

LAKE TOWNSHIP PLANNING COMMISSION

Unapproved Minutes

Wednesday, October 24, 2007

The meeting of the Lake Township Planning Commission was called to order at 7:03 PM by Chairman Colletta. Geppert, Ehrlich, Lalley, McCallum, and recording secretary Bolton were present. There were 12 guests.

Motion by Geppert to approve the minutes of the September 26, 2007, seconded by McCallum, motion carried.

New Business

Site Plan reviews

Tom Carriveau, 5176 Port Austin Road, installed a shed on his property. Russell informed him that he needed a site plan application and that the shed would need to be moved off the easement area. Property is in R-1. Planning commission members reviewed the site plan and approved.

Charlotte and Jerald Ignash recently purchased a ten acre property on Conkey Road in an R-R district. There is an existing home on the property and they want to sell the home and have it removed from the property. They would like to use the remaining basement as a foundation and construct a storage building on the property. The plan is to build a home with an attached garage in about five years along with a pole barn and greenhouse. The final plan would result in four (4) accessory buildings on the property. The current zoning ordinance only allows two (2) accessory buildings per parcel. Additionally the basement converted to an accessory building would be in the front yard of the home and the proposed pole barn would have more square footage than allowed. Charlotte wanted the planning commission's opinion on requesting a rezoning to Agricultural to avoid all of the variances her plan will entail. The members stated that they try to avoid spot zoning and feel it would be best if left R-R. The members feel the existing basement is grandfathered in and that the Ignash's can construct an accessory building on the foundation. If and when the Ignash's decide to build a home and additional accessory buildings, they would need to submit a site plan and would have to apply for variances for those items that do not meet the ordinance.

Old Business

Wind Turbines-Colletta stated that a lot of the information the members have gathered so far has been negative and he would like input from the audience as to their views of some of the positive benefits of locating wind turbine facilities in the township.

Matt Wagner from DTE said he has read the minutes from the planning commission meetings and knows that the members have concerns about the

environmental impacts the turbines may cause. He is aware of the US Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) guidelines of not locating turbines closer than three (3) miles from a great lake shoreline and no closer than five (5) miles from an eagle nesting site. DTE is having wildlife studies done and they have acquired easements in the township but until all the data is in the company does not know if they will construct turbines on those properties or not. They are aware of the Rush Lake Wildlife Preserve and it is a concern that they are looking at. Wagner has spoken to Burr Fisher of USFWS and Fisher has offered to visit the area and offer input on the proposed project. Fisher discussed the three (3) mile and five (5) mile guidelines with Wagner as recently as Monday, October 22nd and did not give his okay or denial as to if the project could proceed or not. More studies of the migration patterns need to be completed. DTE has hired Applied Ecological Services to conduct migration studies for the next one (1) to three (3) years in spring and again in fall. They also will be looking at endangered species habitat and mating patterns.

Lalley asked if DTE ever plans a wind turbine facility for an area and then just finds a certain area not good and what would be the smallest land mass area available for turbines that would make it economically feasible. Wagner stated that DTE has 4,320 acres under contract in southern sections of Lake Township, the normal ratio is one turbine per one hundred (100) acres. Lake Township has the potential for about forty (40) turbines in the township. Setback requirements, wind speeds, and other issues will affect that number.

Lalley stated that he has heard a lot of people say we should encourage the wind turbine facilities because they will reduce the need for foreign oil. Lalley would like to know if wind turbine facilities reduce foreign oil dependency. Wagner stated that they have no effect and that DTE has not been stating that.

Bill Osborne, 5332 W. Kinde Road said wind turbine facilities will reduce the need for coal fired plants and nuclear plants. Lalley asked DTE to clarify the process of wind turbine generated power. Ron Chriss of DTE explained that when the winds are good and power is being generated from the facilities, DTE can run the coal and nuclear plants at a lower capacity. Power generated from wind sources cannot be stored for future use.

McCallum stated that the concept of wind power is a good one but, taking USFWS guidelines into account she questions if Lake Township is the best location for them. Lalley said he is not against wind power but that he represents the residents of Lake Township and he is trying to gather as much

information as possible so he can make educated decision on the development of a zoning ordinance. Lalley questioned if DTE has researched other sources of renewable energy such as solar and methane digesters. He questions if DTE is only looking at wind turbine facilities because they are receiving subsidies from the state to develop them. Wagner stated that solar energy is not a real option in Michigan and DTE has started to look at methane digesters but wind turbine facilities have the lowest development cost and require less manpower. Turbines facilities only need approximately one (1) person per every eight wind turbines. Wagner said that a lot of the information out there is from old data and that design changes to the tower supports have lessened the impacts to birds.

Lalley asked if DTE has ever looked at an area like Lake Township that is unique with six miles of great lake shoreline, Rush Lake Wildlife Preserve, wetlands and such and just said let's go elsewhere. Lalley envisions the whole township covered in wind turbines and as a representative of the residents of the township he has concerns.

