

**CHARTER TOWNSHIP OF VAN BUREN  
PLANNING COMMISSION - VIRTUAL MEETING ON ZOOM  
March 10, 2021  
MINUTES**

**Prior to the start of the meeting, the public was given instructions on how to take part in the meeting.**

Chairperson Thompson called the meeting to order at 7:31 p.m.

**ROLL CALL:**

**Present:** Jahr, Cullin, Kelley, Atchinson, Budd, Franzoi and Thompson.

**Excused:** None.

**Staff:** Director Power, Director Best and Secretary Harman.

**Planning Representatives:** McKenna Associate, Vidya Krishnan.

**Applicant(s) in Attendance:** None.

**Audience:** Four (4).

**APPROVAL OF AGENDA:**

Motion Jahr, Cullin second to approve the agenda of March 10, 2021 as presented.

**Roll Call:**

**Yeas:** Budd, Atchinson, Kelley, Cullin, Jahr, Franzoi and Thompson.

**Nays:** None.

**Absent:** None.

**Motion Carried.**

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES:**

Motion Kelley, Jahr second to approve the regular meeting minutes of February 24, 2021 as presented.

**Roll Call:**

**Yeas:** Cullin, Kelley, Atchinson, Budd, Jahr, Franzoi and Thompson.

**Nays:** None.

**Absent:** None.

**Motion Carried.**

**NEW BUSINESS:**

**ITEM #1: DISCUSSION: LOT COVERAGE ZONING ORDINANCE TEXT AMENDMENT.**

**PROPOSED AMENDMENTS THAT WOULD REVISE THE DEFINITIONS OF LOT COVERAGE UNDER SECTION 2.102 (DEFINITIONS) AND REGULATIONS RELATED TO LOT COVERAGE UNDER SECTION 4.103 (FOOTNOTES TO SCHEDULE OF REGULATIONS) OF THE VAN BUREN TOWNSHIP ZONING ORDINANCE IN ORDER**

**TO RELAX LOT COVERAGE REQUIREMENTS RELATED TO UNENCLOSED ROOFED STRUCTURES.**

Director Power provided a brief presentation. The discussion is a continuation from the February 24, 2021 Planning Commission meeting in which the Commission recommended a few changes to the proposed lot coverage zoning ordinance text amendment. The discussed changes have been implemented and the Principal Planner will review the changes with the Commission.

Vidya Krishnan of McKenna Associates gave the presentation. The proposed amendments are in response to an existing request to increase lot coverage area by 1%, the BZA decided to ask the Planning Commission for insight. McKenna Associates provided research from other communities and it was found that Van Buren Township was more restrictive than other communities. The amendment allows the Township to be less restrictive while still protecting from potential stormwater issues. The proposed amendments to the lot coverage in the Zoning Ordinance are as follows:

**The addition of language to Article 2. Definitions, Section 2.102 Specific Terms: (121) Lot Coverage.** For industrially zoned parcels located in the M-1, M-2 and M-T zoning districts, lot coverages shall not include unenclosed roofed structures that provide shelter over approved outdoor storage areas located over existing paved surfaces as noted in Section 4.102, footnote BB. Green roofs, solar panels, porticos and similar coverings shall not be allowable under this provision and shall be considered an architectural feature subject to the regulations of the district.

**The addition of footnote BB under Article 4. Schedule of Regulations, Section 4.102.** (BB) Unenclosed covered roof structures over approved outdoor storage areas located on existing impervious surface areas shall not exceed 10% of total lot area up to a maximum of 20,000 square feet. This coverage is in addition to any such coverage possible within the allowable 35% lot coverage.

**The addition of language to Article 5. Development Standards for Specific Uses, Section 5.101., Accessory Outdoor Industrial Storage.** Such approved outdoor storage areas may be provided with an unenclosed roof structure covering up to a maximum of 10% of the total lot area, up to a maximum of 20,000 square feet.

Commissioners discussed the changes to the amendment and provided the following questions and comments:

1. Commissioner inquired regarding the last sentence in (121) Lot Coverage, what if the applicant wanted solar panels on top of an awning that they are already building? It would qualify as part of their lot coverage as it is a dual purpose. If the request was for stand-alone solar panels it would not be allowable. Language will be added to clarify that the last sentence is to address stand-alone solar panels, green roofs and porticos.
2. Commissioner inquired if the last sentence of (121) Lot Coverage is needed at all if they are allowed by the building codes? Vidya Krishnan agreed that some features are allowable with compliance to the building code and clarified that the extra language is

added to avoid confusion with interpretation. Commissioner also inquired about the portico clause. Vidya Krishnan will look further into the language and fine tune it for clarification.

3. Commissioner inquired with the 10% lot area coverage and maximum of up to 20,000 square feet, how did we come up with the 10%? Commissioner identified that the number may not match what is allowable in other areas of the Zoning Ordinance. Vidya Krishnan informed that the 10% was a reasonable number when looking at the comparison communities, she will look at the numbers further to make sure they match.
4. Commissioners discussed what is allowable under the zoning ordinance for lot coverage. Director Power and Vidya Krishnan will discuss further and tighten up the language.

Director Power informed that an applicant from Neapco was present in the audience and expressed their thanks to the Planning Commission for reviewing the lot coverage text amendment language. Neapco also inquired about solar panels on the existing roof. Director Power informed that there are provisions in the zoning ordinance that are separate to address a request for solar panels on an existing roof. Director Power also noted that the changes discussed by the Commission will be looked into and brought back to the March 24, 2021 public hearing. After the public hearing the Planning Commission will consider a recommendation to the Township Board based on the final edits.

