

MINUTES

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**THOMAS TOWNSHIP PLANNING COMMISSION
THOMAS TOWNSHIP PUBLIC SAFETY BUILDING
8215 SHIELDS DRIVE, SAGINAW, MICHIGAN
JUNE 19, 2019**

Members Present

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

Members Absent

Others Present

D. Sika, Dir. Of Community Dev
C. Watt, Plann'g Asst/Code Enf.
R. Weise, Twp. Supervisor

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

Approval of Minutes:

Motion by Mr. Lynch, supported by Mr. Yockey, to approve the minutes of April 17, 2019 as presented.

VOTE

7 YEAS

0 NAYS

0 ABSENT

MOTION CARRIED

New Business:

A. Discussion Only-Ordinance to Restrict the Number of Domestic Pets in a Household.

Mr. Sika explained that a complaint had been received concerning a property that had over twenty (20) dogs and/or cats in the home. The complaint was unfounded and no violation was ever found there however, it did prompt discussion on the current ordinance and if there was a need to put such an ordinance in effect to limit the numbers of cats and dogs a property can have. Currently the Thomas Township Zoning Ordinance addresses a “kennel” as a business establishment with three or more dogs which would refer to breeders, and those who may be watching your dog. Mr. Iamurri asked if this covers boarding kennels the Planning Commission would not be looking at that then. Mr. Sika said “no” ,in looking at the Saginaw Township Ordinance, they expand on their definition of a kennel to include properties that are not involved in a commercial activity and limit the number to six (6) dogs, cats or other domestic pets and address it under their “Use by Special Permit” and site plan approval. Mr. Iamurri questioned if this would also include animals like guinea pigs or rabbits or similar? Mr. Sika stated that those are usually considered specialized pets but if the Planning Commission wanted to, they can be included in an ordinance. He added that generally guinea pigs, rabbits, fish and the like are not considered domestic pets. Mr. Iamurri asked about small pigs that are litter trained and kept in the home. Mr. Sika stated that those are unique and we have not had any problem with them. He added that we have not had any problem with cats and dogs but he could see where we could have a problem somewhere down the road. Mr. Iamurri asked if this ordinance would cover everything with the exception of a dog who has pups which would have to be kept with the mother for about eight weeks. Adding that you are not a breeder. Mr. Sika stated that most of these types of ordinances do not allow you to have a breeding dog in your house. If it is bred, you become a breeder. This can become very unclear to enforce. Mr. Lynch added that sometimes this is not intentional, the dog happens to become bred. Mr. Iamurri said even if the dog is bred elsewhere and is brought back home to have pups this would not be allowed? Mr. Sika stated it becomes a problem if you exceed the given number of pets you’re allowed to have. Some of these ordinances looked at have set a time frame for how long you can keep the puppies of up to four months at that time you must get rid of them. Most don’t allow this at all or it becomes a breeding/selling business. Mr. Lynch stated that breeding is intentional. A lot of times dogs becoming impregnated is not. Mr. Sommers stated it could be specified to pertain to cats and dogs only thus leaving out the guinea pigs etc. He added that a dog with pups would only become an issue if there was a complaint. Mr. Sika explained that if you set a limit it must be something that can be enforced. By either setting a specific number and/or providing for a timeframe to get rid of puppies or kittens. You need to think of all the issues that you could run into. Mr. Bird asked if you already have more pets than what the limit would be set at if you’d be “grandfathered” in. And how could this be determined. Mr. Yockey added that the dogs should be licensed so you’d know the number owned and if they were “grandfathered” in. Mrs. McDonald asked if this was only for residential districts or if it included agricultural areas. Mr. Sika answered that it would be for all zoning districts. Mrs. McDonald said then this would affect barn cats on farms. Farmers keep a lot of cats to keep down pests. She also asked if this regulation would apply to apartments and duplex homes? Mr. Sika stated that when we have a law, it applies to all. Mr. Lynch said this is very near and dear to his heart as he has three dogs and his daughter has seven. He does not support the regulation of how many he can have. Mr. Bird stated no need for more

