

Keene Township Planning Commission

Minutes from Meeting - Wednesday, May 8, 2024

Denny Briggs called the meeting to order at 7:02 pm

Roll Call:

Present: Denny Briggs, Christine Hendrick, Nancy Solomon, Matt Stahlin, Cori Wilber, Corey Wojcik. Ray Krieger arrived at 7:05.

There were approximately 20 members of the community present along with Zoning Administrator, Jeanne Vandersloot and Supervisor, Bob Schafer.

Changes to the agenda:

Denny Briggs wanted to move New Business before Old Business. Corey Wojcik motioned to approve and Matt Stahlin seconded. Motion carried.

Approval of last meeting minutes:

Nancy Solomon mentioned that "motion passed" was not added after motions were seconded. Cori Wilber motioned to approve minutes with corrections and seconded by Matt Stahlin. Motion carried.

Report from Township Representative:

Corey Wojcik mentioned that our Township clean up day was good and everyone worked well together. 62 vehicles were there. Many tires were dropped off. He also mentioned that we now have a new light in our parking lot.

Report from Zoning Administrator:

Jeanne Vandersloot gave her report.

Permits issued for:

- New homes
- Outbuildings
- Decks

Land divisions:

- None

Planning Commission:

- Members met on April 18, 2024 to work on commercial solar energy amendments
- Regular fiscal year meeting dates are May 8, August 7, October 1 and February 4, 2025

Zoning Board of Appeals:

- Building height variance requested and recommended PC look into our current height maximums

Other:

- Many calls received by appraisers and residents with miscellaneous zoning related questions.

Violations:

- One violation resulted in a fine for unlicensed vehicles
- A mobile home is in the process of being torn down
- A third letter was sent to clean up a property and license vehicles
- Another property has been cleaned up

Public comments:

Someone mentioned many dead animals on the road.

New Business:

Denny Briggs suggested adding more meetings between now and the next scheduled meeting dated August 7, 2024. It was agreed that June 13th would work for everyone. Matt Stahlin motioned to add another special meeting dated June 13, 2024 and seconded by Nancy Solomon. Motion carried.

It was decided that because summer is so busy that we would discuss another meeting date during the June 13th meeting.

Old Business:

Commercial Solar Amendment

Denny Briggs said he liked the four categories Christine Hendrick mentioned at the last meeting. He also mentioned a 700' radius setback at the last meeting.

Denny Briggs suggested that information be shared via email before meetings so that all could be prepared to discuss. He mentioned that this is already being done.

Christine Hendrick mentioned that she found information regarding setbacks from dwellings in Ohio. She stated that the renewable industrial wind developers in Ohio were pushing for setbacks from dwellings but because residents were suing the State citing trespass zoning, the State changed their law back to property rights zoning which is from lot lines. She wants setbacks for all renewables from lot lines.

Cori Wilber had documents, specifically Keene's Master Plan which states on page 56 things like:

- Keeping it rural
- Keene doesn't have to have more industry because surrounding areas can handle it
- Preserve prime farmland
- Take no action to change rural area

Denny Briggs gave the definition of rural as having low population and housing and open country and said that solar adheres to rural definition.

Cori Wilber stated that prime farmland is top priority.

Corey Wojcik stated that to promote orderly development, we need to redo the Master Plan.

This has not been done yet due to solar issues taking precedent as indicated by Denny Briggs. All agreed that we are working on a non-compatible ordinance.

It was also agreed that we will not have radius setbacks.

Christine Hendrick mentioned that the Master Plan allows only 20% lot use. Jeanne Vandersloot stated for correction that the 20% coverage for buildings and structures is not in the Master Plan but only in the zoning ordinance (Section 4.06 C). She also mentioned that the Township Attorney recommended exempting solar panels from the 20% rule because there are many of them, not as tall as buildings and it is not practical to have that limit for this type of use. Holli Melton wants 700' setbacks due to the disruption of view which Denny Briggs states is subjective. Holli wants larger setbacks with an option to have a good neighbor agreement with the energy company.

Keith wants setbacks to be consistent.

Jeanne Vandersloot stated the Master Plan is out of date and that the ordinance dated 2023 was voted down. She also stated that the no vote meant the 2018 ordinance stayed in place even though the 2023 ordinance had greater setbacks.

Bob Schafer wants to wait for the results of the survey.

Cori Wilber motioned to table solar until the survey results were tabulated. Matt Stahlin seconded. Motion passed.

Public Comments - Topics not on the Agenda:

Keith stated that pole barns are not permanent structures. Jeanne Vandersloot said under Zoning, they are permanent structures.

Someone mentioned that we need to update the Master Plan as it was last updated in 2016.

Cori Wilber stated that Grand Rapids is holding community workshops to see what residents really want and suggested that we also do that.

Bob Schafer mentioned that our Master Plan is old but still good. We still want the rural experience. Only a couple of families will profit greatly if solar goes through but the majority will not.

Christine suggested that all Planning Commission members share info 4-5 days prior to a meeting. Denny Briggs agreed.

Sandy Smiley mentioned concerns about the power lines.

Keith mentioned that Campbell township is confident that it won't happen.

Bob Schafer said the lines would be a double circuit and there is escrow money from Invenergy.

Christine Hendrick stated that ITC has to have both projects before lines go in. Current line is ITC.

Cori Wilber mentioned that there are tentative plans for solar in Ionia, Muir, and Portland.

Matt Stahlin motioned to adjourn at 8:16. Seconded by Christine Hendrick. Motion passed.

Minutes recorded by Nancy Solomon.