Osborne said he was disappointed that the ZBA had denied the variance request from DTE for a temporary test tower. Lalley pointed out that the ZBA made that decision and that the planning commission is working on an ordinance for wind turbine facilities that will be permanent. Wagner stated that DTE is concerned about locating turbines so close to Rush Lake and that habitat protection is of great importance to DTE. He stated that wind generated power is clean and does not create waste by-products.

Osborne said the township needs to wait for USWFS studies before making decisions. Osborne thinks one to one and a half (1 -1 ½) miles from the great shoreline would be okay.

John Tait said he read the minutes of past planning commission meetings and read that the members are concerned about the impacts to the summer habitat of Endangered Indiana Bats in the area. He wants to know how many deer are hit by cars each year and maybe the members should be concerned about them.

Paul Golsch, 4946 Port Austin Road and ZBA member stated that he read an article in Bay City Times that Consumers Energy is building a new coal fired plant that will release seven (7,000) thousand tons of CO2 into the air per year. McCallum asked DTE if wind turbine facilities will ever be able to replace coal plants. Chriss stated that at this time the power generated from wind turbines cannot compare to coal plants. McCallum asked if the power

generated from wind can be stored like that created by coal. Chriss replied no. Osborne said that when the wind turbines generate power, DTE can shut down their power plant. Wagner clarified that statement, DTE can run the power plants at a lower intensity but they do not shut down.

Gary Bauer of Brokerage Land Company, the leasing agent for DTE in the area, presented a map of the area. The green areas have already signed leases, and yellow are nearing the signing process. Bauer said the company is mindful of the shoreline and is staying a distance from it. Lalley asked if Bauer or anyone from DTE has ever driven down State Park Road to the south and seen the sand hill cranes and tundra swans in the fields. Wagner said studies are being done to see if the swans and cranes have an avoidance behavior to the towers. Lalley asked if that meant they would stop using this area for migration and nesting. Wagner stated that DTE is considering that.

Lou Bushey, 3403 Port Austin Road and ZBA Chairman said that no dairy farm in the area is large enough to make a methane digester economically feasible, but maybe if all the dairies got together and trucked the waste to a central site than it might make sense.

Dorothy Fischer, 6187 State Park Road and Township Treasurer, stated that the wind turbine facility would generate tax revenue for the township. Chriss stated that DTE will be pursuing tax abetments. McCallum stated that taking into account the tax abetments, the monies for the township general operating would be about \$230. per turbine per year. Fischer stated that she attended a meeting at the county a few years ago and all the local townships wanted wind turbines because of the monies it would generate. Lalley asked about the effect on property values for property owners adjacent to or near a wind turbine facility. Wagner stated that the impacts are small and that he will send copies of studies to us. Bauer stated that residents in Sebawaing Township want wind turbines. Bauer also stated that many of the parcels under contract are in the PA116 program and that utility easements do not affect the program. Bauer said that companies are even allowed to build turbines in wetland restoration areas. Wagner stated that DTE avoids placing towers in wetlands and that is part of studies.

Bushey stated that Oliver Township is claiming $\frac{1}{4}$ of their SEV will come from wind turbines. Bauer questioned how much Oliver Township is charging per wind turbine.

Colletta said he read in the Huron Tribune that Lakers' Schools was thanking DTE for putting in the wind turbines at the school. Wagner stated that DTE did not install the turbines at the school, the statement in the paper is not true.

Wagner stated that the monies from leases will provide additional monies to the area. Bauer stated that lease signers feel the revenue is important but they are really doing it for future generations, their children and grandchildren.

Bushey asked if the planning commission has received any response from the attorney yet pertaining to the wind turbine ordinance. Colletta stated that nothing has been received.

Chriss thanked the commission for the opportunity to offer input at the meeting. Osborne asked if the commission was making a decision on the wind turbine ordinance at the meeting. Colletta stated that no decision is going to be made at this time, the commission is still gathering information. Fischer asked why Lake Township doesn't just adopt the county's wind turbine ordinance. Colletta said the commission members feel the county ordinance does not address a lot of the unique resources in Lake Township and is too general. Fischer stated that Caseville adopted the county's ordinance. Lalley said the members of the Lake Township planning commission feel it is their responsibility on behalf of the residents to educate themselves and make their decisions based on the facts. Bauer asked if the commission had considered an overlay district. McCallum said the commission had considered an overlay but considering USFWS guidelines of three (3) miles from the great lake shoreline and five (5) miles from eagles nest, it didn't leave an area in the township that was appropriate for a wind turbine facility. Bushey said that Caseville Township adopted the county ordinance and they have great lake shoreline. Colletta stated that the commission needed to move on to other agenda items.

Canvas Structures-the board has placed a moratorium on canvas structure until April 2008 so that the planning commission can research model ordinances. The members were provided with reading materials in preparation of a discussion at the next meeting. No action was taken and the agenda item was tabled.

Motion by McCallum to adjourn, seconded by Geppert. Motion passed, meeting adjourned at 8:36PM.

The next planning commission meeting is scheduled for November 28th at 7PM.