

WRIGHT TOWNSHIP
PLANNING COMMISSION MEETING MINUTES
OCTOBER 21, 2019-7:30 P.M.
1565 Jackson St. Marne MI 49435

The meeting was called to order at 7:30 p.m. by Chairman Dausman with the Pledge of Allegiance and a Prayer. Commission members present: Rich Dausman, Gary Karr, Steve Gray, Dan VanDyke, Steve Van Timmeren. Also present were Township Planner Brian Werschem, Township Attorney Jeff Sluggett and Recording Secretary Jan Redding.

No parking in the reserved fire spaces was announced.

Agenda Approval-

No additions to the agenda.

Approval of Minutes-

Motion by VanDyke and support by Karr to approve the minutes of the September 16, 2019 Planning Commission meeting as written. Motion carried 5-0.

Public Comment-

Comments were taken from the following people regarding the construction of a substation. Most spoke in opposition citing concerns over loss of rural character, health issues, impact on farming, and location.

One person spoke supporting the project as it helps supply reliable electrical power to the community.

Dan Carmody 16269 16th Ave.

Erwin Beemer 953 Garfield

Lois Lothschulz 16514 16th Ave.

Cindy Clayton 1235 Arthur St.

Bonnie Khums 16365 16th Ave.

Jeanne Green 16453 16th Ave.

Rita Carmody 16217 16th Ave.

Rick Lenke 3319 Cleveland

Kim Weurding 145 Miller Dr.

Jennifer Owen Address Unclear

Marjorie Gilde 359 Garfield

Christopher Thoms 2688 N. Sherman Rd.

Tim VanDyke 1986 Arthur

Jennifer Morton 1183 Arthur

Representatives of METC

Unfinished Business-

Special Use Permit and Site Plan for Michigan Electric Transmission-

Chairman Dausman explained the process for approval of special use permits and site plans. The Wright Township Zoning Ordinance places full authority for approval or denial of all special uses with the Planning Commission, not with the Township Board. Chair also laid out the order for proceeding. First, concerns that were expressed at the public hearing will be addressed, the requirements of the ordinance will be reviewed, and the special use application will be reviewed for compliance with the ordinance. The site plan review may also be addressed.

Recess taken from 8:23 until 8:29 p.m.

It was explained that electrical service systems are considered "essential public services" and as a permitted use are exempt from application of the ordinance. The special use permit being considered only applies to the accessory buildings, not to the substation itself.

The following concerns and questions that had been voiced previously were addressed by Commissioners and representatives from METC on behalf of the applicant:

Lighting-no lighting would be higher than 11 feet, no perimeter lighting, it would all be downward cast lighting, no flashing or strobe lighting, and except for 2 porch-style lights on the storage buildings, lights would only come on when maintenance was being done or if there was an emergency.

Fire-a letter from the Fire Chief was presented stating there were no unusual concerns for fire safety. There is little flammable material in the facility. METC stated that there is an auto-shut off for arcing or other emergencies. Applicant will work with the fire department to develop a response plan.

Location-applicant explained how location was chosen and why it was chosen as the best option. Considerations were location of existing lines, distance from high density residential areas, and available

parcel large enough to provide buffers from neighboring properties. Placing the substation at another location would likely require construction of additional electrical lines for access to the site.

Health issues-no definitive conclusion was reached on whether or not stray voltage or electromagnetic fields pose a significant health risk. It was also unknown if any risk would be increased by the substation over what is already present with the high power lines.

Property values-it was not believed that property values would be affected to a higher degree than already impacted by the existing towers and lines. As this is in an agricultural district, there would not be a significant impact based on aesthetics. Landscaping will be done at the site for screening.

Sound-decibel levels are not expected to exceed acceptable levels. The landscaping will provide sound buffers.

Recess taken from 10:08 until 10:20 p.m.

Memos from Attorney Sluggett and Planner Werschem regarding the standards for approval of special use permits were reviewed. Each of the general standards found in Section 1902 of the Zoning Ordinance was discussed and found to have been met.

Chairman Dausman took some questions from the audience regarding the ordinance regulations, how they can be changed, and whether or not changes made would apply in this case. Since the application has already been submitted, any changes made would not affect this case.

Attorney Sluggett recommended any conditions that would be included as part of the site plan review to be specified in the motion for approval of the special use permit. Conditions to be defined would include building design, lighting, landscaping and drainage. Each of these items were discussed and the conditions agreed upon.

Motion by VanDyke to approve the special use application based on the discussions at tonight's meeting and with the following conditions:

1. Elevations consistent with the representation submitted by the applicant.
2. A plan for landscaping and buffers will be refined by Planner Werschem and submitted to the Planning Commission for final approval at a special meeting. Emphasis will be on aesthetics and noise buffering.
3. No lighting other than as represented on the plan submitted at this meeting, including no perimeter lights, no lighting higher than 11' cast downward, none on the towers, and no strobe or flashing lights.
4. Drainage plan as approved by Ottawa County Water Resources.
5. All applicable Federal, State and local regulations will be met.

Second by VanTimmeren. Roll call vote: Karr-yes, Gray-no, Dausman-yes, VanDyke-no, VanTimmeren-yes. Motion carries.

Motion by Gary Karr to approve the site plan as submitted with the conditions as set forth in the special use permit and under the standards of Section 1806 of the Wright Township Zoning Ordinance. Second by VanDyke. Motion carried with unanimous roll call vote.

Adjournment-

Motion to adjourn at 12:36 a.m.

Janice Redding

Recording Secretary

(Any document referenced in these minutes is on file in the Clerk's office)