**PLANNING COMMISSION MINUTES - MARCH 26, 2024**

The meeting was called to order at 3:33pm by chairperson Larry Shaffer.

**MEMBERS PRESENT:** Rod Lowe, Jenny Irvine, Larry Shaffer, Phil Bontrager, Christine Lundquist, Walt Mixon (via zoom), Lou Lundquist (via zoom)

**AGENDA:** The agenda was approved on a motion by Christine with support by Jenny.

**PUBLIC COMMENT:** Bob Stocking asked about the status of ST rentals. Larry noted that no official actions have been taken yet, and the Township Board has not acted on the recent recommendation of the Planning Commission related to reopening registration for property owners currently renting without permits.

Rick Cappagrossa provided information on a long-term rental unit planned for the Chatham area. He asked if the township might consider something like this being built on Harju Road off M-77, a couple miles south of town on property owned by the Township. Rod noted that he believes a feasibility study was done on this property & it was not considered feasible. Rick indicated that he believes it could be done and if grant dollars are available, issues noted could be compensated for. Chatham is trying to obtain grant funding for their proposed project. Larry indicated he will arrange a meeting with the Township supervisor to discuss the possibility.

Chet Tavner asked if there is any tax abatement available for making a long-term rental available. He indicated he has property on Airport Road where he might consider building long-term rental units. He also noted that he has made a long-term rental available for the new park manager.

Sherri Shafer joined the meeting & indicated the full Township Board would need to review Rick’s proposal. She also suggested that Chet write a letter to the Township Board regarding his proposal on the tax abatement question.

**ANNUAL ELECTION AND MEETING SCHEDULE:**

Larry noted that the elected positions would run through the end of the calendar year.

Motion by Christine with support by Rod to open nominations for Chairperson. Christine nominated Larry Shaffer as Chairperson. Motion by Phil with support by Rod to close nominations. Upon vote of the Commission, Larry was unanimously voted in as chairperson.

Motion by Rod with support by Phil tp open nominations for secretary and to nominate Christine for the position.

Motion by Jenny to close the nominations. Upon vote of the Commission, Christine was unanimously voted in as secretary.

Motion by Christine with support by Rod to open nominations for the Vice-Chairperson position.Motion by Phil with support by Larry to nominate Jenny Irvine. Motion by Phil with support by Rod to close nominations. On a motion by Phil with support by Rod, Jenny was unanimously voted in as vice-chairperson.

MEETING SCHEDULE: Following discussion of member availability, it was agreed that the Commission would meet on the 3rd Tuesday of each month, with other meetings as needed. Pending verification of meeting room availability, it was agreed that June through August meetings would be scheduled at 6:00pm, and September through May meetings will be held at 3:30pm.

**MASTER PLAN REVIEW:**

On page 10 under “Protect Natural Resources”, it was suggested that the wording should be more proactive than “prevent degradation”. Larry suggested adding “enhancement and prevention” to the description.

On page 14 under “Population

and Demographics” Larry noted the numbers are not good. Rod noted that job growth is an ongoing issue and wondered if a home for the aged or nursing home would be a good idea, both for providing for the aging population and for providing jobs. Christine indicated it would be a nice addition to the community, but indicated she had experience with doing this from her time living in the Sault, and it is a lot of work and a highly regulated industry to jump into. Phil and Rod suggested the Township might consider tax abatement to an organization already operating a comparable home in Munising or Newberry if they opened something here.

On page 30, Larry noted the “Foster Better Relationship with National Park Service”. He asked if we need to do more to foster this relationship and wondered if we would want them to offer more within town limits. it was noted that the old Coast Guard building needs to be painted. Sherri Shafer indicated she thinks that is next on there agenda of buildings. They have put a lot of effort into the building that houses the Historical Society as well as a couple other properties. Phil noted that he is hesitant to give things to the Park Service as they typically take everything to Munising, even if it comes from Grand Marais. Jen noted that last year the park supervisor told us he would try to stay involved with the Township but hasn’t. Sherri indicated she will contact him about meeting a couple times per year for updates/discussions.

On page 35 the importance of economic development was reviewed.

On page 38 the need to work with the Township on workforce housing issues was discussed. Questions were asked about how we can quantify the need for long-term housing options.

Related to pages 43-45, the need to continue to pursue grant opportunities for installing a community septage system was discussed. Sherri noted that it would be an estimated $20million dollars at this time, so massive grant dollars would be needed to make it feasible. The need to continue pursuing options was discussed in case an issue arises and the State requires action.

On pages 49-55, it was noted that zoning district descriptions/maps will eventually need to be updated for changes in the zoning ordinance.

On page 58, the Front Door & Bayshore Park was discussed. It was suggested that we emphasize the importance of this to the Township. Phil noted his experience when working in Colorado that provided ways to create areas that could be considered “park extensions” for funding purposes. Phil also suggested that “dark sky projects” might be a way to pull in more eco-tourists. He described a presentation he saw at the Seney Wildlife Refuge and suggested we may want to see if we can access it. Rod noted that this might be something to propose to the Chamber of Commerce. Jenny agreed and indicated she would do so.

Larry indicated he will contact Julia at CUPPAD about updating a draft of the master plan for our review.

**Other:** Larry indicated he talked with CUPPAD about the Coastal Resilience Grant. Julia would like to schedule a presentation to the Planning Commission.

Larry noted an email he sent to the Commission earlier in the day related to an MSU ST Rental Forum scheduled for Thursday, March 28th at 6:30pm. He indicated he would make arrangements to set it up at the community center for Commission members interested in participating. Several members indicated they hoped to attend.

The next regular meeting will be held on April 16 at 3:30pm.

**PUBLIC COMMENT:** Bob Stocking likes the idea of increasing communication with the national park but cautions that there are still many people who feel they have a bad record in their dealings with the community and suggested treading lightly.

Chet asked about the possibility of adding floating docks at various township beaches. It was noted that these are planned for marina expansion in the Master Plan, and the Township may need to review liability issues if putting them at other beaches.

**ADJOUMENT:** The meeting was adjourned on a motion by Christine with support by Jenny at 5:30pm.