

## **Exeter Township Planning Commission Minutes October 4, 2022**

Exeter Township Planning Commission chairperson, David Schafer, called the meeting to order at 7:12 pm. The meeting opened with the Pledge of Allegiance.

**Roll Call:** Present: Roger Bezek, Phillip Bruck, William Gay, Robert Post, and David Schafer  
Excused: Kyle Preston, Ameer Runyon  
Guests: Lucie Fortin, planner Mannik & Smith Group,

### **Correction / Approval of Agenda:**

The Planning Commission members reviewed the meeting agenda. There were no corrections or additions.

- ❖ **Motion: Phillip Bruck, 2<sup>nd</sup> William Gay:** To accept the meeting agenda as presented.  
**Motion carried.**

### **Approval of Minutes:**

The September 6, 2022 Planning Commission meeting minutes were E-mailed to all Planning Commission members and read at the meeting. The following corrections were made.

- In the "Approval of Minutes" the date of the April meeting was corrected
  - In the "First Public Comment: the last names of township resident that spoke were corrected. Corrected Kim Montri to Kim Monske and Amy (Lafebere) Murphy to Amy Lafebere.
  - Also in "First Public Comment"; the beginning sentence of the third paragraph was corrected to read "At this time, Mr. Montelone was asked to conclude his comments..."
  - In the "Second Public Comment": the item numbers were corrected.
- ❖ **Motion: Phillip Bruck, 2<sup>nd</sup> Robert Post:** The September 6, 2022 Planning Commission minutes were approved as corrected.

**Motion Carried.**

**First Public Comment:**

NOTE: There were 20 townships residents present at the meeting.

1). Lisa Walker, Capernall Road Carleton, MI.

Offered the following comments concerning solar (commercial size) energy installations;

A). she stated that such installations had a negative impact on the environment and wildlife

B). would make detrimental changes to both local drainage and environment,

C). the reflection (of sunlight) from multiple solar panels will become a heat source and potential fire hazard

D). the relative short power producing life of large solar installations compared to the longer term potential of environmental impact

E). the requirement to be sited near a “three phase electrical” station.

2). Gerald Bruck, Doty Road,

Stated that the reason people live in Exeter Township is for the “rural atmosphere” and that the planning commission members must represent “the will of the residents”. Suggested the planning commission draft their ordinance to “make it as difficult as possible, within legal limits” to establish any large scale solar installation.

He also echoed the sentiment (expressed in the September 6, 2022 meeting minutes) that any township official that may have potential interest in siting a large solar installation be prohibited from voting on the matter.

3). Amy Lafebere, Finzel Rd Carleton, MI.

Inquired how the residents could mandate a 500 foot set-back from all residential houses be included in the proposed ordinance.

The planning commission members responded that the set-back discussed were minimum and could be increased as part of the site plan review process. Comments from the public hearing could be offered as to required set-back distances.

4). Pam Barker, Bluebush Road

Stated that she is “an environmentalist” and that solar power will be needed. She also asked why residents were against solar energy installations as they need to be constructed and are “environmentally friendly”.

Several resident began to respond to Pam Baker and were reminded to address any comments only to the planning commission.

5). Deana Homan

Stated that food production was more important than funding business ventures. She also agreed that anyone who has “committed land” to large solar energy installations be prohibited from voting on their approval.

6). Julie Murphy, Finzel Rd Carleton, MI.

Wanted to know how Ms. Barker could call large solar energy installations “environmentally friendly”?

The audience was again reminded to address their comments to the planning commission members, and not amongst the other meeting attendees.

7). Fred Monteleone

Asked the planning commission members why Ms. Barker wasn’t allowed to answer Julie Murphy’s questions.

