

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

September 17, 2024

The Empire Township Planning Commission held a regular meeting on Tuesday, September 17, 2024. The meeting was held at the Empire Township Hall.

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

ROLL CALL:

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

Members Absent: None

Staff Present: Dana Boomer, Recording Secretary; Tim Cypher, Zoning Administrator

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 the June 18, 2024 regular meeting, and the special meetings of June 25, July 18, and August 22, 2024. **Motion by Deegan, second by Petersen to approve the June 18, 2024 Regular Meeting Minutes and the June 25, July 18, and August 22, 2024 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 June through August 2024. He summarized the ZA business for the month. **Motion by Deegan, second by Krawczak to acknowledge receipt of the June through August 2024 written reports. All in favor, motion carried.**

OLD BUSINESS

- **Sign Ordinance** – The PC extensively discussed the draft sign ordinance, originally developed and discussed in May 2024; an updated draft had been distributed to the PC members prior to the meeting. The PC discussed grandfathered signs and previous discussion on the topic. The main outstanding issue from the May discussion was the allowable size of signs. Deegan asked the Township Board for input, but did not receive any substantial comments. Surveys of existing signs in the township by members of the PC determined that most residential existing residential signage was larger than two square feet. The PC felt that it would be appropriate for any parcel to be allowed one permanent sign of up to nine square feet without a permit; however, the square footage of this sign should be included in calculations of total sign square footage for a parcel. It was added that “Each parcel may have one sign between two (2) square feet and nine (9) square feet without a permit. However, the sign area of these signs shall be considered when determining the total allowable sign area for the parcel.”

The PC then moved to an extensive discussion of political signs and other temporary signs, and the implications of court decisions on these matters that require content neutrality and implications of freedom of speech arguments. MDOT regulates signs in the right-of-way on state highways and the LCRC regulates signs in the right-of-way on other roadways. There was discussion regarding whether temporary signs should be or were allowed to be used in calculations of the allowable square footage of signs on a property. There was discussion regarding whether there could be or should be regulations with regard to how far before and after an event a temporary sign should be allowed to be placed. It was added that “Event signs must be removed within ten (10) days of the event.”

The PC would like to have an attorney review of the document, specifically with regard to what is allowed for regulation of temporary signs. There was discussion regarding whether there is interest in the township of the enforcement of temporary signs, as the more onerous the regulation of temporary signs, the more enforcement will be needed. Boomer will forward the amended draft ordinance to Figura for review and then the draft will be returned to the PC.

- **Zoning Ordinance Review** – The PC determined that they will try to finish the initial review of the Zoning Ordinance through Chapter 12 at the October meeting, and then continue with more involved discussion items if time allows. Boomer will try to get a draft wind energy ordinance from MTA or MML.

NEW BUSINESS

- **Pleasure of the Board**

PUBLIC COMMENT: None

BOARD COMMENT: None

ADJOURNMENT: **Motion** by Krawczak to adjourn at 8:35 pm, Petersen seconded. With no objection, Shugart adjourned the meeting.

Respectfully Submitted,

Dana Boomer
Recording Secretary