

MINUTES
MECOSTA COUNTY PLANNING COMMISSION

Mecosta County Services Building

November 2, 2023

I. Roll Call

Chair, Ethan Ray called the meeting to order at 6 p.m. Present for roll call were; Lorie Behrens, Marilyn Bradstrom, Richard Hatkowski, Gary Lambrix, Bill Routley, Annette Coles, Zoning Administrator, & Kim Straley, Recording Secretary. Bill Stanek was not present.

Agenda amendment

Chair Ray requested that the agenda be amended to place the map amendments together as they are from the same area. Motion supported by Gary Lambrix, motion passed unanimously, and public hearings were rearranged as stated in these minutes.

II. Matters Pertaining to the Public (3-minute limit per speaker)

1. Chair Ray then asked if there was anyone who wished to be on the next agenda. There was no response.

III. Public Hearings on the agenda retaining to the Public

1. Special Use Petition #PPC23-038 – Jason & Tamara Dey, 7865 Garfield Rd., Mecosta, Martiny Township; Parcel #07 035 009 500. Property is zoned AF. Request to allow a heating and cooling home-based business.

The Chair read the request into the record. The applicants, Jason and Tamara Dey, were present to speak in favor of the application.

- No clients will visit the sight.
- Are available for questions from the board.

There were no additional members present who were in favor of the petition.

Those present to speak against were none.

No one else to speak for or against the petition. Chair closed the public portion of the meeting and opened the floor to the Board for discussion and decision.

- Good fit to the area.
- Surrounded by trees and gravel pit area which makes a good buffer from neighboring properties.
- Not a client based on sight business.
- Will use structure to store materials and work on equipment only.

Approved

- Wants to attach to current small cabin and use cabin as a breakroom and restroom for employees.
- Has 5 employees plus self and spouse.
- Vehicles will be stored on sight from time to time.
- Presented a good sight plan.
- No foreseeable negative impacts to the area.

After discussion and based on the findings of facts listed, a motion was made by Marilyn Bradstrom and supported by Gary Lambrix to approve Special Use Petition #PPC23-038, request to allow a heating and cooling home-based business. Property is zoned AF and located at 7865 Garfield Rd., Mecosta, Martiny Township; Parcel #07 035 009 500.

Roll Call Vote – 6 Yeas – 0 Nays, motion passed. The petitioner should see staff for building permits in the office.

2. Special Use Petition #PPC23-041 – Austin Township Properties LLC, Colby Bettis, 16665 12 Mile Rd., Big Rapids, Austin Township; Parcel #10 008 007 000, 10 008 001 000, 10 005 002 001. Property is zoned AF. Request for an expansion of an agrotourism venue to allow a shooting range & adventure bike training on property.

Lorie Behrens made comment on a possible conflict of interest, her daughter works for the Bettis family. Board members believe this is not a conflict and feel she can continue and stay for this petition.

Chair Ray read the request into the record. The applicant, Colby Bettis, was present to speak in favor of the application.

- Told the board he was available for questions or comments if the board needed.

Additional members in favor were; area resident, Steve Hanford.

- Believes the business is a great asset to the community and brings a lot of people into the community.

Those present to speak against were; area neighbor Jared Peterson.

- Has no issues with the bed and breakfast and hunting preserve.
- Believes there is a noise issue with gunshots going off at all times of the day.
- Is not fond of the excessive gun noise.
- Has spoken with the State of Michigan EGLE on the wetlands impact.

No one else to speak for or against the petition. Chair closed the public portion of the meeting and opened the floor to the Board for discussion and decision.

Approved

- Shooting area is in the valleys and bottom of hills on the property.
- There are possible noise impacts but would not be on a daily basis.
- Good situation, property is surrounded by trees to help buffer the noise and surrounding impacts.
- Wetlands should be dealt with by soil erosion or the State of Michigan.
- Believes the homes are a great distance away and should have limited impact to neighboring properties.
- Bike training is a good fit and should have no impact on surrounding area residents.
- Will be a good expansion of the hunting preserve and bed and breakfast.
- Fence allows limited access to property.
- Many of the shooting issues are covered under the hunting preserve guidelines.
- May need to limit the amount of times an event would be allowed.
- Should do a study on the site and ask petitioner to come back in 6 months to one year with results.
- Does not state how many events would have per year.
- Would consider the expansion if gave special use with a limitation or review to come back in one year.

After discussion and based on the findings of facts listed, a motion was made by Gary Lambrix and supported by Rick Hatkowski to approve Petition #PPC23-041, a request for an expansion of an agrotourism venue to allow a shooting range & adventure bike training on property. Motion was approved with the stipulation that the petitioner come back in one year for a review of the special use. Property is zoned AF and located at 16665 12 Mile Rd., Big Rapids, Austin Township; Parcel #10 008 007 000, 10 008 001 000, 10 005 002 001.

Roll Call Vote – 6 Yeas – 0 Nays, motion passed with a stipulation that there be no limitations on use at this time and that the petitioner come back in one year (November 2024) for review of use at no cost to petitioner and possible changes in special use.

3. Map Amendment #PPC23-039 – John & Mandy Strohkirch, 13617 High Sierra Pass, Big Rapids, Colfax Township; Parcel #06 030 001 700. Property is zoned AG. Request to rezone the property from AG, agricultural to AF, agricultural and forestry.

The Chair read the request into the record. The applicant was not present to speak in favor of the application.

There was no one present to speak in favor.

Those present to speak against were; area neighbors, Joe and Julie Strohkirch, Greg Buydaert, Lou Kusay, and several letters in opposition received by staff, placed on file and put on record.

