

**Courtland Township
Regular Planning Commission Meeting
Tuesday, June 18, 2019**

The regular meeting of the Courtland Township Planning Commission was called to order by Chairman Rock Wood at 7:00 PM. Pledge of Allegiance.

Roll Call: Members present were Rock Wood, Katy Nelson, Mary Ann Andersen, and Andy Moore. Al Rau was absent with notice. Attorney Jim Scales and Recording Secretary Colleen Brown were also present.

Approval of Agenda: Motion by Moore, supported by Nelson, to approve the agenda as presented. All yes, motion carried.

Approval of Minutes: Motion by Moore, supported by Nelson, to approve the minutes of the May 21, 2019 meeting with one change to approve "the agenda" as presented. All yes, motion carried.

Public Comments: No comments were made

Old Business: Master Plan Discussion - Chairman Wood stated the commission is discussing their concern that they are not doing enough to guide the growth and the pattern of growth of the township. Factors of consideration are sewer capacity and/or extension of the sewer, proximity to Grand Rapids, utilities, growth of the southern portion of the Township in relationship to Rockford Schools, maintaining agriculture and rural atmosphere, limiting site condos and PUDs to certain areas, possible reduction of minimum lot size in certain areas, etc. The Master Plan attempts to control growth now as the areas marked in yellow of the future land use map show where the development is most desired. This is all food for thought. Most zoning issues are planning issues. We need a plan to encourage what control the Township deems as important. We could encourage development for 500 houses on 200 acres rather than eat up 500 houses on 1,000 acres.

Member Andersen suggested that the growth south of 12 Mile road has been because of the benefit of the sewer in that area which allows for the higher density. Further studies will need to be made to review the sewer system to determine what capacity is available, the cost factor to extend, hook-up with Cannon Township and North Kent Sewer Authority, how many lift stations you need, grinder pumps, and the long term cost of maintenance for the future. Attorney Scales stated the processing plant, NKSA, North Kent Sewer Authority, is about at 60% capacity at this time and can be easily expanded upon. Member Moore stated that many communities such as Allendale and Alpine Townships tie their subdivision and site condo ordinances to utility extensions and do not allow them without water and sewer utilities, and this helps to limit sprawl. Courtland Township could look at other municipalities reasoning for applying their goals for their township. We would have to be very prepared to educate the residents. There is no city water available in Courtland Township. Affordability and the sewer costs is a big component of the decision to be made. Chairman Wood felt a sewer study would need to be done, and he thinks it will be millions, and the Township would have to deem what is most feasible. Also, the Township needs to keep in mind that the residents have stated they desire to keep the township in somewhat the same rural character. That is why they moved here, to keep the open space, trees, and farmland as much as possible. Otherwise it could become just a suburb then. With probably thousands of new homes coming in the next 50 years the Township would not be recognizable.

Trustee McIntyre stated we love the farmland, but farmers are not always able to produce another generation of farmers to carry on the tradition anymore. People typically do not buy land for farming, often it is inherited from family. She suggests that the corridor of Northland Dr., south of 12 Mile Rd., and along 10 Mile Rd. could be higher density and allow for small apartments and smaller lots, etc. because the way it is now the Township discourages anybody with lower income or first time home buyers to get started. She also feels Cedar Springs is growing with leaps and bounds.

The commission will put their thoughts together and see how the Township Board feels about any suggestions. Chairman Wood suggested we prepare a proposal. That is the proposal, why, what it is going to cost, etc. Communication is key and helps to address people's concerns. A charrette group (focus group) could be created to put findings together to present to the Township Board. Moore volunteered to write a first draft and work with chairman Wood on something to present to the commission.

Farms that are protected in Farmland Preservation Act are the Keech, Cole, and Patterson farms.

Motion was made by Wood, supported by Andersen, to draft a plan that addresses some strategic growth management for the future development of the township. All members voting yes, Motion carried.

Zoning Administrator Report – Admin. Brown stated there has been several requests to consider Barn Venues. General discussion was held. Member Nelson will review & make recommendations to the commission, from her standpoint, with currently having a Special Land Use Approval for a barn venue that was approved as an exception previously. Commission members noted that it is a positive way to preserve old barns and their history. Motion was made by Wood, supported by Moore, to review the proposal for a Barn Venue Ordinance. All members voting yes, motion carried.

Township Attorney Report – Attorney Scales stated the Township has been given a ruling from the Circuit Court that Short Term Rentals are a prohibited use and validates how the township has interpreted the ordinance all along. Nine – ten homeowners that were previously doing short term rentals have agreed in writing to no longer offer Short Term Rentals (anything less than 30 days stay). There are two homeowners, grandfather clause in, Mojzuk and Wessell, because they have a long history, since before 1983, of doing seasonal short-term rental but, not less than seven days stay.

Township Board Representative Report – McIntyre stated the Cedar Springs Parks & Rec. is being monitored to see if funds for future continuation of the program will be available. The fire alarm siren @ the Kle-Mac Farms site needs repair and was discussed.

ZBA Representative Report – One variance was tabled to allow the builder to revise the proposal taking into consideration the comments of the neighbors and concerns of the board. Side yard setbacks were discussed at length. The commission will further review the ordinances to see if there is any way to alleviate the need for most variances.

Adjournment – Motion by Andersen, supported by Wood, to adjourn. All members voted yes, the meeting was adjourned at 8:56 PM.

Recorded by: Colleen Brown, Recording Secretary, Courtland Township Planning Commission