

**LOWELL CHARTER TOWNSHIP PLANNING COMMISSION
SPECIAL MEETING
July 24, 2017**

PRESENT: Blough, Batchelor, Simmonds, Clements, Edwards
TOWNSHIP PLANNER: Bob Toland
CITIZENS IN ATTENDANCE: 8

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

CHANGES OR ADDITIONS TO THE AGENDA:

Mr. Simmonds moved to remove Item 3, Approval of July 10, 2017 Meeting Minutes, from the agenda, and to approve the Agenda as amended. Motion seconded by Mr. Batchelor. 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 one spoke. Public comment was closed at 7:02 pm.

PUBLIC HEARINGS

There were no Public Hearings.

OLD BUSINESS

Fairgrounds Zoning Ordinance Amendment – Discussion

Mr. Simmonds explained to those present the process of a workshop meeting. There were several questions and concerns expressed by neighbors living across Cascade Road from Deer Run Golf Course, the property most likely to be developed as a fairground.

Mr. Edwards raised the question of which fairground activities could be addressed under Michigan Acts 80 and 106, and Acts 11 and 12.

Mr. Clements suggested that, rather than attempting to create a list of allowed activities, that it might be more productive to focus on existing ordinances which can limit the impact of fairground activities on neighboring residences.

Mr. Batchelor suggested a review of activities which would not be allowed on the fairground. Mr. Edwards would focus on sound levels of activities. Mr. Blough asked if this would prevent rock bands and similar events.

Mr. Edwards brought up the distinction between Acts which allow privately-owned fairgrounds (Acts 80 and 106) and Acts which allow fairgrounds owned by municipalities (Acts 11 and 12).

The fair under discussion would be privately owned. Municipally owned fairs are already allowed under the Ordinance.

Planner Toland reviewed the options available to the Planning Commission with respect to a fairground. Zoning regulates activities in different zones. Each zone has permitted uses, which don't require special approvals. With Special Land Uses, there needs to be conditions for use of the land subject to the special land use. Some conditions can be general (applying to all Special Land Uses allowed in a zoning district). Another option for zoning would be to create a special zoning district just for fairgrounds.

Mr. Batchelor raised the question of whether the Master Plan provided for a special zone for fairgrounds. Mr. Edwards noted that fairgrounds had been discussed in connection with the last revision of the Master Plan, when it was thought that a fairground would be formed on other lands in the Township.

It was noted that the Kent County Road Commission would normally review and approve road access into and out of a fairground. In this case, it is believed that Cascade Road is actually a State Highway. Jessica Marks from the Kent County Youth Association indicated that a discussion of road requirements is already underway.

In response to a question from the public, it was explained that any changes made to a piece of property cannot increase the water runoff from that property onto a neighboring property.

In the context of parking needs, Mr. Clements asked for some estimates of fairground attendance for the annual Kent County Youth Fair. Ms. Marks indicated that they estimate about 8,000 to 10,000 attendees, guessing that each car arriving would have from two to four occupants. These are acknowledged to be rough estimates only.

Mr. Simmonds indicated that further discussions of fairground zoning would continue at each Planning Commission meeting where there was new material to discuss. Mr. Edwards reminded members of the Planning Commission that an attorney opinion on the restrictions allowed by Acts 80 and 106 on fairground activities should be acquired before proceeding further. This will be sought, and Township Supervisor Jerry Hale will facilitate getting this Opinion, before the next Planning Commission meeting on August 14, 2017.

NEW BUSINESS

Wedding Barns - Discussion

There have been calls to the Township offices asking if commercial wedding and other social events are allowed in existing barns or if new facilities for this purpose can be build in the agricultural zones.

Mr. Clements inquired as to whether such activities would fall under the Home Based Business ordinance currently under consideration.

Mr. Edwards pointed out that this discussion had been tabled at the February 2015 Planning Commission meeting and has remained tabled since then.

Mr. Simmonds suggested addressing this matter as ‘event venues’. These can provide supplemental income for those involved in agricultural activities. He does not see this as allowing new facilities to be build in the Ag-1 zone for these purposes. Section 5.03(p) of the Ordinance currently does allow uses which utilize farm land, farm buildings, or farm equipment for rural recreation/amusement enterprises in conjunction with an active farm operation as a special land use. Mr. Edwards asked about whether construction of a new barn for such activities would be allowed.

It was decided that Planner Toland would gather sample wedding facility ordinances from nearby Townships for review at the August 2017 meeting of the Planning Commission.

Items for Potential Discussion

None of these items were discussed.

Commissioner Comments

Mr. Simmonds advised that the Township Board had only minor changes to the current draft of the Home Occupation and Home Based Business ordinance under consideration. Proposed additions by the Township Attorney have not as yet been accepted. The hearing on this proposed Ordinance was held in April 2017, so without significant changes, another public hearing would not be required. Some explanation from the Township Attorney on sections added at the end of the draft Ordinance will be sought. The proposed Ordinance with the remaining minor changes will be considered at the next meeting, for possible recommendation for approval to the Township Board.

Mr. Batchelor pointed out language on the 2014 Lowell Charter Township Master Plan Future Land Use Map referencing Social/Cultural/Institutional land use, which specifically includes the land comprising the Deer Run Golf Course should this land cease to be used as a golf course.

Mr. Clements sought clarification on land descriptions provided to the Township in connection with the Kissing Rock Site Condominium project, for purposes of completing the July 10, 2017 Planning Commission Regular Meeting minutes, and received that from Planner Toland.

ADJOURNMENT:

Mr. Batchelor moved to adjourn. Seconded by Mr. Blough. All in favor and the Special Meeting of the Lowell Charter Township Planning Commission was adjourned at 9:23 p.m.

Submitted _____ Secretary

Timothy Clements

Approved _____