Approved

- Believes the petitioner is not using the property for agricultural purposes at this time.
- Recently rezoned property to AG in 2022, wondering why did not ask for AF at that time.
- Referred to hand out given to staff and presented to board on the previous map amendments done for this property.
- Believes there are safety impacts to the area residents.
- Believes the board has a tough job.

No one else to speak for or against the petition. Chair closed the public portion of the meeting and opened the floor to the Board for discussion and decision.

- Items listed are already an allowable use on the property.
- There is no need to rezone as the uses are allowed on the property in the current zoning district.

After discussion and based on the findings of facts listed, a motion was made by Marilyn Bradstrom and supported by Lorie Behrens to recommend denial of Map Amendment #PPC23-039, request to rezone the property from AG, agricultural to AF, agricultural and forestry. Property is zoned AG and located at 13617 High Sierra Pass, Big Rapids, Colfax Township; Parcel #06 030 001 700.

Roll Call Vote – 6 Yeas – 0 Nays

4. Map Amendment #PPC23-040 – Mark Hanford, 17063 Sierra Dr., Big Rapids, Colfax Township; Parcel #06 030 001 300. Property is zoned R-1. Request to rezone the property from R-1, rural residential to AF, agricultural and forestry.

The chair read the request into the record. The applicant was not present to speak in favor of the application. However, his brother Steve Hanford was acting as his representative.

- Mark grows grapes, ferns, and trees on the property.

There were no other members present in favor of the petition.

Those present to speak against were; area residents, Joe, Julie, and Terrie Strohkirch, and Lou Kusay.

- Would be considered spot zoning.
- Many believe there is a character issue.
- Believes the trees and grapes died or have been harmed by work being done on site.
- Uses are already allowed.
- Gave the definition of AF property.

Approved

- Not trying to stop current uses, just don't want additional large scale uses allowed.
- The Petitioner is a weekend visitor, does not live in the area full time.

No one else to speak for or against the petition. Chair closed the public portion of the meeting and opened the floor to the Board for discussion and decision.

- The vineyard is already an allowable use on the property.
- Could be considered spot zoning as the property does not abut to any other AF property.
- Don't believe there is a viable reason to make a change in zoning.
- There is no viable reason to make a recommendation for rezone change.
- The storing of equipment mentioned on the petition is too vague and could be an issue, therefore, should not be allowed without clarification of type of equipment and proposed use.

After discussion and based on the findings of facts listed, a motion was made by Rick Hatkowski and supported by Bill Routley to recommend denial of the Map Amendment #PPC23-040 Request to rezone the property from R-1, rural residential to AF, agricultural and forestry. Property is zoned R-1 and located at 17063 Sierra Dr., Big Rapids, Colfax Township; Parcel #06 030 001 300.

Roll Call Vote – 6 Yeas – 0 Nays, motion passed, staff will prepare the recommendation paperwork.

5. Map Amendment #PPC23-033 – Sent back to this board by the Board of Commissioners, for further review by the board and discussion. Stephen Hanford, 17099 Sierra Dr. Big Rapids, Colfax Township; Parcel #06 030 001 000. Property is zoned R-1. Request to rezone the property from R-1, rural residential to AF, agricultural and forestry.

The Chair read the request into the record and asked staff to report why the Board of Commissioners requested the review. Annette Coles replied with the following comments.

- The Board felt that the traffic impacts and uses allowed in an AF zoned district be considered more carefully.
- The board believes this may be considered spot zoning as the property is not adjacent to any AF zoned district.
- Dig more into the uses of an AG and AF property.

Chair Ray opened the floor for board discussion.

- Could be considered spot zoning.
- Type of business is not allowed in current zoning and requesting a map amendment is not a way to comply.

Approved

- Traffic impacts are an issue to the health, safety and welfare of the community.
- R-1 to AF is a huge jump in what is allowed by right when they are both compared to each other.
- The decision will affect surrounding neighborhood in a negative manner.
- Map amendments are not meant to solve noncompliance of non-permitted usage when have not complied in past.
- Different roads or access to property would allow for traffic concerns to be mitigated.

After discussion and based on the findings of facts listed, a motion was made by Rick Hatkowski and supported by Marilyn Bradstrom to recommend denial to the Board of Commissioners for Map Amendment #PPC23-03, request to rezone the property from R-1, rural residential to AF, agricultural and forestry. Property is zoned R-1 and located at 17099 Sierra Dr. Big Rapids, Colfax Township; Parcel #06 030 001 000.

Roll Call Vote – 6 Yeas, 0 Nays, motion passed. Staff will prepare the recommendation to present to the Board of Commissioners.

IV. **Public Comment** (3-minute limit per speaker)

The chair asked if there was anyone who wished to address the board on any subject. There were area residents, Joe Strohkirch, Roger Guiney, and Steve Hanford who spoke.

- Each person thanked the board for listening to what they wanted to say and for doing their job.
- Mr. Hanford complained about a neighbor having hazardous material on his property.
- Staff has already looked into this, and the complaint must go to Michigan State EGLE department as it is an environmental issue and not something staff would take care of.

V. **Business Session**

Old Business

1. Camping zoning discussion

- Staff recapped the items which the board requested to be sent to them.
- Staff explained the issues of raising fines and the board agreed will not be making any changes to the fines imposed on violations.
- Staff requested verification on wording board would like.
- Staff will bring back documented changes in the fashion of a draft for presentation to the December meeting.

New Business - None presented.

Approval of Minutes

Rick Hatkowski motioned to approve the October 5th, 2023, minutes, supported by Bill Routley and passed unanimously.

VI. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 8:10 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Kim Straley / Recording Secretary



_____, Chair
Ethan Ray
Mecosta County Planning Commission

_12/07/23_____
Date Approved