

**MINUTES OF THE GAINES CHARTER TOWNSHIP PLANNING COMMISSION  
FOR THE REGULAR MEETING HELD ON  
June 28, 2018  
AT THE GAINES CHARTER TOWNSHIP OFFICES  
8555 KALAMAZOO AVENUE SE CALEDONIA, MICHIGAN 49316**

**I. CALL TO ORDER AND ROLL CALL**

The meeting was called to order at 7:00 p.m. by Chair Giarmo. A quorum was present.

**MEMBERS PRESENT:** Billips, Giarmo, Haagsma, Rober, Thomas

**MEMBERS ABSENT:** Burns, Waayenberg

**OTHERS PRESENT:** Mark Sisson, AICP, Township Planner  
Matt McKernan, Assistant Planner  
Robin Haaksma, Recording Secretary

**II. CONSIDERATION OF MEETING AGENDA**

Item VIII.3 added to the agenda

**III. CONSIDERATION OF MEETING MINUTES**

May 24, 2018 – Regular Meeting Minutes

**Motion:** By Member Rober, supported by Member Giarmo to approve the minutes for the May 24, 2018 Planning Commission Regular Meeting.

**Discussion:** None

**Ayes:** Billips, Giarmo, Rober, Thomas

**Nays:** None

**Abstain:** None

**Decision:** Passed

**IV. INQUIRY OF CONFLICT OF INTEREST**

None

**V. PUBLIC COMMENT ON NON-AGENDA ITEMS**

None

**VI. NEW BUSINESS**

None

**VII. UNFINISHED BUSINESS**

**1. Site Plan Review**

**Everett's Landscape Management, 240 84th Street SE (A-R)**

*Continued discussion for a special use permit request by Everett's Landscape Management to allow a monument sign featuring an electronic changeable copy display at 240 84<sup>th</sup> Street SE.*

***Transcriber's note: Member Haagsma arrived at 7:10 pm and missed the majority of the discussion related to Everett's request. Member Haagsma decided to abstain from voting on this matter.***

Planner Sisson showed that the pole sign has been changed to a monument sign with a retaining wall. The necessary ordinance amendments were passed by the Township Board and take effect July 1.

Motion by Rober, supported by Thomas to take discussion on Everett's monument sign featuring electronic messaging center from the table.

**Discussion:** None  
**Ayes:** Billips, Giarmo, Rober, Thomas  
**Nays:** None  
**Abstain:** Haagsma  
**Decision:** Passed

The Planning Commission members expressed general approval for the sign and asked the applicant if they would be willing to discuss the signs hours of operation. Brent Diemer of Everett's Landscape Management stated there wouldn't be much need for the sign after peak traffic hours and agreed to a 10 pm shut off time.

**Motion:** By Member Rober, supported by Member Thomas to approve the special use permit request to allow for construction of a monument sign featuring an electronic messaging center at 240 84<sup>th</sup> St. SE. Approval is subject to the following conditions:

1. Building permits shall not be authorized for the sign until the related zoning ordinance amendments take effect on July 1, 2018.
2. There shall be a minimum of eight (8) seconds between copy changes.
3. The rate of change between messages shall be instantaneous.
4. The sign will make use of an ambient light meter to lower the intensity of the lighting during evening hours.
5. Physical evidence/documentation of an intent to comply with all of the above stipulations, and those of Section 17.7, shall be requirements for the issuance of all necessary sign and electrical permits, and preconditions to the approval of all final inspections.
6. Non-compliance with the above conditions during the signs operation may be considered grounds for the revocation of the special use permit.
7. The permitted hours of operation for the sign are 7 am to 10 pm.

**Discussion:** None  
**Ayes:** Billips, Giarmo, Rober, Thomas  
**Nays:** None  
**Abstain:** Haagsma  
**Decision:** Passed

**VIII. GENERAL DISCUSSION**

**1. Master Plan Discussion**

**a. Review of Existing RUR-Rural Planning District (Comparison of Current Zoning to Master Plan Objectives)**

Planner Sisson explained that the 2002 master plan discussed the possibility of creating a single rural zoning district that would feature large lot sizes or cluster developments. The plan mentions that overlay zones could be added for wetlands, cluster developments, or mineral removal operations. The current zoning ordinance does not reflect this. The A-R district has minimum lot sizes of 80,000 sq. ft. and does not restrict land division. The A-B district has minimum 40,000 sq. ft. lot sizes and restricts the number of splits and no plats are allowed. The planning commission should evaluate the township's agricultural preservation policies. Should we do one rural district with restricted splits, except in the case of cluster development? Should we maintain current districts and adjust the master plan accordingly? Sisson finished by explaining relevant concepts such as cluster developments, purchase of development rights programs, and transfer of development rights programs.

Chair Giarmo recalled that the majority of discussion in 2002 focused on allowing farmers to pursue additional income sources and there was not much discussion devoted to housing policy.

Member Haagsma expressed a preference toward transfer of development rights programs because they do not involve public funds. Haagsma also expressed approval of promoting cluster development as a means of preserving agricultural land.

Planner Sisson explained that Allen Edwin Homes would be making a presentation at July's Planning Commission meeting to gauge the Planning Commission's opinion on rezoning two properties (3250 100<sup>th</sup> St. and 10330 Hanna Lake Ave.) from A-B to A-R to allow for a cluster development of around 50 homes.

**2. Solar Energy Collection Systems Review of Model Ordinance Language**

Planner Sisson explained that discussions relating to solar farms and solar panels have been increasing and it is time to proactively address some of the issues. Sisson presented a model solar energy ordinance for discussion. Currently, the sole standard is that solar panels on individual homes need to meet building code requirements. Some municipalities require special use permits for solar farms and restrict the zoning districts in which they can be built. Sisson explained that they would most likely be taking up the issue in the fall and asked the Planning Commission to consider what types of regulations they would like to see.

**3. Discussion Relative to the Planning Commission's Philosophy on Allowing Developers to Request "Preliminary Development Reviews"**

Planner Sisson asked the Planning Commission for their opinion on allowing developers to request informal hearings on potential development requests for a small fee. The Planning Commission has received several of these requests in the past several years. There are pros and cons to allowing these types of requests and Sisson asked for direction on how to respond for future requests.

Sisson explained that allowing developers to gauge the Planning Commission's interest in a project before large amounts of time and money are devoted to a project would be a plus. A negative however, is the Planning Commission would have to speak broadly and vaguely to avoid any potential legal problems if the development isn't ultimately approved.

The Planning Commission likes being developer friendly, but does not like to appear they are colluding with the developer prior to a public hearing. Sisson explained that next month a developer would be discussing apartments on 60<sup>th</sup> St. next to Fieldstone Apartments.

**IX. ADJOURNMENT**

**Motion:** By Member Rober, supported by Member Haagsma to adjourn the meeting.

**Discussion:** None

**Ayes:** Billips, Giarmo, Haagsma, Rober, Thomas

**Nays:** None

**Abstain:** None

**Decision:** Passed

Meeting adjourned at 8:20 pm.

**CERTIFICATION**

I hereby certify that the above is a true copy of the minutes from the June 28, 2018 Regular Meeting of the Gaines Charter Township Planning Commission held at the time and place mentioned above pursuant to the required statutory procedures.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Lani Thomas". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned above the printed name and title.

Lani Thomas, Secretary  
Gaines Charter Township  
Planning Commission

Dated: July 26, 2018