

Vergennes Township Planning Commission
October 7, 2013

The meeting was called to order at 8:06 pm.

Roll Call – Jernberg, Mastrovito, Post, and Rasch were present. Baird was absent.

There was a motion by Post to approve the August 26, 2013 minutes. Mastrovito seconded. Motion passed.

Agenda changes and approval – Motion to approve the agenda as written.
Motion passed.

Discuss Future Amendments to Zoning Ordinance

Jeanne Vandersloot – Looked up other ordinances regarding internet towers. There is not much written in Michigan. She found some from other areas (3) and printed a few excerpts of the wording. Discussed current towers in area and the need for more of them. Ryan Peel tried to put a small one at Headwaters. It failed to go through due to setbacks and adjacent property would not agree to let trees come down for clearance. The time to apply through the cell tower ordinance takes so much time and is not all that applicable to internet towers.

Jernberg – knows there are kits or do it yourself towers available on the market.

The Commission was given a copy of the Township Law E-Letter outlining some of the FCC Over-the-Air Reception Devices (OTARD) rules. We need to take this in consideration in creating a new tower ordinance. In looking over the rule, it sounds like Township can state “in rear yard only” but if reception is impossible or substantially degraded, the property owner can move it to where it does work. How much can we really regulate?

The law is set up to cover receiving towers/antennas only. While internet goes both ways, it is considered receiving.

Jernberg suggested having Williams and Works read and interpret the law and give us their opinion. Vandersloot indicated they were asked about it and they indicated that transmitting towers could be regulated. They had not written any ordinances to date on internet towers.

Concern about not being able to regulate internet towers from local level is mainly about the size. For other towers there is a fall zone and it has to be placed so as to not fall on a neighbor’s property. If anyone can install the tower, are there going to be towers popping up all over the horizon and 120’ tall?

The Township Board would like to see new language in ordinance to separate internet towers from other towers. Jernberg suggested changing words to “Cell and Transmitting Towers” to take care of definition. It could require resident to come to Board to discuss their plans so the Township at least knows what is going on. Language could be tweaked as it goes along based on feedback from residents.

There are still a lot of questions about law and more research needs to be done on the part of the Planning Commission. There are no scheduled meetings the rest of the year. The Commission is willing to meet in November if Vandersloot can do more research on the law and some sample language. She will follow up and hopefully set something up in November.

Discuss Joint planning Commission Meeting

Duane Rasch, Mike Mastrovito and Jeanne Vandersloot represented Vergennes Township at the joint planning commission meeting.

Gas station status- probably won't start construction until spring, 2014. They do not have a restaurant picked out but know Subway is not desired. J & H has been working on another project in Byron Township and needs to finish that work before beginning this job.

A wrestling facility is planned east of Lowell at the former TJ's bar/restaurant. It would be a house wrestling club and possibly future housing for out of town teams.

Lowell Township is discussing vacant land between Heidi's Farm stand and gas station. They are trying to determine what kind of growth they want out there. There was some talk of a hotel/motel but the issue is water/sewer and who would provide those services.

Impact Church- should probably have had a joint meeting with city so both parties were on same page. It may have saved some time and clarified a few points for city.

Backyard animals – the City of Lowell is wondering what other ordinances allow with regard to chickens, etc. It has become an issue in the city in that many residents want them.

Bridge on Alden Nash SE over I-96 is set to be replaced by MDOT. There will be a community meeting in November to outline plans and alternate routes during construction.

Mari Stone and Pinky McPherson discussed community vision. Booklets were given to attendees for reference and to understand what residents think is important in future. Part of the goal is to get or keep younger 20 – 30 year olds in the area. A micro-brewery was suggested.

O'Reilly's Auto Store was going to be coming to town, building next to Rite-Aid. That plan has been postponed for now.

Unity School north of the Library in Lowell has been bought. There are talks in the works and information is confidential until it is finalized. The building has been for sale for a while and may have finally sold because of the amphitheater rebuild.

Set 2014 Meeting Schedule

Planning Commission is required to have four meetings per year. Since there are possible changes to ordinances needed before spring building begins, January 6 will be first meeting.

Schedule for 2014 is: January 6, May 5, July 7 and October 6.
Other times may be scheduled on an as-needed basis.

Other Business

None

Meeting adjourned 8:47pm.

Next scheduled meeting is January 6, 2014.