

**WATERVLiet CHARTER TOWNSHIP  
PLANNING COMMISSION  
REGULAR MEETING AND PUBLIC HEARING  
MAY 9, 2023**

Present: Joseph Stepich, Louis Nordell, Deane Fizzell, Colleen Curtis, Deanna Heminger, Lane Blatchford.

Also Present: Jill Adams, Paul Gilliam, Patricia Geisler

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

Roll Call was taken.

The minutes of the April 4, 2023 meeting were read. C. Curtis made a motion to approve the minutes as read. D. Fizzell seconded and the motion carried unanimously.

**Issuance of a Special Land Use Permit for the location of a County Park**

At 2:05 p.m. J. Stepich made a motion to close out of regular session and enter the scheduled public hearing. L. Nordell seconded and the motion carried.

J. Adams, Director of the Berrien County Parks and Recreation Commission, began discussion by stating that the County currently possesses approximately 100 acres of undeveloped land along the Paw Paw River. With the purchase of this property, she said, another 63 acres will be added to the County park system. P. Gilliam stated that he owns the Paw Paw River Campground which is adjacent to the proposed park property and noted that he has problems with undesirable individuals camping on his property and foresees the same problems with this land and asked if there is a planned way of closing the park. Adams said that the park does have set hours and is closed seasonally during the winter months. She added that, at this time, there are no plans to develop camping sites anywhere on the river park system. L. Nordell stated that part of the park land lies under the approach to one of the airport's runways and asked Adams if cutting trees out from under the approach for aircraft safety was going to be a problem. Adams said she did not think it would be a problem but will look into the matter with the park commission. Nordell then inquired if people would be allowed to continue hunting on the property, noting that the airport manager permits hunters to hunt deer on the airport to prevent deer incursions onto the runways in front of aircraft that are landing or taking off. Adams replied that she did not think that would be an issue either but, again, stated that she would discuss the matter with the park commission.

With there being no further discussion from those in attendance for the public hearing, L. Nordell made a motion to close out of the public hearing and re-enter regular session. J. Stepich seconded and the motion carried unanimously.

The public hearing was closed at 2:12 p.m.

Back in regular session, L. Nordell made a motion to recommend the issuance of a Special Land Use Permit to Watervliet Charter Township and the Berrien County Parks Commission for the location of a public park in the AG-Agricultural District. J. Stepich seconded and the motion carried unanimously.

**Nuisance Ordinance Amendment**

J. Stepich noted that the proposed draft amendment to the Nuisance Ordinance was reviewed by Township Legal Counsel, Jessica Fette. Upon that review, she noted that the current language of the ordinance already contains all the controls and remedies that were added to the draft amendment. Instead, Stepich said, she suggested that the township change the prosecution method by changing violations under the Nuisance Ordinance from Misdemeanors to Municipal Civil Infractions for the simplicity she spoke about at the April Planning Commission meeting. Stepich stated that this could be accomplished by changing the Penalty Clause of the ordinance which only requires two readings by the Township Board and publication.

**Proposed Grant Application**

D. Heminger brought to the Commission's attention that the Southwest Michigan Association of Realtors is offering grants, for up to \$5,000, to local municipalities to help fund certain projects. Heminger suggested that a grant could be applied for to construct a sign for the soccer field. She added that one of the stipulations with the grant is that the project, planning to use the money, must be creative and imaginative. Since the park will officially be referred to as Airport Park, it would be fitting to devise a sign with an airport, or airplane, theme. They agreed to talk about the matter further.

With no further business before the Commission, C. Curtis made a motion to adjourn. D. Fizzell seconded and motion carried.

The meeting was adjourned at 2:57 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,



Robert Lohr  
Zoning Administrator