

Watertown Township Planning Commission  
Meeting Minutes – as Submitted for Approval  
Thursday, July 15, 2021 6:00 PM  
Special Meeting

The meeting was called to order by Chairman Batkie promptly at 6:00 pm and everyone was invited to join in the Pledge of Allegiance.

1. Roll Call: Jim Hacker, Mark Batkie, Alan Stoutenburg, Jason Radloff, Gary Fetting
2. Absent: Bill Dixon (ill), Nathan Campbell (arrived at 6:34 pm)  
In lieu of Secretary Dixon's absence, Fetting appointed to take minutes.
3. Administration: Franzel
4. Guests: Todd Porrett, Rick Pangburn, Ray Welker, Ken Landsburg, Randy Fahs, Michael Smith, Joe Cramer, Travis Miller, Roger Brown, So Young Park, Clint Stoutenburg, Diane Ferguson: Numerous Unknown Citizens.
5. Agenda Approval / Additions/ Corrections:
  - a. Motion by Stoutenburg to accept the agenda with the noted additions, Support by Fetting, Motion carried unanimously.
6. Additions: Todd Porrett, THUMB BID Commercial Land Use Permit.
7. Corrections: None.
8. Consideration and Approval of Previous Meeting Minutes:
  - a. Motion by Stoutenburg to approve the minutes as presented, support by Fetting. Discussion followed. Radloff felt that during public comments Mr. Kenny had not admitted to authoring the unsigned letter to residents. Discussion followed. Minutes to be approved with the following changes:
    - b) *Scott Kenny made the accusation of a violation of OMA because he could not find planning commission minutes on the township website. Despite the assurance of placement by multiple planning commission members and township board members, he maintained his position. He then went on to state that he had engaged attorney and that he had been streaming video to the attorney during the entirety of the meeting. ~~Kenny then rejected Dixon's earlier inference of mail fraud, while taking responsibility as the letter's author and admitting to address fraud.~~ He went on to state that he feels an unnamed board member is responsible for the loss of his home sale due to zoning classification. He stated that the sale was lost when financial institutions would not give a new mortgage to a prospective buyer of his property. The home is currently zoned as residential but is listed as future commercial in the master plan. Lastly, he asked if the solar setbacks for his property would be that of commercial or residential. Answer residential.*
  - b. Motion by Stoutenburg, support by Radloff to approve the minutes from 6-17-2021 as corrected. Motion carried unanimously.

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9. New Business: Todd Porrett, THUMB BID Commercial Land Use Permit.
  - a. Mr. Porrett presented a site plan for the commercial use of the property located at 408 South Sandusky Road (*drawing attached, see Appendix A*). His plan is to hold a Flea Market style venue in the Norhtwest corner of the property with the use of portable sheds and tents. Site Plan attached: appendix A. Discussion followed. Mr. Porrett felt that the plan should be allowed under existing commercial zoning. Fetting asked about on-site parking availability. Approximately 93 on-site parking spaces are currently available. Mr. Porrett stated that most customers would be coming and going at various times, and generally not all at once. Fetting stated his thought was to avoid on-street parking. Batkie asked about food being provided. Mr. Porrett indicated food truck vendors would be used in conjunction with the Flea Market. Hours of operation, 2 days a week, hours 8 am till 8 pm; typically in the summer. The Flea Market would most likely be a seasonal operation with shorter winter hours. Restrooms provided inside with outdoor port-a-johns also being available during the Flea Market. Discussion followed.
  - b. Motion by Hacker to approve the Commercial Land Use as submitted with no on-street parking allowed. Support by Stoutenburg. Motion carried unanimously.
10. Public Comments:
  - a. Joe Cramer: Saginaw County resident. He stated he is concerned with the value of the farm land, "he likes to eat". Suggests we keep most prime farm land in production and look for other areas.
  - b. Ray Welker: Thanks for allowing me to speak and thanks to folks for coming. Stated, we're in an island, surrounded, have talked to Samsung about being paid. Land owners are only gainers. Concerned about recent news article about required tax refunds, and hopes Watertown Township doesn't end up in that situation.
  - c. Ken Landsburg: Paid to have soil tests done. Soil health ranged from 38.9 in the wooded area to 8.6 in the land that would be under the panels. We're killing the soil biology, Concerns about farmland preservation is a poor example.
  - d. Rick Pangburn: Haven't had answers to his questions, but now Jim [sic] has answered with pro solar answers. While he respects Mr. Berden who spoke at the last meeting on mag impulses, he is just one man with one meter and cannot make an issue that is telling us how it is going to be. This is America. I respect his opinion, you need to respect my opinion – setback 500 feet minimum for residential and 300 for roads.
  - e. Travis Miller: Has lived next to Lapeer solar for 2-3 years. No health issues, you can't see them. He feels people have the right to do what you want with your property.
  - f. Mike Smith: 30 year resident. Read a prepared statement to the Planning Commission. (*Note attached: see Appendix B*). Stated his wife talked to 200 people about the solar project and only 3 out of 200 were for it.

