

VAN BUREN COUNTY PLANNING COMMISSION

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Van Buren County Planning
Commission November 29, 2023

Meeting Minutes

1) Call to Order & Attendance

The meeting was called to order at 6:35 p.m.

Present: Alyssa Hosbein, Tom Motycka, Scott Cedarquist, Pam Stermer, Jan Petersen, Kurt Doroh, and Tony Hemenway. Others present included Lisa Imus Ransler, staff and Tyler Augst with MSUE attended via Zoom.

Absent: Celinda Gilmore, Will Pugsley and Barbara Rose.

2) **Approval of Agenda:** Motion by Doroh, with support by Motycka to approve the November 29, 2023, agenda. Motion approved unanimously.

3) **Approval of Minutes:** A motion was made by Motycka, with support from Stermer to approve the October 25, 2023, Minutes. Motion approved unanimously.

4) **Public Comment:** Cedarquist asked Hosbein if a Planning Commission meeting could be held at the Getman Corporation so that the Planning Commission members could get a tour of the facility. Hosbein agreed to arrange.

5) Reports:

a) **BOC Liaison Report:** Commissioner Doroh reported that the Legal Self-Help Centers are now available in each district library. Mike Chappell is preparing an ORV ordinance for the County to review. It would create consistency in regulations for safety and any Township would have the ability to opt out. Doroh also reported that the ROBIN grant continues to move forward, and the County consultant would be meeting with each local government to work out the final details for internet accessibility.

b) **Land Preservation Board (LPB) Report:** The Land Preservation Board is preparing a marketing campaign to interest landowners in participating in the purchase of development rights for farmland. A grant will be submitted to the State for funding assistance in January 2025.

c) **Southwest Michigan Planning Commission (SWMPC) Report:** Petersen reported she had sent her official resignation letter after her two-year term. The County will be looking for her replacement if there is interest.

d) Local Visits Report:

i) Motycka reported that Decatur Township lost their legal battle with Southwest Michigan Solar Project and had no plans to appeal.

ii) Cedarquist reported that he recently attended an agricultural show that highlighted Germany for their advanced regenerative agriculture initiatives.

- iii) Petersen reported that she had been reviewing the inflation reduction act progress and it seemed to be moving full steam ahead with impacts in Michigan.
- iv) Hosbein reported that Decatur Village was preparing for the Christmas Parade and other holiday activities hosted on December 3 at 6:00 pm.

6) Unfinished Business:

- a) **Training Opportunities:** MSUE is coordinating a Citizens Planner Class for Van Buren County Planning Commissions. It will be held at the Van Buren ISD Conference Center on March 12, 19, 26 and April 9, 16, and 23 2024. The target audience will be any member of a Planning Commission in Van Buren County. The cost is \$250 per person. Ransler will distribute copies of the flyer to each Planning Commission in the County.
- b) **Coordination of Local Visits:** No report will keep on agenda.

7) New Business:

- a) **Antwerp Township proposed Wellhead Protection Overlay Ordinance:** Antwerp Township submitted their proposed Wellhead Protection Overlay Ordinance. After discussion, Doroh, supported by Motycka made a motion to concur with the Township's conclusions. Motion was unanimously approved.
- b) **Pam Stermer Resignation** – With deep regret, the Planning Commission accepted Pam Stermer's resignation from the Commission to be effective in March 2024. Stermer has served over 20 years on the Commission.
- c) **Officer Nomination Committee for January 2024 meeting** – Chairperson Petersen took nominations from the floor for a nominating committee to be formed to create a slate of officers for the January 2024 Organizational meeting. Doroh, Stermer and Hosbein will serve on the Committee.
- d) **Presentation by Tyler Augst via Zoom: Van Buren County Planning Commission Roles and Responsibilities** – Augst presented a PowerPoint presentation on the Roles and Responsibilities of County Planning Commission:

The Big Picture:

- Planning and Zoning activities contribute to better placemaking, environmental quality, orderly growth, and economic development.
- Zoning aims to protect property values, prevent incompatible land uses, ensure public improvements, and maintain public health and safety.

Responsibilities of a County Planning Commission:

- Review and update the County Master Plan every 5 years, with options to amend or adopt a new plan.
- Conduct surveys and studies, consult with adjacent local units, and coordinate with state and federal agencies.
- Monitor, link, coordinate, assess, and advocate for projects in alignment with the Master Plan.

Local Zoning Review:

- Request and review zoning ordinance amendments from local Planning Commissions.
- Coordinate with adjacent municipalities, ensuring consistency with the County Master

Plan.

Responsibilities - Local Master Plans:

- Receive and review local draft Master Plans, providing advisory statements on consistency with the County Master Plan.

County PC Bylaws, Minutes, Findings:

- Adopt bylaws, maintain public records, and provide annual reports to the legislative body.
- Annual reports include work plans, budgets, and recommendations related to planning and development.

Planning Commission membership represents diverse segments of the community.

- Ex-officio members may include the Chief Administrative Official, Chief Elected Official, or a legislative body member.
- Roles of Chairperson and Membership:
- Chairperson sets agenda, runs meetings, mediates conflicts, and represents the board.
- Membership attends faithfully, understands important documents, refrains from pre-decision, and participates in deliberation.

Function: Appointed Boards:

- Implement policies, rules, and ordinances, study, hold meetings, and provide recommendations to the elected body.
- Must communicate effectively, stay within budget and the law, and practice ethical behavior.
- Expectations from Elected Boards:
- Results, competency, clear communication, and defined roles.
- Appointed boards are expected to follow through on priorities, possess knowledge of relevant laws, and communicate effectively.

Ethics:

- Public office comes with a duty to serve the public good.
- Ethics involve a higher standard, adherence to moral principles, and avoiding conflicts of interest and impropriety.

Conflict of Interest:

- Public officials must avoid conflicts between personal interests and public duties.

Foundational Documents:

- PC Ordinance, Rules of Procedure, Master Plan, and ongoing training increase confidence and decrease risk for commissioners.
- Commissioners should be familiar with foundational documents, undergo mandatory training, and engage in ongoing communication with staff and board chair.
- Training opportunities, meeting expectations, and adherence to parliamentary procedures contribute to effective commission functioning.

8) Adjournment: The meeting was adjourned at 7:42 p.m.