

**PLANNING COMMISSION MEETING
ESCANABA, MICHIGAN
August 9, 2018**

A meeting of the Escanaba Planning Commission was held on Thursday, August 9, 2018, at 6:00pm in Room C101 at City Hall, 410 Ludington Street, Escanaba, MI 49829.

PRESENT: Chairperson Kel Smyth, Deputy Secretary James Hellerman, Commissioners Paul Caswell, Richard Clark, and Craig Gierke

ALSO PRESENT: Planning and Zoning Administrator Blaine DeGrave, Community Planner for CUPPAD Richard Smith, Confidential Secretary Roxanne Spencer, City Council Liaison Ronald Beauchamp

ABSENT: Vice-Chairperson Christine Williams, Secretary Brian Black, and Commissioner Dominic Benetti

Chairperson Smyth called the meeting to order at 6:00pm.

ROLL CALL

Confidential Secretary Roxanne Spencer conducted roll call.

APPROVAL/CORRECTION OF THE JULY 12, 2018 PLANNING COMMISSION MEETING MINUTES

A motion was made by Commissioner Gierke, seconded by Commissioner Caswell to approve the July 12, 2018 Planning Commission meeting minutes as submitted. Ayes were unanimous.

APPROVAL/ADJUSTMENTS TO THE AUGUST 9, 2018 PLANNING COMMISSION REGULAR MEETING AGENDA

A motion was made by Deputy Secretary Hellerman, seconded by Commissioner Caswell to approve the August 9, 2018 meeting agenda. Ayes were unanimous.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST DECLARATIONS

None.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

1. Update on tabled item: Proposed Communications Tower Facility at Ness Field – 1619 18th Avenue South

Blaine DeGrave stated that he asked the City Attorney Ralph Peterson for clarification on the proper process for this project. It was determined that the Planning Commission does not have the authority to decide the issue right away as it stands. First, Blaine needs to approve/deny based on the zoning requirements. As a communication tower is not an allowed use in an Open Space District, he will be denying it. Then the developers have the right to appeal to the Board of Appeals to ask for a use variance. If approved, the issue would come back to the Planning Commission for site plan review only, not for any denial.

Commissioner Gierke asked if a special meeting of the Planning Commission would be needed. Blaine responded that would be a possibility, but probably not until October due to going through the Board of Appeals process first. Chairperson Smyth questioned whether action was needed from the Planning Commission now. Blaine indicated that he is asking for it to be formally removed from the Planning Commission agenda.

Deputy Secretary Hellerman made a motion, seconded by Commissioner Gierke, to remove the proposed communications tower facility at Ness Field that was previously tabled off the agenda. Ayes were unanimous.

PUBLIC HEARINGS

None.

NEW BUSINESS

1. Discussion on Amending the Zoning Ordinance to Allow Storage Units in Specified Zoning Districts

Blaine DeGrave introduced Richard Smith, the Community Planner for CUPPAD, who is present to assist in the discussions on amending the zoning ordinance. Blaine referenced Deputy Secretary Hellerman's proposal for discussion on the topic of storage units. He then explained the Planning Commission can discuss and make proposals for amendments to the zoning ordinance to be submitted to the City Council for approval.

Discussion on how to incorporate storage units into the zoning ordinance was entered into. Topics included:

- Which districts might be appropriate/not appropriate for storage units
 - Discussion leaned toward not allowing in single and two-family districts, but possibly in multi-family, business, and commercial districts with extreme caution, with light manufacturing and below being more appropriate
- Whether storage units should be written in as permitted uses to be approved by a zoning official as a or as special land use applications to come before the Planning Commission with public hearings; a mixed approach is possible

City Council Liaison Ron Beauchamp cautioned against building consensus before public hearings are held. Additionally, he remarked that in certain parts of town very little separates light manufacturing from residential areas and that driving a couple miles to get to a storage unit is not a hardship.

