

Final  
**FIANE ROSS TOWNSHIP  
PLANNING COMMISSION  
MINUTES  
August 28, 2023**

CALL TO ORDER/PLEDGE

Chairperson Moore called the regular meeting of the Ross Township Planning Commission to order at 6:00 p.m. at the Ross Township Hall.

ROLL CALL

Present: Chairperson Moore  
Michael Bekes  
Mark Markillie  
Steve Maslen  
~~Pam Sager~~  
Sherri Snyder  
Mary Stage

Absent: **Pam Sager**

Also Present: Bert Gale, AGS – Township Zoning Administrator  
Rebecca Harvey – Township Planning Consultant  
Rob Thall – Township Attorney

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

The agenda was approved as presented.

APPROVAL OF PRIOR MEETING MINUTES

The Commission proceeded with consideration of the **July 24, 2023** regular Planning Commission meeting minutes. Snyder moved to approve the minutes as presented. Stage seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

NEW BUSINESS

1. Gull Lake Water Quality Protection Discussion w/ GLQO

As a follow up to the Planning Commission's Work Plan discussion in July related to education and water quality efforts, Snyder advised that GLQO has

been contacted and invited to attend an upcoming Planning Commission meeting to speak on the topic of waterfront land use 'best practices'. Snyder stated that a representative from GLQO will be available to attend the October meeting.

The Planning Commission agreed to place the GLQO discussion on the October meeting agenda.

## 2. Charleston Township Zoning Ordinance Amendments

Chairperson Moore noted receipt of a September 5, 2023 public hearing notice from Charleston Township regarding proposed amendments to the Zoning Ordinance pertaining to waterfront setback requirements and accessory building/structure location and setback requirements.

## UNFINISHED BUSINESS

Chairperson Moore stated that no Unfinished Business is scheduled for consideration.

## REPORT FROM TOWNSHIP BOARD

Bekes provided a detailed overview of the issues considered and actions taken by the Township Board in August.

## REPORT FROM ZONING BOARD OF APPEALS

Bekes reported on a recent meeting he participated in with the Township Supervisor and a township resident wherein modifications to the Planning Commission's and ZBA's public hearing processes were suggested for improved citizen understanding and participation.

The suggested modifications were summarized as follows:

1 – Commission/Board members should state at the beginning of a public hearing if they have visited the site in question . . . so as to confirm to the public in attendance that the Commission/Board members understand what is being considered.

Attorney Thall reminded Planning Commission members that site visits should not include discussions with the property owner or neighbors in order to preserve due process.

2 – A single 3-minute public comment opportunity does not allow for adequate or back and forth conversation during the public hearing.

Chairperson Moore noted that the 3-minute time limit was only applied during public hearings where there is high public attendance as a way of maintaining order and efficient debate.

Snyder stated that she would not like to see a process that involved Commission/public attendee dialog during public comment. However, she supports the idea of the Planning Commission addressing questions posed during public comment before Commission deliberation begins. Snyder stated that she would like the process to be responsive without impacting the Commission's deliberation efforts.

Harvey noted that some boards institute a public comment portion early in the public hearing (prior to board deliberation) and then again after the board deliberation (and before a motion is made) so that the public can provide initial comment and comment after the matter has been discussed. The Planning Commission expressed interest in this approach.

3 – Assurance that building plans/site plans under consideration by the Commission/Board are available at AGS or the Township office for public viewing.

Gale advised that as a matter of practice building plans/site plans are available at the Township office for viewing shortly after they are received. He explained that the only time there may be a delay in finding submitted plans at the Township office is if application documents are revised and submitted outside of the standard process, such as at a board meeting.

4 – Police attendance at Commission/Board meetings for additional security.

No Planning Commission response was offered.

5 – Code enforcement should not rely on complaints by neighbors, which results in neighborhood friction. Can enforcement procedures practiced in other communities be considered?

No Planning Commission response was offered.

6 – Review the repair vs. rebuild approach applied to improvements to nonconforming buildings/structures, specifically docks.

No Planning Commission response was offered.

Bekes requested that the Planning Commission add to an upcoming agenda a discussion of the outlined suggestions. It was agreed that the requested discussion would be scheduled for the September meeting.

## PUBLIC COMMENT

Connie Lavender expressed support for adding a second opportunity for public comment during public hearings. She noted that it would be appreciated by the public in attendance.

## MEMBERS, CONSULTANTS, ADVISORS

No member/staff comments were offered.

## ADJOURN

There being no further business to come before the Commission, the meeting was adjourned at 7:01 p.m.

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