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- g. Diane Ferguson: Not in favor of solar. Government is supposed to protect the people. St Clair County has higher rate of cancer from nuclear contamination. Is against Ag spraying and GMO, they grow organically. Family was [sic] tobacco farmers. Need to address hemp growing. Should be growing hemp. Had two offers to sell last month, might move back to the mountains. Can't grow under solar panels, will kill animals going under solar from heat. Not good money like wind turbines.

11. Correspondence: None

12. Old Business: Solar Ordinance: Solar Ordinance Language Debates Decisions

13. Medium Solar Setbacks:

- a. Stoutenburg wants 500 feet setbacks everywhere, Batkie agrees 500 feet everywhere. Campbell suggested 100-200 feet on medium or same as houses, 125 feet. Long discussion followed. Rick Pangburn interrupted the discussion, "are your setbacks to the residence or the residential property line?" Answer: Property line. Radloff commented lots of houses are on one acre lots, should be 300 feet from non-participating property. Hacker commented setbacks should be uniform. Radloff commented, non-participating or participating, need one number for everything. Batkie commented, buffer depth depends on what the greenbelt will be. Batkie commented remote areas could run with current zoning. Radloff commented, should be 300 feet even in remote areas.
- b. Consensus: Possible consensus on 300 feet everywhere, but not conclusive after polling members.

14. Noise:

- a. Discussion. Jason commented, 65 DBs at property lines was too high. Stoutenburg stated all DBs should be one number. Discussion followed, which morphed into discussion on noise during construction. Stoutenburg commented the noise during construction could go on for 24 hours a day, he has seen them going 24 hours. Discussion followed. Fetting commented that noise during construction could be addressed during the Site Plan Review process. Discussion followed.
- b. Consensus: Leave the noise levels as currently in the draft ordinance.

15. Large Solar Setbacks:

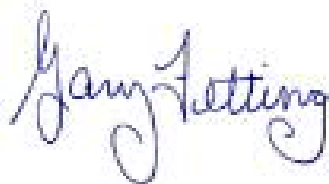
- a. Radloff stated, all large solar, non-participating residential or commercial should be one number. Discussion Followed. Stoutenburg suggested 2500 feet with developer to be allowed to negotiate it down. Batkie commented 75 feet setback along roadway. Fetting commented 125 feet along roadway. Radloff commented, with current zoning you can't build closer than 100 feet to road and 150 feet on M-19 and M-46. Discussion Followed. Stoutenburg suggested 2500 feet everywhere. Discussion Followed.
- b. Current Consensus:
  - Non-Participating property, commercial or residential, 500 feet.

