

**Minutes:**  
**Watersmeet Township Planning Commission**

**Regular Meeting of May 13, 2015**

Watersmeet High School Library

- 1) Meeting called to order by Chairman Roy D’Antonio at 6:31 PM.
- 2) Pledge of Allegiance was given.
- 3) **Roll Call:** Members Present: Chairman Roy D’Antonio, Township Board Liaison-Rich Henriksen, Pete Peterson, Jeff Wasson and John Cestkowski were present. Secretary John Neumann, Larry Potter, Dave Sherrill and Jeff Zelinski were absent. Zoning Administrator – Dave Neumann, Township Board Supervisor- Mike Rogers and Supervisor Emeritus-Frank Kuchevar were present. Several other members of the community were also present including Pat Walsh and Peggy Tuttle.
- 4) **Approval of Agenda/Changes:** Pete Peterson made a motion to accept the agenda as presented. This was supported by John Cestkowski. A unanimous yes vote followed.
- 5) **Approval of Minutes:** Motion was made by Pete Peterson to accept the minutes of regular meeting of April 8<sup>th</sup> as written. This was supported by Jeff Wasson. A unanimous yes vote followed.
- 6) **Zoning Administrator Report:** Dave Neumann said there were three garages and one pole barn permit approved. Dave stated that the Township has a problem with a number of camper trailers being the sole dwelling on some R&F parcels. These “trailers” don’t seem to have any capacity for processing waste water and sewage over the long term. The ordinance requires these trailers to be removed and stored during the winter months but these are essentially being stored in place and not used during the winter season. Dave sees the bigger issue as what is happening during seasons where these trailers can and are occasionally used. Dave is investigating approved systems that can function safely for these intermittent use scenarios. Dave would like the Planning Commission to consider updates to the ordinance to effectively cover this situation. This can be done by tweaking Sections 6 and 7 to both describe this situation, and require the solution(s) approved by the Health Department. Mr. Neumann spoke to a question he received from a potential resident, as to whether we have an animal (pet) restriction in our ordinance as some neighboring townships do. We do not. Discussion followed and the trend was to “not go there”. Current law protects residents from “nuisance” pets howling all night or running loose through neighborhoods. As a result, on an ongoing basis, we have few if any formal complaints related to this issue. Therefore, at this time, the Planning Commission does not seem likely to “go there” on creating a restrictive pet ordinance.

- 7) **Recreation Plan Update:** Mike Foley representing Coleman Engineering was introduced. Mike made a presentation on behalf of Coleman Engineering indicating that they have experience in writing and updating up to 20 recreation plans for a number of neighboring townships. Mr. Foley explained that the Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund is blessed with a large amount of money to be expended on qualified Parks and Recreation projects. A solid recreation plan is essential for a community to be able to potentially tap into this fat stream of matching dollars. For a flat fee of \$5,000 Coleman would assist the Planning Commission in the production of an updated Recreation Plan. The Planning Commission is central in planning long term (five year) details of future projects to be presented in the updated plan. Chairman D'Antonio has read the current plan and stated that what we have seems pretty good, and asked what weaknesses need to be addressed. Mike Foley mentioned that we need community brain-storming sessions. Coleman would be present at the requisite community meetings to assist with answering questions posed by our community's citizens. Jeff Wasson stated that in glancing at the current Recreation Plan he was aware of an excess of "boiler-plate". Mike Foley replied that one of his people had made written comments to him that the Watersmeet Recreation Plan contained "great detail about blight, overhead wires, and the history of the Land O'Lakes library. None of this needs to be in the Recreation Plan". He also stated that the text and tables contained in the current Recreation Plan, providing statistics on race and resident's family income, are not essential either. What Watersmeet's Recreation Plan currently lacks is a prioritized detailed plan for future projects centered on recreation. Mr. Foley had no suggestions on the Master Plan. The ball is clearly in the Planning Commission's court but the Planning Commission doesn't seem too keen on actually doing the planning work involved in long range recreation planning. It became obvious that; even for \$5,000, Coleman is not going to do that work either, and hand us a completed plan tied up in a pretty bow. The discussion was tabled on a motion by Pete Peterson with a 2<sup>nd</sup> from John Cestkowski.
- 8) **Master Plan Update:** As Dave Sherrill was absent, work on the Master Plan was tabled until next month's meeting. The motion to table was made by Rich Henriksen with support by John Cestkowski. Unanimous yes vote, followed.
- 9) **Blight Ordinance:** Gogebic County is the biggest slum landlord in the Township of Watersmeet. Watersmeet Township is stuck with abandoned, uninhabitable structures seized by the county for back taxes. Then they just sit indefinitely as cleaning up the mess costs more than the property is ultimately worth. Therefore it will continue to sit; as-is, until the environment ultimately reclaims the land, which may well take hundreds of years. It is unfortunate that tax-paying neighbors have this view from their picture windows. It has a very negative effect on the livability, desirability and overall property values within the community. Supervisor Rogers will call "Super Tilley" at Gogebic County to see what can be done. As we don't have a blight ordinance, we can't cite the County for violation. Chairman Roy noted that we currently have unfinished structures that are awaiting completion and asked what controls we have over that. Our ordinance has time limits on the building permit which eventually requires reapplication and additional cost to extend.

It is therefore in the best financial interest of one in possession of a Building Permit, to get the job done. The days of “Michigan Siding” are history.

10) **Public Comments:** Dave Neumann reminded attendees of this meeting that we need to formalize rental application requirements on the application form. Also, Dave believes that going forward, these enhanced rental requirements need to be added to R&F, R1 and R2 sections of the Zoning Ordinance in addition to the L1 and L2 sections. Mr. Neumann reported that plans for the annual Watersmeet Independence Day Celebration Extravaganza are progressing. The items nailed down so far include: Step-off for the parade to take place at 3:00 PM CDT (1500 hours) on Saturday, July 4<sup>th</sup> 2015. Picnic, music and games will occur, organized by a host of community minded volunteers. Finally, to end the Fourth of July’s Fun Festivities, a Fantastic Fusillade of Fabulous Fireworks Follow at dusk. Good alliteration, huh?

11) **Adjournment:** Motion to adjourn at 7:35 PM by Pete Peterson, seconded by Jeff Wasson. Unanimous yes vote.

Respectfully submitted by, *Rich Henriksen* – Planning Commission Secretary Pro-tem

Approved: September 9, 2015