

**Barry County Planning Commission
Public Hearing Minutes
June 26, 2023**

The meeting was called to order by Chairperson John LaForge at 7:00 p.m. in the Community Room of the Tyden Center located at 121 South Church Street in Hastings.

The Planning Commission members in attendance included: LaForge, Jack Miner, Jack Nadwornik, Dave Hatfield, Joyce Snow and Jeff Kammenzind. Ben Geiger was absent. Others in attendance included: Chris Khorey, James McManus and many other interested people.

Motion by Hatfield to approve the agenda as printed. Support by Snow. All ayes – motion carried.

The minutes of May 22nd, 2023 were reviewed by the Planning Commission. Motion by Snow to approve the minutes as printed. Support by Nadwornik. All ayes – motion carried.

BUSINESS

LaForge explained the procedures of a public hearing.

MASTER PLAN PUBLIC HEARING

LaForge recessed the Planning Commission, opened the public hearing, and asked Khorey to summarize the Master Plan.

Khorey noted that Barry County has a great deal of open space and rural character to maintain. He noted that Barry County is facing a lot of growth pressure and the ultimate goal of the plan is to find areas to allow that growth while retaining the rural character. He noted the document is still a draft, and any comments or changes that result from the public hearing will be added into the document.

LaForge asked if anyone wished to comment on the Draft Master Plan.

Rebecca Badge expressed concern about the inclusion of Blue Zones in the Plan. She noted she is a nutrition counselor and she was concerned about the food and nutrition goals of Blue Zones.

LaForge noted the health side of Blue Zones is not part of the Master Plan.

Badge was concerned about dietary components of the Blue Zone Plan, and noted it does not line up with Barry County. She noted it will affect other aspects of the Master Plan. She noted Blue Zones tout less eggs and meat which could have an impact on farming.

Eldon Shellenbarger asked that the Master Plan be turned down because of the inclusion of Blue Zones. He was concerned that Blue Zones take away constitutional rights and will lead to globalization and world government.

Pat Jameson asked that Blue Zones be removed from the plan. He noted there are nine places in the plan where Blue Zones are mentioned. He said the plan was created in collaboration with Blue Zones, and their philosophy will be engraved with policy.

David Laansma said Blue Zones has a strong impact on the Master Plan Design and Implementation. He said they are not a reflection of the community.

Joyce Foondle questioned what the definition of neighborhood growth was and asked why the corner of Hickory Rd and M 37 was planned for that.

Gary White asked to strike any mention of Blue Zones in the document and that it be left out of government. He said Blue Zones plan is to get into government. White submitted Badge's written letter for the record. He concluded by saying Blue Zones does not need recognition.

Karmen Nickerson agreed with maintaining the beauty of Barry County. She noted Consumers Energy is planning a solar farm and she did not want all of the solar farms to be in Johnstown Township. She noted Ag land will not be Ag land with solar farms.

LaForge closed the public hearing and reconvened the Planning Commission.

Hatfield asked what the process was from here. McManus noted the public process started with mailings to all of the jurisdiction within and around Barry County. He said those jurisdictions had 63 days to comment. He noted the comments were distributed to you, and most of them have been implemented into the plan by McKenna.

McManus continued and noted any comments or corrections approved by the Planning Commission will be placed into the Draft Plan. He noted the final amended draft plan will be forwarded to the Board of Commissioners hopefully in July.

McManus commented on Foondle's question and noted most of the neighborhood growth areas are in already zoned areas, and the area in Johnstown was expanded south to account for future growth.

Khorey noted that the definition of neighborhood growth area is on page 175. He said the growth area discourages solar farms.

Snow asked how the volunteer groups were selected. McManus noted they are groups that have been active in planning and that may be willing to assist us moving forward.

LaForge noted there are people collecting signatures for a petition to not allow solar arrays on farm land. He also noted the legislature is writing policy that may remove solar power from local review.

