

White Oak Township Planning Commission

Meeting Minutes

October 2, 2024

The meeting was called to order at 7:00 p.m. with the reciting of the Pledge of Allegiance. In attendance were Planning Commission members, John Kemler, Aaron Graf, Missy Noll, Meg Redfern, and Ashley Andersen. Board members in attendance include Leela Vernon and Katrina Griffith – Zoning Administrator. Also in attendance was township residents Wade Andersen, Judy McManaman, and Deanna Varesi. Leslie Abdo from Foster Swift Collins & Smith PC also was in attendance.

Introduction of the Board: Introductions were made of the Board.

Approval of Agenda: John made a motion to approve the agenda. Aaron seconded. Motion approved.

Approval of Minutes: Aaron made a motion to approve the minutes: John seconded. Motion approved.

Review of Zoning Ordinance to Regulate Solar Energy Systems:

Leslie Abdo provided an update. With the current ordinance, solar is allowed in the agricultural district. Discussed removing Section 3. Amendment Of- which is currently blank. This was left blank intentionally to include changes to where commercial solar energy systems are permitted in the township. The PC discussed and agreed to not make any changes. Leslie will remove Section 3. Amendment of from the ordinance.

Public Comments on Solar Energy Systems:

Resident Judy McManaman discussed PA 116. PA 116 is to allow solar energy facilities to be placed on lands enrolled in the Farmland Development Rights Program. The landowner must sign an agreement with the State of Michigan to be enrolled in the program. Public comments closed.

The Board agreed to not make any changes to the current ordinance. John made a motion to recommend the ordinance to the township Board and Meg seconded.

A voice vote was taken, and the results are as follows:

John – yes

Aaron – yes

Missy – yes

Meg – yes

Ashley -yes

Motion carried.

Review of Zoning Ordinance to Regulate Wind Energy Systems:

Leslie provided an explanation of the ordinance. Brief discussion on permitted locations. Adding to CREO to make compatible to PA 233 provisions. Leslie spoke with Chris Corey from McKenna about what they discussed previously about permitted location. Currently allow in Overlay in master plan. Allow Wind in industrial district, currently 37 acres. Revised masterplan to create overlay industrial options so a developer would have to rezone property to industrial to get land needed for a project. Currently just under 200 acres in industrial and overlay. Nothing spells out how much land would be needed for a project like this. Leslie recommended 300 acres at a minimum. Discussed setting up specific parcels. If a developer tries to rezone and is denied, then more than likely will sue the township, claiming not enough acres for what is needed. A developer would have to get lease agreements with landowners in the overlay, approval for property rezoning, and apply for a special use permit. Or could leave the ordinance like it is and make changes when needed.

Public Comments on Zoning Ordinance to Regulate Wind Energy Systems:

Resident Judy McManaman discussed getting landowners consent to rezone properties and agree to a lease. Asked if the land had to be continuous parcels. Leslie confirmed that it does not have to be continuous parcels. Public comment closed.

Meg made a motion to recommend the current ordinance to regulate wind energy systems to the township Board. Ashley seconded the motion.

Review of Zoning Ordinance to Regulate Utility-Scale Battery Energy Storage Systems:

The township currently does not have an ordinance to regulate battery energy storage. The proposed ordinance is restrictive. Very new, not a lot of them. Don't require much space as solar and wind farms. Typically placed by transition lines. Only 10-20 acres is plenty of room. Leslie recommended allow in the industrial zone which allows 30 acres.

Public comments on Energy Storage Systems:

Resident Judy McManaman discussed concerns about allowing battery storage facilities near oil tanks in the industrial zone. Public comment closed.

Aaron made a motion to recommend the proposed ordinance zoning in the industrial zone. Meg seconded. Motion carried.

A voice vote was taken, and the results are as follows:

John – yes

Aaron – yes

Missy – yes

Meg – yes

Ashley -yes

Additional Comments:

Next step is sending to the Tri-County Regional Planning Commission for planning review and the Board. Takes approximately 30 days from October 3 and will miss the October township board meeting. This will be voted on in the November township board meeting.

Other Township business:

None

Next Planning Commission Meeting:

The next meeting will be on February 4, 2025, at 7:00 p.m.

Adjournment:

John made a motion to adjourn: Meg seconded. Meeting closed at 7:40 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Ashley Andersen

Planning Commission