

Watertown Township
2630 South Sandusky Rd
Sandusky, MI 48471
Thursday, December 16, 2021 – 5:30 pm

The Watertown Township Board meeting was called to order by Supervisor, Scott Franzel at 6:00 pm.

All present rose and recited the Pledge of Allegiance.

PRESENT: Cambridge, Dixon, Franzel, Ross and Coats

ABSENT: Diaz

GUESTS: Al Stoutenburg, Jason Radloff, Matt and Susan Cole, Gary Heberling, Ken Landsburg, Richard Honaman, Gary Fetting, Brandon Miller, James Hacker, Lyne Stauffer and Hannah Bryan from Sanilac County News.

MINUTES

Franzel tabled until the next regular meeting.

ADDITIONS OR CORRECTIONS TO THE AGENDA

Franzel requested that

- 1 written correspondence and 2 email correspondences be added under Correspondence

***Dixon made the motion to accept the agenda as amended. Coats supported. Ayes: Cambridge, Coats, Dixon, Franzel and Ross Nays: None. Motion carried

PUBLIC COMMENT

- Township Planning Committee Member, Gary Fetting expressed his concerns regarding the discussion of the Solar Ordinance Draft at the December 7, 2021 regular Township Board Meeting while entertaining a quorum of the Watertown Planning Commission Committee, the Board's changes to the Solar Ordinance Draft prior to submitting to the Sanilac County Planning Commission especially without referring it back to the Township Planning Commission, the tax language "Upon approval of a large scale permit, the property shall be assessed as a commercial property", and offering a member of the Planning Commission pay in excess of the regular per meeting salary since this compensation was not fixed by the legislative body prior to the work being performed. He stated that he could not accept the offer.

***Coats made the motion to rescind the offer of compensation to Gary Fetting on the Planning Commission for the outstanding work he did on the Solar Ordinance. Dixon supported. Ayes: Cambridge, Coats, Dixon, Franzel and Ross. Nays: None. Motion carried.

- Ken Landsburg expressed his concerns regarding the affect the ordinance changes have on small land owners and that the Coal and Gas Lobbyist will take what he considers a highly intrusive ordinance and use it as an example in other townships.
- Brandon Miller, Atlanta Liberty Coalition -- expressed an opinion on the restrictiveness of this solar ordinance, what it says about landowner's property rights in general and the negative information that some township residents received.

CORRESPONDENCE

1. Cambridge read a written correspondence from Scott Campbell in support of solar energy and solar farming. The correspondence also expressed Mr. Campbell's disapproval of the solar ordinance, as he considers it restrictive and unfair to landowners.

2. Ross read an email sent to Franzel from M. Fraley expressing frustration on the current solar ordinance and the restrictiveness of it.
3. Dixon read an email sent to Franzel from Randy Fahs expressing that he is 100% in favor of the solar project and a landowner's right to decide on the use of their land.

Franzel reported he spoke to the Township Attorney, Kyle O'Mara and received written correspondence regarding the Planning Commission Member's Conflict of Interest issue. It is Mr. O'Mara's opinion that there is no Conflict of Interest.

OFFICIAL GUEST

1. PUBLIC OFFICIALS:

Sanilac Planning Commission Vice-Chairman Gary Heberling reported that after review of the ordinance, the committee voted that the ordinance be sent back to the Township Board with one comment. The Planning Commission didn't think the Township had the right to assess land as either farmland or commercial. That is a function of the Township Assessor.

- Franzel reported that an adjustment has been made that the ordinance will not have an automatic change in zoning clause, but will have a zoning clause that states the best and highest use of the land as assessed by the Township Assessor.

DISCUSSION

1. Adoption of the 2022-1 Solar Ordinance amendment.

- The Board reviewed and discussed the Solar Ordinance as amended. They found, some amendments were accurate, however some were missing language and had confusing changes. Dixon made the observation that, as there are notation marks to the side of some pages, it is possible the whole document did not print.
- Coats will contact Township Attorney, Kyle O'Mara to request a review of the ordinance language and that he provide a final finished draft.
- Another meeting of the Board will be scheduled as soon as possible after the final draft is received.

***Cambridge made the motion to hold off on adopting the ordinance until the final draft is received and a new meeting is scheduled. If the draft is received by Friday, December 24, 2021 a meeting may be set up on Thursday, December 28, 2021 at 5:30 pm or this matter will be considered at the next regularly scheduled meeting on Tuesday, January 4, 2022. Coats supported. Ayes: Cambridge, Coats, Dixon, Franzel and Ross. Nays: None. Motion carried

2. Pizza will be served while we are having our discussion and will be an open meeting until we are done eating.
 - Pizza was served.

ADJOURN

***Coats made the motion to adjourn the meeting at 6:13 pm. Cambridge supported. Ayes: Cambridge, Coats, Dixon, Franzel and Ross. Nays: None. Motion carried

Next Regular Board Meeting is Tuesday, January 4, 2022, 6 pm.

Respectfully submitted

Tammy Ross, Clerk,