

**Elk Rapids Township Planning Commission Meeting
Meeting Minutes – March 12, 2024**

The meeting of the Elk Rapids Township Planning Commission was called to order by Chairperson Shen Smith at 6:30 PM at the Government Center, 315 Bridge Street, Elk Rapids, MI 49629.

Present: Shen Smith, Emile Sabty, Zach Amos, Jim Lundy, and Matt Soper.

(Quorum Established)

Chairperson Smith turned the meeting over to Vice Chairperson Zach Amos.

Absent: Tom Crandall and Gary Pepler

Also Present: Larry Nix, Zoning Administrator and William Derman, Township Attorney.

Audience: Pat and Carol Brady. Mark Poniatoski.

Approval of Agenda: **Motion to approve the March 12, 2024 Agenda.**
Motion/S: Lundy/Soper **Motion Carried.**

Public Comments: None.

Approval of Minutes: **Motion to approve the November 14, 2023 meeting minutes.**
Motion/S: Lundy/Soper **Motion Carried.**

Open Master Plan Public Hearing:
Motion/S: Lundy/Soper **Motion Carried.**

The required public hearing is to acquire public input prior to final approval of the proposed 2023 ER Township Master Plan. The proposed 2023 Master Plan has already gone through the necessary advisory approvals from the surrounding entities. After public input at the public hearing the 2023 Plan will finally be approved and forwarded to the Elk Rapids Township Board for their concurrence and adoption.

A copy of the PC approved 2023 Elk Rapids Township Master Plan can be viewed online at www.elkrapids.com or at the Government Center at 315 Bridge Street, Elk Rapids, Michigan during normal business hours.

Public comments in support or objection to, a request will be heard at the meeting, or may be made in writing addressed to the Planning Commission, P.O. Box 365, Elk Rapids, Michigan 49629.

- Emile Sabty expressed to the audience and Commission that the copy of the Master Plan on the website is the latest copy and that any adjustments would be minor. It is not necessary to pull back the adoption.
- Larry Nix gave a brief summary of the timeline of the drafting of the Master Plan. He mentioned how the Village and Township previously had a collaboration for a Master Plan in the years past. Last summer the Village decided to branch out and have their own document drawn up. Larry Nix also reiterated that the collaboration between the Village and Township has ended, but cooperation is still a factor in the Master Plan. The only adjustments he would like to see is

an addition of two paragraphs that would bolster the relationship of the agricultural community and the Township of Elk Rapids.

Public Comment: P. Brady of Williams Drive, addressed the Commission asking if the reference of “citizens” could be changed to “the agricultural community” in the first amended paragraph. Mr. Brady feels that it is misrepresenting that citizens are benefited by the processing plant and agricultural industry language used in the additional paragraphs. L. Nix explained his reasoning for adding the additional paragraphs, and a discussion with the Commissioners followed. Carol Brady also presented to the Commission that she would have liked to see more citizen input from the community when drafting a Master Plan. L. Nix thanked Mrs. Brady and agreed that citizen input is important and perhaps during the time of drafting the next Master Plan, the Planning Commission will consider that. Mr. Nix expressed that the only items he repeatedly hears in the 5 or 6 Master Plans he has worked on, is what is important to the residents is protecting the environment, protecting the rural character, and protecting the agricultural community. This update addresses these issues. Matt Soper commented that he feels the language is correct as Larry has presented the additions. Chairperson Smith would like the wording of “by right”, replaced with “by special use permit”.

Motion to Close the Public Hearing:

Motion/S: Smith/Lundy

Motion Carried.

Discussion of the Board:

- Soper, Sabty, and Smith carried on with discussion, each presenting their interpretation and opinions. Soper would like the wording left as is. Sabty would like to leave the paragraphs out and get it passed, maybe amending it at a later time. Zoning Administrator Nix feels the change would distort the meaning that is implied as it is currently phrased. Township Attorney B. Derman remarked that the Master Plan is only a guide and not a controlling document. Chairperson Smith inquired about the Township Ordinance regarding marijuana facilities. The Commission felt the Township does have a ban but will do further research. At this time the Master Plan can be adopted as is with amendments. Any minor wording could be adjusted at a later date.

Motion to Approve 2023 Master Plan With Amendment

Move to approve and adopt the amended proposed 2023 Elk Rapids Township Master Plan with the addition of the suggested text supporting Agricultural Processing in Elk Rapids Township and forward it to the Elk Rapids Township Board for their concurrence and adoption.

Motion/S: Sabty/Z. Amos

Discussion: None

Roll Call Vote:

**Sabty – Yes
Lundy – Yes
Amos – Yes
Soper – Yes
Smith – Yes
Crandell - Absent
Peppler – Absent**

Motion Carried.

- Sabty advised that in following the Master Plan approval process, once approved, the Planning Commission needs to adopt a resolution for the adoption of the Master Plan.

Motion to Approve Planning Commission resolution # 2024-01

Motion/S: Sabty/Z. Amos

Move to approve Planning Commission Resolution #2024-01 as presented.

Discussion: Administer Nix explained the resolution is numbered as the first resolution of the 2024 year.

Roll Call Vote:

Sabty – Yes
Lundy – Yes
Amos – Yes
Soper – Yes
Smith – Yes
Crandell -Absent
Peppler – Absent

Motion Carried.

Township Zoning Administrator Report (Larry Nix)

- Larry Nix commented it has been a quiet winter.

Public Presentation:

- Mark Pontiaski property owner of land on US. 31 South, would like input on a possible rezoning. He gave a brief history of the property and expressed interest in building onsite storage condominiums. He would like the R-2 changed. It is commercial all around him within the Elk Rapids Township. The Planning Commission discussed the property is the entry into the Township, so the esthetic feature is important. Mr. Pontiaski presented the Commission with photos of some storage units which include an upscale version of a condominium/storage unit development. Traffic would be at a minimum with this idea compared to existing commercial enterprises. Planned development or Conditional Rezoning was discussed and their differences. Setbacks, ingress and egress were brought to the attention of the owner and would be considered when he brings the site plan to the zoning board.

Township Legal Staff Report (Bill Derman)

- B. Derman gave an update on the issues in the Township which included the septic inspection ordinance recently becoming effective.

Unfinished Business: None

New Business:

- Chairperson Smith would like future discussion on using non-productive agricultural land with a possible workshop with farmers.
- Issues mentioned by L. Nix were the concerns of putting residential housing by farmland regarding the exposure of pesticides, and also the sanitary sewer situation it would create and how that would be best handled.

Motion to Hold Discussion at a Later Date:

Motion/S: Smith/ Lundy

Public Comment: None

Motion to Close Meeting:

Motion/S: Amos/Lundy

Motion Carried.

Adjournment:

8:25 PM

(An audio tape of this Planning Commission Meeting is available at the Township Office)