

HILLSDALE COUNTY PLANNING COMMISSION

Minutes

The **Hillsdale County Planning Commission** convened in the Intermediate School District Conference Room, 310 W. Bacon Street, Hillsdale, Michigan, on Monday, April 20, 2009.

Members present: Ned Bever, Fred Fowler, Deb Sikorski, Julie Kanouse, Christie Cook (filling in for Sarah Fronczak), Ken Lautzenheiser, Brad Densmore, Charlene Page

Others present: Jasneet Sharma, Deb Coffing, Don Figiel, Kim Thomas, Lisa Bernath, Peter Tochman, John Shepherd, David Raley, William Bishop

Call to Order: Ned Bever called the meeting to order at 1:33 p.m.

Approval of Minutes: The Minutes of March 16, 2009 were amended under "Additional Business" by changing the word *eliminate* to *address*. *K. Lautzenheiser moved to approve the amended Minutes of March 16, 2009. D. Sikorski supported. Motion unanimously carried.*

Approval of Agenda: *The agenda was amended to add "Robert Henthorne's resignation" and discussion on the "New Economy Seminar". D. Sikorski moved to adopt the amended agenda. B. Densmore supported. Motion unanimously supported.*

Public Comment: *John Shepherd, Somerset Twp., spoke about the Somerset Twp. Rezoning issue on the agenda. He felt let down by the community and talked about the issue of the Meckley's using the property for a gravel mine. William Bishop, Reading Twp., asked about the Recording Secretary item on the agenda. David Raley, Somerset Twp., wanted to know if the letter submitted by his attorney was reviewed by all of the members. Ken Lautzenheiser introduced representatives from the Equalization Dept. – Lisa Bernath and Kim Thomas and stated that they will possibly be recording the minutes for the Planning Commission.*

Agenda Items: Before the PA-116's were reviewed, B. Densmore said he thought the social security numbers on the forms should be blocked out by the County Clerk before they get to the Planning Commission members.

A Woodbridge Twp. PA-116 enrollment (Miller) was reviewed. A PA-116 on the applicant's property was found to be consistent with the County's Master Plan. *C. Cook moved to recommend approval. D. Sikorski supported. Motion unanimously approved.*

A Ransom Twp. PA-116 enrollment (Oleszkowicz, Trust) was reviewed. A PA-116 on the applicant's property was found to be consistent with the County's Master Plan. *C. Cook moved to recommend approval. D. Sikorski supported. Motion unanimously approved.*

There were **seven Somerset Township Rezoning Requests for the Meckley's property** reviewed by the Planning Commission. J. Sharma reviewed the findings of fact with planning commission members:

1. Are there substantial reasons why the property could not be used as is?

The property was rezoned to RNF-1 in 2002, which allows for low density residential, but farming has continued on the parcels unabated even after the rezoning. As per the Right to Farm, if the applicant is involved in commercial farming activity, has been farming before the rezoning and has continued even after that, there is no reason they could not continue farming the land under the RNF-1 zone. The applicant has indicated (as per the Township minutes) that they are only interested in farming the land – why then are they seeking rezoning to Ag-1

when as per the Right to Farm Act they could continue their farming operation under the present zoning designation?

2. Is a zone supported by the adopted master plan and has there been a change of conditions in the area supporting the proposed rezoning?

The Somerset Township Master Plan shows this area as future residential and even rezoned the land in 2002 to match the future land use plan. The Hillsdale County Master Plan also shows the applicant's property and surrounding area as apt for future low density residential. Somerset Township, before the housing bust was one of the fastest growing communities in Hillsdale County and it is expected to once again be the community that new growth will move into mainly due to its proximity to Jackson and the freeway. The property under consideration has two subdivisions on its east and west. Therefore, it would be prudent to cluster new development in and around already developed areas and leave the outer fringes of the township as agricultural land.

Other findings – there have been no complaints from the neighbors about the current impacts of farming activities from the applicants property.

The area also has a number of lakes and to protect the quality of water and the impact of land use on the watershed, new development should be concentrated around present development.

K. Lautzenheiser moved to keep the 7 parcels (formerly Flavor Fruit Farms) as RNF-1, as they were recommended to be converted to by the Hillsdale County Planning Commission in 2002. C. Page supported. 7-Yes, 1-No, motion carried.

The **Amboy Wastewater Project Grant Application** was reviewed and the members concluded that this project is consistent with the Hillsdale County Land Use Plan. A letter is to be sent to Amboy Township with comments from the County Planning Commission. The project is estimated to start in October. *D. Sikorski moved to draft a letter of support for the Amboy Wastewater Project Grant. K. Lautzenheiser supported. Motion unanimously carried.*

A letter from RESCOM Environmental Corp. re: **telecommunications tower facility** proposed to be constructed in **Camden Township**. J. Sharma stated that State requirements have to be met. Camden Twp. does not have a Zoning Ordinance or Land Use Plan and Hillsdale County does not have jurisdiction over this. K. Lautzenheiser asked if this tower could be used for Public Safety. He volunteered to follow-up on this and review it with the Board of Commissioners before sending a letter to RESCOM.

The **Draft County Planning Commission Ordinance** was reviewed, comparing it with comments from Prosecutor Brady's letter dated March 10, 2009. *C. Page moved to eliminate paragraph 102A.2 from the ordinance. D. Sikorski supported. Motion unanimously carried.*

There was much discussion on paragraph 102.C reference one commissioner representative on the County Planning Commission Board vs. two commissioners. B. Densmore suggested taking this paragraph to the Commissioners to get their opinion. Jasneet also stated that she had further amended the ordinance by adding the requirement that no member of the County Planning Commission should hold any elected office or employment position with Hillsdale County Government (except the County Commissioners appointed to the Planning Commission).

D. Sikorski moved to recommend that this draft Ordinance be presented to the Board of Commissioners with the exception of 102.A.2. C. Cook supported. Motion unanimously carried.

J. Sharma stated that she had added additional liaisons in paragraph 103 to give more flexibility to the commission. J. Sharma also added that the county commissioners need to be aware of

reviewing proposed infrastructure physical improvements in the government as stated in #9. This must take place. County commissioners *can* exempt this from going to the County Planning Commission.

R. Henthorne, education representative, of the Planning Commission resigned. *K. Lautzenheiser moved to accept R. Henthorne's resignation with regret. F. Fowler supported. Motion unanimously supported.* Peter Beck was recommended by D. Sikorski to fill this position.

K. Lautzenheiser discussed the "Recording Secretary" position. A formal letter will be sent to Nick Wheeler, Equalization Department on taking over this position.

N. Bever presented *PA-116 enrollment application for Joseph Graber, Camden Twp., 40 acres.* *J. Kanouse moved to recommend approval. C. Cook supported. Motion unanimously approved.*

Public Comment: *David Raley* asked for a copy of the minutes. *John Shepherd* thanked the County Planning Commission. *Peter Tackman* would like a copy of the court case referred to in Leelanau County.

Adjournment: The meeting was adjourned at 3:30 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Ned Bever, Chair

Recorded by: Deb Coffing, Executive Secretary, Board of Commissioners