

Allendale Charter Township Planning Commission Meeting

*March 16, 2020 7:00 p.m.
Allendale Township Public Meeting Room*

1. Meeting called to order.
2. Roll Call:
Present: Westerling, Adams, Zuniga, Kelley, Zeinstra
Absent: Schut
Staff present: Greg Ransford
3. Received for Information: Email regarding Polkton Township's Master Plan
4. Motion by Adams to approve the March 2, 2020 Planning Commission minutes as presented. Seconded by Westerling. **Approval 6-0.**
5. Motion by Longcore to approve the March 16, 2020 Planning Commission agenda as presented. Seconded by Zeinstra. **Approval 6-0.**
6. Public Comments for *non-public hearing items*:
Chairperson Longcore opened and closed public comment section due to no present public.
7. Public Hearings: None
8. Site Plan Review: None
9. Old Business:
 - A. Subdivision Ordinance Amendments
Planner Ransford prompted discussion on the Subdivision Ordinance Amendments regarding acceptable average lot sizes for private road developments in relation to requirements to connect properties to public water. Mr. Longcore recounted the discussion from the March 2, 2020 meeting which explored if splits on 20-acre lots where a private road will be installed should face a requirement to connect to the water main. Additional questions posed were at which minimum this requirement would take effect and what minimum would maintain a subdivision's rural characteristic.

Mr. Zeinstra expressed concern not with lot sizes but the number of wells on a property in addition to property waste involved in splits, adding that the Commission wants to preserve farmland as much as possible. Mr. Longcore clarified that the issue involved cases regarding private road additions, noting that the Commission's previous discussion concluded that properties that split their parcels with an average of four acres as well as add a private road would not need to connect to the water main. Mr. Zeinstra agreed; however, he favored smaller average lot sizes rather than the four-acre

average presented, noting that he would like to reduce the occurrence of developers building subdivisions on agricultural parcels.

Mr. Longcore expressed appreciation for Mr. Zeinstra's opinion, noting that the Commission would also prefer to see development closer to Lake Michigan Drive rather than on agricultural parcels. Mr. Zeinstra acknowledged the nuance of the issue, particularly in that the revisions would restrict development. He opined that the goal is to protect the aquifer by requiring residents to connect to the water main and conferred with Mr. Ransford regarding legality in restricting splits. The Commission also pondered how often similar situations occurred.

After deliberation over historical occurrences and how to maintain the rural characteristics of a development, the Commission concluded that instead of four acre averages, they would require that a development averaging a lot area of more than two and one-half acres, if creating a private road, would not need to connect to public water.

Before moving forward with the agenda, Mr. Ransford requested an off-topic discussion related to Subdivision Ordinances regarded street trees and the management actions taken by the Ottawa County Road Commission. He reiterated the language in Allendale Charter Township's ordinance on street trees. The problem communities are experiencing, he explained, is that the Road Commission is not allowing, on outside horizontal curves with intersections to residential driveways, the planting of trees—or are pulling already planted trees, which is stricter than the current code book. His firm has been working with municipalities to write language that keeps trees in front yards, as trees planted before the rules have grown large, creating safety hazards.

Mr. Zeinstra posed questions pertaining to utility easements that may conflict with permitting tree placement by streets or in front yards. He suggested simplifying the issue by adding language for trees not to be allowed in the right of way and should be planted in the front yard. Mr. Ransford noted that other communities have been requiring for trees to be outside of right of way but within 10 feet of it to maintain uniformity. Mr. Zeinstra countered that such a distance overlaps with utilities, and Mr. Ransford explained that in these communities, the attorney indicated that the municipality possessed authority over the utility company in such conflicts.

The Commission deliberated over instances of easement for utility companies to go around, under, or even through trees. Mr. Longcore prefers street trees but did not want to encounter a situation like Jamestown where trees are not being planted due to Road Commission requirements.

Mr. Adam's noted that the Road Commission's requirements might involve site distance, suggesting that the ordinance should tie into site distances as far as the offsets from the right of way.

Mr. Kelley said 11 feet would provide adequate site distance, and additional discussion prompted Mr. Ransford to display on the projector an illustration and table from the Ottawa County Road Commission Code Book laying out optimal placement of trees to accommodate site distance at intersections. After the Commission examined and discussed the diagram, Mr. Ransford suggested language that required applicants to have tree plans approved by the County. In this way, the ordinance could bypass the

issue of site distance entirely. Mr. Zeinstra added that applicants should submit County approval for the tree locations to acquire a driveway permit.

The Commission requested that Mr. Ransford insert and revise the new language into the Subdivision Ordinance to be reviewed at a future date.

B. Zoning Ordinance Amendments

- Section 3.14 – Condominium Project Approval

Mr. Ransford recapped the previous meeting where the Commission agreed to require sidewalks for private roads in site condominiums and that these sidewalks should be privately maintained by the subdivision. Mr. Ransford noted that he added a provisions, pursuant to the recommendation of the Township Legal Counsel, to make it clear that the sidewalks would be privately maintained.

Mr. Zeinstra wondered if they could encompass other items within this revision to simplify the ordinance, such as the maintenance of trees or light poles. Mr. Ransford agreed to add in a reference to such maintenance, which would avoid conflicts with other parts of the ordinance.

Mr. Ransford was directed to insert language referencing related items to improve consistency and reduce conflict in other sections, which the Commission will review at a later date.

- Section 23.08 – Removal of Topsoil, Sand, Gravel, or Other Minerals

The Commission reviewed the changes to the mining ordinance, with Mr. Kelley remarking that the revised language read much cleaner and simpler. They briefly discussed errors in punctuation and missing wording, but otherwise approved the revisions to this section.

- Section 29.01 – Procedure for Changes

Mr. Ransford explained that the draft for this section added in the Three C's of Rezoning, noting that the original factors from the previous draft were maintained with the Three C's added as a prelude. He suggested deleting the first factor because it repeated one of the Three C's, and the Commission was comfortable with this deletion.

Mr. Longcore recapped the purpose of Three C's: to help prevent the rezoning factors from being too strict while guiding the Township in making decisions fit for the Master Plan.

The Commission deliberated over the need of the second section, with Mr. Kelley pointing out most of those factors were essentially repeats of the Three C's, and while they were useful checklists and additional talking points, he questioned its necessity. Mr. Zeinstra suggested moving those items as bulleted lists underneath the appropriate C.

Mr. Ransford will draft changes to the section for the Commission to review at a future date.

10. New Business: None

11. Public Comments:

Longcore opened and closed public comment section due to no present public.

12. Township Board Reports:

Trustee Zeinstra reported that Allendale Charter Township offices are currently closed to the public due to the COVID-19 pandemic. He did not have additional items to add.

13. Commissioner and Staff Comments: None

14. Chairperson Longcore adjourned at 8:04 a.m.

Next tentative meeting March 16, 2020 at 7:00 p.m.