

WEST TRAVERSE TOWNSHIP
REGULAR PLANNING COMMISSION
Wednesday May 14, 2025

Chair Hollerith called the meeting to order at 5:32 p.m.

Roll Call: Hollerith, Forster, Remus, Dohan, Osetek, Green

Absent: Thompson

Visitors: Ed Taylor, Lisa Morris, Bill Mulder

The Pledge of Allegiance was recited by all.

Approve Agenda as presented or with additions: **Remus made the motion to approve the agenda as presented. Forster seconded. Six (6) ayes one (1) absent.**

Public Comment –Hollerith recognized visitor Bill Mulder, Chair of City of Harbor Springs Planning Commission. The board expressed their appreciation to Bill for the on-going partnership with West Traverse Township. Mulder thanked the Board members and commented on the issues facing Planning Commissions in the area.

Approval of March 12, 2025, Regular Meeting Minutes: **Forster made the motion to approve the minutes of 3-12-2025, as presented. Green seconded. Six (6) ayes, one (1) absent.**

Unfinished Business –

- a. **Master Plan Review** – Lane gave an update on the Master Plan Review and noted that tonight's meeting will address Chapter 5 covering Community Services, Facilities and Transportation.

- i. Review Chapter 5 – Community Services, Facilities and Transportation: Lane said the changes made to Chapter 5 included updates to the Recreation and Public Lands section now reflected in the new Recreation Plan. Dohan questioned the red-lined sentences in the Recreation Plan. Lane said that it was red lined due to the uncertainty of the Cooke property and location of the possible new Township Hall. Discussion followed on the progress towards a new Township Hall with Green giving an overview of the actions taken, the options of building types, monthly meetings of the New Township Board, etc.

- ii. Review revised Chapter 3 – Natural Resources: Lane gave an overview of Chapter 3 covering the Natural Resources which includes the revisions for Climate, Farmlands, Geology and Topography. Scenic View items were also added along with The Tunnel of Trees, Woodlands, and Wetlands. Lane noted revisions like Little Traverse Township were tailored to West Traverse Township. Lane pointed out on pg. 11, a section of environmental concerns was included referencing the two tanks on the states list, while not problematic, just that they are on the list and includes detail on septic capacity and soils. Also, under Environmental Concerns, the old Dump Site was added in. Osetek said it is important to have septic included in the Master Plan. Remus wondered if the historic proportion of the ice storm and its impact on the Tunnel of

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Trees and Woodlands should be noted as part of reforestation projects. Green stated that subject is in a wait and see mode. There was discussion about reimbursement from the state because it was declared a disaster area and where or how those funds could be allocated. Hollerith asked Lane to add a reference either under the Woodlands portion or the Environmental Concerns, about how traumatic or severe weather events could have financial impacts. Remus informed the Board that Birchwood will be replacing the in-ground water tanks.

iii. Continued Review Chapter 2 – Demographics : Lane reminded the Board that the Planning and Enabling Act was amended and requires information on Housing, specifically information on what shortfalls or deficiencies the Township has relating to Housing and then strategies to address those shortfalls. Lane pointed out on pg. 12 that a definition of Affordable Housing was included. Hollerith noted that in either the February or March discussion, the wording, “*explore options*” was chosen so as not to limit the Board to one or the other. Hollerith noted the aging population of the Township and how those needs could possibly change. Lane gave a quick overview of the revisions to the chapters within the Master Plan. Revisions to Chapter 1 were approved in March, Chapter 2 was finished at this meeting, Chapter 3 will be adjusted and is close to being completed. Chapter 4 revisions were approved in March and Chapter 5 approved tonight leaving Chapter 6 which is Goals. Lane advised giving Chapter 6 a second look, along with reviewing Chapter 7 with those two being discussed at the June meeting.

Discussion followed on how best to hold Public Hearings for the Township residents to give their input on the Master Plan. Notification of the Public Hearings for the review of the Master Plan will be advertised in the papers, on the Township website and pushed through the Township's textmygov system. It was decided to hold Public Hearing Open Houses in July and August when there are more Township residents available, holding the meetings an hour or so before the Planning Commission meetings (4:30-5:30 p.m.) with Lane and volunteer Planning Commissioners available to answer questions. Hollerith suggests sending out invitations to Homeowner Associations West Traverse Township, West Traverse Township business owners and the Recreation Committee members inviting their input. Lane will draft an invitation and bring it back to the board for approval.

New Business – none

Other:

- a. Zoning Administrator Report – provided in packet. Lane informed the Board that Pond Hill Farm is asking to amend their SUP to allow parking to increase from 375 to 500 during the Fall Festival weekends in September and October. An ad will run in the newspapers as well as a mailing going out on Monday. Hollerith questioned the Kleinhenz Blight issue along with the secondary Lauers Lane (Fergus-Jean Art Galley) situation. Lane is keeping an eye on both. Osetek asked about the request for a home-based Firearms business. Lane reported that it does not fall under a Home-Based Business. There will be no signage, no customers coming to the house, etc. Lane said he informed the homeowner of the paperwork needed.

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- b. Township Board Representative Report – Green reported on Housing North’s request for added funding for a Zoning Atlas and Community Planning Project for Emmet County at the Board meeting the previous night. They are asking for \$5000 from Townships and Municipalities to help fund the project. It has been requested to have a representative from Housing North come to the next Township Board meeting to present their case. Hollerith recognized the need for a new Township Hall and asked Green to keep the Planning Commissioners updated as things progress.
- c. Correspondence – none

Planning Commissioner Comments (open discussion) – none

Public Comment – *Chair Hollerith extended Public Comment for an additional three minutes. Lisa Morris, 7997 S. Lakeshore, provided comments suggesting using an alternate non-cable internet service within the Township along with noting the need for periodic inspection of the sewer system along the Lake shore in Pine Trail and Forest Beach. She also recommended replacing the word “demolish” with “*deconstruct, move or re-use*” in the Master Plan to encourage the preservation of historical buildings within the Township. Morris also suggested holding Open Houses later in the day for the people who work and agreed with posting the notices on the website, through textmygov and perhaps using the social platform, “nextdoor” as well.

Next Meeting: Planning Commission next regular meeting will be held June 11, 2025, at 5:30 p.m.

Adjournment: **Green made the motion to adjourn at 6:33 p.m. Remus seconded. Six (6) ayes, one (1) absent.**

Respectfully Submitted by:
Jim Osetek, Secretary

Transcribed by:
Amy Peters

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