

Hillsdale County Planning Commission Minutes  
Monday March 21, 2016 1:30pm

Hillsdale County ISD Administration Building - 310 W. Bacon St. - Hillsdale, Michigan  
49242

1. Call to Order: Chair Alan Beeker called the meeting to order at 1:41pm.
2. Roll Call:  
Members Present: Chair Alan Beeker, Christine Bowman, Ned Bever, Gary Reppert, and Ruth Brown. Chair Beeker declared a quorum present.  
  
Excused: Shelby Burlew  
Absent: Sue Smith  
  
Also Present: Nick Wheeler
3. Approval of Minutes (January 25, 2016): Moved by Gary Reppert and supported by Christine Bowman to approve the minutes as written. Approved unanimously.
4. Approval of Agenda: Moved by Ned Bever and supported by Gary Reppert to approve the agenda as written. Approved unanimously.
5. Public Comment: None
6. Public Hearings: None
7. Unfinished Business:
  - a. Chair Beeker reported that he had followed up from the last meeting and sent a letter to Bob Batt, President, Hillsdale School Board, asking for a candidate name to fill the educational seat on the Hillsdale County Planning Commission formerly held by Mike Potts but has not received a response yet.
  - b. Chair Beeker also sent letters to the townships reminding them that, when they are making changes, the Hillsdale County Planning Commission needs to approve any amendments that they are proposing.
  - c. Ned inquired of Ruth what is going on with the Hillsdale County Planning Commission ordinance that will sunset on June 30, 2016. A new ordinance with similar language and appropriate dates going forward has been drafted and is on the county website. A Public Hearing is planned on April 12, 2016 at 10am during the Commissioners meeting in the Courthouse and Alan said he was

planning to attend; anyone else interested is also welcome to attend. The public notice of the April 12 hearing will appear in tomorrow's (3-22-16) Hillsdale Daily News. Ruth reported that the Commissioners had given consensus during an open meeting discussion that they would like the local Planning Commission to continue and to also include a sunset in 5 years (July 1, 2021). Ruth thanked Nick Wheeler and Chair Alan Beeker for the research they had done and coming with written answers to Commissioner Caswell's questions helped resolve the discussion. Nick and Alan also aided in drafting the new ordinance and in helping Ruth to write a public hearing notice for the paper. Thanks to all.

8. New Business:

- a. Somerset Township Zoning Ordinance Amendment
  - i. Article 2 Section 2.2 (Definitions) -- Add definition of "Mini-Storage or Self-Storage" and to renumber subsequent definitions accordingly
  - ii. Article 3 Section 4.4 (Industrial District), Subsection 4.4.1 "Light Industrial District (I-1)", Subsection a. "Permitted Uses" - Add "Mini-Storage or Self-Storage" as a permitted use

- b. Somerset Township Rezoning Applications
  - i. Application 136
  - ii. Application 137

It was asked why wouldn't mini-storage be commercial anyway? Do they need this change? Alan explained they wanted to combine and expand into an adjacent property that is light industrial. Discussion ensued. Ruth moved acceptance of all Somerset Townships applications and approval of requested changes. Christine supported. Approved unanimously. Nick said that he would help Alan in completing the forms that Somerset needs. Nick also referred to the forms on the county website for mapping and boundary changes and suggested that they be reviewed. Alan agreed and stated would be on the next meeting agenda.

- c. City of Hillsdale (Various Amendments)
  - i. Chapter 6-Buildings & Building Regulations-Article II-Property Maintenance Code
    - 1. Property Maintenance Code
  - ii. Chapter 14 -Environment-Article IV-Municipal Trees
  - iii. Chapter 36-Zoning-Article III-District Regulations
  - iv. Chapter 36-Zoning-Article III-"New Landscape Ordinance"  
Add Sections 149-152
  - v. Chapter 36-Zoning-Article X-Plant Material

Chair Beeker led discussion regarding the City of Hillsdale's various amendments. They have last been looked at in 1967. The effort is to streamline, clean language up, and make it more business-friendly. Another area of focus is making parking and landscape up to today's standards. Gary moved and Ned supported acceptance and approval of all City of Hillsdale's various amendments. Approved unanimously.

9. Any other Business/on-going business:

- a. Ruth inquired of Chair Beeker regarding what is going on with the "Happy Pants" development in the City of Hillsdale. Alan stated everything is moving forward positively and that building permits have been filed. "Happy Pants" is the legal name for the corporation that is working on the new downtown brewery that Kevin Conant at Pub 'n' Grub is planning to manage.
  
- b. Chair Beeker led discussion regarding several new and promising developments coming to the City of Hillsdale. Marty Hubbard is proceeding with the 42 Union Street apartment development which will consist of 1500 square foot, 3 bedroom apartments. Eric Potes bought the former David's Dolce Vita store as an investment property and is looking for someone to manage it. People have been asking for another wine store downtown. Alan led discussion that Hillsdale County statistics point to a workforce that doesn't want to work. Alan cited Hillsdale County has one of the lowest employment participation rates in the state. Alan stated that the current unemployment rate in the City of Hillsdale is 4.4%. Ruth stated this was a big improvement because, when she first went on City Council in 2009, the city's unemployment rate was 18%. Ruth suggested that, with the many new apartments coming into downtown Hillsdale, including the proposed senior apartments across from the former Wilson Hall on Manning Street, there is a need for a budget-friendly grocery store in the downtown for those living there to be able to pick up staples. Broad Street Downtown Market has taken their grocery section out. Discussion ensued. Some felt, even though Broad Street had wonderful products, the general feeling was that there was not enough of a market of people wanting to buy the high-end/gourmet meats, breads, and cheeses that they were carrying. Alan said that Mary Wolfram, City of Hillsdale's economic development consultant, is working on pursuing a local grocer to open up a market in the downtown area.

- c. Ned inquired of Ruth why the Hillsdale County Commissioners did not pay dues and be a member of the Region 2 Planning Commission, Ruth replied dues were too expensive. Nick provided some background information from the past, when the County was a member.
  
- d. Gary asked Ruth about the county website "hillsdale.info." Ruth said that Dave Holcomb has decided to take it down and it will not be replaced at this time. Some townships, such as Hillsdale, are doing their own websites. Ruth explained that there had been complaints regarding the "hillsdale.info" site being down when people were trying to update it and it was not functioning to people's satisfaction. It is a cost savings to the county, as well, by not having it up. Alan said that the City of Hillsdale is currently in the process of searching for a company to rebuild the City's website.

10. Public Comment: None

11. Communications: None

12. Next Meeting: Monday May 16, 2016 at 1:30pm at ISD  
Gary led discussion that at the May 16, 2016 meeting we would review the forms on the county website regarding mapping and boundary changes and work to simplify them and how this could be done in the most efficient way.

13. Adjournment: Ned moved to adjourn and Gary supported.  
Meeting adjourned at 2:29pm.

Respectfully Submitted,

Ruth Brown, Hillsdale County Commissioner