

**LOWELL CHARTER TOWNSHIP PLANNING COMMISSION
REGULAR MEETING
December 9, 2019**

PRESENT: Blough, Batchelor, Simmonds, Edwards

ABSENT: Clements

TOWNSHIP PLANNER: Tim Johnson

CITIZENS IN ATTENDANCE: 6

The Regular Meeting of the Lowell Charter Township Planning Commission was called to order by Chairperson Simmonds at 7:00 pm.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

The Minutes of the regular meeting of November 11, 2019 were presented for approval. Mr. Edwards moved to approve the meeting minutes as submitted. Motion seconded by Mr. Blough. All in favor and the minutes of the November 11, 2019 meeting are approved.

CHANGES OR ADDITIONS TO THE AGENDA:

Chairperson Simmonds moved to add Item 7, Fairgrounds Special Use Permit Application. Motion seconded by Mr. Edwards. All in favor and the agenda as amended is approved.

PUBLIC COMMENT FOR ITEMS NOT ON THE AGENDA:

The meeting was opened to public comment at 7:02 pm. No citizens spoke. Public comment was closed at 7:02 pm.

Election of Officers for 2020

Mr. Edwards moved that the current slate of officers be reelected to their current positions on the Planning Commission for 2020. Motion seconded by Mr. Blough. All in favor and the current officers will continue in their positions in 2020.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS:

Fairgrounds Special Use Permit Application

Chairperson Simmonds acknowledged receipt of Fairgrounds materials from Cory Davis, PE, Project Manager for the Fairgrounds, dated December 2, 2019, the second Site Plan dated November 26, 2019, the Second Preliminary Review Report from Planner Tim Johnson dated December 9, 2019, and a report from the Lowell Township Engineers LRE dated December 9, 2019.

Cory Davis, with assistance from Bill Zasko and Bruce Doll, presented on behalf of the Fair Association. The overall concept for the Fair remains the same. Some trees for screening have

been added, and the retention pond changed. Planned tree types are clarified. Asphalt parking for handicapped spaces are now shown. Shade trees are shown in multiple areas.

Issues on drainage raised by the Township Engineer in his report are being reviewed. The issue of retention ponds was discussed. Borings show heavy clay with high ground water levels, so these ponds are being shown with a minimum of one foot depth, but ideally they will be deeper. Chairperson Simmonds asked for clarification that capacity should be based on a 25 year rainfall event. He was advised that this would be calculated based on a 120 minute rainfall event.

Details on parking surfaces were provided on the second page of the Site Plan. The lagoon will require fencing. Mr. Edwards confirmed that all the property will be fenced as well. Chairperson Simmonds was concerned that a 4-foot high tensile wire strand fence could be easily jumped. Mr. Blough thought more than four strands would stop people and would define the trespass line.

The core fairgrounds will be surrounded by a six-foot chain link fence. The type of fencing around the lagoon is unresolved at this time. Mr. Batchelor asked about the option of an eight-foot fence around the lagoon. Planner Johnson indicated that the Ordinance would allow a taller fence if required for public safety. He further stated that fencing needs to be shown on the Site Plan, along with detail of the fence.

Mr. Edwards asked about the required number of porta-jons, in addition to the restrooms. The final number has not yet been determined. Mr. Edwards stated that 68 porta-jons would be required for the anticipated attendance, based on general formulas. This number and their location will need to be provided. Applicants indicated that there will be additional toilets for the barns, which will affect the overall number of porta-jons required. Mr. Batchelor confirmed that there is a formula setting the number of porta-jons required.

Applicant reported that after some review a 6-foot fence will likely be installed around the property.

Mr. Edwards then asked that the specific phases be detailed, as is routinely done with PUD and other construction projects in the Township.

Mr. Edwards also noted that there was some concern about the height of the lights for the horse arenas, but he was concerned about the risk to animals and spectators if shadows are thrown around the horses. Overall he felt the lighting plan was inadequate at this time, including arena lighting being brighter around the edges and dimmer in the center of the arenas, based on his research. Applicant was concerned about being over the overall light limits from the Ordinance.

Lighting for the track was also discussed, as it appears to have more light than the arenas. Applicant noted that taller poles allow better aiming of the light. The Applicant will review the lighting issues raised. Mr. Batchelor thought a comparison between what the Fairground area requires and what the Ordinance allows should be made. He would also like to know when the lights would be in operation. Applicant stated that they have set hours for operation of the lights.

