

Clearwater Township
Planning Commission
Regular Meeting of March 2, 2020
As approved July 6, 2020

Call to Order, Pledge of Allegiance:

Chair Backers called the meeting to order at 7:04 p.m., and opened with the Pledge of Allegiance.

Roll Call of Members and Recognition of Visitors:

Commissioners present: Backers, Cassasa, Fields, Von See.

Commissioner excused absent: Moore.

Township officials: Zoning Administrator Parzych, Supervisor Gaylord

Public: Jim Leffew, Carol Backers

Approval of Agenda:

MOTION by Von See, second by Casassa, to accept the agenda as presented. Motion carried.

Call for Disclosure of Conflicts of Interests:

Chair calls for commissioners to disclose any real or potential conflicts of interests. All declared no conflicts of interests.

Approval of Minutes:

MOTION by Casassa, second by Von See, to accept the minutes of February 3, 2020, as presented. Motion carried.

Public Comment for Matters Not on the Agenda:

There was none.

Commissioner Comment for Matters Not on the Agenda:

There was none.

Correspondence:

- 1) The Chair of the Kankaska County Planning Commission, having an advisory capacity in the matter, has presented a report to the Clearwater Township Board, expressing his concerns regarding the proposed rezoning of a two-acre portion of parcel 40-004-021-014-00 (at 6323 Rapid City Road, belonging to Jason Morrison), from Recreational to Village Commercial, and advised against that rezoning. There was discussion about whether to address the concerns raised by the County Planning Commission Chair, given the advisory nature of his commission's function and the likelihood that he may be unaware of some of the conditions that Clearwater Township has to take into consideration. After discussion, the following motion was made:

MOTION by Casassa, second by Backers, to address the concerns expressed by the Chair of the County Planning Commission by drafting a letter for the Township Board to consider for action in response to the County. Motion carried 3-1.

- 2) The legal counsel for the Village of Kalkaska sent a letter advising of their scheduled public hearing on an amendment to the Village Master Plan, to be held Thursday, March 5, 2020 at 6:00 p.m. at the Kalkaska Village Hall, 200 Hyde Street, in Kalkaska.

Unfinished Business:

Addressing the issue of long narrow “bowling alley” properties along Valley Road – At present, these properties are almost all in the Recreational zoning district. Many of them are not legally sellable as they stand because they exceed the state-mandated maximum of a 4:1 dimensional ratio. They are at least five acres in size, which puts them out of reach economically for many potential new buyers. During discussion, we examined many different concepts, including a possible new Village Residential-2 district, with specific rules to guard against creating any land-locked parcels. We concluded that the most practical solution was to extend the R-1 district along Valley Road, north to Rapid River (as it is along Aarwood Road), from the eastern edge of the R-2 district in Section 15 to the eastern edge of Section 14. This will require amending the boundaries of the R-1 and Rec districts. Commissioners Casassa and Fields will draft the proposed amendment language.

The need for additional commercial space in the township – The existing uses of the land along Rapid City Road, north of Plum Valley Road to the County Line, are largely commercial, although the zoning is Residential. Ideas for rezoning the area have been brought to the township’s residents three times in the past twenty years, but have been defeated. Yet, the area continues to be commercial in nature and appearance. Discussion resulted in the understanding that it will be necessary to address this area again, as well as the area to the south of the village proper in order to provide growth potential for the township. Because our water table becomes more environmentally sensitive the nearer we approach Torch Lake, the commercial zoning of the area will require careful restrictions and diligence in carrying out site plan reviews.

Further discussion led to the conclusion that the two commercial zones should be named Commercial and Village Commercial, with no more “Light Industry.” The original reason for the “Light Industry” nomenclature was historically associated with a proposed piano manufacturing enterprise that never came to fruition. It is not the intention of this township to ever engage in true manufacturing industry – we are essentially a service community. We will carefully review the current permitted used in the Commercial-Light Industry zone to determine what uses will continue in the Commercial zone and what will be eliminated.

Report of Planning Commission Chair:

Chair Backers – gave his comments to address the concerns of the Kalkaska County Planning Commission, earlier in the meeting.

Report of Township Representative:

Supervisor Gaylord – reported on items of primary concern for the Planning Commission to address in the coming months.

- 1) Pole barn proliferation in the township is presenting a negative visual appearance across the township. Some zoning rules need to be put in place to correct this problem. One idea to consider would be to require a dwelling to be in place on the property (or at least a plan for a dwelling), before a pole barn can be built.
- 2) Tiny houses are of interest to many. Perhaps a particular district could be reserved for tiny houses, or the minimum dwelling space requirements in the zoning ordinance could be modified, or tiny houses could be by special use permit only, with specific design restrictions to assure adequate dwelling space and access by emergency vehicles.
- 3) Marijuana is coming and the township needs to get up to speed on it. Supervisor Gaylord pointed out that we know 60% of the township voted in support of the marijuana ballot initiatives. It is important for us to work with Attorney Bryan Graham to craft an appropriate ordinance to regulate marijuana facilities within our township.

Report of ZBA Representative:

Commissioner Casassa- the next ZBA meeting will be April 13, 2020.

Report of Zoning Administrator:

Zoning Administrator Parzych – distributed his report for February 2020, which report is hereby incorporated into the record by reference, and a copy of which is attached to the permanent copy of these minutes as [Att A].

New Business

There was no additional new business.

Closing Public Comment:

Jim Leffew – inquired what kinds of restrictions would be place on marijuana. For example, might there be a residential requirement?

Discussion ensued among those gathered about the ideas for where dispensaries might be located, what is currently growing on land within the township, how to distinguish hemp from marijuana, the smell that emanates from a field of growing marijuana, and the probability that most local growers will use indoor facilities where they can fully control the growing environment.

Adjournment:

MOTION by Fields, second by Von See, to adjourn. Adjournment at 826 p.m.

Assignments:

- Fields and Casassa to drat the language for amending the boundaries of the R-1 and Rec zoning districts.

- Backers and Fields to draft the language for the proposed response letter to be offered to the Township Board for response to the County Planning Commission.

Next Meeting: April 6, 2020, at 7:00 p.m., in the Clearwater Township Community Center (aka the Little Red Schoolhouse).

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Tina Norris Fields".

Tina Norris Fields
Secretary

Clearwater Township Zoning Administration Monthly Report

Month/Year Feb. 2020

2

- Land Use Permits Issued
- Garages, Sheds
- Residences
- Residences w/Attached Garage
- 1 Pole Barns
- Resident Additions
- Decks, Porches, etc.
- 1 Miscellaneous, Other Buildings

45
 0
 0
 0
 10
 0

- Field Checks
- Attorney Contacts
- Planning Commission Meetings
- ZBA Meetings and/or Township Board Meetings
- Contacts with Public, Home or Land Owners
- Training Sessions

Date: 2-19-20

Signature: 
 Zoning Administrator