

**Casnovia Township**

**Planning Commission**

**August 27, 2020**

**7:00 P.M.**

**I. CALL TO ORDER**

Rick Sible called the meeting to order at 7:00 PM. Emma Posillico agreed to take minutes for the meeting, as the Planning Commission Secretary was not in attendance at the meeting.

**II. ROLL CALL**

Present: Rick Sible, Rachelle Helmuth, Jason Jorgensen, Jeannette Mansfield & Ron Swanson

Absent: Kim Anderson & Craig Montgomery

Others Present: Emma Posillico, Township Zoning Administrator, Mrs. Rusco, Steven Sower, Brenda Thompson, Russ Thompson, II, Russ Thompson, III & 3 representatives of Mitten Made Organics

**III. APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

Minutes from July 23, 2020 were reviewed. Motion to approve made by Ron Swanson; second by Rachelle Helmuth; unanimous vote to approve the minutes as provided.

**IV. APPROVAL OF AGENDA**

Motion to approve the agenda made by Jason Jorgensen; second by Swanson; unanimous vote to approve the agenda as provided.

**V. PUBLIC COMMENT**

Sible asked if there was anyone wanting to make public comment regarding items that were not on the agenda. Brenda Thompson asked about the upcoming Township tire collection, and if there is a limit on the number of tires that can be brought per party. The Planning Commission was uncertain if there was a limit, but suggested that Thompson call the Township Hall to confirm.

**VI. PUBLIC HEARING**

a. Public hearing to consider amendments to Article 14 – Accessory Use Provisions of the Casnovia Township Zoning Ordinance (public hearing notice published in the Ravenna Independent on August 7, 2020).

Emma Posillico explained that the Planning Commission has been working on an amendment to Article 14 of the Zoning Ordinance for several months. Over the past few months, members of the Township Board have expressed concerns over the proposed Ordinance language that would permit movable accessory structures, such as storage containers or semi-trailers. She noted that the Board Liaison may be able to explain this further. After the public hearing and Planning Commission discussion, the Planning Commission can choose to take action on the draft Ordinance, either sending the language to the Township Board for consideration, or the Commission can decide to table the matter for a later meeting. Sible opened the public hearing at 7:15 P.M. There were three (3) attendees at the meeting representing Mitten Made Organics, a company that is utilizing a semi-trailer to grow medicinal and edible mushrooms at the southwest corner of Canada and Bailey Roads. The representatives explained that they are using a semi-trailer to grow mushrooms as it is substantially less expensive than purchasing a permanent accessory building. They don't intend to keep buying additional semi-trailers, but would like to eventually move the operation into a building. They stated that they are willing to work with the Planning Commission on an agreement to be able to keep the semi-trailer, potentially moving it around the property so it does not decay, and insuring the trailer. The Planning Commission expressed that they support new businesses in the Township, and are concerned that the Township may be violating the Right to Farm Act by telling a mushroom grower that they cannot use a semi-trailer to do so. Posillico stated

that she would check with the Township Attorney to see if this is a violation of the Right to Farm Act, and get back to Mitten Made Organics and the Planning Commission.

Posillico mentioned that the Township Board also does not want shipping containers to be allowed as accessory structures in the Township. According to the Township Attorney, shipping containers and semi-trailers are not currently permitted as accessory structures in Casnovia Township. If the Township adopts language outlawing shipping containers, those containers that currently exist in the Township would be permitted to remain, but no new containers would be allowed.

Posillico explained that Supervisor Ashbaugh has stated that she would like Article 14 to have varying height requirements for accessory structures based upon the Zoning District that a property is in. The Planning Commission agreed with this concept, and asked Posillico to provide sample ordinance language for their September meeting. The Planning Commission agreed to table the matter for further discussion. Sible closed the public hearing at 7:30 PM.

#### VII. NEW BUSINESS

- a. Consideration of a site plan, submitted by Russell Thompson, III, to establish a storage shed display lot business at 1569 Newaygo Rd. (parcel number 61-13-002-400-0016-00), currently zoned Commercial (C-1).

Sible asked Thompson to explain the proposed business. Thompson said that they had brought in two (2) loads of gravel for the drive/parking area already. The property will be insured as a subsidiary of the Thompsons' existing business. They may want a sign in the future, which Posillico stated would require a Zoning Permit. Motion to approve the site plan made by Jorgensen; second by Helmuth; unanimous vote to approve the site plan as provided. Sible noted that the site plan would continue for review by the Township Board.

#### VIII. OLD BUSINESS

- a. Consider updates to Master Plan.

Sible stated that he has reviewed master plans for other communities online, and found template programs that complete a full update to the plan. He noted that he is unsure of the cost of such programs. Sible questioned the timeline for amending the Master Plan, and asked if it could be complete by the beginning of 2021. Posillico responded that a Master Plan usually takes at least 12 months to complete, in particular because the Township Attorney reviews any changes, then the draft plan must be reviewed by the Township Board, then the draft plan is issued for a 63-day public comment period (required by the State). She mentioned that one of the aspects that the Planning Commission previously discussed was amending the Master Plan to address wind energy, so that a floating zone could be created for alternative energy (wind and solar). In order to create such a district in the Zoning Ordinance, there would need to be reference to alternative energy in the Master Plan, which there currently is not. Jeannette Mansfield noted that she has heard of solar companies seeking leases in the general area.

Posillico explained that the Master Plan could be amended first to address alternative energy, which could take 4-6 months, then a second, more intensive review of the Master Plan could be completed, which could take 12 months. The Planning Commission agreed to pursue an amendment first to the Master Plan to only address alternative energy. Steven Sower asked if the Township should place a moratorium on commercial solar development until the Master Plan is amended. Posillico responded that she would discuss with the Township Attorney.

Posillico will draft changes to the current Master Plan specifically regarding alternative energy, and present to the Planning Commission at the September meeting.

#### IX. OPEN MEMBER DISCUSSION FOR ISSUES NOT ON AGENDA

- a. Correspondence  
Posillico noted that she has not received any correspondence for Planning Commission review.
- b. Reports
  - i. Posillico summarized the Zoning Administrator's monthly report to the Township Board. She noted that the Township recently completed a property clean-up at 500 Peters Rd.

Posillico explained that the rezoning of 355 Canada Rd., which was not properly completed in 2019, is going to be heard by the Planning Commission at their September meeting. The Township Attorney will be present to advise the Planning Commission. Due to the current restrictions on indoor gatherings, the meeting will either need to be held virtually or outdoors. The Planning Commission expressed concern that some members of the public may not be able to utilize Zoom for a virtual meeting. However, there is concern that a normal meeting time of 7:00 PM may result in an outdoor meeting conducted in the dark. Helmuth made a motion to move the time of the September 24, 2020 meeting to 6:00 PM. Motion was seconded by Jorgensen, and passed unanimously.

c. Commissioners' Remarks

There was generalized discussion about the state of the roundabout in the Township.

X. PUBLIC COMMENT

There was no further public comment.

XI. ADJOURNMENT

Helmuth made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 8:50 PM. Motion was seconded by Jorgensen, and passed unanimously.

Respectfully Submitted,

Emma Posillico, Zoning Administrator

ADOPTED: SEPTEMBER 24, 2020