

**Barry County Planning Commission  
Meeting Minutes  
January 22, 2024**

The meeting was called to order at 7:00 p.m. by John LaForge in the Community Room of the Tyden Center located at 121 South Church Street in Hastings. The Planning Commission members in attendance included: John LaForge, Jeff Kammenzind, Jack Nadwornik, Dave Hatfield, Joyce Snow, and Juli Sala. Jack Miner was absent. Those also in attendance included: Mike Kenyon, Amy Webber, Neal Dreisig, James McManus, and many other interested people.

The Planning Commission reviewed the Agenda. McManus asked that an appointment to the Solid Waste Oversight Committee be added under Other Business. Motion by Hatfield to approve the agenda as amended. Support by Nadwornik. All ayes – motion carried.

The Planning Commission reviewed the minutes from November 27, 2023. On page 3, Snow asked to rephrase the last sentence to read, “He asked if all of the monitoring well data was used”. Motion by Snow to approve the minutes as corrected. Support by Nadwornik. All ayes - motion carried.

**BUSINESS**

LaForge explained the procedures of a public hearing.

**Rezoning**

**Map Change A-1-2024**

**Castleton Township  
Village of Nashville**

LaForge opened the public hearing and asked for the staff report. McManus noted the Village of Nashville will be coming under county authority on March 1, 2024. The proposed map defines the boundaries for the districts. He noted the role of the Planning Commission is to hold the public hearing and make a recommendation to the Board of Commissioners.

LaForge asked if anyone wished to comment on the proposed map. There was no response.

McManus noted the zoning classifications are clearly identified on the map and nearly every district is included between the two townships. He noted the zoning map was advertised in the paper in color so it would be clear where the boundaries were.

Motion by Hatfield to recommend approval of A-1-2024 to the Board of Commissioners.  
Support by Sala. All ayes – motion carried.

**Map Change A-2-2024**

**Maple Grove Township  
Village of Nashville**

LaForge opened the public hearing and asked for a staff report. Similar to the previous change, the Maple Grove Township zoning map needs to be amended to include the Village of Nashville. McManus identified the different zoning classes for the Village and said the amendment will ultimately be approved by the Board of Commissioners.

LaForge asked if anyone wished to comment on the proposed zoning map. There was no response.

LaForge closed the public hearing and reconvened the Planning Commission.

Motion by Snow to recommend approval of A-2-2024 to the board of Commissioners.  
Support by Hatfield. All ayes – motion carried.

**Special Use**

**Case No. SP-12-2023**

**Amy Webber (Applicant)  
Nicholas Gregaitis (Property Owner)**

LaForge recessed the Planning Commission, opened the public hearing, and asked Webber to present her request.

Webber said she currently has a license for a Day Care for up to 6 children, and she would like to file for a group day care for up to 12 children. She said she has a waiting list of 26 children, and some of her existing families are expecting another child. She said she is licensed to transport children and she has an autism certification.

LaForge asked if anyone wished to speak in favor of the request. There was no response. LaForge asked if anyone was opposed. There was no response.

LaForge closed the public hearing and reconvened the Planning commission.

Snow asked how old the children in the day care were. Webber said from 18 months to 8. She said she can only have two children aged 18 months or less.

LaForge asked what the new license would allow. Webber said 4 children under 18 months and 12 total.

Snow asked if Webber would have an assistant. Webber noted she has already hired an assistant who currently works when needed. Snow asked if Webber would need to hire another assistant. Webber said no.

Hatfield noted child care is a huge issue in the county.

Sala verified that the day care would meet ADA requirements. Webber said yes. Sala noted a ramp would be needed if there were two or more special needs children. Webber agreed.

LaForge questioned if there was a parking issue. Webber noted her driveway loops around the home.

Motion by Snow to approve Case No SP-12-2023 pursuant to Section 2302 parts 1-7 of the Barry County Zoning Ordinance. Support by Kammenzind. Roll call vote taken.  
6 ayes – 0 nays – motion carried.

### Site Plan Review

**PR-01-2024**

**Neal Dreisig (Applicant)  
Consumers Energy (Property Owner)**

LaForge asked Consumers to present their case.

Dina Isabelle distributed several paper slides to the Planning Commission members. (see attached). She noted the first page provides an overview for the property. She said it is a priority to retain the agricultural heritage.

On page 2, she cited the reduced odor and emissions to help manure management. She noted the gas becomes a renewable gas, and the fiber can be used as bedding.

