

**CHARTER TOWNSHIP OF GARFIELD  
PLANNING COMMISSION MEETING  
October 23, 2024**

**Call Meeting to Order:** Chair McManus called the October 23, 2024 Planning Commission meeting to order at 7:00pm at the Garfield Township Hall.

**Pledge of Allegiance**

The Pledge of Allegiance was recited by all in attendance.

**Roll Call of Commission Members:**

Present: Molly Agostinelli, Joe Robertson, John Racine, Chris DeGood, Pat Cline, Robert Fudge and Joe McManus

Staff Present: Planning Director John Sych and Deputy Planning Director Steve Hannon

1. **Public Comment (7:01)**

None

2. **Review and Approval of the Agenda – Conflict of Interest (7:19)**

*Robertson moved and DeGood seconded to approve the agenda as presented.*

*Yeas: Robertson, DeGood, Cline, Agostinelli, Racine, Fudge, McManus*

*Nays: None*

3. **Minutes (7:21)**

a. **October 9, 2024 Regular Meeting**

*Fudge moved and Agostinelli seconded to approve the October 9, 2024 Regular Meeting minutes as amended noting that in item #3, the wording which reads “with Township Board” should be removed.*

*Yeas: Fudge, Agostinelli, DeGood, Cline, Robertson, Racine, McManus*

*Nays: None*

4. **Correspondence (7:02)**

None

5. **Reports (7:02)**

**Township Board Report**

Agostinelli stated that there was no meeting.

**Planning Commissioners**

i. **Zoning Board of Appeals**

Fudge said there was no meeting.

ii. **Parks and Recreation Commission**

DeGood said that there was no meeting.

iii. **Joint Planning Commission**

Racine stated that there will be some activity and construction at the historic barns park. A solution to the water pressure issues in that area of the township is close.

**Staff Report**

i. **Zoning Administrator Update**

Zoning Administrator Michael Green gave commissioners an update on the soil erosion ordinance and the stormwater ordinance for the township. Green also discussed small cell towers for 5G and reviewed various zoning enforcement activities. Green added that Lamar filed a federal lawsuit over a billboard and described some challenges with the courts in terms of enforcement issues.

6. **Unfinished Business**

a. **PD 2024-92 – Zoning Ordinance Discussion – Signs Continued (7:20)**

In August, staff provided a draft of Section 630 including some proposed changes to the regulations of this Section. Proposed changes encompassed adding content-neutral language throughout the entire Section with substantial changes to subsection 630.N, proposed to be renamed to “Signs Always Permitted and Exempt Signs” and the Planning Commission commented on the proposed changes. Based on the difficulty in finding guidance on the signage issue, staff recommends that the Planning Commission ask that Section 630 of the Zoning Ordinance be forwarded to the Township Attorney for legal review for compliance with recent United States Supreme Court case law. Legal review would allow for a comprehensive look at all parts of Section 630 from a legal perspective. Staff also suggest that the Planning Commission consider adding charts or tables to this Section to summarize the regulations and allow for easier understanding for anyone reading this Section. Staff can prepare charts and tables as part of the next review of the sign regulations.

*Robertson moved and Cline seconded TO RECOMMEND to the Township Board that Section 630 of the Garfield Township Zoning Ordinance BE FORWARDED to the Township Attorney for legal review.*

*Yeas: DeGood, Agostinelli, Cline, Robertson, Fudge, Racine, McManus  
Nays: None*

**7. New Business****a. PD 2024-91 – Zoning Ordinance Discussion – Definition of “Substantial” Construction (7:30)**

Recently, the Township Board deliberated at length about the “start of construction” as a term applied to a condition of approval for the BATA/Traverse City Housing Commission Planned Unit Development. While “start of construction” is a term not defined or used in the Zoning Ordinance, the related term “substantial construction” is used. However, there is no definition of “substantial construction.” By providing a definition of substantial construction, it would help clarify its application in several sections of the Zoning Ordinance and may be applied in conditions of approval. Commissioners discussed the definitions provided by staff and decided that a definition needed to be crafted to match with what the township is trying to achieve in terms of PUD’s and the different uses allowed in PUD’s. Commissioners agreed that any definition of “substantial construction” should be flexible to accommodate different development situations.

*Racine moved and DeGood seconded to have staff continue to work on a definition of “substantial construction.”*

*Yeas: Racine, DeGood, Cline, Robertson, Fudge, Agostinelli, McManus  
Nays: None*

**8. Public Comment (8:16)**

None

**9. Other Business (8:16)****a. Summary of Planning Michigan Conference 2024**

Planning staff recently attended a planning conference in Grand Rapids and reviewed information from various sessions that they attended. Sych reviewed a housing study which was presented at the conference and which Garfield Township planning staff participated in. He also talked about density and ways to make density more attractive. Hannon covered ways to improve a zoning ordinance and discussed his walking tour of Ada, Michigan where areas of that town were made to look like a classic downtown.

**b. Recent Development Photos**

Staff shared photos of recent projects which have been completed in the township or are near completion.

**c. Joint Planning Commission**

McManus mentioned that a member of the Planning Commission will need to be named to the Joint Planning Commission since he will be stepping down after the election.

10. **Items for Next Agenda – November 6, 2024 (9:16)**
- a. **Angel Care Child Care/Church of the Living God Special Use Permit – Findings of Fact**
  - b. **Tower North Wireless Communication Facility Special Use Permit – Action**
  - c. **K-1 Speed/High Tops – Site Plan Review Amendment**
  - d. **Cherryland Center Comprehensive Phasing PUD Minor Amendment – Review**
  - e. **BATA/TC Housing Commission Phasing PUD Minor Amendment – Review**
  - f. **Copper Ridge PUD Major Amendment – Introduction**
11. **Adjournment**  
*Fudge moved to adjourn the meeting at 9:21pm.*

  
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Joe Robertson, Secretary  
Garfield Township Planning  
Commission  
3848 Veterans Drive  
Traverse City, MI 49684