

**WATERVLIET CHARTER TOWNSHIP  
PLANNING COMMISSION  
REGULAR MEETING  
MARCH 7, 2023**

Present: Joseph Stepich, Scott McKee, Colleen Curtis, Deanna Heminger, Deane Fizzell, Lane Blatchford.

Also Present: None

Chairperson Heminger called the meeting to order at 2:00 p.m.

Roll Call was taken.

The minutes of the February 7, 2023 meeting were read. C. Curtis made a motion to approve the minutes as read. D. Fizzell seconded and the motion carried.

**Event Venues**

D. Fizzell opened the topic by stating that he had researched the proposed use and that, foremost, the Township should establish standards regarding the matter. He noted that, from his research, that the event venue theme is regarded widely as “Agritourism” and, as such, that term should be defined by the township. D. Heminger inquired, that if it is decided that the use is required to have a special land use permit, could the township require a special land use for each scheduled event. J. Stepich, supporting the special land use permit approach, noted that the special land use permit process affords the township more flexibility and control to customize restrictions and conditions based on each venue’s unique characteristics and locations, noting that a stand alone ordinance would not have the same latitude.

Stepich further suggested that, before any approach is decided upon, perhaps the Commissioners should consult with township legal counsel to get their advice on how to further proceed. With that said, he stated that he would invite the Township Attorney to attend the April 4, 2023 meeting.

S. McKee noted that it was a good idea that the Township was exploring avenues to take advantage of and promote the agricultural opportunities of the township outside of the usual commercial farming operations.

**Proposed Nuisance Ordinance Amendment**

The proposed amendment to the Nuisance Ordinance was discussed. Stepich asked the other Commissioners what needed to be added or deleted from the current draft ordinance. Stepich continued by stating that an amended ordinance should “...give us the power to act where we can’t now.” He further added that the core of the ordinance’s authority would be to prosecute the “obvious and blatant” issues within the township and

that, ultimately, the goal of any ordinance adopted would not be so much about enforcement but compliance. After further discussion, Stepich stated that, since the Township attorney will be at the April meeting, perhaps just discuss the matter with her and inquire what elements to add, or to subtract, to make it a strong and enforceable ordinance.

### **Campground Definition**

In discussion with the Zoning Administrator the previous month, S. McKee stated that he has entertained the idea of permitting guests to camp on his property near his large pond. He noted that in discussion with a friend who has a similar enterprise on his property he was told by the State of Michigan that any rentable sites for camping of 5 or more would constitute a campground, as defined by the state. At this point the project would be subject to state licensing and inspections.

He said that, to avoid complications, he would keep the sites down to 4 or less, if the project comes to fruition.

### **Proposed Exemption of Township Road Millage**

J. Stepich asked the Commissioners what they thought about exempting Township residents, who live on private roads, from the township's private road millage. He explained that those residents do not derive any benefit from the tax money they pay, further adding, that townships in this state are not permitted to expend public money on any private roads and any and all road maintenance the residents have they would have to pay for themselves. C Curtis did state that she was not in favor of the exemption. There was no further discussion on the matter.

### **Senior Citizen Services.**

J. Stepich presented a copy of an article he found in an edition of the Herald-Palladium news paper that reported that Covert Township plans to expand its senior services. Stepich pointed out that the expansion of senior services is, in fact, one of the named goals of the Township's Master Plan. D. Heminger stated that there are already adequate services for senior citizens in Berrien County and saw no reason, at this point, to add additional services adding: "I feel like people in our area are pretty well covered."

S. McKee pointed out that, "Residents are not getting any younger," and that the Commission should be planning for the future. He stated that, in his opinion, transportation should be a priority. Stepich stated that the Commission should study and discuss what options are available that would avoid duplication. D. Heminger stated; "What more can we do without duplication?" Stepich replied; "That's what we need to talk about."

With there being no further business before the Commission, D. Fizzell made a motion to adjourn. L. Blatchford seconded and the motion carried.

The meeting was adjourned at 3:50 p.m.

Watervliet Township Planning Commission - Minutes - March 7, 2023

The meeting was adjourned at 3:50 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Robert Lohr". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Robert Lohr  
Zoning Administrator