



Minutes

THOMAS TOWNSHIP PLANNING COMMISSION

Thomas Township Public Safety Building, 8215 Shields Drive, Saginaw, MI 48609

July 23, 2014 at 7:00 p.m.

John Bintz called the Planning Commission meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

Present in addition to Mr. Bintz were: Rod Iamurri, Chris Thompson, Rick Lorentzen Ruth McDonald, Diane LaMountain and Dale Halm. Also present were Dan Sika, Director of Community Development, Connie Watt, Planning Assistant/Code Enforcement Officer, Doug Elchuk and Mike Cristoforo of Lamar Advertising and two interested parties.

1. Call to Order and Roll Call

2. Pledge of Allegiance.

3. Approval of Agenda:

It was moved by McDonald, seconded by Halm to approve the agenda as presented. Motion carried unanimously.

4. Approval of Minutes:

It was moved by Thompson seconded by Iamurri to approve the minutes of June 18, 2014 as presented. Motion carried unanimously.

5. Communications – Petitions – Citizens Comments – None.

6. Hearings-A. Amendment to the General Ordinance-Chapter 1 “Sidewalk Construction and Maintenance” of Title 6, “Public Ways and Property”

The Public Hearing was opened at 7:01 P.M. by Bintz. Bintz reviewed the text amendment aloud and asked for any interjection from Sika. Sika stated that this Ordinance and the changes which were considered had been discussed previously. He noted that the areas of change were listed in the copy of the Ordinance in the form of bold print and strike outs. The purpose of the changes were simply for clarification of the ordinance to make it understandable to all those who read it. He added that the changes and review had been addressed by the Township Attorney, otto Brandt. Bintz requested Public Comments at that time and there were none. He closed the Public Hearing at 7:05 P.M. McDonald did have some questions and concerns she wished to address. She asked for an explanation on how the Township received the authority to require property owners to maintain the sidewalks. Sika explained that the Township Board requires sidewalks to be installed as part of any Building Permit for that such as new subdivisions and

businesses. An agreement is signed to do so which also requires the maintenance of the sidewalks. Other sidewalks are installed if there is a need for them. The Ordinance includes all sidewalks in the Township this is not a change. McDonald questioned if the Township had considered maintenance of the sidewalks instead of requiring the property owner to do so. Sika replied that they have considered and attempted this option along Gratiot but have found that the expense of doing this is too costly. Therefore, if you have a sidewalk in front of your property you are required to maintain it. McDonald mentioned those who are physically or economically unable to do so, what consideration is taken for them. Sika suggested that in most cases neighbors have most often come forward and assisted in removing snow for people falling under these categories. Iamurri added that being a member of the Sidewalk Committee the biggest percent of sidewalk requests come from residents looking for a safer alternative than walking on the road. They actually target areas of high population when thinking of where sidewalks may be installed by the Township. Sika agreed explaining that this is part of the criteria the Township uses for selection of where to install new sidewalks. Thompson added that from the perspective of the Board of Trustees they desire to make Thomas Township a walkable community. Motion by Thompson, seconded by LaMountain to recommend approval of the proposed amendment. Motion carried 6-1.

B-Amendment to the General Ordinance Section 4-7-2, Definitions and Section 4-7-6, exceptions of Chapter 7, “Unauthorized Display of Vehicles for Sale”.

Bintz opened the Public Hearing at 7:15 P.M. He read the proposed text amendment aloud. Bintz asked for any Public Comments. There were none. The Public Hearing was closed at 7:20 P.M. This item has been talked about for some time at past meetings. There were no comments from the commission. Motion by Thompson, seconded by McDonald to approve the proposed text amendment. Motion carried unanimously.

7. Presentations-None

8. Sign Board of Appeals – Lamar Advertising Requests a variance for three (3) existing billboard signs.

A. Location west of Admiral Gas, Parcel 28-12-3-26-1021-001

B. Location west of Levity Spa, Parcel 28-12-3-25-3012-000

C. Location west of I.B.E.W., Parcel 28-12-3-25-4028-000

Mr. Doug Elchuk and Mr. Mike Cristoforo of Lamar Advertising were present to speak with the Planning Commission. Bintz turned the meeting over to Lamar Advertising to state their case for the variance request. Elchuk stated that the variance for these billboards would bring them closer into compliance with existing Sign regulations in Thomas Township and make them more aesthetically appealing. The desire is to reduce the size of two (2) of the billboards from 10’ 6” X 36’ to 10’ 5” X 22’ 8”. The third billboard in question is already at the 10’ 5” X 22’ 8” size. The request for this billboard which has two signs located one above the other, would be to remove the top billboard completely. Originally a mono pole was to be installed instead of the existing double poles at the base of the sign. Elchuk stated that at this time the lease with the

property owner in this location is almost up and a continued lease has not been agreed upon. Because of this Lamar does not find it economically feasible to absorb the cost of changing the poles to a mono pole. All the other signs that Lamar owns along M-46 in Thomas Township are currently at the lower square footage. These two signs are the only remaining ones they need to reduce and he added that additionally the billboard currently located at wash World will be coming down entirely to develop the property located there which is owned by Thomas Township. Elchuk said that based on the industry, the vinyl signs placed on billboards are being made to cover the smaller square footage. Having these two signs which are not to that size creates a problem with regard to selling the advertising to cover them. Because of how the advertising is sold, moving from board to board, this limits the advertising ability for these signs. Thompson questioned if the findings were for approval would the Commission be setting a precedence. Sika explained that the variance is bringing the signs more into compliance. Lamar could actually choose to leave the signs as they are under Federal Law. McDonald felt this was actually a favorable thing for the Township. Lorentzen questioned as to if this does bring Lamar closer to what is compliant. Sika stated that the current ordinance does have larger setbacks required and more distance required between billboards. Regarding Sign A; west of the Admiral Station, a motion was made by Halm and supported by Thompson to allow the variance Lamar is requesting. The motion carried unanimously after going through the checklist. Regarding Sign B; west of Levity Spa, a motion was made by McDonald and supported by Iamurri to grant the variance to Lamar for this billboard. Motion carried unanimously after going through the checklist. Regarding Sign C; west of the I.B.E.W, a motion was made by Thompson and seconded by Iamurri to grant the variance for the removal of the top billboard on the stacking sign. It was also noted that if an agreement was reached by the property owner and Lamar for an extension of the lease by Lamar, at that time a mono pole could be used to replace the two (2) existing poles. The general consensus of the Planning Commission was that due to the reduction in size of the boards and removal of the top portion of the stacking board, this was a benefit to the community aesthetically as well as to bring the signs further into compliance with the current sign regulations under the Thomas Township Zoning Ordinance. Motion carried unanimously after going through the checklist.

9. Old Business

A. Discussion Only-Replacement of Fire Department Squad Vehicle as per Capital Improvement plan.

10. New Business

A. Date change for the August 2014 Planning Commission meeting.

Sika explained that a need has arisen to move the next Planning Commission meeting from August 20, 2014 to August 13, 2014. This was a result of efforts being made to accommodate a resident seeking a Special use Permit who missed the July meeting deadline by only a couple of days. Motion by Iamurri, seconded by Halm to change the August meeting date. Motion carried unanimously.

11. Receive and File All Correspondence

A. Planning and Zoning News May 2014

12. Adjournment

Motion by LaMountain, seconded by McDonald to adjourn the meeting at 7:55 p.m. Motion carried unanimously. *The next meeting date is August 13, 2014.*

Respectfully submitted by Connie Watt, Planning Assistant/Code Enforcement Officer