

Meeting Minutes

Cascade Charter Township Planning Commission

Farmland Preservation Sub-Committee

Thursday, August 17

Cascade Charter Township offices

Conference Room

ARTICLE 1: Call the meeting to order

Meeting called to order by Chairman Scott Rissi at 7:33 am.

ARTICLE 2: Approve the Agenda

Member Moxley moved to approve the agenda. Motion Unanimously approved.

ARTICLE 3: Welcome and Introductions

Members of the Sub-Committee include Scott Rissi, Joe Engel, Ryan Bruneau, and Ralph Moxley. Planning Director Brian Hilbrands will also be attending meetings.

ARTICLE 4: Assign a Recording Secretary

Motion by member Engel to make Ralph Moxley the Recording Secretary. Supported by member Bruneau. Motion approved.

Meetings will be recorded on Ralph's cell phone. He will then take the recording home and type up the rough draft of the meeting minutes.

The rough draft will be sent to Chairman Rissi for his review and comments. They will also be sent to Brian Hilbrands for his review and comments.

Once all changes and additions are included in the notes they will be sent as a preliminary copy to Brian Hilbrands for distribution to Sub-Committee members.

Sub-Committee members are then welcome to suggest recommended changes at the next Sub-Committee meeting.

ARTICLE 5: Disclose any Conflict of Interest

No Conflicts of Interest were noted by any members of the Sub-Committee.

ARTICLE 6: Acknowledge visitors and those wishing to speak

No visitors were present at this meeting.

ARTICLE 7: Introduction to ARC and FP Zoning

Farmland Preservation (FP) Zoning is shown as green area on the Official Zoning Ordinance Map. This is not an overlay on the Zoning Map. Farmland Preservation is a stand-alone zoning district, similar to Transitional Industrial (TI) zone.

The Farmland Preservation district is based on where there are farms remaining in the Township, and where the soil type is useful for farming.

The cross-hatch pattern that shows up on the REGIS zoning map is the FP Zone. It is not an overlay, though it looks like an overlay. The REGIS map is mis-leading.

Brian Hilbrands presented a document that outlines a comparison of zoning and lot requirements for agricultural districts in communities surrounding Cascade Township. Cascade Township zoning for ARC is 200 ft. minimum lot width, and 100,000 SF for lot area. Farmland Preservation District is the same area requirements and same lot width size. This document compares minimum lot size and area requirements for Ada Township, Gaines Township, Caledonia Township, Lowell Township, Bowne Township, Vergennes Township, and Grattan Township.

Lowell Township has AG-1 zone (Prime Agricultural) and AG-2 zone (Rural Agricultural). AG-1 is prime farmland that is level, with soil types that are good for a wide variety of farming. AG-2 is land that is not prime farmland and is mostly hilly, or has wetland areas. It can be used for cow farms, pig farms, and Christmas tree farms, but is not ideal for vegetable farming.

ARTICLE 8: Discuss Goals of the Sub-Committee

Chairman Rissi stated that direction from the Planning Commission is we compare what we have currently zoned as Farmland with surrounding townships and recommend changes if needed. He feels that the Board wants to avoid higher density development in farmland areas. He also likes the approach that Ada Township has taken with larger parcel sizes for AGP (Agricultural Preservation) and RP-1 (Rural Preservation) standards. Chair Rissi also feels that zoning along Snow Road should be the same for both Lowell Township (east side) and Cascade Township (west side).

Member Engel asked about a potential change in zoning and how that may affect properties east of the Ford Airport.

Chair Rissi stated that, in his opinion based on what he is hearing from local friends and neighbors, residents of Cascade Township do not want higher residential density and more housing developments, especially in farmland zones.

One area that Director Hilbrands suggested we look at is the use of farm facilities for agribusiness/tourism, such as wedding venues. For example, Snow Avenue greenhouse owner (the son) is looking at using his building for wedding and tourist gatherings during off seasons (October to April). Director Hilbrands noted that the greenhouse is already a special use and asking for it to be used for weddings and social gatherings is a bit messy. We will need to look into that dual use issue.

At next meeting Director Hilbrands will bring in zoning maps for surrounding townships. A couple meetings down the road he will bring in someone from Kent County to discuss farmland zoning.

Chair Rissi asked: Why is it that Cascade Township does not have any Kent County parks? He noted that a massive Kent County Park is going to be built east of Heidi's farm stand at intersection of Alden Nash Road and Cascade Road.

Chair Rissi also noted that Lowell Township will have extensive development in the near future between I-96 and Cascade Road, west of Alden Nash, and east of Timpson. Fast food restaurants and hotels are planned for this area. Water and sewer mains are being planned and extended for this zone.

Director Hilbrands noted that with ARC zoning you can subdivide a large parcel into more parcels than you can with Farmland Preservation zoning.

ARTICLE 9: Requests for further information

Director Hilbrands to bring zoning maps for Lowell Township and Caledonia Township to next meeting.

Member Engel to investigate Grand Traverse Land Conservancy to see what they are doing to preserve lower density zones.

ARTICLE 10: Any other business

No other business.

ARTICLE 11: Acknowledge visitors and those wishing to speak

No visitors were present.

ARTICLE 12: Adjournment

Next meeting is planned for two weeks from now: Thursday, August 31, at 7:30 am.

Meeting adjourned at 8:25 am.