Chairperson Simmonds would like information about the use of lights at times other than during the Kent County Fair week, for horse clubs and other uses.

Mr. Edwards noted that he has information that 40db is a realistic estimate of Fairground noise limits, and will a report to the Planning Commission regarding that. Applicants noted that the carnival has also provided this information. Sound levels will be higher for people close to or riding the amusements, but lower at the property lines.

The street level view was then discussed, including barns and lights. Chairperson Simmonds clarified where the access to the core fair will be. There will also be other entrances, such as from the camping grounds. There will be entrances through the fence around the core fairgrounds. The fence is primarily to make buildings and vehicle storage more secure when there are no activities. Entrance fees will be collected further North on the entrance drive on the West side of the property. The service drive will have a few vehicles (mostly vendors) entering, and there will be staffing at that entrance. Planner Johnson would like all gates to be shown, and to see the emergency plan for exiting the property.

There are plans for the Kent County Sheriffs Office to patrol the grounds during certain hours of the Fair. This is considered a part of their daily patrol and no charge to the Fair for their services is expected.

Planner Johnson asked whether the Kent County Road Commission had discussed a bypass lane for traffic headed East on Cascade Road, at the time the driveway permit was approved. His concern is traffic backup behind cars waiting to turn left into the fairgrounds. There will be a deceleration lane. Applicant will investigate further on the need for a bypass lane.

Planner Johnson returned to questions about parking, on page 2 of his report. He would like a 10-foot walkway for foot traffic through the parking area to the core fairground. Applicant said this would be done, noting that only 40 parking spaces would be lost. Planner Johnson also asked if there would be a walkway along the core fair fence. Applicant has used a 50-foot walkway separated by rope in the past. This should be shown on the Site Plan. Aisle designations were suggested to help people find their parked car as they leave the fairgrounds.

The parking surface will be investigated further to confirm fire equipment has access to the fairgrounds. Further information will be required from the Fire Chief. No fire hydrants are planned, as this would require a larger pumping system.

Mr. Blough asked about access to the lagoon. Mr. Edwards noted that these drawings have not yet been provided. A hard surface for access will be necessary.

For large events such as the annual Kent County Fair, the entrance drive will be roped off from the parking area so all cars are directed to the back of the entrance drive, rather than turning off early to reach parking along the East side of the drive. This will be shown on future plans.

Mr. Edwards asked about manure distribution on neighboring property and what the alternative manure management plan will be if that procedure does not continue indefinitely. Applicant will work on an alternative plan.

Continuing with Planner Johnson's questions, current bridge crossings will be removed. At a later meeting, the Planning Commission will need to compare the proposed activities listed against those which will be permitted under the Ordinance. Chairperson Simmonds asked about tractor pulls, being told that these are antique machines. This should be specified in the final approval list. Monster truck events were discussed. These are allowed at other fairs, and do not produce excessive noise. Hudsonville Fair permits them despite nearby residential property, and the event would be just one night during the Fair.

Grandstand events would include concerts, viewing the monster truck event, and similar events. This is the large bleacher set shown on the Site Plan. Mr. Edwards noted that speakers at the grandstand should face North for sound control. The grandstand orientation and uses will be reviewed more closely by Applicant.

Chairperson Simmonds asked about location of the fair office. The plan is to locate it in the 'still' exhibit barn eventually, but it may initially be located in the former Deer Run clubhouse.

Trees on an earthen berm in the front of the fairgrounds will eventually form a solid wall. Planner Johnson suggested that a filtered view might be a nicer option. Chairperson Simmonds felt the solid trees would protect the neighbors across Cascade Road from sound and light. The decision was to leave these trees as a solid wall.

Placing of trees will be part of the first phase after grading; this will be made a condition. Shade trees to benefit the Midway will be added.

The front sign size is fine, but the LED display would not be allowed in the Ag-1 zone without a zoning amendment or variance. A manually changed sign with lighting would be allowed.

A first aid office will be in the livestock arena initially, but will be moved to another location later on.

Building height limit is 35 feet. Applicant is revising the height of buildings.

The campground will have many requirements, which the Planning Commission can modify. Applicant should decide which requirements they can meet and which ones might be negotiated. State regulations will also apply.

