

Douglass Township Planning Commission
3521 W. McBrides Rd
Stanton, MI 48888
989-762-8014

Special Meeting Minutes
November 29, 2023
Immediately following public hearing

Call to order Chairman Rick Baldwin called the hearing to order at 7:41 pm.

Pledge Of Allegiance recited previously at Public Hearing.

Roll Call

- Present: Eric Tester, Jon Bailey, Melissa Bannen, Rick Baldwin, Matt Moorman, Mike Swan, Kathy Craig
- Absent: None

Approval of agenda items

- Eric Tester made a motion to accept the agenda items as written, seconded by Matt Moorman. Ayes: 7 Nays: 0 Motion passed.

Approval of Minutes from October 25, 2023 public hearing and regular meeting

- Eric Tester made a motion to accept the minutes as written, seconded by Melissa Bannen. Ayes: 7 Nays: 0 Motion passed.

Public Comments on agenda items opened at 7:43 and closed at 8:09 pm

Citizen	Comments
Holly Huff, Douglass Township	<p>In the township, 7 homes have steel siding, but only one is legal. She paid for the variance. Many other areas have steel siding. It is recyclable, has good fire prevention quality, and is guaranteed for 50 years color retention.</p> <p>She has a small house (not a tiny house) of 512 sq. feet and has a basement. She is being threatened by one neighbor that she will have to build an addition of 200 sq. ft. It has passed all inspections but is not the required 750 sq. ft. The smaller size requires less electricity, and provides more green space. Michigan law has a size requirement of 120 sq. ft, the county has no stipulation. The township requires 750 sq. ft.</p> <p>Reports that the appraisal on the property has gone up since the small house was put there.</p>
Eric Silm, Douglass Township	Asked what the township stance is on Mother in Law sheds.

	(Some discussion between PC members and audience that would have to be connected to main house somehow to be legal, and dimensions from building dept require 70 sq ft bedroom, and must have kitchen, bedroom and bathroom).
Dave Kelsey, Zoning Administrator	In response to pc member question on how many requests he has gotten for tiny homes: He reports that he gets an occasional call but tells people they are not allowed. Reports that one other township has a 350 sq.ft requirement.
Sara Beechy, Douglass Township	States that insurance companies like steel siding. Regarding campers/motor homes: states that she likes to work out of her camper on property, and does not have a home built there yet. Can she get a permit?
Brandy Bunting, Douglass Township	Asked what would happen with Tiny homes if it was sold to a larger family?
Eric Silm	Is in favor of barndominiums.

New Business

- Rick Baldwin brought up that there is an old noise ordinance and wonders if we want to tackle it again. There is also a county noise ordinance that we can use which would be easier for them to enforce. PC felt it would make sense to use county noise ordinance.

Committee Reports

- Eric Tester Board Liaison: shared info from attorney regarding architectural standards, parcel sizes, setbacks, access, height for pole barns, small houses vs. tiny houses, and definition of “grandfathered” referring to land and not structures.
- Dave Kelsey Zoning Administrator: reports that there are four current violations but no tickets issued. Currently the township gives 45 days for violations to be corrected then gives a ticket. Then the court gives 15 days, so blight cleanup can take 2-3 months. He recommends it changes to 30 days at most. This would allow him a quicker response time. Most townships have 30 days. He will have the yearly summary for building permits available at the next meeting. He has gone to court on one issue, and the Ellsworth court issue is still ongoing.

Old Business

- Height of pole barn discussion included if we need 16 ft side walls if we have a 25 foot peak. Consensus was reached on this, and comments from the public favor this. All members agreed it should be sent to an attorney for review and correct language.
- Eric Tester made a motion to send the following to the attorney for language: remove the side wall height of 16 feet and increase the peak to 25 feet in section 2.02.A6. Seconded by Mike Swan. Further discussion: Jon Bailey questioned if we should also look at removing the 25% rear lot coverage requirement. PC members discussed this and agreed it would make sense to remove it if the setback requirements were still met. Eric Tester amended the motion to read: send the following to the attorney for language: remove the side wall height of 16 feet and increase the peak to 25 feet, as well as

remove the 25% rear lot coverage requirement in section 2.02.A6. Mike Swan seconded. Ayes: 7, Nays: 0. Motion passed.

- Definition of front and rear yards of lakefront: PC reached consensus to leave this as is written. There was no input from the public regarding any changes.
- Pole barns on vacant property discussion included requiring where a pole barn could be built on a vacant parcel, and adding language that would define the roadway as the front yard (or the setbacks plus the width of the property is the front yard), since this is the reason they are being denied. Public comments support allowing pole barns on vacant property and many variances have been granted on this. PC members agreed it should be sent to the attorney for review and correct language.
- Eric Tester made a motion to send the following to the attorney for language: Pole barns on vacant property are allowed in section 2.02.A5 so long as setback requirements are met and the side facing the roadway is the front yard. Seconded by Melissa Bannen. Ayes: 7 Nays: 0 Motion passed.
- Upon further reading of the language in section 2.02, the pc members discussed confusing language regarding accessory buildings and the possibility of simplifying it to make more sense.
- Jon Bailey made a motion to send the following to the attorney for review and language: amend section 2.02 A6 to read as follows: accessory buildings are not to exceed 25 feet. Matt Moorman seconded. Ayes: 7 Nays: 0 Motion passed.

Public Comments: Rick Baldwin opened public comments at 9:35 but none were offered.

Further commission discussion

- Rick will contact the attorney and send the motions to him for review so we can proceed with the correct language for moving forward to a public hearing for any proposed changes to the ordinances.
- At our next meeting, we will review the annual report and decide on officers.
- Feedback for Eric to take to the board: Should we have 6 meetings per year? There needs to be an accountability process for building permits/issues which includes surveys.

Next meeting date January 31, 2024 at 7 pm.

Adjourn

- Eric Tester made a motion to adjourn, seconded by Jon Bailey. Ayes: 7 Nays: 0 Meeting adjourned at 10:04 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Kathy Craig
Douglass Township Planning Commission Secretary

