made by Al Gareau. There are 9 new permits at the hall to be inspected. Two individuals are interested in land purchases. He showed them the property. Permits are \$25 as of April 1, 2021.

No Public Hearings scheduled or heard.

Old Business:

Draft of Mission Statement for Planning Commission. Dean read aloud that the mission of the Escanaba Planning Commission is fairness, consistency, and coherent to the Escanaba Township Master Plan. Renee suggested adding predictable and to follow the MTA guidelines when

making decisions. Dean suggest adding compliant with the Master Plan. Theresa N concurred that would be a good addition. Dean asked the members to each add ideas and thoughts in writing as to what they would like the Mission Statement to include then email them to him at dvanloon55@gmail.com. Planning Commission Recording Secretary was asked to send members this note in email. (the message was sent to all members April 5, 2021 at the end of the meeting)

AdHoc Section 5) Security for Removal of Solar Farm Improvements Pg 24.

Dean asked for board comments:

Renee pointed out the statement reading, Escanaba Township may pursue legal action if the facility fails to operate or is non-functional. This appears to state that one of the township securities is to purse legal action in the event of some type of failure. The township could try to re-coup legal expenses. Dean: how do we protect the township from the cost of that litigation. The amounts of bonds for removable it is a moving target there will be changes how these are recycled and dismantled. Securities can be through bonds or credit. What is the effect of landowner transfers. The township needs to know who is going to be responsible for what. How are we going to protect ourselves. Changes of technology could change in 10 years. Once agreed upon, that is what we have to live with. It is very hard to pin point the cost. Norm: has found a website stating removal is 3.5 cents a watt and bonds are based on 125% of cost of removal. Shiawassee County in lower Michigan is putting in a 1900 acre by the end of the year. In line with Gov. Whitmer's Energy package. He suggested members to check out the Shiawassee website to see how they proceed. Theresa C is concerned about how the township will be informed is the project becomes non-functional. Companies that do decommissioning advise the townships to have the money set aside in an account for decommissioning. Greg F: we need to have something added to cover the issue of transfers of liability. Especially if they were to sell the project out. Dean said before any kind of language is drafted regarding solar, it will involve the attorneys. We need to educate our selves on the issues and discuss with attorney before a finalized zoning ordinance.

New Business:

1)Dean called on Mr. Lanenfeld. No response. He appears to not be present.

2) Master Plan

a) As a planning Commission we should be reviewing the Master Plan every 5 years. Theresa C stated the Planning Commission master plan was adopted Jan 7, 2109. Then adopted by Board Jan14, 2019 as updated version. There was an original master plan book so she will continue to work with CUPPAD to obtain a copy. Norm recalled when the Master Plan was worked on. Orion did not want a conditional use permit. They are not in the business to hang on to solar farms. They put them together then sell

off. Conditional use permit is for 5 years and then at that time it is looked at for renewal if terms were met. Orioin said that wouldn't serve their purpose because of financing issues with a conditional use permit. Delta County is having a meeting tomorrow to discuss Solar Ordinance. Townships do not receive large amounts from some projects or businesses.

Dean explained to the Members that he didn't find anything in the Present Master Plan specifically targeting Solar development. The Planning Commission's goal as step 1 is to look at our present Master Plan. We need to consider how does it fit within the goal set by the group that put the plan together. A lot of work went into the master plan by the previous group. We need to review the present master plan and address if modifications need to be made, if there are, we proceed on to draft an ordinance to accommodate the changes that seem to be coming down the road for us. It doesn't matter if Delta County is putting together the same ordinance. Escanaba township has already been established and any ordinance we have in the township will supersede. Escanaba Township is the governing authority on zoning in Delta County in our township. Norm recalled the meetings to where residents were vocal on both sides.

Theresa C. The Master Plan should have community input. In chapter 11 pg 1 it states that surveys seeking community input were sent out to residents in Dec 2007. In that the survey were they talking about solar? Then Chapter 10 pg 2, swat exercises, statement reads "It was very strongly identified that solar is an opportunity with a total of 13 votes." She doesn't feel 13 votes represents a whole community. Norm recalls residents being very upset that they were not notified. We should have a solar ordinance to stay ahead of any development. Ray H informed the members that there were 2 years that surveys were sent out with the taxes and they waited and received no response. There was no input at that time and no one was showing up. Dean said that is the purpose of reviewing the master plan is to see if anything changed. Dean wants the Planning Commission to start review process of the master plan and put ideas together and find any public comments, what things have changed and what needs to be addressed. Then we can discuss those by recommending an ordinance or modifications to an ordinance. Right now Escanaba Township does not have a solar ordinance. First thing is putting solar ordinance in place. Then if that ordinance doesn't fit somebodies wants and needs that is when changes to that zoning, need to be requested or handled differently. MTA guideline is to address the Master Plan initially. Review what is here, what changes since publication and what we understand the township resident's want through public comment. Dean invited each of the members to take the Master Plan and go through it thoroughly with anticipation of a discussion at the next meeting at what steps we are going to take to make revisions to the master plan. Renee R asked to draw attention to chapter 10 pg 3 of master plan, "The township could seek to become a designated so smart community of energy under USDA so smart solar program." That is a residential program for individual and business use." If we want to talk about large scale production it needs to be done separately.

Dean said solar ordinance should consider all types of solar which has many aspects.

PUBLIC COMMENTS: (Dean announced to unmute to participate in public comment session)

Warren Bovin

Board liaison report given by Theresa C. The township approved the budget at their last meeting. Chair person and board will receive a \$5 a month raise. If meeting goes over 3 hrs you will receive an additional \$25.

Education information: Theresa Chenier will forward the webinar and education information to the members.

Motion to adjourn made by Ray Hughes . Second Theresa N. Roll vote: Theresa N YES Greg F YES Ray H YES Thera C YES Norm YES Renee YES Dean YES .

Meeting adjourned at 9:06 pm

Next meeting of the Escanaba Township Planning Commission is May 3, 2021 7:30 p.m. Please watch website for notification if to be held in person or via zoom conference.

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Escanaba Township minutes by, Cathy Culliton, Recording Secretary cathyculliton@gmail.com
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