

MELROSE TOWNSHIP PLANNING COMMISSION MINUTES
MELROSE TOWNSHIP HALL

REGULAR MEETING OF AUGUST 28, 2023

I. Call to Order/Roll Call

A. Call to Order: Chair Bart Wangeman called the meeting to order at 5:31 PM.

B. Members present: Bart Wangeman, Julie Christy, Dan Nowland, Douglas Jenkins, Tim LaGasse.

C. Members absent: None.

D. Staff present: Zoning Administrator Ken Lane.

II. Approval of Agenda

By consensus the agenda, as presented, was approved.

III. Approval of Minutes

Member Christy motioned to approve the June 26, 2023, draft minutes as presented, seconded by Member LaGasse, the motion was approved unanimously.

IV. New Business

a. Draft ordinance amendment-waterfront overlay

Chair Wangeman asked Zoning Administrator Lane if he would like to open the discussion on the draft amendment.

Zoning Administrator Lane stated that he had prepared draft amendments to Section 6.11 of the Township Zoning Ordinance to provide for administrative approval for the removal of dead, diseased, or dangerous trees in the Waterfront Overlay District. He added that the draft amendments were based upon the Planning Commission's discussion at the June 26, 2023, meeting.

Zoning Administrator Lane stated that the draft document before the Planning Commission is a first attempt at a draft amendment for discussion only, and that the Planning Commission may have some suggestions or modifications. He added that if the Planning Commission determines to proceed with an amendment, a public hearing is required and after the public hearing the Planning Commission can make a recommendation on a proposed amendment to the Township Board. He further added that the Township Board may adopt or deny any proposed Zoning Ordinance amendment.

Zoning Administrator Lane stated that some of the proposed amendments in the draft were grammatical or style changes, like consistently spelling out the word feet or using the abbreviation. He added that the substantive draft amendments are to Section 6.11 (D) (1) (F) allowing administrative review for the removal of fallen, dead, diseased, or dangerous trees on waterfront properties, provided that the removal is less than 30% of the trees on a parcel and limited to 30 feet per 100 feet of shoreline width in accordance with Section 6.11 (C) (3) (b) (3). He further added

that the draft amendment would increase the shoreline width that would qualify a project for administrative review from 120 feet to 150 feet.

Chair Wangeman questioned the proposed changes to subsection (d) on page 32 that would only apply site development standards to the construction of structures. He suggested that those standards should also be applied to major landscaping projects to ensure the project fits the site topography and soil.

Zoning Administrator Lane agreed and stated that the limitation to structures can be removed from that subsection.

Member LaGasse asked whether the proposed amendments would apply to tree removal for aesthetic reasons covered under Section 6.11 (C) (3) (b) (4).

Zoning Administrator Lane replied that the proposed amendments would not apply to tree removal for aesthetic reasons or for landscaping or construction projects within the Waterfront Overlay District. He added the change would only apply to the removal of fallen, dead, diseased, or dangerous trees under circumstances that comply with Section 6.11 (C) (3) (b) (3).

Chair Wangeman asked the Planning Commission how they wanted to proceed with the draft amendments.

Member LaGasse suggested that the draft amendments, with the modification requested by the Planning Commission, be scheduled for a public hearing and then passed along to the Township Board.

Chair Wangeman agreed and asked Zoning Administrator Lane to schedule a public hearing on the proposed zoning ordinance amendment for the September 25 meeting.

The remainder of the Planning Commission agreed by consensus.

V. Unfinished Business

a. Recreation Plan

Chair Wangeman asked Zoning Administrator Lane if he would like to bring the Planning Commission up to date on the draft Recreation Plan.

Zoning Administrator Lane stated that Robert Carson was in attendance on behalf of Networks Northwest and that he was taking over for Jennifer Neal who had left Networks Northwest. He added that Mr. Carson would be going over a draft plan that was included in the Planning Commission's meeting packet and the process for moving forward.

Robert Carson, Regional Director of Community Development with Networks Northwest, introduced himself and stated that he was at the meeting to address any questions with the final draft of the Township Recreation Plan. He added that the process from this point will be first, the Planning Commission will review the final draft and note any discrepancies. He further added that the Planning Commission will secondly formally recommend approval of the final draft plan to the Township

Board and that the Township Board will hold a public hearing and consideration the plans adoption.

Chair Wangeman asked how the final draft plan before the Planning Commission was created. He stated that in his recollection, the Planning Commission last discussed components to include into a draft Recreation Plan, but the actual draft plan document was not discussed or put together. He asked Zoning Administrator Lane to clarify how the draft plan was created.

Zoning Administrator Lane responded that he did not exactly know. He added that at the May, 2023, Planning Commission meeting, the Planning Commission reviewed various ideas and items for inclusion into a Township recreation plan, and he understood that those items would next be placed into a rough draft document by the consultant for further review and consideration by the Planning Commission. He further added that such further consideration did not occur at the June or July 2023, Planning Commission meetings. Zoning Administrator Lane stated that from his perspective, the Planning Commission did not have any further involvement in creating the final draft plan that was included in the meeting packets.

After some discussion, by consensus, the Planning Commission agreed that additional time was needed to review the final draft Recreation Plan and that significant edits and changes would likely be suggested by the Planning Commission. The Planning Commission by consensus agreed that the final draft Recreation Plan before them may not be a bad plan, but they did not discuss or propose the goals, objectives, or action items included in the draft.

Robert Carson stated that if the intention was to apply for MDNR grants this year, the Township Recreation Plan must be adopted by the Township Board no later than February 2024.

Zoning Administrator Lane stated that he understood that the Township Board tasked the Planning Commission with drafting the Township’s Recreation Plan. He added that he thinks the Planning Commission’s work can be complete in time to meet the February deadline, but the drafting process should not be rushed to apply for grants this year.

Robert Carson agreed with Zoning Administrator Lane.

Chair Wangeman suggested that further review of the draft Recreation Plan be added to the Planning Commission’s September meeting agenda. He stated that the Planning Commission’s homework is to review the final draft plan and to be prepared to discuss it and any proposed changes at the September meeting.

Robert Carson stated that he will attend the September meeting to document any changes to the draft plan requested by the Planning Commission.

The Planning Commission requested that Zoning Administrator Lane provide them with a copy of the current Township Recreation Plan and the draft documents provided by Networks Northwest in relation to the proposed draft plan to facilitate further discussion at the September meeting.

The Planning Commission by consensus agreed that the draft Recreation Plan be added to the Planning Commission's September 25, 2023, meeting agenda for further consideration.

VI. Other Communications/Reports

A Zoning Administrator report was provided to the Planning Commission.

VII. Zoning Board of Appeals Report

Chair Wangeman stated that the ZBA will be meeting on September 19, 2023.

Zoning Administrator Lane stated that the new owners of the former Elvyn Lea Lodge have submitted an application to expand a nonconforming use.

VIII. Planning Commissioner Comments

None.

IX. Citizen Comments on Non-Agenda Items

None.

X. Next Meeting Scheduled

September 25, 2023. Zoning Administrator Lane stated that a development plan review for Walloon Central Marine, the continued work on the draft Recreation Plan, and a public hearing for the draft Zoning Ordinance amendment will be on the agenda.

XI. Adjournment

At 6:19 PM

Prepared by:

Planning Commission Approval by:

Ken Lane, Zoning Administrator/Recording Sec.

Julie Christy, Secretary

Copies: Melrose Township Board, Planning Commission Members, www.melrosetwp.org