ordinances and more regulation. Mr. Yockey added that he knows farmers that have twenty cats for pest control and some neighbors that have fifteen! Mr. Bird asked specifically what the complaint involved. Mrs. Watt replied the number of dogs on the property which she never saw. Mr. Bird stated that if we are already covered under the noise ordinance for barking dogs and we can't enter a home regarding number why do we need to do this? Mr. Lynch said one dog can be more of a problem than twenty. He got reported for his one dog barking and got a barking collar and went to his neighbors and explained this. He said he feels limiting the number would be overregulating. Mr. Iamurri asked if this was the only complaint that has been received regarding number. Mr. Sika answered that it was. He added that we do not enforce barking dog calls the police do-this is strictly dealing with the number. Mr. Lynch said he feels there is enough regulations to take care of any problems that are important such as barking. Mr. Bird said he felt this is a regulation looking for a problem. Mr. Sika explained that code enforcement had to deal with a resident who has been complaining of an odor from dog feces. We have made nineteen trips and not smelled anything. This is the reality of what we are dealing with and whatever would be decided, it has to be enforceable. Mr. Iamurri suggested possibly setting a number and if residents need an exception to it then they bring it to the Board. Mr. Sika said he felt it was not a good idea to have to bring it to the Board. He would rather build something right into the ordinance concerning puppies and kittens and the individual having to get rid of them by four months old. Mr. Iamurri stated he wanted to ask Mr. Weise his feelings on this. Mr. Weise said to him it seems unnecessary. Mr. Sommers said he has entered homes which are overrun with cats and dogs and feels an ordinance might solve the problem. Mr. Lynch said you are then trying to solve people's problems and people need to take responsibility for themselves. Mr. Sommers stated that if the code enforcement officer received a complaint and came to your house where you have a mother dog and eight puppies and says you now need to get rid of three of them, you're not going to do that. He feels setting a number simply gives a guideline in case there is a problem. Mr. Lynch said he does not think we need a regulation in this regard and would not be in favor of it. Mr. Yockey stated that he agrees. Mr. Bird suggested that a lot of these were neighbor issues. The issue of hoarding animals and mental health issues was also brought up. Mr. Sommers felt that an ordinance is not going to make these individuals abide by it.

A motion was made by Mr. Yockey and supported by Mr. Lynch that an ordinance regarding setting a number of domestic animals (cats/dogs) allowed in a household should not be created and the subject will be revisited in a year.

VOTE 7 YEAS 0 NAYS 0 ABSENT MOTION CARRIED

Old Business:

A. 2019 Business/Organization of the Year Results.

The results of the votes by the Planning Commission and Community Development Department were presented. The results were as follows:

- Small Business Category:
 Winner: Darcey's
 Honorable Mention: First Area Credit Union



- Large Business Category:
Winner: Sherwin Williams
Honorable Mention: Stanley Steemer.

A time will be set up by Mrs. Watt for the award presentations for the week of July 8th. The members will be contacted once the date/times have been determined.

Motion by Mr. Sommers, supported by Mrs. McDonald to award the winner in the small business category to Darcey's, honorable mention to First Area Credit Union with the winner in the large business category to be Sherwin Williams and honorable mention to Stanley Steemer.

VOTE 7 YEAS 0 NAYS 0 ABSENT MOTION CARRIED

B. Update-“The Greens at Apple Mountain”

The revised site plan for “The Greens at Apple Mountain” was presented to the Planning Commission showing that all contingencies for approval from the October 17, 2018 Planning Commission meeting have been met. The site condominium will now be presented to the Thomas Township Board at the July 8, 2019 meeting for their approval.

Adjournment:

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

VOTE 7 YEAS 0 NAYS 0 ABSENT MOTION CARRIED