

Jonesfield Township

Richard Bluemer, Chairman

Jonesfield Township Planning Commission

October 9, 2017

Meeting Minutes

Chairman Bluemer called the regular meeting of the Jonesfield Township Planning Commission to order at 7:00 p.m.

MEMBERS PRESENT: Chairman Bluemer, Mike Kenny and John Siler, Jr.

MEMBER ABSENT: Mike Keenan, Jr.

GUEST: Jerry Rohde, Rob Eggers, Larry Fleming, Lee Glazier, Dennis Hogan, Mildred Parker, Justin Buckley, Kathy Nock and Larry Tibbits

Pledge to the Flag

Public Comment: There were no formal public comments but during the presentations described below there were many questions and information gathering.

Chairman Bluemer asked supervisor Tibbits to update the commission on the status of the township board membership since clerk Siler has resigned. After interviews, former trustee Julie Foye was appointed to the clerk's position and Justin Buckley was appointed to Julie's trustee position. At the upcoming October 23, 2017 township board meeting, one of the board members will be appointed to the planning commission to take Rochelle's vacant position. Tibbits volunteered to take minutes for tonight's meeting.

Tibbits stated that the township board members present were there for an information gathering opportunity and no interaction of board members leading to future board decisions would take place.

The July 10, 2017 planning commission minutes are not available. It was moved by Mike Kenny and seconded by John Siler to table the minutes approval until the next meeting. Motion carried.

Jerry Rohde, Supervisor of Wheeler Township and Rob Eggers of the Spicer Group were introduced as tonight's speakers to share their experience with wind turbine energy systems.

Jerry Rohde began by describing Wheeler Township's experience with their wind turbine project. He worked with Gratiot County in the beginning to develop one wind turbine ordinance which provided the basis for the 56 turbines now operating in his township. Gratiot County has a total of 190 turbines and Pine River Township will come on-line next year. The project doubled Wheeler Township's taxable value. Specifically, in real dollars, the road fund is now \$69,000.00 more than it was; General Fund \$70,000.00 more than it was and Fire and Rescue have \$109,000.00 more.

The township had some citizen opposition early on, but most concerns brought up during their public meeting turned out not to be a problem that was either valid or could not be overcome.

John Siler asked if turbines would exist without government subsidy. Rob Eggers said that is true and occurs to cover part of the installation cost.

Lee Glazier asked about setbacks. Our setbacks are not yet defined in Jonesfield but other jurisdictions range from 1,000 feet to 2,000 feet which is the case of Lakefield Township's new ordinance. Active systems range from 1,000 to 1,300 feet. Road setbacks are normally 400 feet or more; setbacks from villages may be ½ mile to a mile. Setbacks at property lines are dependent upon the program participation by adjacent owners. Unless otherwise agreed to, a non-participating/participating property line would have a setback of 4 times the turbine height.

Questions concerning some jurisdictions calling for a moratorium to implement turbine farms were brought up. Most enact a moratorium to give them time to write and adopt an ordinance. As an alternative, our township could say that the existing Special Use Permit wind energy description is only applicable for small non-industrial home type wind generation units.

Rob Eggers said it is important, as our township moves forward, to look at what other jurisdictions do, but to make decisions based upon what is best for our township. Decisions on setback, shadow flicker, red light strobes, distances from the Village, etc. should be our own.

Spicer Group has assisted between 80 and 85% of all jurisdictions with wind systems or pending systems that exist in Michigan. To help planning commissions develop ordinances, Spicer helps set up escrow accounts funded by the energy companies to pay for the planning commission ordinance development work, engineering review, permit issuance, construction engineering and project close out. Normally this escrow amount is set at \$3K to \$5K per turbine. If we anticipate taller turbines requiring less units we may consider collecting more than these rule of thumb amounts.

Rob suggested that we only include turbines in our "A-1" general agricultural district and probably avoid our "A-2" agricultural and rural residential districts. He also indicated that technology now exist for aircraft radar to turn on the red flashing lights at night. The nighttime flashing red lights are a major irritant for non-participating property owners. With the new system, the red lights would normally be off.

One mistake jurisdictions make is not demanding digital as-build plans and specifications.

Additionally, shadow flicker can be mitigated by setbacks, affected resident treatments and shutting down the turbines during the influence hours of operation.

Rob indicated that if the township wished to engage Spicer, the first step would be for Spicer to prepare a draft ordinance and then work with the whole planning commission or sub work group to set the variable metrics that work for Jonesfield.

Chairman Bluemer said that the company that approached him concerning his land said that the system would include 40 to 45 turbines total over seven townships. This statement from the real-estate company representative has not been confirmed. Rob shared a document titled, "Wind Considerations for Planning Purposes."

At this point, Siler made a motion to recommend to the township board that we enact a one-year moratorium on any proposed wind turbine system so the planning commission has time to finish the ordinance.

Kenny offered a motion amendment that the moratorium includes any Alternative Energy Systems including solar or any other system that may be proposed. The amendment was accepted by Siler and Kenny seconded the amended motion. The motion carried unanimously. Tibbits stated that the recommendation will be on the board agenda for the October 23, 2017 meeting.

The planning commission affirmed that they were not going to recommend any action concerning the new medical marijuana law to the township board.

Tibbits opened the discussion of the need to update our Jonesfield Township Zoning Ordinance. In 2013, the planning commission updated the Master Plan and it was enacted by the board. It is time to update the corresponding zoning ordinance. It was decided that the commission would begin their January 8, 2018 meeting early and begin the section by section review as a group. Each commission member will speed up the review by prereading and marking up the documents ahead of time. Jim Gray, our zoning administrator is available as a resource to the planning commission.

Tibbits agreed to check on a Special Use permit status to the east of Chapin Road on M-46 and report back to the planning commission.

Mike Kenny made a motion, seconded by Siler to adjourn at 8:48 p.m., carried.

Next meeting: Monday, January 8, 2018 @ 6:00 p.m.

Larry Tibbits, Supervisor