

Laketon Township Planning Commission
July 12, 2023 Regular Meeting & Public Hearing Minutes – APPROVED 8/9/23

CALL TO ORDER: Chairperson Bob Marine called the meeting to order at 6:00 pm

ROLL CALL:

- Present: Paul Hoppa, Eric Anderson, Bob Marine, June Earhart, Dave Mieras and Chris Simpson.
- Absent: Suzanne Hayes, w/notice.
- Also present: Zoning Administrator Heidi Tice, Recording Secretary Veronica West and Twp. Supervisor Kim Arter

APPROVAL OF AGENDA: June Earhart moved to approve the agenda as presented. Paul Hoppa supported the motion and the motion carried by voice vote.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES: Dave Mieras moved to approve the minutes of 06/14/2023 as presented. June Earhart supported the motion. The motion carried by voice vote.

PUBLIC COMMENTS ON AGENDA ITEMS ONLY: **NONE**

CORRESPONDENCE:

- **Monthly Permit Report:** ZA H. Tice commented on the increasing permit activity, noting 5 new dwelling units this month, and an increase in the number of deck permits.
- **Letter to State Building Code Officials** – ZA H. Tice commented that the letter has been sent to the State, specifically Keith Lambert of the Bureau of Construction Codes/Licensing and Compliance Division. She also noted she submitted it via email on the State's website where they take in information and complaints for consideration in legislation once each year.

NEW BUSINESS:

- **Temporary Structures** – ZA H. Tice explained that a ticket for a temporary structure was dismissed by the courts because the zoning ordinance has a definition of a temporary structure, but no regulations within the ordinance regarding temporary structures. She presented some basic language that could go in Section 3.18 Accessory Buildings and Uses. The language mirrored the definition in that it would allow them for up to 6 months per year and require a zoning compliance permit. Eric Anderson commented on the zoning compliance permit regarding price and duration – if it would be a one time permit or required to get a new permit each year when they wanted to put up a temporary structure, which could cause heavy administration workloads. Also discussed other potential permit time frames, perhaps 5 years before reapplication but still needing to take them down after 6 months each year. Paul Hoppa commented that he feels it would be best to require a new permit each and every year someone wants to put up a temporary style structure because he is concerned about the township encouraging these type of structures rather than an actual permanent shed, garage or pole barn. Paul Hoppa added he doesn't feel long term repeated use meets the definition already in the ordinance, which says they can be permitted for periods of time, up to 6 months per year, during construction or special events. Discussed the issues with these structures becoming torn up by wind or dilapidated by heavy snow or just wearing out and becoming eyesores, it was also mentioned that cost for a typical shed or accessory building is sometimes cost prohibitive whereas the temporary tarp structures are much more cost effective for some people. Discussed complaints regarding these types of structures and the process of enforcement. Discussed needing this language in the ordinance to enforce on the problem ones that are dilapidated. Bob Marine commented understanding that but not wanting to make it too costly or difficult for those that follow the rules, just a way to get rid of the ones in poor condition. Also discussed if the ones in poor condition can be addressed under the Anti-Blight Ordinance, consensus was that it could but regulations in the zoning ordinance would still be needed to limit how long they can be up. ZA H. Tice to ask the township attorney about this. Discussion of a form to apply for a temporary structure permit was also discussed, perhaps the form could require what the temporary structure is to be used for and for how long. Chris Simpson commented on having a temporary structure on his property for 2 years to store his boat until his neighbor complained and the township made him take it down, noting that it was still in good condition and he felt it looked better than his boat in his yard with a tarp on it, which is allowed. Discussion also included instances where they are used to house blight, where there are more than the allowable number of accessory buildings etc. ZA H. Tice asked the PC members to think on this issue and be prepared for

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more discussion of what regulations would be best for this issue at the next meeting. No action taken at this time.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS:

