

**ROSS TOWNSHIP
PLANNING COMMISSION
MINUTES
January 10, 2017**

CALL TO ORDER/PLEDGE

Chairperson Lauderdale called the special meeting of the Ross Township Planning Commission to order at 3:00 p.m. at the Ross Township Hall.

ROLL CALL

Present: Jim Lauderdale, Chairperson
 Rusty Fry
 Greg Pierce
 Jeff Price
 Jon Scott
 Sherri Snyder

Absent: Victor Ezbenko

Also present: Bert Gale, AGS – Township Zoning Administrator
 Kelly Largent, AGS – Township Zoning Administrator
 Rebecca Harvey – Township Planning Consultant

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

The agenda was reviewed and approved as presented.

PUBLIC COMMENT ON NON-AGENDA ITEMS

No public comment on non-agenda items was offered.

NEW BUSINESS

No 'New Business' was scheduled for consideration.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

1. Watershed Protection Strategies

Chairperson Lauderdale stated that the special Planning Commission meeting was scheduled to allow for discussion and development of the scope for the watershed protection strategy. He referenced the document titled 'Master Plan and Zoning Ordinances addressing Watershed Protection Strategies' dated November 28, 2016 and Chapters 4 & 5 of 'Protecting Michigan's Inland Lakes' as material relevant to the discussion.

Price stated that Chapter 1 of the Ross Township Master Plan provides a strong foundation for watershed protection efforts and can function as the detailed 'scope document' that is desired. He opined that the discussion should instead focus on desired implementation steps.

Scott stated that the Township Board has indicated general support for the 'watershed protection' platform but that communication and buy-in regarding 'next steps' is crucial. It was agreed that the purpose of the meeting was to develop a strategy of 'next steps' and 'action items' and that it should include a strong communication/participation element.

General discussion ensued wherein the following was noted:

- Chapter 4, Protecting Michigan's Inland Lakes recommends the establishment of a waterfront setback requirement; this has been accomplished in Ross Township.
- Chapter 5, Protecting Michigan's Inland Lakes outlines 7 additional options for local protection, some of which have already been implemented in Ross Township.
- Option #1 references ways to strengthen site plan review regulations to improve water resource protection.
- Revising Sections 21.4 and 21.6 (Site Plan Review) would be a simple first step in achieving site designs more responsive to watershed protection objectives.
- Such an effort would not be as technical as establishing specific standards related to groundwater protection, design alternatives, etc. - - which may better serve as a 'next step' in the strategy.

Harvey stated that it is general practice and consistent with sound planning principles to establish site plan content requirements and general review criteria related to water resource protection. She noted that a review of area ordinances would reveal that it is a common approach used to improve site design and can be easy to implement. Harvey advised that application of the site plan review criteria could then allow the Township to build successful approaches into standards over time, if desired.

Planning Commission members agreed that revisions to Section 21.4 - Site Plan Review Content and Section 21.6 B. – Site Plan Review Criteria to include content requirements and criteria related to water resource protection, such as storm water, groundwater, shoreline management, wetlands, soil erosion, and surface water, is an appropriate first step. Harvey was directed to prepare draft text as noted for Planning Commission consideration in January.

Lengthy discussion then ensued regarding the site plan review process and how the suggested standards would impact that process. It was noted that the Zoning Ordinance establishes standards and ‘end result’ criteria that allows design flexibility. Generally, that design should be accomplished by a professional (engineer, architect) and then reviewed by the Township for compliance. Further, it is general practice for the Township to engage the services of a professional in the review of a site plan when it is determined to be warranted. Regarding water resource protection-related design elements, it was noted that engineered features of a large development site (ie. storm water management, erosion control, etc.) would likely require the review of an engineer to determine compliance. It was agreed that the proposed revisions to Sections 21.4 and 21.6 would not alter the Township’s current review practice.

ADJOURN

There being no further business to come before the Commission, the meeting was adjourned at 4:36 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,
Rebecca Harvey, AICP, PCP
Township Planning Consultant