

Conway Township Planning Commission Meeting Minutes

December 13, 2021

Conway Township Hall – 8015 N. Fowlerville Rd., Fowlerville, MI

Attendees	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Public: 12 attendees • Planning Commission Members present: Londa Horton, Meghan Swain-Kuch, Kelly Ralko, Chuck Skwirsk, Keith Wasilenski, Dave Whitt and George Pushies (ex officio member) • Planning Commission Members absent – 0 • Zoning Administrator: Todd Thomas, present • Livingston County Planning Commissioner: Dennis Bowdoin, present • Township Attorney: Abby Cooper, present • Township Planner, John Enos, not in attendance 	Assigned Action Items
Call to Order and Pledge to Flag	<p>President Keith Wasilenski called the Conway Township Planning Commission meeting to order at 7:01pm and led in the Pledge of Allegiance. He called roll call.</p> <p>The next meeting is January 10, 2022 at 7pm.</p>	
Minutes from last meeting	<p>Londa Horton asked to add to the agenda; ‘Discussion’ in Old Business, and ‘C3 Climate Change.’ Dave Whitt moved to approve the December 13, 2021, meeting agenda with changes. Second by Chuck Skwirsk. All in favor. Motion passed.</p> <p>Chuck Skwirsk made a motion to accept the November 8, 2021 meeting minutes. Second by Dave Whitt. All in favor. Motion passed.</p>	
Communications	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The last Township Board meeting there was discussion on onsite training for the Planning Commission. Saturday after 3pm seems to be an amenable time. • The Infrastructure Bill needs to be lobbied by the Township Board. • George Pushies received a phone call from an individual that hires the promoter from Luke Bryan concerts. He was not happy with the letter from the Zoning Administrator (ZA). ZA explained the process. Now it would take about 4 months from start to finish including for them to get the paperwork in. Have Todd Thomas put a timeline on it, recommended George Pushies. 	
Call to the Public	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pamela Koleno on Sherwood Road presented the Chairman with a letter stating her displeasure with a solar farm in that it would affect her and her family and decrease her property value. She wants to maintain the beauty around her and asks how much the township will reduce property taxes since value is being taken away. She questioned the decrease in setbacks by her property line stating she values her privacy and the natural beauty around her affirming her belief that a decreased setback is for increased profit. • Another resident complained about no internet. Keith Wasilenski inquired to others about Elon Musk Starlink satellite internet options-not online yet. Supervisor Bill Grubb commented on the 	

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	<p>internet broadband cost of around \$6 million dollars if installed by the township and may be obsolete when installed if other commercial options become available. The hope is to use the Moonshot survey to show the government how we are underserved.</p> <p>Close the Planning Commission meeting at 7:24pm</p>	
<p>Public Hearing</p>	<p>Open the public hearing at 7:24pm.</p> <p>Public Hearing – Zoning Ordinance Amendments</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Event Structures. Allow for special event/wedding structures and venues as a special land use with the addition of new Sections 13.10(W), 7.07(A)(22), 8.03(A)(13), 10.03(A)(11), and 11.03(A)(10). • Accessory Structures. Amend Sections 6.06 and Article 2 definition Structure regarding regulations applied to accessory structures and buildings. • Parking Space Requirements for Event Structures. Amend Section 15.04 to provide parking regulations for special event/wedding structures and venues. • Medical Marijuana Caregivers. Amend Section 6.25 to update outside agency references and to update consumption and delivery regulation to be consistent with current law. • Land Division. Amend Sections 7.05, 8.05, and 10.05 to remove reference to the 4/1. • Solar Energy Collectors. Amend Section 6.26(F)(14) to reduce set back from 1,000 ft. to 200 ft. <p>There was no public comment.</p> <p>Close public hearing at 7:26pm.</p>	
<p>Old Business</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discussion; Londa Horton researched other township Zoning Ordinances (ZO) and found that the average setback from property lines and roads for solar farms is 50-75 feet. Our current ZO setbacks will kill any future solar farms. Keith Wasilenski offered that Sheridan Township for example is 50 feet setback from the property line and 75 feet for adjacent residential structures. • Londa Horton made a motion to reduce to 50 feet from all other property lines and roads setbacks for solar farms and 200 feet setback from residences. Second by Meghan Swain-Kuch. Discussion over lease or purchase by the developer of the solar farm. Land is still protected under the Right to Farm Act. There will be screening. Roll call vote: Yeas: Londa, Meghan, Keith. Nays: Kelly, Chuck, Dave, George. Motion is defeated. <p>Recommendation to send Zoning Ordinance Amendments to the Board – Megan Swain-Kuch moved to send to the Township Board for approval the ZO amendments for event structures, accessory structures, parking space for event structures, medical marijuana caregivers, land division, and solar energy collectors. Dave Whitt second. All in favor. Motion passed.</p>	<p>George Pushies to take ZO amendments to the Board.</p>

