

**MINUTES**

**DRAFT**

**THOMAS TOWNSHIP PLANNING COMMISSION  
THOMAS TOWNSHIP PUBLIC SAFETY BUILDING  
8215 SHIELDS DRIVE, SAGINAW, MICHIGAN  
FEBRUARY 19, 2020**

**Members Present**

**Members Absent**

**Others Present**

R. Iamurri  
P. Lynch  
D. Sommers  
D. Bird  
J. Curry  
K. Beam  
S. Yockey

D. Sika, Dir. Of Community Dev  
C. Watt, Plann’g Asst/Code Enf.  
Several Interested Parties

Mr. Iamurri called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

At this time a special recognition plaque was presented to Mrs. Ruth McDonald for her 31 years of service to the Thomas Township Planning Commission.

**Approval of Minutes:**

Motion by Mr. Yockey, supported by Mr. Bird, to approve the minutes of January 15, 2020 as presented.

**VOTE            7 YEAS            0 NAYS            0 ABSENT            MOTION CARRIED**

**Sign Board of Appeals:**

- A. Saginaw Gun Club, located at 9540 Gratiot Road, is seeking an eighteen square foot variance to install an LED sign.**

Mr. Iamurri opened the Public Hearing at 7:10 p.m. Mr. Britt Heinz of 880 Kochville Road spoke on behalf of the Saginaw Gun Club. He stated that they are seeking to place a new LED sign on the property which will actually be back further out of the right-a-way than the current sign is. The current sign, which is thirty-two (32) square feet is not easily visible from either direction (east, west) on Gratiot Road. The speed limit in this area is 55 m.p.h. and it has been noted that the average speed along that strip of road is about 67 m.p.h. The club has been there for a hundred years and has a membership that has dropped way below 100. Members have been informed numerous times that people are unable to locate them by trying to find their sign. The property is unique in the fact that it is zoned environmental in a business corridor area and they do have about 310 lineal feet of frontage which if they were zoned as part of the business district would entitle them to bonus signage. Mrs. Curry questioned if the current sign was lighted in any way because she rode passed it on her way to the meeting and was unable to see it at all. Mr. Heinz said there was some small lighting in front of it. He added that there is a concern for the safety of kids in school bus pulling in & out. He also noted that the sign at "Sporty's" several feet to the west was lit and much larger making them visible because they were zoned as part of the business district and allowed the signage. Mr. Yockey agreed that there was a lot of difficulty with visibility of the sign. The Public Hearing was closed. After discussion, Mr. Iamurri read the Sign Board of Appeals checklist questions with the voting as follows;

- *The alleged hardships or practical difficulties are:*
  - Exceptional and peculiar to the property or the person requesting the variance,  
And
  - Result from conditions that do not generally exist throughout the Township.

Yes: Yockey, Beam, Sommers, Lynch, Bird, Curry, Iamurri

No: None

Mr. Yockey stated that there was a uniqueness to the property as it is the only property zoned Environmental on the business corridor.

- *The alleged hardships or practical difficulties or both that will result from a failure to Grant the variance include:*
  - Substantially more than inconvenience, or an
  - Inability to attain a higher financial return

Yes: Yockey, Beam, Lynch, Bird, Iamurri

No: Sommers, Curry

Mr. Yockey noted that there is a definite safety issue as well as an inconvenience to those looking for the Saginaw Gun Club when the sign is not visible due to its size. Also, recognition would most likely increase membership which is needed.

- *By not allowing the variance, it will result in a substantial injustice being done considering the following:*
  - The public benefits intended to be secured by the code,
  - The individual hardships that will be suffered by a failure of the Sign Board of Appeals to grant a variance, and

- The rights of others whose property would be affected by allowing the variance, and will not be contrary to the public purpose of this chapter.

Yes: Yockey, Beam, Lynch, Bird, Curry, lamurri

No: Sommers

Mr. Yockey noted that there are no other businesses in close proximity that would be affected in any way to the variance being granted.

Motion by Mr. Yockey, supported by Mrs. Beam to grant the sign variance of eighteen (18) square feet to the Saginaw Gun Club.

**VOTE                      7 YEAS                      0 NAYS                      0 ABSENT                      MOTION CARRIED**

### **New Business:**

#### **A. Ordinance Review Update.**

Mr. Sika stated that the packet contains several ordinances, most that have previously been discussed and a couple that are new, which text amendments are necessary for. The following ordinances which changes considered have been given to the Planning Commission:

- Parking Lot Lighting.
- Pillar Standards.
- Private Roads.
- Parking Lot Landscaping.
- Overgrown Landscaping.
- Sign Illumination Standards.
- Changes to A-1 & A-2 Zoning Districts; uses by “Special Permit”.
- Home Occupations.
- Essential Services.

Mr. Sika said that there are changes noted on these ordinances. Most are still in the process of being reviewed by the Township Attorney and final drafts will follow. Once that is done, they will be brought for further discussion prior to any Public Hearing for text amendment. Mr. Sika added that he did want to briefly discuss the last two ordinances which have not been previously discussed. He said that the Home Occupation Ordinance is being reviewed to decide if it should be necessary for those with Home Occupations in Thomas Township be required to have a Business License. This would

included all Home Occupations. Currently the definition of a business allows Home Occupations, religious establishments and political/charitable entities to be exempt from obtaining one. It was noted that in some cases, for example, Home Occupations receive numerous deliveries during the day which can be disturbing in a neighborhood. Several members noted that they too receive a lot of packages and do not have a Home Occupation. Mr. Lynch asked to be put on record that he is opposed to any such ordinance requiring a business license for a Home Occupation and would not vote for any such thing. He feels this oversteps the necessity to oversee these. Mr. Bird questioned how anything like this would ever be enforced, how could it be enforced? Mr. Sika presented a list of other communities who do require a business license for Home Occupations. Mr. Iamurri requested that for a future meeting, the copies of the ordinances from these other communities be presented so the Planning Commission can see how they are handling this. Mr. Sika then went on to explain the changes necessary for the definition of "Essential Services" as suggested by the Township Attorney. This change is necessary in the case of pump stations that need to be moved to other locations and the necessity to not consider specifics such as parcel size and setbacks. It would make these "Essential Services" exempt. Mr. Sika added that this text amendment is scheduled for a Public Hearing at the March 18, 2020 meeting.

**Adjournment:**

Motion by Mr. Yockey, supported by Mrs. Beam, to adjourn the meeting at 7:40 p.m.

**VOTE            7 YEAS            0 NAYS            0 ABSENT            MOTION CARRIED**