

**Pennfield Charter Township  
Planning Commission Meeting  
Minutes of November 3, 2014**

The meeting was called to order at 6:30 pm at the Pennfield Middle School cafeteria. Members present were Jon Bartlett, Jack Pooler, Paul Anderson, Brad Messenger, Elaine Walter and Curtis Whitaker. Tammi Damerow was excused. A quorum was met.

Others present: Supervisor and Zoning Administrator Rob Behnke, Recording Secretary Sandra Cummings and resident Kurt Stark.

All attendees recited the Pledge of Allegiance.

**APPROVAL OF MEETING MINUTES**

A motion was made by Brad Messenger, seconded by Paul Anderson to approve the Planning Commission meeting minutes of September 8, 2014. The motion carried.

A motion was made by Brad Messenger, seconded by Curtis Whitaker to approve the joint Planning Commission and Zoning Board of Appeals meeting minutes of October 22, 2014. The motion carried.

**PUBLIC COMMENTS**

There were no public comments.

**NEW BUSINESS**

**a) Discussion on possible changes to Ordinances regarding installation of outdoor wood-burners in C-2 zoned areas.**

Rob Behnke stated that the township has received a letter from resident Kurt Stark in regard to revising the Zoning Ordinance involving outdoor freestanding wood burning furnaces. Mr. Stark owns a 5 acre parcel located at 20234 Capital Avenue NE which is currently zoned C-2 Commercial. He acquired the parcel in 2005, and at the time of acquisition it was split-zoned AG / C-2. His parcel later became rezoned to C-2 in 2010 during township Master Plan revisions. Mr. Stark's concern is that he will not be allowed to install an outdoor wood burning furnace to heat the home that he is planning to construct in the near future, as it is not provided for in C-2 zoned areas. It is allowed in AG zoned areas, which his property was zoned originally. He is asking the township to address this situation before he begins construction, so that he can plan accordingly.

Mr. Behnke stated that the installation of outdoor, freestanding solid fuel-burning appliances is addressed in Sec. 22-1 (a) (6) of the Pennfield Township Code of Ordinances for “Nuisances prohibited”. He feels that the Ordinance should be amended to broaden the areas in which wood burning units are allowed. Since Mr. Stark has 5 acres of land, and would be located over 200 feet from any neighboring homes in the adjacent neighborhood, it can be viewed as a hardship or punishment to preclude him from installing such a unit based on the rezoning of his property after he had acquired it.

Mr. Behnke further stated that these types of heating units are being improved to operate much cleaner and more efficiently, therefore may become more popular in the future as an alternative to traditional hearing methods. He feels that revisions to the ordinance should be accomplished before numerous enquiries come to the township from others wishing to install such units. The question is whether to add these wood burning units to the zoning ordinance as an allowed use in C2 areas with restrictions, or let them remain in the “Nuisances prohibited” section of the code of ordinances.

The Planning Commission members discussed the revision of the Code of Ordinances as it pertains to freestanding wood-burning furnaces. Jack Pooler made a motion, seconded by Brad Messenger, to send the issue to attorney John Macfarlane for his opinion. The motion carried. After Attorney Macfarlane has rendered his opinion, the Planning Commission will send their final recommendation for amendments to the Township Board.

**b) Meeting dates and times for 2015**

It was suggested that the meeting time for Planning Commission should be moved from 6:30 to 6:00 pm starting with the January 5, 2015 meeting. All Planning Commission members agreed to the change of time. The meeting dates for Planning Commission will remain on the first Monday of each month, unless it conflicts with graduation exercises, Labor Day, or Independence Day.

**TOWNSHIP UPDATES**

Rob Behnke announced that the township will be looking for a new consultant to assist in the development of a proposed recreational plan, as township planner Russ Wicklund is preparing to retire. He stated that there is grant money available to townships with a recreational plan in place.

**COMMISSION MEMBER COMMENTS / ADJOURNMENT**

Brad Messenger reminded everyone to vote on November 4, 2014. Curtis Whitaker made a motion, seconded by Brad Messenger to adjourn at 7:58 pm. Motion carried.