Planning commission member, William Gay reminder the residents that the Public Comments time was for resident’s comments and concerns to be presented to the planning commission and not for debate. The (soon to be scheduled) public hearing will be residents’ opportunity to voice their concerns and comments, and to suggest additional changes to the final draft ordinance. The planning commission can make changes as presented at the public hearing. The proposed ordinance is accepted and then it is recommended (to be adopted) at the next township board meeting. At that time the township board can modify or change the proposed ordinance at their meeting.

**Old Business:**

1). Planning Commission members reviewed with Lucie Fortin, (Exeter Township planner) the DRAFT (final) amendments and changes (dated 10/04/2022) to the current Exeter Township Solar Energy and Wind Energy generating ordinance. Changes made in this (final) draft included:

A). Wind Energy Conversion Systems (WECS) (Article 5 General Provisions) Section 5.14

- Change language so that ALL WECS need to apply for a Special Land Use
- Planning commission members inquired if this also applied to “on-site users” with one wind turbine strictly for private use. Would such “on-site users” also be required to issued and maintain performance securities?

B). Solar Energy Systems (Article 5 General Provisions) Section 5.15

Planning commission members suggested the following changes be made

- (par 3 J) change max allowed noise to be 50 dBa (to match requirements set in WECS proposed ordinance changes)

Planning commission members also discussed, and requested clarification on

- Fencing and vegetative screening requirements
- Would any required earthen berms need to be returned to original land use at decommissioning? Can the impact that berms have on local drainage be considered during the site plan review?

C). The planning commission members briefly discussed the extent of enforcement powers that could be used to ensure compliance with all aspects of (commercial sized) solar energy systems installations

2). Planning Commission members discussed making copies of the final draft zoning ordinance amendments avail to the public prior to the public hearing. It was decided that printed copies would be available at the township hall.

- ❖ **Motion:** Phillip Bruck, 2<sup>nd</sup> David Schafer: To set (and publish notice) that a public hearing will be held on November 1, 2022 at 7:00 pm to accept comments concerning proposed zoning ordinance amendments to Section 5.14 Wind Energy Conversion Systems and Section 5.15 Solar Energy Systems.

**Motion Carried.**

**New Business:**

Township resident Anne Kleinow inquired if her home occupation (Beeleaf Naturals) required a Special Land Use permit. Beeleaf Naturals processes honey and related beeswax products which are collected and processed on their property. Honey and beeswax items are made available for (retail) sales at local farmer's markets and local events. No special facilities would need to be constructed or adapted for this home occupation. No showroom or permanent sales facility would be constructed. Sales of products would be seasonal.

It was determined (by planning commission consensus) that bee keeping, honey collection and processing, and sale of honey and beeswax products is considered an agricultural practice, no Special Land Use permit would be required

**Second Public Comment:**

1). Mr. Jay Murphy, Finzel Road Carleton, MI

Suggested that the November 1, 2022 Public Hearing be moved to and held at the township fire hall. Had concerns about residential set-back of 250 feet and provision allowing animals (to graze) on large (commercial sized) solar energy system installations.

2). Julie Murphy, Finzel Road Carleton, MI

Asked for clarification concerning the process that residents could suggest additional changes to the proposed ordinance(s). She also asked what protection the residents would have to prevent "toxic compounds" from being released (by any solar installation) into local water systems.

Planning commission members said all large commercial solar energy systems would be required to conduct an environmental impact study as part of the application process.

3). Gerald Bruck, Doty Road

Asked how land can be selected for possible (large solar) installations without public notification.

4). The planning commission will determine if the township fire hall is available for the scheduled public hearing. At the same time, the regularly scheduled monthly meeting of the Exeter Township Planning Commission will be held on Tuesday November 1, 2022 at the conclusion of the public hearing and at the same location as the public hearing (to be determined).

- ❖ **Motion: William Gay, 2<sup>nd</sup> Robert Post:** To adjourn the meeting. **Motion carried.**  
The meeting was adjourned at 9:15 pm.

Respectfully submitted, \_\_\_\_\_

Roger Bezek, Secretary  
Exeter Township Planning Commission