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	<p>Accessory building will be on next agenda.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">Review Accessory Dwelling Unit (ADU) proposed from Carlisle Wortman Associates. Can only have one single family dwelling unit per parcel. “How will you not allow 2 kitchens in your house?” asked Todd Thomas. If the residence has two gas meters or two electric meters, now you are describing two family units. Strike out the attached. Abby Cooper to make changes to ZO 6.27 verbiage. Section B#2 Keith Wasilenski needs clarification on Chris Atkins’ proposal. It was agreed to take it out. <p>Large Event Zoning</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">Research from Kelly Ralko and Meghan Swain-Kuch from surrounding townships<ul style="list-style-type: none">Garden City, GA and Stockbridge have very detailed verbiage for events like the Luke Bryan concert.Bring proposed language to the next meeting for a new ordinance. ZA recommends capping attendance at event due to stress on our infrastructure. Need a traffic plan. Define small- and large-scale entertainment, commented Todd Thomas. Todd recommends having a timeline of having all paperwork in to him 60 days prior to the event. Is it a paved or a dirt road? They tried to get 20,000 people in the Luke Bryan event and 7000 cars. <p>Large/Commercial Solar Farm</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">Review Handy Township wind farm ordinance. Keith Wasilenski mentioned setbacks and decibels we should have in our ordinance for solar and wind farms. Drew Vielbig mentioned they would provide a sound study if they set inverters close to a property line.Review Ranger Power proposed change to solar ordinance<ul style="list-style-type: none">Proposed changes to be reviewed by Todd Thomas.Conway Township Master Plan supports the use of renewable energy. Londa Horton presented research on <i>Climate change in Conway Township and resiliency efforts by the Planning Commission</i>. See attached.<ul style="list-style-type: none">Comment that the township installed backup generators as part of a cooling mitigation plan for the township.	<p>Abby Cooper to make changes ZO 6.27 verbiage. Take out B#2 in Chris Atkins’ proposal.</p> <p>Kelly Ralko and Meghan Swain-Kuch to develop proposed ZO language for small- and large-scale entertainment.</p> <p>Todd Thomas to review proposed changes to solar ordinance by Ranger Power.</p>
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Climate change defined: changes in the normal levels of heat, cold, rain, and wind. Using fossil fuels like oil, natural gas or coal is dirty and disturbs the balance of greenhouse gases (mainly carbon dioxide, methane, nitrous oxide) in the earth's atmosphere. When we add more greenhouse gases to our atmosphere, we trap more heat and the planet gets warmer as a result. Carbon dioxide is the biggest cause of human-made climate change.

We now add over 35 billion tons of CO₂ to the atmosphere every year, mostly by burning carbon-rich fuel like coal and oil that had previously been trapped in the ground. Second, it lasts a long time in the atmosphere. The CO₂ we emit today will stay above us reflecting heat for hundreds of years. This means that, even if we stop all new CO₂ emissions tomorrow, it will take many lifetimes before the warming effect of our past emissions fades away.

Chandler, David. "Explained: Greenhouse Gases," *MIT News*, 30 January 2017, [Greenhouse Gases | MIT Climate Portal](#)

Climate change causes major disasters like floods, hurricanes, heatwaves, and wildfires. How do we combat these threats?

- Build structures that can withstand high winds and tremors
- Clear roads of debris to return public services and business activity
- Ban construction in most hazard-prone areas through zoning laws and building codes
- Communicate to our residents to educate them on climate change initiatives, programs, grants to finance upgrades to their homes. Get our representatives involved.
- Make fertilizer more sustainable by cutting down on its use through incentives to farmers. Use slow-release fertilizers, change when fertilizer is applied, use sensors to monitor fertilizer absorption.
- Promote no-till farming. Tilling breaks up the soil and controls weeds but negatively releases a lot of stored carbon. Promote the planting of perennial crops (fruit trees, alfalfa, grapes, perennial wheat, asparagus), which don't die off every year, have deep roots and store more carbon. After the main harvest promote the growing of cover crops like clover, beans, and peas to help soils take in carbon in the soil year-round.
- Protect our wetlands that is a natural storm buffer
- Promote reforestation. Trees release moisture that cools the earth and stores carbon.
- Cut down on the use of concrete which produces greenhouse gases – carbon dioxide. Use low-carbon concrete or use 'carbon capture' when making cement so that rather than pumping the captured carbon underground, mineralization chemically transforms the carbon and permanently stores it within the concrete.
- Allow for the building of solar farms near mines and manufacturing plants to lower greenhouse gas emissions when using chemicals to extract metals from minerals.

