

CASS COUNTY PLANNING COMMISSION
February 28, 2024

The regular meeting of the Cass County Planning Commission was called to order by chairman, Don Stutsman at 4:00 PM. In addition to Stutsman, members present were: Sam Barrera, Roseann Marchetti, Dianna McGrew, Tyler Augst, Annie File, Richard Palmisano, Dave Kring and Jayne Bailey. Member absent: Char Hiemstra.

Four guests from Jefferson Township were present—Sara A. Senica, Jefferson Township Attorney, Dean Haas, Township Supervisor, Trustee Della Bundle and Township Clerk Jenny Bunner. Other guest present was Pokagon delegate Lynn Schanz.

MOTION made by Augst to approve agenda with exception of rearranging New Business order to accommodate guests present. Second by Barrera. Motion passed.

With a MOTION by McGrew and second by Barrera, minutes of the January 24 meeting were approved.

The following are motions and support for the three planning commission positions:

For Chairman: MOTION by Barrera in favor of incumbent Stutsman, second by Kring. Motion passed.

For Vice Chairman: MOTION by Stutsman to appoint Palmisano, second by Marchetti. Motion passed.

For Recording Secretary: MOTION by Stutsman to appoint Bailey, Support by Kring. Motion passed.

Sara A. Senica presented for Jefferson Township Zoning Ordinance Amendment highlighting the hard work, time and effort invested in the ordinance since 2019. Focus was given on solar energy overlay districts in designated agricultural zones. (Solar power is considered agricultural.) Natural characteristics and nearness to power outputs were considerations in the creation of these special overlay districts (which can be changed/amended if necessary). MOTION by Marchetti to approve Jefferson Township Zoning Ordinance. Second by McGrew. Motion passed.

MOTION was made by Marchetti to approve submitted PA 116 application of the Reed Family Properties, LaGrange LLC, Parcel # 14-040-020-006-00. McGrew seconded motion and it carried.

Discussion began on additional “emerging issues” to include in the Master Plan. Stutsman made a MOTION to add a focus on parks and recreation as well as senior housing.

Palmisano gave support and the motion passed. ORV use on roads and trails was mentioned but no motion was made.

It was decided that a larger planning commission board of 11 members was desirable at this time. A MOTION was made by Kring to add another board member/members to make the 11. Marchetti seconded and the motion passed.

The proposal by McKenna was discussed. By next meeting, the townships/villages that will be included in the Cass County Master Plan should be known. Also, we should know the amount each entity will be responsible for. (Volinia, Wayne, Pokegon and the Village of Vandalia were previously included.) Two things that may help the bottom line are the capabilities to produce our own maps and the use of Zoom calls between board members and representatives of McKenna. McGrew made the MOTION to accept the proposal by McKenna. File seconded that motion. The motion carried.

Finally, Marchetti presented a letter and plat from Road Commission Engineer Joe Bellina notifying the Planning Commission on its intent to abandon historic roads that appeared on maps only for over 150 years. Roads are in Newberg Township near Corey Lake.

The meeting adjourned at 5:16 PM with a MOTION by Barrera and support by Marchetti.

Jayne K. Bailey