

ROBINSON TOWNSHIP PLANNING COMMISSION
July 25, 2023

The regular meeting of the Robinson Township Planning Commission was called to order at 7:00 PM at the Robinson Township Hall.

Present

Shawn Martinie
Bill Maschewske
Travis Vugteveen
Lydia Brown
Steve Young
Michelle Gillespie

Absent

Anne Goede

Also present were Township Supervisor Frank Johnson, Township Attorney Ron Bultje, Zoning Administrator Julie Lovelace, and 9 members of the public.
The attendance sheet is attached.

Approval of Agenda

A motion was made by Michelle Gillespie and seconded by Travis Vugteveen to approve the meeting agenda as amended to add review of the draft Rules of Procedure for the Planning Commission at the end of the meeting.
The motion carried unanimously with one member absent.

Adopting of Previous Minutes

A motion was made by Travis Vugteveen and seconded by Lydia Brown to approve as written the minutes of the May 23, 2023 Planning Commission meeting.
The motion carried unanimously with one member absent.

Non-Commission member Inquiries and Questions -- None

Reports and Communications -- None

Announcements

Zoning Administrator Lovelace reported that she will be on vacation from August 14 through August 21, 2023.

Old Business

The review of the draft Rules of Procedures for the Planning Commission was added and moved to the end of the meeting.

New Business

As noticed, the public hearing was held for the citizen initiated Zoning Ordinance Text Amendment. Chairperson Martinie gave an introduction to the public hearing and Secretary Maschewske read the public hearing notice. Chairperson Martinie declared the public hearing open and requested the applicant to make a presentation for the requested Zoning Ordinance Text Amendment.

Joel Smeenge, applicant, noted that he has developed other properties in which storage units were combined with residential living quarters throughout the state. He noted there is a marina adjacent to the subject property. He considered doing just boat storage but wanted a “softer landing” in which his property would be a better transition to the adjacent property. He is proposing 9 storage units/residences on the property. The existing storage building would be converted to 3 units, a new building would be constructed housing 6 units, and the existing house would be demolished. All units would utilize a common well which the Health Department states must serve less than 10 dwelling units. He has preliminary approval for the septic systems. Each storage unit will include a mezzanine which will have a kitchenette and sleeping quarters. He noted he is willing to do just storage buildings without dwelling units. He would not allow any commercial business uses and no outside storage. He would probably own one of the units himself.

Chairperson Martinie – Is a common area proposed?

Joel Smeenge – Stated he had a wetlands study done. They propose adequate parking and a detention area.

Jim Milanowski (representative of Joel Smeenge) – Noted this proposed development would be a conventional condominium and not a site condo. There will be a master deed that must be approved by the Township.

Joel Smeenge – Inquired if he could just do the condominium storage units and forget the residential component.

Chairperson Martinie – How large is the proposed site?

Jim Milanowski – 3.8 acres. Noted this use would make a good transition between properties.

Steve Young – How large of a boat would be accommodated by the proposed docks?

Joel Smeenge – Noted they are permitted a 40 ft. dock by the State. There are two 44 ft. docks on the site now.

Todd TenBrink (one of the property owners) – There are two 45 ft. docks on the parcel and a seawall was started long ago.

Chairperson Martinie requested comments from the public.

Supervisor Frank Johnson – Stated that the current no-wake zone does not extend in front of the applicant's property. Would the applicant request it to be extended?

Chairperson Martine – Inquired of Township Attorney Bultje and Zoning Administrator Lovelace what their experience is with mixtures of storage and residential.

Zoning Administrator Lovelace – She fears that as storage only units they will become dwellings also.

Joel Smeenge – His first choice is to not do the residential component.

Township Attorney Bultje – He has no experience in this area but has experience with accessory dwelling units for multigenerational use and with short-term rentals.

Dale TenBrink – Noted this is a popular concept in Ohio.

Steve Young – Could the owners lease either the storage units or the living units or both?

Jim Milanowski – This could be included in either the Master Deed or Township regulations.

Joel Smeenge – Showed the Planning Commission his preliminary plans for reworking the existing storage building and the plans for the new building. The living units would be 1400 sq. ft. minimum. There would be one bath on the main floor.

Chairperson Martinie – The Planning Commission needs to do research on this subject. Storage units only is acceptable.

Rich Sibley – He is concerned about the number of dwelling units and adequate well and septic capabilities.

Chairperson Martinie – Well and septic issues are the responsibility of the Ottawa County Health Department.

Jim Milanowski – Noted that hotels and motels are allowed in the B-2 Zoning District.

