

Planning Commission
Vergennes Township
February 6, 2017

The meeting was called to order at 7pm by vice-chairperson, Penny Rosema.

Roll Call – Gillett, Rosema, Makuski, and Rogers were present. Jernberg was absent.

A motion was made to approve the minutes from the meeting of October 10, 2016 as presented. Supported by Gillett. Motion passed.

Approval or Changes to the Agenda – Rogers added discussion regarding joint meeting from October to agenda. Gillette made motion to accept agenda with addition of joint meeting discussion; Makuski supports. Motion passed.

1. Election of officers

After some discussion about duties of Secretary, Officers were elected as follows: Scott Jernberg will remain Chairperson, Penny Rosema will remain Vice-chairperson and Bob Rogers will become Secretary.

2. Review New Ordinance Amendments

Flat River District – proposed changes are to clarify certain portions of ordinance and to add in language to match the State Natural Rivers Ordinance. The definition of “bluff” was changed to combine our current definition and the one by the State.

Bluff: Means a bank that rises at a slope of 33 degrees or greater from within 10 feet of the river’s edge. The crest of the bluff is the first riverward facing area (approximately parallel to the river) that breaks to a slope of less than 18 degrees for a distance away from the river of at least 25 feet. If an existing flat area begins at the water’s edge before rising into the bank, the bluff setback does not apply.

The balance of the ordinance was reviewed. Change the word “Natural” under the definition of Structure to “Flat” River District. Change the width of boardwalks to 3’ instead of the 4’ we have. Also change length of docks along water’s edge from 16’ to 12’ to match the State guidelines. This would apply to new boardwalks and docks only. Anything already in place would be allowed to remain.

Changes proposed were approved by Commission.

Swimming Pool Ordinance – The State Building Code changed to allow for traditional fencing and gates or to install motorized covers on in-ground pools. The language was approved by our Building Official, Mark Fleet. Bob Rogers questioned section B & C, suggesting the two items be combined since the wording was similar and both items could be combined into one sentence. It was agreed to change B & C to one item as worded below.

Fencing, gates, safety covers, pool decks, and door alarm systems shall comply with the State Building Code.

Lake Accessory Buildings – The Township Board is asking for an allowance on lake lots of one accessory building without a home. Grattan Township does allow them with certain setbacks. Our current accessory building ordinance allows for a building up to 200 square feet. Grattan allows one at 150 square feet. After some discussion, allowing one at up to 200 square feet keeps it in line with our current accessory building ordinance. We will also keep the current setbacks, 5’ from side lot line, 35’ from street right of way and 30 feet from the high water mark. Grattan Township has larger setbacks, but their lots are larger to accommodate them.

Changes were approved by Commission.

Fairground Commercial Recreation Ordinance – this is a completely new addition to the ordinance. It would be a special exception use requiring approval from the Township Board and/or Planning Commission, and a Public Hearing. This is not in our current Master Plan.

There was concern about parking setbacks in Section C.20.d. Members felt the setback of the parking areas should be at least 50’ instead of 25’ from any road right of way. There should also be side and rear setbacks added with consideration of buffering via landscaping or other screening.

Under C.20.f.4, lighting will follow the commercial lighting ordinance. Remove “low pressure sodium or similar fixtures” from language. It should allow for new technology without having to amend the ordinance each time.

In paragraph 5, elevated light fixtures should not exceed 20 feet in height. What is a common height for those fixtures?

Have Williams and Works review to determine if an environmental impact study should be required since there is animal waste involved and it is close to a stream/creek.

Gillett made a motion to set a public hearing on March 6, 2017 to go over the Flat River District, Swimming Pool, and Lake District accessory building ordinances. Rogers supports. Motion passed.

3. Review Letter and Accessory Building Ordinance

Several neighbors near the intersection of Parnell and Bennett wrote a letter asking that the Township review our ordinance regarding accessory buildings, specifically for setbacks and allowing them in front yards. After some discussion among the members, it was decided that the ordinance was fine as written and no changes needed to be made. Gillett motioned to keep Accessory Building Ordinance as written, Makuski supports. Motion passed.

4. Review Noise Ordinance Section on Target Shooting

The members went over a letter written by Jim Jaworowicz regarding the noise ordinance specific to target shooting. He had suggestions for re-wording the ordinance. There was discussion to limit target practice to either RA or R1 districts. Also would change wording in “h”. Target Practice to include Excessive noise and correcting a spelling error, there was a motion to set the changes for a public hearing on March 6, 2017. That motion was withdrawn and will instead accept public input during that meeting. Any further changes to the ordinance will be revisited at the next Planning Commission meeting on May 1. Jeanne Vandersloot will see what Williams and Works suggests as well.

5. Plan for Master Plan 5 Year Review

Typically both the Planning Commission and Township Board have a joint meeting to go over Master Plan one section at a time. The majority of the plan will not change. The Planning Commission owns the Master Plan and has the final say on it. Each member should review the current plan by May 1. It was suggested that Williams and Works send a memo to the Commission as a guideline for what they should be looking for or specifics to possibly change. Vandersloot will get an estimate on what it would cost to have them do that. The goal is to have the 5 year plan ready to make a decision on if updating by the August meeting.

6. October Joint PC Meeting with Lowell and Lowell Township

Points of discussion at the joint meeting were on the different housing developments going in Vergennes and Lowell Township near their respective borders. Also, with home businesses, how many employees are allowed? Some neighbors are concerned with the number of vehicles in and out of the business each day. Lowell Township is the next host. Date to be determined.

General Public Comment Time

Sandra Miles, new resident last year, sat in for entire meeting. She is concerned about fall zone of cell tower monopoles. Why would we allow a lesser fall zone? Maybe it should be in the ordinance that a cell tower has to be on a lot with a minimum acreage. She would like moratorium put on any new cell towers, including the Beckwith site, until our current ordinance is changed. She is also very interested in the ordinance changes and proposals discussed tonight.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:23pm by Gillett, supported by Rogers.

The next regular scheduled meeting is March 6, 2017.