LaForge noted he has concerns about Blue Zones using public money. He felt it embraces socialism, and he was uncomfortable with the doctrine.

Miner noted that any Blue Zone project is voluntary, and there is nothing to fear about the organization.

Hatfield commented that Blue Zones may be incorrectly classified and noted they are not a government agency. He said they have only aided on transportation issues so far, and any dietary issues are not mentioned in the plan. He said the listed organizations can be invited to the table for issues.

Snow noted Blue Zones was added after the original draft. She noted organizations can be asked to join a forum at a later date. She noted every group does not need to be in the plan.

Hatfield stated that a Blue Zones partnership would be equal with the other partners. Snow questioned why any of the partners needed to be listed.

McManus noted the chart on page 195 already has community members listed. He suggested that Blue Zones could be considered a community member. Hatfield said it should not be listed as a government.

Miner asked how Pierce Cedar Creek was listed. Khorey said it was a community member.

LaForge suggested listing Blue Zones as a community member as a private entity. Snow asked if they needed to be in the plan at all. Khorey noted the list of partners was added after the project pages were placed in the plan.

Hatfield suggested that community members be separated from the other classifications. Khorey said he could add CM to each project category.

Miner said he could accept that, but he cautioned that the groups may not be so willing to volunteer in the future.

Nadwornik suggested Blue Zones be removed from page 134 and to include them as a community member.

Hatfield said that community members need a broader category for community members who participate in planning activities.

Khorey said community members include individual and groups on page 196.

Khorey verified that the partner chapter will stay intact (page 134) but the action plan chapter will be amended.

Miner asked if solar arrays were included and if there was an estimate for needed acreage.

Khorey said yes and cited page 105 which showed the calculations.

Kammenzind asked if the acreage calculations include ROW's and transmission lines.
Khorey said no.

Miner said the specifics of solar arrays needs to be determined. McManus noted that will happen in the zoning phase.

McManus asked to add the newly created Land Bank to the government partner's page.

LaForge noted Mini nuclear plants may be an energy option in the future. Khorey said they would be best suited in industrially zoned areas.

Nadwornik noted bio digesters may be another energy service, Khorey said they would also fit in industrial areas.

Motion by Hatfield to make the corrections to the plan and return it to the Planning Commission and recommend approval to the Board of Commissioners.

The Planning Commission discussed the motion.

Khorey said he could have the amendments completed by July 7th, 2023.

McManus noted he anticipated forwarding it to the Board of Commissioners for the July 18th, 2023 COW meeting.

The Planning Commission agreed that they would have a chance to review the plan prior to the Board of Commissioners review.

Hatfield withdrew his original motion.

Motion by Hatfield to recommend approval of the Barry County Master Plan as amended.
Support by Miner.

Roll call vote – Miner, Nadwornik, Hatfield, LaForge – Aye
Snow, Kammenzind – Nay Motion carried.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Gary White said he appreciated the Blue zones adjustment. He suggested including ways to contact volunteer groups. He said the plan should have been reviewed again before sending it on.

Eldon Shellenbarger thanked the Planning Commission for the Blue Zone adjustment. He asked that roll call votes be used.

David Laansma said Blue Zones is already active in the community, and a county commissioner is the local coordinator.

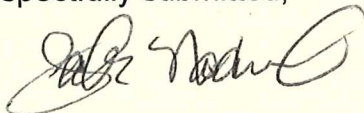
Barb Earl expressed disappointment that the plan would not be reviewed again before the Board of Commissioner's received it.

Pat Jameson noted there is a Blue zone poster behind the glass in the hallway.

Sheri Babcock noted Johnstown Township would like to be involved in the development of the solar array ordinance.

Motion by Hatfield to adjourn. Support by Nadwornik. All ayes – motion carried.
Meeting adjourned at 8:35 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jack Nadwornik", written in a cursive style.

Jack Nadwornik,
Secretary