

Clearwater Township
Planning Commission
Special Meeting of August 24, 2020
As approved September 14, 2020

Call to Order, Pledge of Allegiance:

Chair Backers called the meeting to order at 7:01 p.m., and opened with the Pledge of Allegiance.

Roll Call of Members and Recognition of Visitors:

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

Township officials: Zoning Administrator Parzych was not present

Because of the size of the gathering and the COVID-19 limit of no more than ten people at an indoor event, we moved the meeting outdoors to the parking lot of the township hall, where we could accommodate the crowd with proper spacing.

Public: Jerry McDiarmid, Steve & Becky Hobig, Wanda Armstrong, Theresa & Dale Brockway, Tony & Sherri Barber, Chuck & Becky Carlson, Steven McDiarmid, Aaron & Sandee Hendricks, Mitch Guzanek, Gwendolyn Pridemore, Charles Ward, Joe & Sharon Waterman, Rodney Dunlap, Joanne Childs, Erma Deater, Carol Backers, Steve Missino, Larry Barber.

Approval of Agenda:

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

Call for Disclosure of Conflicts of Interests:

Chair Backers called for disclosure of any conflicts of interests of the commissioners with the subject of the agenda. All commissioners declared no conflicts of interests.

Approval of Minutes:

MOTION by Casassa, second by Von See, to accept the minutes of August 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 Not Related to the Agenda:

There was none.

Public Hearing to consider amending Ordinance 22 (Zoning), to rezone the land lying between Valley Road and the Rapid River, in Sections 14 and 15, from Recreational to Residential Single Family:

Chair Backers explained the purpose of the meeting and the concerns that led to this proposed amendment. Chair Backers and Clerk Moore both affirmed that, according to our assessor, such a change would not affect the current taxable value of existing properties.

Chair Backers engaged with community members, responding to questions about what would be permitted under the proposed new zoning, how many property owners are actually trying to sell, and whether existing permitted uses would be grandfathered in as legal nonconforming uses.

Speaking in support: There was nobody speaking for the proposal.

Speaking in opposition:

Joe Waterman – reading from the township’s current master plan, which referred to the original standards of Ordinance 9, he commented that his own father had been part of the original struggle to preserve the land along the river by converting it from Residential to Recreational. He specifically referred to the portions that addressed protecting the value of the riverine uplands, as well as the ground and surface waters of the area. He commented that although there is supposed to be a fifty-foot setback from the river, there are some houses built right on the river and, in each case, the river at that location “gets killed.” His final comment was that if we want to attract young families to Rapid City, we have several other concerns to take care of, first.

Joanne Childs – asked why, if we want more residents, there are not more subdivisions being built out in the country.

Steve Minisso – commented that if we want more commercial and more residential occupancy, we have to clean up the look of the township and enforce the existing regulations.

Mitch Guzanek – reiterated the master plan comments of Mr. Waterman.

Larry Barber – expressed his opinion that we should be making more five-acre parcels, not fewer.

There being no further additional comments, Chair Backers closed the public input portion of the hearing at 7:39 p.m. and opened the Commission deliberations.

Deliberations:

Clerk Moore – although she did receive one message in support of the proposal, the public response is overwhelmingly negative. She believes we should not move forward with the idea.

Von See – stated he sees no support for the proposal.

Casassa – agrees that there is no support.

Fields – agrees that there is no support.

Backers – notes that the problem he hoped to address turns out not to be one in the view of the public.

MOTION by Fields, second by Backers, to abandon the proposal to rezone the land lying between Valley Road and Rapid River, in Sections 14 and 15, from Recreational to Residential Single Family. Motion carried by roll call vote.

Roll call:

Von See – yes;

Casassa – yes;

Moore – yes;

Fields – yes;

Backers – abstain.

Closing Public Comment:

People comment on the proceedings.

Childs – has read that there is more growth in Kalkaska and Leelanau Counties than in Grand Traverse County at this time.

Chair Backers – interjected the concern about pole barns springing up in the township, and he engaged with members of the public on the topic.

Missino – said he agrees with the desire to attract more business to the community, but first we have to clean up what is already here. He pointed to a disabled vehicle and garbage all visible around a nearby and noted that there are homes with grass more than a foot tall in the front yards – all violations of the zoning ordinance.

Guzanek – commented about a house with toilet on the front porch that has been there for a long time.

Hendricks – a new resident, loves the area and sees great potential, but we need to start with the small stuff, like cleaning up the place.

Chair Backers – interjected that the cleanup starts with enforcing existing regulations, evenly across the board, not picking and choosing. He commented that the Zoning Administrator has his hands full.

Childs – said she grew up here and remembers that people used to care about how their property looked.

Chair Backers – thanked everybody for coming and gave a short speech on his efforts to improve communication between the Planning Commission and the public.

Adjournment:

MOTION by Von See, second by Backers, to adjourn. Adjournment at 7:52.

Next Meeting: September 14, 2020

Respectfully submitted,



Tina Norris Fields
Secretary