- **Park & Rec Plan** – ZA H. Tice reported that the public surveys are coming in and being tallied by staff, the township paid for the survey monkey online platform for 30 days for people to be able to do the survey online if they wanted to. She commented she will have the survey results at the August 20203 meeting. She also noted that the Township has been investigating costs for a new sprinkling system at the park and the estimates are coming in around \$35,000 so that will be added to the Park & Rec Capital Improvement Plan for 2024, with their approval. Consensus of the group was fine with adding that item. It was also noted she drove around the township and got updated pictures of the parks and amenities. No action taken.
- **Solar Ordinance** – ZA H. Tice explained the Township Board sent this ordinance back due to some wording issues. She explained that the wording, suggested by the Township Attorney, regarding the building code and all appendages was located in 3 places in the ordinance and it was only corrected in one place. She further explained that this is important because the wording it replaced referred to electrical codes that aren't adopted by the Township, instead the Township adopts the Michigan Building Code and all its appendages, which include the electrical, mechanical and plumbing codes. Dave Mieras moved to approve the language changes and recommend that the Township Board approve the Solar Ordinance with these changes. Paul Hoppa supported the motion. The motion carried by voice vote.

PUBLIC COMMENTS:

- **Kim Arter, Township Supervisor:** Kim thanked the PC for their work thus far on the Park and Rec Plan and keeping to the timeline to get the plan done on time in order for the Township to be eligible to apply for grants if and when they become available. She updated the PC on the following topics:
 - **SPARK Grant** – she informed the PC the Twp Board has applied for the \$1 million dollar Spark grant to connect our current bike path to the Berry Junction Trail, stating the state favors projects that serve as regional amenities. It was noted the connection of the Laketon Township bile path to the Berry Junction Trail is a \$1.4 million dollar project and the Township would use its ARPA funds for the \$400,000 match.
 - **Scenic Drive Initiative** – she informed the PC she will be meeting with Fles & Vandenbrink engineering firm regarding this joint project with Fruitland Township and the road commission to try to get the Scenic Dr widened with paved shoulders for bikes and pedestrians due to the safety concerns. She added the Rep. John Molenaar was recently in town and a group of people from Lansing and the townships took a trolley tour to show them the concerns with bikers and walkers on Scenic Dr. She also added there is more grant and state funding available for off road bike trails that paved shoulder trails but that includes getting easements from property owners which is often a very difficult task. In addition, she noted that Fles and Vandenbrink will review our Parks and Rec Plan draft to help with language that is needed in grants. There were comments from the PC on this project being much needed for public safety. There were also comments on the cleaning of the bike trail in Laketon Township by the local Northside Lions Club and Paul Hoppa, a member of that group, noted they are ready with several teams to make sure the trail stays clean.
 - **Bike Trail Bridge** – she noted the township has hired a company to come in to clean and power wash the bike trail bridge on Dykstra Rd. as well as having in house maintenance staff replace some boards on the railing.
 - **Pickleball** – she commented the township would keep working on pickleball courts, noting that the old tennis courts/basketball courts at Mullally are in rough shape and should probably be removed.
- **PC Members Questions for Kim Arter:** Dave Mieras asked about the Michigan Dept. of Environment, Great Lakes and Energy requirements for erosion control sandbags on Lake Michigan being removed and about short term rentals in Laketon. ZA H. Tice stated that she has seen EGLE patrolling the shoreline south of here and expects they will be doing all of the shoreline to make sure people comply with their requirements. Supervisor Arter noted that the ordinance hasn't changed and short term rentals are still not permitted, but that there are some legal non-conforming cottages/cabins that exist and have existed prior to the ordinance that continue to exist and operate. It was also noted that one such property was recently sold to new owners, who put up a new sign, but the use can continue under the new ownership.

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BOARD REPORTS:

- **Board of Trustees – Eric Anderson** – No report, covered under public comment by Supervisor Kim Arter.
- **Zoning Board of Appeals – Suzanne Hayes** - No activity to report.

ADJOURNMENT:

- Eric Anderson moved to adjourn. June Earhart supported the motion. The motion carried and the adjournment occurred at 7:03 pm.

Respectfully Submitted:

Veronica West
Recording Secretary