

**APPROVED
EMPIRE TOWNSHIP PLANNING COMMISSION
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES**

March 21, 2023

The Empire Township Planning Commission held a regular meeting on Tuesday, March 21, 2023. The meeting was held at the Empire Township Offices.

CALL TO ORDER: Duane Shugart, Chair, called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

ROLL CALL:

Members Present: Dale DeJager, Duane Shugart, Micah Deegan, Larry Krawczak

Members Absent: Dick Figura

Staff Present: Dana Boomer, Tim Cypher (present remotely)

Deegan moved, Krawczak seconded to excuse Dick Figura from the meeting. All in favor, motion carried.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA: The PC briefly discussed the agenda. **Motion by Deegan, second by Krawczak to approve the agenda as presented. All in favor, motion carried.**

ANY CONFLICT OF INTEREST – None

APPROVAL OF MINUTES: The PC briefly discussed the minutes of February 21, 2023. **Motion by Deegan, second by DeJager to approve the February 21, 2023 Special Meeting Minutes as presented. All in favor, motion carried.**

COMMUNICATIONS: None

PUBLIC COMMENT: None

ZONING ADMINISTRATOR'S REPORT: Cypher had previously distributed his monthly reports for February 2023. Cypher reported that the Glen Lake Manor is hoping to have a complete application in place by mid-April, to be on the May agenda. The PC discussed the application process and timeline; there may be enough changes in the application to make it advisable to hold a second public hearing. Cypher received an initial communication from Doug Mansfield regarding a potential amendment to the Empire Township Zoning Ordinance – Cypher does not have a substantial amount of detail on the proposal at this time, but it would likely involve commercial storage for septage waste in the agricultural district. If this proposal is finalized and brought to the PC, it could take a substantial amount of focus from the Planning Commission. The PC and Cypher discussed this issue and potential actions that could be taken. **Motion by Deegan, second by DeJager to acknowledge receipt of the February 2023 reports. All in favor, motion carried.**

OLD BUSINESS:

- **Master Plan Review** – Boomer had distributed a final draft of the Master Plan by email – she was still waiting on two maps and one data piece from the county. The county has stated they should have these details by the end of the week or early next week. Deegan asked to discuss wording in the Master Plan discussing the location of new municipal buildings. The PC

discussed adding an additional objective to the Utilities and Services section regarding additional municipal services and buildings. DeJager and Krawczak thinks that language regarding “consistent with state policies” should be added to the objective, because state policy holds that townships do not have to follow their own Zoning Ordinances. Deegan and Shugart disagree, because the Master Plan as a whole is consistent with state policies and law. It was determined to add an objective “Consistent with legal precedent, review and explore the needs for additional municipal services and municipal buildings in appropriate locations in the township.” – and the PC asked for the Township Board’s opinion on the matter. The PC discussed the timing for the Master Plan, and what they were asking the Township Board to approve at their upcoming meeting.

Deegan moved to finalize the Master Plan, and then forward the document to the Township Board for their approval for distribution. Shugart seconded. DeJager asked if that meant that the Township Board would not see the whole document for approval until after the discussion with the Township Board regarding the objective language. The PC discussed extensively. It was determined that the language as proposed by DeJager would be inserted and Deegan would bring it up as a specific discussion point at the Township Board meeting. **Deegan restated his motion to forward the document to the Township Board, as long as document can be sent with the added maps and acreage data points at least two weeks prior to the Board meeting. DeJager seconded. All in favor, motion carried.**

The PC briefly discussed the timeline and the format for a public hearing. There were no further changes or questions regarding the Master Plan red-line version. If the Master Plan is able to be finalized at least two week’s prior to the Township Board meeting on April 11, it will be sent to the Township Board with a request for their approval to distribute. It was noted that this is not an approval of the Plan as a whole, but merely allows the Planning Commission to distribute the document to the public and other municipal entities and hold a public hearing. Depending on the response of the board at their April meeting, the PC will discuss in April whether to hold a public hearing on the Master Plan in May.

After a public hearing is held, the PC will need to send the document to the County Planning Commission for review, after which it will come back to the Planning Commission and then be sent to the Township Board for final approval. At any time in this process, changes can be made to the Plan, although major changes may necessitate a second public hearing.

NEW BUSINESS:

A. Pleasure of the Board – None

PUBLIC COMMENT: None

BOARD COMMENT: The PC briefly discussed public safety issues in the township, including the M-72/Benzonia Trail intersection, recent fires, the availability of water supplies for firefighting, and the ability for fire and EMS vehicles to access properties in various areas of the township.

ADJOURNMENT: **Motion** by DeJager to adjourn at 8:50 pm. With no objection, Shugart adjourned the meeting.

Respectfully Submitted,

Dana Boomer

Recording Secretary