General discussion continued focused on whether storage units are beneficial to the city, particularly in residential areas including possible lost value for residential area being taken up by storage units and whether they are a necessity or not. Richard Smith highlighted a number of issues that should be considered to ensure storage units would not become a detriment to the area, such as allowing accessory dwelling units for round-the-clock monitoring, prohibiting living in or running businesses or garage sales from units; requirements on lighting, screening, vegetation, and fencing; and prohibiting storage of hazardous materials.

Chairperson Smyth asked that Blaine DeGrave work with Richard Smith to put together a solid written proposal to be discussed at a future meeting, followed by a public hearing at a later date.

2. Discussion on Amending the Zoning Ordinance to Allow Expanded Uses in Light Manufacturing Districts

A discussion was entered into regarding the number empty buildings in the city, particularly in light manufacturing districts and how the zoning ordinance could be amended to allow expanded uses in these areas. Topics included:

- Including others in these discussions, such as Vickie Micheau from the Chamber of Commerce, Vicki Schwab of the MEDC, and possibly the owners of these empty buildings
- The owner turnover rate of some empty buildings leading to lack of maintenance
- The need to be open to creative ideas for expanding to allow other types of uses in light manufacturing districts that would not exclude retail
- How zoning ordinances can be changed to make the process easier for developers (ie. not requiring special land use permits and Planning Commission approval for certain types of uses, but allowing city administration to approve)
- Making distinctions between light and heavy manufacturing by putting guidelines in place regarding smoke, noise, etc.
- Whether the zoning map itself should be revised to reflect reality with the changes that have happened since it was last updated, and also to reflect future intentions

Kel asked that Blaine work with Richard Smith on a proposal for a future meeting, depending on how full the agendas are. Additionally, zoning maps will be made available at that meeting.

3. Project Updates

- Zoning Board of Appeals Hearings/Decisions:** Blaine DeGrave reported that the Verizon Communication Tower may be going before the Board of Appeals pending the developer's decision to move forward.
- Delta County Planning Commission Update:** No report.
- Zoning/Land Use Permit Update:** Blaine DeGrave updated the Planning Commission with the following information:

ZONING PERMITS REPORT

January 01, 2018 thru August 9, 2018

4	NEW RESIDENTIAL HOME	\$ 1,282,000
12	RESIDENTIAL REMODEL	\$ 195,989
2	NEW COMMERCIAL	\$ 1,735,000
3	COMMERCIAL REMODEL	\$ 260,000
1	CHANGE OF USE	\$ -
1	HOME OCCUPATION	\$ -
1	LAND USE PERMIT	\$ -

5	DEMOLITION PERMIT	\$ 66,200
29	TOTAL	\$ 3,539,189

Commissioner Caswell inquired what the two additional demolition projects were. Blaine reported that one was the condemned building at 910 Ludington Street for which lawyers for the City and the owner are in discussion regarding payment for the demolition costs, and the other was a house.

d. **Various:** None.

GENERAL PUBLIC COMMENT

City Council Liaison Ron Beauchamp commented that the Planning Commission serves as an important part of the City's process and cautioned against giving up their authority too quickly by allowing too many permitted uses which don't require Planning Commission approval. He further stated that there is a process for obtaining variances when needed. Concern was expressed regarding businesses that have put a lot at stake financially only to have other less desirable businesses put up next to them.

COMMISSION/STAFF COMMENT AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

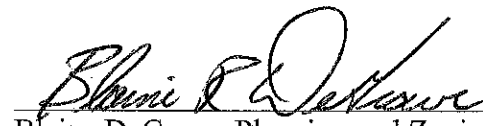
The upcoming Planning Commission/Board of Appeals training sessions on September 5 and October 3 have changed time from afternoon to evening timeframes. An email will be sent to everyone to gauge how the time change will affect individuals' registrations.


ADJOURNMENT

A motion was made by Deputy Secretary Hellerman, seconded by Commissioner Clark, to adjourn the meeting. Ayes were unanimous.

The meeting adjourned at 7:09pm.


 Kel Smyth, Chairperson
 Escanaba Planning Commission


 Blaine DeGrave, Planning and Zoning Admin
 City of Escanaba


 Christine Williams, Vice-Chairperson
 Escanaba Planning Commission