Location and screening of dumpsters will need to be shown.

Some narrative about the planned uses of the current clubhouse should be provided.

After meeting with the Fire Chief an update should be provided to the Planning Commission.

Mr. Batchelor asked about revisions needed for the bleacher area. The current orientation has to do with not having the sun in the audiences' eyes during evening events. This orientation will cause sound to be projected towards Cascade Road. Applicant will review this matter. There may be some presentations in the 'mall' as well, with a stage pointing in the correct direction. Applicant noted that large concert events at fairgrounds are becoming less common, as local casinos are serving as a site for these events. More family-friendly events such as rodeos would be more likely.

Mr. Batchelor confirmed that the Fair will be in the City of Lowell next year. This year will involve building the infrastructure. There could be a minimum fair with only the horse arenas and the arena building. More buildings will be added as funds permit. Funding for Phase 1 is still being sought, but Applicant is hoping to start work in the Spring.

Mr. Blough asked about the existing well used by Deer Run Golf Course. Applicant will need to test it to see if a new well will be required. There will be an electrical supply upgrade to the fairgrounds. There is not a natural gas line to the fairgrounds currently.

Mr. Edwards asked when the requested information will be provided. Applicant's goal is to bring it to the next Planning Commission meeting on January 13, 2020.

Fencing will be shown on the Site Plan, including that for the lagoon and for the storage shed. RV storage parking will be indoors. Future barns will be multipurpose, to allow storage of RVs. Mr. Batchelor would suggest closing the first parking turnoff from the west drive into the parking area, to avoid backups caused by cars waiting to make that first left turn.

Applicant will provide more detail on how far cars will go North on the driveway before turning into the parking area, to keep waiting cars off Cascade Road. There might be two lanes in and one out when events are commencing, then two lanes out and one in at the end of events.

Applicants will continue their work on developing final plans for the fairgrounds. This Application will be pursued again in January if possible, and new materials will be channeled through Planner Johnson.

NEW BUSINESS:

Master Plan Update

Planner Johnson provided Draft 1 for 2020 Goals and Objectives for the Master Plan dated December 9, 2010, a memorandum on the Mixed Use MX planning area dated December 9, 2019, and a document from McKenna Associates showing demographics for the Township. He noted that it was clear that Lowell Township is getting older by the day. The median age of a resident is 45 years old. From a planning perspective this will require future discussion.

Chairperson Simmonds asked if the Jansma property in the MX mixed-use zone should include multi-family residential zoning. Mr. Jansma most recently indicated that he does not want multi-

family residential. Planner Johnson explained that multi-family residential is one of many reasonable uses for that property, and there may be a future owner of the land who would like this option.

Planner Johnson suggested more R-1 areas which have smaller lot sizes, making purchase by younger owners more feasible.

Mr. Edwards is concerned with our Ordinance 5.07(C) contradicting the Land Division Act. Planner Johnson feels that the Land Division Act only concerns land splits and does not regulate the size of the parcels or the granting of building permits. However this has not been tested in court.

Mr. Edwards is concerned with what will happen to the large family farms as farmers retire. Mr. Blough feels prime farmland involves multi-generational farms, and that the land will be passed on to family members. He stated that farmland has not changed hands very often within the last 30 to 60 years.

Mr. Blough would like to see the Bieri sand pit be master-planned as a fill site when the sand mining operation is finished. The fill ordinance is currently being developed.

COMMISSIONER COMMENTS:

Mr. Batchelor asked for Planner Johnson's opinion regarding insurance bond requirements. Planner Johnson explained that the insurance bond is a common requirement for certain activities such as mining, wind turbines and cell towers. This requirement ensures that the person conducting the activity is covered if accidents occur on their property, or on adjacent properties, or to people coming onto the property, and further ensures that the activity is a legitimate operation. Chairperson Simmonds suggested that at each annual review of a Special Use Permit where a bond is required, that evidence of a continuing bond be required.

Mr. Batchelor stated that the latest Fill Licensing Ordinance draft will be sent on to the Township Board.

There will be no workshop meeting on December 23, 2019.

Adjournment:

Motion to adjourn made by Mr. Edwards. Motion seconded by Mr. Batchelor. All in favor and the meeting of the Lowell Charter Township Planning Commission was adjourned at 9:15 pm.

Submitted _____ Secretary
Timothy Clements

Approved _____