

MEETING MINUTES
GRAND HAVEN CHARTER TOWNSHIP
PLANNING COMMISSION
MARCH 15, 2021
Remote Electronic Meeting

I. CALL TO ORDER

Cousins called the meeting of the Grand Haven Charter Township Planning Commission to order at 7:00pm.

II. ROLL CALL

Members present: Cousins, Wilson, Chalifoux, Taylor, Reenders, Hesselsweet, Wagenmaker, Mesler and Lemkuil

Members absent: None

Also present: Community Development Director Fedewa and Attorney Bultje

Without objection, Cousins instructed Fedewa to record the minutes.

III. STATEMENT ON REMOTE MEETING

It was noted the Planning Commission was meeting remotely on the Zoom platform because of health concerns associated with COVID-19 pandemic. Information on this remote meeting has been posted so that the public may participate. All officials present noted they are meeting remotely and are located within Grand Haven Charter Township.

IV. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Without objection, the minutes of the February 15, 2021 meeting were approved.

V. CORRESPONDENCE – None

VI. PUBLIC COMMENTS – None

VII. OLD BUSINESS

A. Review the DDA Report

Fedewa provided an overview through a memorandum dated March 11th.

The Planning Commission noted the following points of discussion:

- Chalifoux expressed concerns over the use of TIF Plans because he feels it “takes away” from other millage-funded organizations such as Harbor Transit and Four Pointes. Forcing these organizations to find alternative means of funding to make up for what is lost in the TIF Plan.
 - Fedewa explained a TIF Plan does not “take away” from these organizations. The TIF captures the property tax revenue from the growth/increase in taxable value each year as the properties within the DDA boundaries are improved and become more valuable.

- Chalifoux questioned why the Future Land Use Map would have to change to support the DDA boundary adjustment. If the Future Land Use Map does not support the DDA boundaries now, then it should not be expanded.
 - Fedewa explained the Future Land Use Map is a living document that requires the municipality to review and consider updating every 5 years. The Map changes as the needs of the community change.
- Two members indicated the Commission will need to be thoughtful when the Future Land Use Map is reviewed this year because a change from Agricultural Preservation to Commercial is significant. The intent of the Future Land Use Map and the US-31 Overlay Zone were to provide natural beauty through the Township.
- Chair Cousins requested the term “Week” on page 3 be revised to “Step” for consistency with the staff memos.

Motion by Taylor, supported by Wagenmaker to **approve** the Final DDA Report, with the terminology amendment, and direct staff to forward it to the Downtown Development Authority Board for their review and consideration.

Which motion carried, as shown by the following roll call vote, with Chalifoux voting against the motion because he philosophically disagrees with the use of TIF Plans:

Ayes: Wilson, Taylor, Wagenmaker, Mesler, Lemkuil, Hesselsweet, Reenders, Cousins
 Nays: Chalifoux
 Absent: None

VIII. NEW BUSINESS

A. Presentation by Staff – Planning Commission Bylaws

Fedewa presented a slide show highlighting the main points of the Bylaws.

Subsequently, Fedewa provided an overview of the proposed amendments through a memorandum dated March 11th. The amendments focus on codifying the actual practices of the Commission and Staff and empowering the Planning Commission to address unique cases where a member may have a conflict of interest.

Motion by Taylor, supported by Chalifoux, to **approve** the revised Bylaws and Rules of the Planning Commission, as presented, and authorize the Chairperson and Secretary to sign the document.

Which motion carried unanimously, as shown by the following roll call vote:

Ayes: Wilson, Taylor, Wagenmaker, Mesler, Chalifoux, Lemkuil, Hesselsweet, Reenders, Cousins
 Nays: None
 Absent: None

B. Presentation by Bultje – Special Land Use Authority + Q&A

Attorney Bultje presented information through a memorandum dated March 15th.

Highlights of the presentation and Q&A session included:

- A Special Land Use (SLU) is a use the Township has determined to be generally suitable for an area if additional standards are considered to mitigate the potential for negative impacts.
- The Planning Commission must determine whether the application is a “good fit” for the area.
- Commission can negotiate with the applicant to improve the submittal. Meaning, if the standards only meet the bottom line the PC can negotiate to improve the application, so it is a better “fit” for the location.
 - This negotiation cannot amount to variances or PUD concessions.
 - For example, reducing the size of a building to be more cohesive; revising rooflines to provide variety; requiring parking in the rear, etc.
- The Township does not owe an applicant the highest and best use of a piece of property. The courts have ruled the Township owes a “reasonable use” of the land.
 - For example, if a two-family dwelling is not suitable in a particular location the application can be denied as long as there are unique reasons. The applicant still maintains a “reasonable use” because a single family dwelling could be built and sold instead.
- The Planning Commission does not owe an applicant a “quick” response either. If there are uncertainties surrounding an application, then it should be tabled. This would allow more time to consider the application and what revisions may be necessary to improve its suitability in that location.
- Some Commissioners want to consider increasing the minimum lot width for two-family dwellings or establishing increased side yard setbacks.
 - Per Bultje, the zoning ordinance is a living document and if certain aspects are not working well, then text amendments should be pursued.

IX. REPORTS

A. Attorney’s Report – none

B. Staff Report

- The City of Grand Rapids obtained a variance from the ZBA to locate a ground-mounted solar array in the front yard of the Lake Michigan Filtration Plant. Expect a Site Plan Review application soon.
- Will need to schedule a special meeting in April for the City of Grand Rapids application and a Major Home Occupation application.

C. Commissioner Comments – none

X. EXTENDED PUBLIC COMMENTS – None

XI. ADJOURNMENT

Without objection, the meeting adjourned at 8:46 pm.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Stacey Fedewa, AICP". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, looping 'S' at the beginning.

Stacey Fedewa, AICP
Acting Recording Secretary