Climate Change in Conway Township and Resiliency Efforts by the Planning Commission

- Offer tax incentives for renewable energy

The Conway township Master Plan supports the use of renewable energy.

- Industrial goals: Update Zoning Ordinance to allow for renewable energy generation in designated areas of the community.
- Environmental goals: Develop an ordinance for renewable energy generation such as solar panels or wind farms.
- Municipal services goals: Permit alternative sources of energy that benefit township residents and do not negatively impact the township's unique character and natural resources.

The Master Plan is the township's vision for the future, laying the groundwork for growth and development.

Page 50 of the 2018 Conway Township Master Plan recognizes the effect climate change already has had on our township with regard to lessening crop yields and pest and disease outbreaks in the agricultural sector. It suggests that our mission now is to engage the community and make policy changes to our infrastructure, habitat protection, landscape design, and land use to increase resiliency.

The question is, how do we build resiliency to climate change? Some ways to mitigate the effects of climate change include:

- Identify hazard districts.
- Consider high climate risk areas such as those in lower elevation areas prone to flooding and limit development
- Incorporate climate data and scenarios into our current Master Plan. Evaluate their risk and vulnerability to climate hazards and implement adaptation, resilient actions.
 - Scenario: a period of abnormally cold weather lasting weeks
 - Scenario: a period of abnormally dry weather marked by little or no rain lasting long enough to cause water shortage for people and natural systems
 - Scenario: an episode of abnormally high rain or snow – an extreme may cause flooding
 - Scenario: a period of abnormally hot weather lasting days to weeks
 - Scenario: an invasion of non-native organisms into the ecosystem causes harm to human, animal, and plant health
 - Scenario: a sudden, rapid growth of algae in waterways which may be toxic or harmful to humans and ecosystems caused by heat
- Strategies to consider include developing a green infrastructure, natural infrastructure/habitat restoration, home elevation and relocation, property buyouts

Invest in renewable green energy as a strategy to mitigate the impact of climate change.

Rather than invest in fossil fuel energy sources of natural gas, coal, oil, invest in reducing our carbon footprint through the use of sustainable energy. Fossil fuels are dirty releasing harmful emissions into our air causing pollution. Renewal energy is clean and sustainable into the future.

Chart 1: Types of Renewable Energy

Renewal Energy	Available in Conway Township	Definition	Pros	Cons
Solar power	Yes	Energy sent by the sun.	It's free, clean, green energy for another 5 billion years.	The sun is only up during the day and not always present.
Wind power	Yes	Energy sent by the sun heating up different layers of air in the atmosphere in an uneven way.	It's free, clean, green energy for another 5 billion years.	The sun is only up during the day and wind not always present and it differs in speed.
Wood	Yes	It is a renewable source of power because trees grow back.	Produces oxygen and stores carbon dioxide.	It takes decades to grow back.
Hydropower	No	The power of water to produce electricity like using the tidal waves into clean energy.		Need to live near a large body of water.
Geothermal power	No	Heat produced by the earth's core.		There are only certain areas of the planet where this is available.

What can we do as a Planning Commission?

- Reduce the price of solar – the soft costs account for 2/3rds of the total cost of installing a solar energy system. They include: permitting process, planning, and zoning considerations, financing, and installation labor. Streamline the processes, save staff time and money, reduce the time and cost of installation to quickly deploy renewable energy. Example: implement a three-day turnaround for permitting applications.
- Be adaptable in our Zoning Ordinances. This is an evolving technology.
- Convert the Conway Township Hall to solar powered energy.
- Develop Conway Township as a solar-friendly community by encouraging solar development and expanding local solar knowledge.

Climate Change in Conway Township and Resiliency Efforts by the Planning Commission

- Research benefits of joining SolSmart.org: “With over 400 designees nationwide, SolSmart helps local governments and regional organizations bring new business to their community, promote economic growth, and foster the creation of new jobs. As a program funded by the **U.S. Department of Energy Solar Energy Technologies Office**, our goal is to make it faster, easier, and more affordable to go solar. Their national team of experts provides no-cost technical assistance to help communities become "open for solar business." In recognition of their achievements, communities receive designations of SolSmart Gold, Silver, and Bronze status.”

The time is ripe right now to implement green energy. DTE will be transforming SE Michigan’s century-old electric infrastructure into a 21st century smart grid at a cost of \$7 billion, a 5-year investment creating a more resilient and reliable electric grid. They will create new substations with high levels of automation and a tech-driven infrastructure. Conway Township can be part of this change effort.