

NORTHFIELD TOWNSHIP PLANNING COMMISSION Minutes of Regular Meeting January 6, 2021

1. CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order by Chair Roman at 7:00 P.M. via tele-conference.

2. ROLL CALL AND DETERMINATION OF QUORUM

Roll call:

Janet Chick	Present
Brad Cousino	Absent (appointment expired)
Eamonn Dwyer	Present
Sam Iaquinto	Absent with notice
Cecilia Infante	Present
Larry Roman	Present
John Zarzecki	Present

All Commissioners present indicated they were participating from locations in Northfield Township.

Also present:
Building/Planning/Zoning Coordinator Mary Bird
Planning Consultant Julie Connochie, McKenna Assoc.
Recording Secretary Lisa Lemble
Members of the Community

3. ADOPTION OF AGENDA

- **Motion:** Roman moved, Infante supported, that the agenda be adopted as presented.
Motion carried 5—0 on a voice vote.

4. FIRST CALL TO THE PUBLIC

No comments.

5. CLARIFICATIONS FROM THE COMMISSION

None.

6. CORRESPONDENCE

None.

7. PUBLIC HEARINGS

None.

8. REPORTS

8A. Board of Trustees

Chick reported that she at a special meeting on December 17, 2020, heard a very favorable audit report for fiscal year 2019-20 and accepted the audit.

8B. ZBA

Has not met since the last Planning Commission meeting.

8C. Staff Report

Nothing to report.

8D. Planning Consultant

Connochie reported that Natalie Bond with McKenna has posted the Parks & Recreation Plan for public comment on the Township website. She noted a public discussion and review of the Plan by the Commission is not statutorily required, but Bond is willing to attend the next meeting to present and discuss it.

Chick said it appears there is information missing from the draft Plan. Connochie said more information is being added and Commissioners are invited to make comments. It was agreed that Ms. Bond should make a presentation to the Commission on January 20th.

8E. Parks and Recreation

No report.

8F. Downtown Planning Group

Infante said major issues are tax increment financing (TIF) capture and trying to exactly identify the Downtown Development Authority (DDA) boundaries to capture those funds, as well as Redevelopment Ready preparedness. She said there is also confusion about the status of the North Village Park and development plans, but also excitement about it.

9. UNFINISHED BUSINESS

9A. Revised 2020 Annual Report and 2021 Work Plan.

Connochie reported she incorporated all comments made at the last meeting about these documents, and also added estimated costs for each item to help the Township Board with financial planning

- **Motion:** Roman moved, Chick supported, to forward the revised 2020 Annual Report and 2021 Work Plan to the Township Board.

In answer to a question from Dwyer, Connochie said costs included in the work plan are for McKenna expenses as well as the probable hiring of a landscape architect and other misc. expenses.

Motion carried 5—0 on a roll call vote.

9B. Discussion: Code Enforcement Zoning Ordinance Text Amendment

Connochie referred to her memo of December 29, 2020, and recalled that this was last before the Commission in 2018. She said the purpose is to strengthen the ability of the code enforcement officer to enforce the ordinance.

Comments included:

- In response to a question from Dwyer, Connochie said this amendment strictly pertains to enforcement of zoning ordinance violations, whereas blight (non-working vehicles stored outdoors, for example) falls under the general code of ordinances enforced by the Building Official. Connochie said she does not know if there is a similar ordinance elsewhere in the general ordinances to address blight.
- Chick said blight has been a major issue for a long time, but the Township can only issue warnings, not tickets or citations, so there are no teeth in the ordinance, and that is part of what the changes to this ordinance are trying to address regarding zoning. Infante added that blight is often defended by use of the term “grandfathering,” and this has resulted in serious disagreements between neighbors.
- Chick asked whether time frames for issuance of citations, tickets, etc. should be included. Roman said different situations might need more or less time to address, so that should be left up to the enforcement officer. Zarzecki noted there are State limitations on some things, such as stop work orders.
- Suggestions for additional text changes were made, including allowing the zoning administrator to designate authority for some actions, designating approval to the Township Manager rather than the Township Board, and including definitions of terms such as civil infraction and misdemeanor.

There was a brief discussion of the actual process of enforcing codes. Dwyer suggested providing enforcement officers with a drone as an additional tool.

It was agreed to have the revised document reviewed by both the Building Official and Township Attorney. It was also agreed to have the Commission review the revised draft prior to setting a public hearing, preferably by the next meeting.

10. NEW BUSINESS

10A. Adopt Robert’s Rules of Order—Simplified.

- ▶ **Motion:** Roman moved, Zarzecki supported, that the Planning Commission adopt Robert’s Rules of Order—Simplified. **Motion carried 5—0 on a voice vote.**

11. MINUTES

- ▶ **Motion:** Roman moved, Chick supported, that the minutes of the December 16, 2020, regular meeting be approved as presented, and to dispense with the reading. **Motion carried 5—0 on a voice vote.**

12. SECOND CALL TO THE PUBLIC

No comments.

13. COMMENTS FROM THE COMMISSIONERS

- Chick briefly provided information about the difference between violations and misdemeanors.
- Infante said she would like the purchase of a drone for code enforcement purposes. Chick said she will bring this to the Board.
- Roman recommended that the code enforcement officer also be provided with a vehicle and communication equipment.

14. ANNOUNCEMENT OF NEXT MEETING

January 20, 2021, at 7:00 P.M. via tele-conference or at the Public Safety Building was announced as the next regular Commission meeting time and location.

15. ADJOURNMENT

- ▶ **Motion:** Roman moved, Chick supported, that the meeting be adjourned. **Motion carried 5—0 on a voice vote.**

The meeting was adjourned 7:58 P.M.

Prepared by Lisa Lemble.

Corrections to the originally issued minutes are indicated as follows:

Wording removed is ~~stricken through~~;

Wording added is underlined.

Adopted on _____, 2021.

Larry Roman, Chair

John Zarzecki, Secretary

Official minutes of all meetings are available on the Township’s website at <http://www.twp-northfield.org/government/>