**ITEM #2: DISCUSSION: SENIOR HOUSING DEVELOPMENT ZONING ORDINANCE TEXT AMENDMENTS: MINIMUM USABLE FLOOR AREA AND SIGNAGE.**

**PROPOSED AMENDMENTS TO SECTION 5.143 THAT WOULD CLARIFY REQUIRED SITE MINIMUM USABLE FLOOR AREA IN SQUARE FEET PER DWELLING (INDEPENDENT SENIOR HOUSING DEVELOPMENTS) AND REVISE REQUIREMENTS FOR SIGNAGE IN SENIOR HOUSING DEVELOPMENTS.**

Director Power gave a presentation and brief history of the work on the senior housing zoning ordinance. There are currently two senior housing development applications, the latter of the two has prompted important discussion relating to how the language within the ordinance applies with respect to the minimum usable floor area. The ordinance 5.143(D)(1) states the required minimum usable floor area in square feet per dwelling unit and/or independent living units, efficiency, studio or 1 bed is 650 square feet and 2 bed are 800 square feet. The clarification is whether the language is referring to the minimum usable floor area in square feet per dwelling unit as an aggregate for what a development produces or as in the original interpretation the space that's inside of each individual dwelling unit. Based on the BZA's decision to proceed with reasonable limits on usable floor area that can be credited from common rooms, staff has created a text amendment for review.

Vidya Krishnan of McKenna Associates gave the presentation. Senior independent living facilities are different as seniors are more likely to use the amenities where they live (game room, dining room, recreation room, etc.), therefore including a percentage of the common area as usable floor area can be included. The suggested amendment will acknowledge that common areas count towards the usable floor area. The amendment is as follows:

**The addition of language to Section 5.143(C)(1).** Common space/community space/spaces with amenities within the building can be included in the required per-unit usable floor area calculation, not to exceed a maximum of 10% of the unit size. Balconies, decks, patios and other unenclosed open spaces shall not be included in such determination.

Commissioners discussed the amendment and provided the following questions and comments:

1. Commissioner inquired in the senior living ordinance there is a specific allotment for usable floor area, thought it was the intent to acknowledge the different use by acknowledging the lower amount. The increased use in the common area wasn't clear in the ordinance, are we counting the space twice? No, the common space is counted as a percentage of the usable floor area.
2. Commissioner inquired if we are planning on including what is included as a common space? Vidya Krishnan explained that the ordinance clearly defines and specifies what is not counted as common space area. Common space areas are the amenities. Language will be added to spell out what types of areas in the amendment and senior housing ordinance.
3. Commissioner inquired how staff came up with the minimum floor area number and asked if the table will be included in the ordinance as the math calculations on the table are confusing. Director Power explained that the table will not be included in the ordinance and that the room combined usable area has to be 650 square feet for a 1 bedroom with 10% of that square footage outside of the room (common area) that is credited to each individual unit.
4. Commissioner inquired if there is a reason why we don't lower the usable floor area requirements to account for the common area? Yes, so that future developments don't just use the extra square footage to squeeze in more units, it encourages having more common area. Vidya Krishnan informed that the table will disappear and the language will be tightened up.

Vidya Krishnan of McKenna Associates gave a brief presentation the sign language to the text amendment. At the time of the adoption of the senior housing ordinance, the signage placement was to be similar to the residential districts with a larger sign, however would have a 30-foot setback. Residents of the senior housing development need to be able to see the sign when they are driving, so they know where to turn, the residential requirement puts the sign too far back. The underlying zoning regulations requirements are very reasonable when the development is located in RM, C, and mixed-use districts, which gives the applicant the benefit of a smaller sign and more visible being closer to the entrance. The wall signs will still be limited, with the road sign comfortable enough for the residents and for citizens within the community.

Resident believes the Township should have the highest requirements in regards to signage. Vidya Krishnan explained that the sign for the current development will still comply and have to meet the sign standards for the Belleville Road Overlay District (BROD).

Vidya Krishnan will make changes to clarify the common areas and changes to usable floor space. Director Power discussed the next steps in the process and inquired if the Commission would like

to schedule the public hearing and see the revisions at that time or have the text amendment revisions come back to a meeting prior to the public hearing. Commissioners agreed that they are comfortable with the changes and to schedule the public hearing for April 14, 2021.

**Motion Kelley, Atchinson second to schedule the public hearing for April 14, 2021 to address the proposed amendments.**

**Roll Call:**

**Yeas: Franzoi, Jahr, Cullin, Kelley, Atchinson, Budd and Thompson.**

**Nays: None.**

**Absent: None.**

**Motion Carried.**

**GENERAL DISCUSSION:**

Director Power informed that the next Planning Commission meeting is scheduled for March 24, 2021 and there will be a full agenda. Director Power also informed that there are training opportunities coming up, if Commissioners are interested, please contact Director Power and he will get them signed up.

Director Best reached out to the Commission with an idea that staff has been working on. Due to Covid, the economy and changes in zoning, the landscape has changed around the Belleville area. There is a strong demand for service oriented commercial space and staff is looking at how to build growth within the Township. The idea is to create an overlay district along Sumpter Road in the area just south of the City of Belleville to the north side of Hull Road with a mixture of commercial and light industrial, bringing in more restaurants, retail and light industrial (ex. Sign company, plumbing company, etc.). The rural development areas to the south of Hull Road will have rules in place to protect them, not necessarily looking to change the rural areas. Commissioners discussed and agreed that they would like staff to continue to look into this idea and bring more detailed information back to a future meeting.

**ADJOURNMENT:**

**Motion Kelley, Jahr second to adjourn the meeting at 9:01 p.m. Motion Carried.**

Respectfully submitted,

Christina Harman  
Recording Secretary