Township Attorney Bultje – Stated this project opens huge doors and there could also be short-term rentals involved. Research on this subject is tied into short-term rentals and is probably specific to the waterfront.

Jim Milanowski – Noted he has done Planned Unit Development projects before. Could this type of project be done as a PUD?

Planning Commission Response – There are many complications to try this as a PUD. The absolute minimum would be 7 acres in size and the proposal exceeds the number of dwelling units allowed.

Joel Smeenge – What is the time frame for an answer?

Chairperson Martinie – Perhaps a month.

Township Attorney Bultje – It will take much longer than that.

Jim Milanowski – Is there a problem adding docks if the project is for just storage units?

Chairperson Martinie – No.

Joel Smeenge – Could he just apply for storage units only and add residential units if and when the Township makes a decision?

Concern was raised by the Planning Commission about occupants living in the storage units.

Township Attorney Bultje – The Township could put conditions in the Master Deed to prohibit residential occupancy.

Joel Smeenge – He is going to request a Special Use for storage only and consider the residential component when the Planning Commission reaches a consensus.

Jim Milanowski – Would the Township require hookup to sewer and water?

Dale TenBrink – Most storage units in the South have bathrooms.

There were no more comments from the applicants, the public or the Planning Commission.

A motion was made by Lydia Brown and seconded by Michelle Gillespie to close the public hearing.

The motion carried unanimously with one member absent.

A motion was made by Michelle Gillespie and seconded by Steve Young to take the matter under advisement for recommendation at a later date.

The motion carried unanimously with one member absent.

Chairperson Martinie requested background information on storage/residential units from Township Attorney Bultje.

At 8:10PM., Travis Vugteveen introduced the subject of short-term rentals for discussion as noted on the agenda. The Township Board has issued a directive to the Planning Commission to

investigate this subject and make recommendation with a Township-wide view. This may involve an overlay district or an independent new Zoning District for short-term rentals.

Zoning Administrator Lovelace noted that there have been numerous inquiries regarding short-term rentals.

Township Attorney Bultje noted the State has considered pre-empting local ordinances regarding short-term rentals and permitting them in 30% of residences. Issues to consider include:

1. Area(s) where allowed.
2. Zoning Districts.
3. Density.

In addition to a Zoning Ordinance Amendment, a Police Power Ordinance is needed to address nuisance issues.

It was noted that property values and population base are issues of concern. South Haven was cited as an example of what can happen with short-term rentals.

Township Attorney Bultje – Stated there are 3rd party businesses that will contract to police short-term rentals similar to contracting for building inspection services. This would mean that the Township would need to charge for permits to support the policing required.

Township Attorney Bultje agreed to supply copies of the Laketown, Spring Lake, Grand Haven and Casco Township short-term rental ordinances for Planning Commission review since he represents all of these municipalities. He will also investigate what Port Sheldon Township is doing since adjacent Park Township has recently prohibited short-term rentals.

At 8:30 PM., Zoning Administrator Lovelace introduced the subject of gazebos and play structures. Currently these are considered Accessory Buildings under the Zoning Ordinance. Residents have requested permits for such structures, however, if they already have the maximum allowable square footage of Accessory Building(s), they are not allowed these structures.

Zoning Administrator Lovelace is to investigate how other townships deal with this issue and report.

Chairperson Martinie inquired how Township Attorney Bultje is progressing in reviewing the draft Master Land Use Plan. Township Attorney Bultje responded that he would have his review complete by the end of August. As such, Chairperson Martinie stated there would be no Planning Commission planning meeting scheduled for August but one would be scheduled for September 12, 2023.

Any and All Other Business That May Come Before the Board

A motion was made by Travis Vugteveen and seconded by Steve Young to table review of the draft Rules of Procedure.

The motion carried unanimously with one member absent.

Pay Bills

A motion was made by Travis Vugteveen and seconded by Lydia Brown to pay Planning Commission salaries for the July 25, 2023 meeting (six members present, one member absent).
The motion carried unanimously with one member absent.

Adjournment

A motion was made by Travis Vugteveen and seconded by Michelle Gillespie to adjourn the Planning Commission meeting at 8:50 PM.
The motion carried unanimously with one member absent.

Respectfully submitted,

Bill Maschewske, Secretary
Robinson Township Planning Commission

Attachment: Sign- In Sheet for Planning Commission July 25, 2023 meeting.



SIGNATURE

GC Marshall

Robert Lee Brant



Jul. 1907

Paula Lee

Brent S. H.