

ROBINSON TOWNSHIP PLANNING COMMISSION
September 25, 2018

The special meeting of the Robinson Township Planning Commission was called to order at 7:30 PM at the Robinson Township Hall.

Present	Absent
Shawn Martinie Travis Vugteveen Bill Maschewske Tom TenBroeke George Schippers Steve Young Rich Sibley	None

Also present were Township Attorney Ron Bultje, Zoning Administrator Brian Werschem, and one member of the public. The attendance sheet is attached.

A motion was made by Travis Vugteveen and seconded by Tom TenBroeke to approve the agenda as written.
The motion carried unanimously.

A motion was made by Rich Sibley and seconded by George Schippers to approve the August 28, 2018 Planning Commission minutes as written.
The motion carried unanimously.

Non-Commission Inquiries

Kathleen Gunning – Inquired about difficulty in finding the Planning Commission and Township Board meeting minutes online at the Township website. Zoning Administrator Werschem was able to find the minutes and show her how to access them.

Reports and Communications

Travis Vugteveen reported the following from the Township Board.

1. The Andrew Foster Class A Earth Change application was reviewed and approved.
2. Expenditures were approved to reroof the fuel shed.
3. Signage was approved on Buchanan St. as “Not a Truck Route”.
4. Fire Department benefits were reviewed without resolution.
5. A water quality meeting was attended at the Ottawa County Building.

Chairperson Martinie – Reported that he attended the Ottawa County Water Quality meeting and summarized the content. It was noted that areas of Ottawa County have a unique water quality issue (primarily the SE corner of the Township and the Stearns Bayou areas). The shallow and deep aquifers are separated by a clay layer. The deep Marshal Aquifer is experiencing a serious drawdown. The clay layer above it restricts recharge of the aquifer from rainfall. As a result, the Marshal Aquifer is diminishing and increasing the salinity of the remaining water. The Ottawa County program is beginning with education and voluntary conservation and may be followed with ordinances. Chairperson Martinie will distribute copies of the presentation to all Planning Commissioners.

Announcements -- None

New Business

As scheduled, the public hearing for the Zoning Ordinance amendment to address Solar Energy was held. An introduction was given by Chairperson Martinie and the public hearing notice was read by Secretary Maschewske. Abbreviated rules of procedure were explained by Chairperson Martinie and the public hearing was declared open.

Chairperson Martinie gave a brief description of the history, purpose, and content of the proposed ordinance amendment with draft date of September 12, 2018 and stated that outside input is being sought. Questions were requested from the public.

Kathleen Gunning – Stated she is interested in Solar Energy and she was given a copy of the proposed ordinance amendment. She inquired if existing units were grandfathered.

Chairperson Martinie – Yes.

Kathleen Gunning – She has no comment other than she is pleased the Planning Commission is considering it.

There were no further comments from the public.

A motion was made by Travis Vugteveen and seconded by Rich Sibley to close the public hearing.

The motion carried unanimously.

Chairperson Martinie – Requested comments from the Planning Commission.

Bill Maschewske – Reviewed the September 12, 2018 draft compared to the minutes of the August 28, 2018 Planning Commission minutes and noted the following.

1. There does not appear to be a definition of “Battery Storage”. This could be a stand-alone system.

Township Attorney Bultje – Battery Storage facilities are only allowed as part of a Solar Energy Collection system per the proposed ordinance.

Bill Maschewske – What if they are on separate parcels or across Township boundaries?

Chairperson Martinie – The existence of a Battery Storage facility as a separate entity was noted by one of the industry representatives in attendance at a previous meeting.

Steve Young – Separate entities is definitely a possibility and we must have a very loose definition of “battery” since a variety of storage systems are used.

Township Attorney Bultje – It could be permitted if part of the same solar energy collection system.

Zoning Administrator Werschem – Noted that the industry is looking at 800 to 1200 acres of area in the Township for Utility Scale Solar Energy Collectors.

Township Attorney Bultje – We could add specific requirements.

Steve Young – Suggested the applicant be required to demonstrate safety of the system to the environment.

Township Attorney Bultje – Will revise Section 35.2 (G) to be more generic.

2. Section 35.2 -- Fire Risk is not addressed.

At Rich Sibley’s suggestion, a risk mitigation plan will be requested.

3. Security – We do not have any requirements beyond fencing for Utility Scale Solar Energy Systems.

Following discussion, it was agreed to require security as part of a risk mitigation plan. This will be added to requirements in Section 35.2.

Steve Young – Correct Section 34.3(A) to read “The maximum height in the Zoning District ...”.

A discussion followed regarding whether a battery storage system should be contiguous with a solar energy collector system. Rich Sibley noted that industry representatives had previously informed the Planning Commission that 20 acres of solar energy collector system would need approximately 1 acre for energy storage.

It was generally agreed that the 20 to 1 collection to storage ratio be used and that the storage facilities be located either on the same parcel as the collection system or on a contiguous parcel.

Township Attorney Bultje will make the agreed upon changes to the proposed text and the Planning Commission will review them at the October meeting. If the Planning Commission recommends approval at the October meeting, Township Board could then either adopt the ordinance amendment at their November meeting or extend the moratorium.

Old Business

At 8:45 PM., the draft Zoning Ordinance amendment to Signs was reviewed.

Township Attorney Bultje – Noted that proposed legislation had been introduced to force municipalities to comply with the recent Supreme Court decision regarding signs.

A motion was made by George Schippers and seconded by Tom TenBroeke to untangle review of the draft amendment to the Sign ordinance with draft date of May 29, 2018.
The motion carried unanimously.

The following comments were offered.

Section 4.44(C)(2) -- Rewrite to make clear that signs cited by the Township for repairs could be repaired instead of removed.

Section 4.44(C)(6) (E) and (F) – Do not allow electronic messages.

Bill Maschewske -- Suggested the Chart be rewritten and organized by Zoning District. The allowable signs for each district would be listed along with maximum sizes and other relevant requirements. This could then replace much of the text in Section 4.44 and help in understanding and implementation.

Section 4.44 (C)(7) – The maximum size should be 100 square feet instead of 120 square feet.

Section 4.44 (D)(6) – Increase 5 feet to 10 feet.

Section 4.44(E)(2) – Exempt address signs.

Section 4.44(E)(5) – Delete “are not” to correct a grammatical error.

Section 4.45(D) – Delete “whichever is greater”.

Section 4.45(C) – Delete the last sentence.

Zoning Administrator Werschem – The Boes variance requests from the Zoning Board of Appeals need to be considered.

Bill Maschewske – Agreed to bring the Zoning Board of Appeals minutes to the next meeting to resolve the subjects of the two variances.

Township Attorney Bultje is to prepare a revised draft incorporating the above comments for additional review.

A motion was made by Travis Vugteveen and seconded by Rich Sibley to pay Planning Commission salaries for the month of September 2018 (one meeting, all present).
The motion carried unanimously.

A motion was made by George Schippers and seconded by Travis Vugteveen to adjourn the Planning Commission meeting at 10:00 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Bill Maschewske, Secretary
Robinson Township Planning Commission



SIGN IN SHEET

Meeting of the Planning Commission

September 25, 2018 at 7:30 pm

PRINT NAME

SIGNATURE

PRINT NAME	SIGNATURE
<i>Kathleen J. Gunning</i> <i>Kathleen J.</i>	<i>Kathleen J. Gunning</i>