

St. James Township Planning Commission
Special Meeting Minutes
August 14th, 2019

Present: Anderson, Cole, Croswhite, McGinnity, Tidmore

Absent:

Other: Preston Heron [and Colin (?)], Kitty McNamara, Tim Newman, Sheri Richards, Rob Shigley, Rick Speck

1. Call to Order: McGinnity called the meeting to order at 7:00 pm.

2. Additions/Changes to Agenda:

Secretary (or Chair) election added to Old Business; Update from County Planning Commission added to Old Business

3. Approval of Minutes: Motion to approve minutes from July 9th, 2019 Special Meeting proposed by Tidmore, seconded by Anderson—motion passed.

4. New Business

a. Popke Critical Dune Application development plan

Speck explained the proposed project, explaining that the only portion of the property that really qualifies as critical dune is not going to be affected by the project. There was some discussion of the distance to the high-water line versus where the water is today, and it Heron explained that the front of the house would line up with the homes on neighboring properties, and is safely beyond the high water line. A motion to recommend approval of the Critical Dune application proposed by Anderson, Cole seconded—motion carried.

5. Old Business

a. Renken/Shigley R-2 Business

McGinnity explained following the Commission's first discussion of the issue, the township attorney issued a memorandum on it, saying it was not a permitted Home Business for R-1 [or R-2, which uses the R-1 Home Business requirements]. It was mentioned in the memo that the home must be the residence of the business owner/operator. McGinnity went on to explain that there was some discussion with the business owner, and between community members and commissioners, about the importance of avoiding the appearance of selective enforcement of any part of the ordinance. The issue being that numerous other properties across the township are home to business owners, and a fair number of them store equipment or vehicles

and conduct business out of a home office, making for a lot of gray area in current usage of residential properties. It was agreed after much discussion to contact the attorney again for specifics on the requirement for a home to be considered a “residence,” as well as for guidance on determining how to proceed in general when it comes to sometimes longstanding violations of the ordinance. McGinnity and Speck will draft a letter to send to the attorney.

b. Recreational Marijuana Impacts on Planning/Zoning

McNamara and Croswhite briefed the Commission on the joint Planning Commission meeting held August 13th at Peaine Twp. Hall, and on the ongoing webinar series presented by the MSU extension and MTA. St. James has opted out officially, and Peaine Township is considering doing so as well. A community meeting has been scheduled for September 16th at 7:00 pm at the community center. The first part will be information dissemination to dispel misinformation, while the second part will be focused on gathering information and opinions from the community members in attendance in order to clarify why a majority of the community voted for legalization and how the townships ought to proceed in the wake of its passage.

c. Food Truck Ordinance

McGinnity explained that there had been no progress on this issue. It was agreed that more information was needed, and that it should be kept on the agenda for next time.

d. Secretary Election

McGinnity asked if anyone wanted to nominate themselves for the position of Planning Commission Secretary, as he is currently serving as both Chair and Secretary. No nominees. He mentioned (half-jokingly) that an election for Chair could be held instead if there were nominees for that position. No nominees. Tabled until next meeting.

e. County Planning Commission Update:

Tidmore informed the Commission of latest news from the County level. Noting especially the idea of adding flow charts to the ordinance to show how various applications proceed from application to a final decision including requirements and conditions after an application is approved. [See attached.]

6. Public Comment:

Richards mentioned that she sees selective enforcement as an impediment to economic development as it discourages especially new residents and property owners. She noted that a complaint-driven enforcement might not be the best way to continue.

7. Correspondence: There was a follow up question about the Karnes “Old Livery” property. McGinnity explained that a letter had been sent to the owner of record, with no response. Others volunteered that they might have a better way of contacting the family.

Motion to adjourn proposed by McGinnity, meeting Adjourned 7:56 pm

Next scheduled Regular Meeting: September 3rd, 2019