

BENTON TOWNSHIP PLANNING COMMISSION
Meeting Minutes
November 7, 2019

Members Present: Jack Caughey, Tom Fasnaugh, Jeff Locke, Roy Pelfrey, Maureen Sorbet,
Ben Kudwa, Chris Tennes and Barb Wickerham

Members Absent: Jason Haigh

Others who attended the Meeting:

Please see attached sheets

Call to Order:

Chairman Jack Caughey called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m., and led the Board in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Meeting Minutes Approved:

A motion was made by Maureen Sorbet, supported by Ben Kudwa, to approve the minutes of October 10, 2019. Motion carried 8 ayes; 0 nays. Jack Caughey mentioned that the Conditional Use Permit CU-11-19-4 that was approved at the October 2019 meeting, will need to be revisited at a later date due to the Township's actions to provide their own zoning.

Agenda Amendments:

Agenda was approved as written.

New Business:

- A. Interim Zoning Ordinance: The Township has decided to provide their own Zoning Services. In doing so, the Benton Township Planning Commission needed to provide and review zoning ordinance to the Township Board. Attorney Christopher S. Patterson, of Fahey Schultz Burzych Rhodes PLC, provided and reviewed this information with the Commissioners. After discussion, Jack Caughey made a motion, supported by Jeff Locke to approve the "Planning Commission Resolution Recommending a Benton Township Interim Zoning Ordinance" as provided. Roll Call Vote: J. Locke-yes; Ben Kudwa-yes; Chris Tennes-yes; Maureen Sorbet-yes; Tom Fasnaugh-yes; Roy Pelfrey-yes; Jack Caughey-yes; Barb Wickerham-yes. (J. Haigh-absent); Ayes-8; Nays-0. Motion passed unanimously.

- B. CU-12-19-8 – Large Solar Energy System – Sandstone Creek Solar, LLC: The Township has decided to provide their own Zoning Services, in doing so, the Township shall table any matters concerning land use within Benton Township to provide sufficient time to establish our own zoning ordinance. A motion was made by Jack Caughey, supported by Ben Kudwa to

“Table” CU-12-19-8 Large Solar Energy System – Sandstone Creek Solar, LLC. Roll Call Vote: Tom Fasnaugh-yes; Roy Pelfrey-yes; Maureen Sorbet-yes; Jack Caughey-yes; Barb Wickerham-yes; Jeff Locke-yes; Ben Kudwa-yes; Chris Tennes-yes. Jason Haigh-absent. Ayes-8; Nays-0. Motion passed unanimously.

As the applicant, Sandstone Creek Solar, LLC was planning on providing a presentation, Chairman Caughey gave 30 minutes to them to provide details of their large solar energy system. At the end of their presentation, their attorney invited the Planning Commission to vote and reconsider tabling the project.

There were comments, questions and answers between the Commissioners and the applicant after the presentation. Some of the main concerns were drainage, water discharge, fire, maintenance of panels, brand of panels, toxins in the panels, and decommissioning of the project.

After discussion, Jack Caughey made a motion, supported by Tom Fasnaugh to reconsider “tabling” the CU-12-19-8 – Large Solar Energy System Permit. Roll Call Vote: Jack Caughey-no; Maureen Sorbet-no; Tom Fasnaugh-no; Roy Pelfrey-no; Jeff Locke-no; Ben Kudwa-no; Barb Wickerham-no; Chris Tennes-no. (J. Haigh-absent); Ayes-0; Nays-8. Motion failed unanimously.

Public Comment:

Kara Bakke, Geronimo, Developer, Geronimo, suggested, due to time limits in public comment, they would answer any questions to them in writing at the next Benton Township Board meeting on November 11, 2019. Chairman Caughey agreed.

-Rick Farrell – What are in the panels? He is concerned about toxins.

-Helen Schneider – Thanked Commissioners and wants the Township to have a say in what can be approved in the Township. She is for the Township doing their own zoning.

-Scott Hoornstra – Concerned about drilling; mosquitoes on ponds; decision on what brand of panels.

-Gary Suits – School tax funds; tax abatements; real estate value; solar panels burning;

-David Luukkonen – Moved 20 years ago to have a rural setting. Worked for DNR and MSU and concerned about the negative environment for wild life.

-Kelley Cobum-Harris – Curious what kind of vegetation will be planted. Will wildlife eat it, or will the wildlife be driven to the farms to eat their crops. Also makes less land available to lease.

-Shawn Root – Who holds the bond for the project; concerns of rainfall and drainage.

-Marilyn Slivenski – Why take prime farm land. Is it in relation to overhead wires?

-Walter Leitch – We do not get enough sunshine. It doesn't make since to put up solar panels of this magnitude.

-Jane Hoxie & Lindsey Hoxie – Concerned that some homes will be surrounded by three sides. Also concerned about drainage.

-Scott Walker – President of _____ Okemos or East Lansing????

-Lane Shaget – Why use farm land. When Geronimo sited the Lapeer site along I-69, was that site surrounding a prison?

-Ray Graham –

-Maureen Sorbet – Could Commissioners get a copy of CU-12-19-8 Large Solar Energy System – Sandstone Creek Solar, LLC's presentation

I apologize if I misspelled anyone's name, and missed some comments.

Adjournment: 9:25

Prepared by Barbara Wickerham, Secretary of the Planning Commission