Isabelle noted page 3 describes the digester process. She said they will use the manure produced on site and digest it anaerobically. She said this project supports the clean energy plan for the company.

Neal Dreisig noted Swiss Lane Farms operates the dairy farm and the farm does not have an efficient manure management program. He noted the digester will be set behind the barns, and the methane that is captured will be piped into the existing natural gas pipeline. He said there will be one additional building, and Semco will have a meter station on site.

Hatfield asked if it was economically feasible to have a larger digester for area farms. Dreisig noted the size was based on the site, but there could be capacity added in the future.

Nadwornik asked about water usage. Dreisig said there is no water added to the process, the only liquid is the waste liquid.

Nadwornik asked about adding food waste. Dreisig noted that cannot be licensed currently.

Snow asked how many cows were on site. Dreisig said about 5,000. He said there were 2,700 milk cows. Snow asked how much waste is produced. Dreisig said 35 million gallons per year.

Snow asked how the ownership of the property is divided. Dreisig said Consumers owns the property, and Swiss Lane owns the cows and equipment.

Nadwornik asked about the other products. Dreisig said the dried product can be used as bedding, and the liquid can be applied to land as concentrated fertilizer.

Snow asked how many digesters there were in Michigan. Dreisig said 10.

LaForge verified that the proposed project was Consumers first. Dreisig agreed.

Sala questioned the methane production of a digester verses spreading manure in a field.

Dreisig noted the methane emissions occur in lagoons before spreading the liquid in a field. He estimated the current volume to be 30,000 tons of carbon. He said the digester will reduce that to 5,000 tons of carbon, which is a 75% improvement.

Sala asked when the property was purchased. Dreisig said it was purchased in 2021, and they lease the farm operation to Swiss Lane in 5 year terms. Sala asked how many other farms Consumers owns. Dreisig said none and noted they hope to transfer the ownership of the farm to Swiss Lane.

Sala asked if this project is considered a utility scale project. Dreisig said yes. Sala asked if it is covered under the new renewable energy law. Dreisig said no because they are not producing electricity.

Sala asked if the methane was pipeline compatible and if odor reduction would be up to standards. Dreisig said yes.

Sala asked if they would monitor for methane leaks. Dreisig said they are required to install methane monitors.

Sala asked if the Semco pipeline was new. Dreisig said any of the new pipeline would be installed on the property.

Snow asked how large the site and buildings are. Dreisig said the digester and components is about 5 acres. He said the building is 45 ft tall and 100 ft in diameter.

Kammenzind asked if Consumers had projects in other states. Dreisig said no.

Nadwornik asked if they would have above ground or underground storage. Dreisig said above ground and noted the water table is too high for underground. Nadwornik asked if there was room for an additional digester. Dreisig said yes, if needed.

Kammenzind asked if this project was similar to the Alto project. Dreisig said yes. Kammenzind asked what the life span of the digester would be. Dreisig said 25 years.

LaForge asked about the power. Dreisig said they will need to upgrade the power which will benefit the whole area.

Snow asked about the noise. Dreisig said there is very little noise generated.

Nadwornik asked if there would be any methane flare offs. Dreisig said only in emergencies.

LaForge asked about the work schedule. Dreisig said they would start this summer to hopefully begin operating in 2025.

Kammenzind asked why the digester could not be bigger. Dreisig said because of permitting requirements.

Motion by Hatfield to approve PR-1-2024 as submitted. Support by Nadwornik. Roll call vote taken. 5 ayes – Kammenzind nay – motion carried.

### **Rutland Township Master Plan**

McManus noted Rutland Township had recently adopted its Master Plan amendments that had been previously reviewed.

### **Solid Waste Oversight Committee**

Snow nominated Hatfield to serve on the Solid Waste Oversight committee. Support by Sala. All ayes – motion carried.

Other Business

McManus noted monies have been allocated to complete zoning ordinances. He asked if the Planning Commission was okay using McKenna. The Planning Commission concurred.

McManus noted the Road Commission would be meeting with Stone Co on Wednesday, January 24, 2024 at 11:00 am to discuss Hayward Rd. He noted Nadwornik will be attending, and he had contacted Orangeville Township as well.

McManus noted an education forum on Solar Energy will be held on February 13, 2024 at 6:00 PM at the Hastings Performing Art Center.

Motion by Snow to adjourn. Support by Sala. All ayes – motion carried.  
Meeting adjourned at 8:10 pm.

Respectfully submitted.



Jack Nadwornik