Watertown Township Planning Commission  
Meeting Minutes – as Submitted for Approval  
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Special Meeting

- Participating property, commercial or residential, 50 feet from property line. If no property line is involved, 50 feet from nearest structure.
  - Along all Roadways 400 feet.
  - M-19 existing and future commercial corridor, from City Limits to Marlette Rd. 400 feet (existing commercial depth) plus 500 feet setback, totaling 900 feet.
  - Miller road existing commercial 350 feet (existing commercial depth) plus 500 feet setback, totaling 850 feet.
16. Stoutenburg wants named changed to “Industrial Solar Energy Facility”. “It’s no Solar Farm”.
- a. No consensus
17. Stoutenburg wants substations to abide by the setbacks.
- a. No consensus
18. Stoutenburg wants maximum solar in township lowered from the current 8% to 5%. Fetting suggested 10%.
- a. No consensus
19. Stoutenburg wants the Planning Commission to send a letter to the Township Board, that they need to get something done in regards to marihuana grow houses. Discussion followed with Supervisor Franzel explaining that the Township Board has been working on this issue and that someone will be at the next meeting to discuss the townships options.
- a. The Planning Commission took no further action.
20. Motion by Campbell to adjourn, support by Stoutenburg. Motion carried unanimously.

Time: 8:20 pm

Respectfully submitted,



Gary Fetting

Future Meetings  
6:00pm Thursdays

- August 19, 2021
- September 16, 2021

VS - Vendor shed  
VT - Vendor Tent

PAVILLION

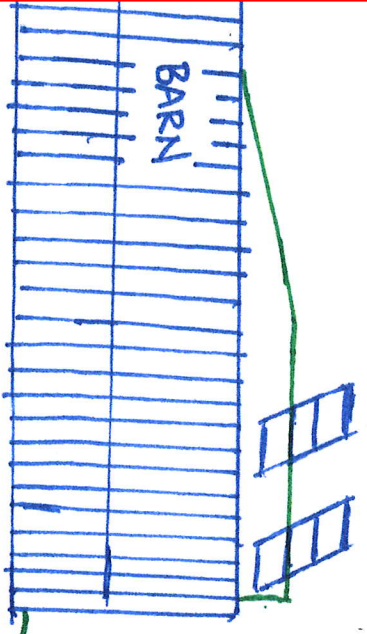
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FOOD TRUCKS

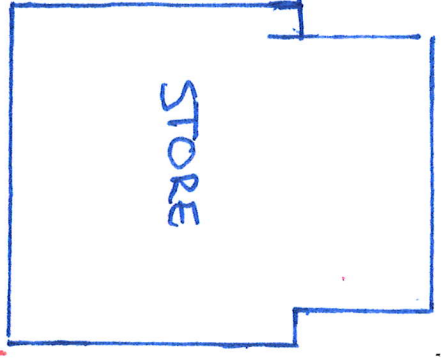


JEAN STREET

PARKING

PARKING

UHAUL STORAGE AND PARKING



S Sandusky Rd.



Watertown Township Planning Commission  
07-15-2021 Special Meeting Minutes  
Appendix: B

July 15, 2021

## The Best Interest of the People

Watertown Township Board:

Scott Franzel, Sheila Coats, Tammy Ross, William Dixon and Rebecca Cambridge.

Watertown Township Planning Commission:

Mark Batkie, Nathan Campbell, William Dixon, James Hacker, Al Stoutenburg, Gary Fetting and Jason Radlof.

Thank you all for your service and concern for the people of Watertown Township.

I was talking with a person on the planning committee for Watertown Township about the solar farm and they assured me they would make a decision that is "In the best interest of the people." This person was very helpful and seemed sincere.

How does a person define "In the best interest of the people?" I believe that depends on how they view their constituents. Do they view their constituents as less intelligent and therefore what they want as irrelevant?

Does the term "In the best interest of the people" really mean "in the best interest of the few who will profit?"

I believe "In the best interest of the people" means give the people the information, answer their questions honestly, and let the people decide what is best for themselves.

Over the last two weeks Karen Smith has knocked on the doors of over 200 Watertown Township residence talking to them about the solar farm. She has stated that many people are not aware of the solar farm trying to come into our township, especially the massive size of this project. Quite frankly, many people were shocked. One lady was so distraught she started to cry. Karen said only 3 people were in favor of the solar farm.

Therefore, I ask you, if the strong majority of the people do not want solar farm, and only a select few do, what truly is "In the best interest of the people?"

Sincerely

Michael and Karen Smith