

BOWNE TOWNSHIP PLANNING COMMISSION

DRAFT MINUTES

REGULAR MONTHLY MEETING

TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 4, 2025 7:00 pm

The Bowne Township Planning Commission's regular monthly meeting was held at the Historic Bowne Township Hall, 8240 Alden Nash Avenue SE, Alto, Michigan, Kent County.

1. CALL TO ORDER:

The meeting was called to order by Member Oosting at 7:00 pm.

2. ROLL CALL:

MEMBERS PRESENT: JAMES OOSTING – CHAIR
DAVE HOEKSTRA
SARAH LARSON – SECRETARY
JAY BARNHART
DAVID FUSS – TOWNSHIP BOARD REPRESENTATIVE
FRED OESCH
SEAN WENGER

NOT PRESENT: LARRY WINGEIER – VICE CHAIR
ROGER GRAHAM

OTHERS PRESENT: BRADLEY KOTRBA – TOWNSHIP PLANNER, WILLIAMS & WORKS
CLIFF BLOOM – TOWNSHIP ATTORNEY, BLOOM SLUGGET, PLC
8 MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC

3. AGENDA: MOTION

Chairman Oosting inquired from the Commission if any changes to tonight's agenda were required. After hearing none, Commissioner Larson motioned to accept the agenda submitted for the February 4, 2025, regular Planning Commission meeting, seconded by Commissioner Wenger. Motion carried.

31 **4. MINUTES: MOTION**

32 Chairman Oosting asked if there were any changes, additions, or corrections to the November 12,
33 2024, regular Planning Commission Draft Meeting Minutes. Commissioner Larson motioned to
34 accept the November 12, 2024 meeting minutes, and Commissioner Fuss supported it. Motion
35 carried.

36 **5. ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF THE PUBLIC**

37 Chairman Oosting acknowledged and welcomed the members of the public.

38 **6. PUBLIC COMMENT AND CORRESPONDENCE CONCERNING ITEMS NOT ON THE AGENDA**

39 Chairman Oosting asked the public members if they would like to comment on any item, not on
40 tonight's agenda. Bonnie Lent-Davis asked about the status of the Township Master Plan and
41 whether there were any upcoming meetings in that regard. Planner Kotrba said that would be
42 discussed later at this meeting. Colleen Tipson introduced herself and explained that they were the
43 developers of the property near Magna Mirrors. She encouraged the Planning Commission to
44 continue to pay attention to the lighting issue on the Magna property and provided the Planning
45 Commission with photos. She asked that the issue with outdoor lighting shining at neighboring
46 properties be addressed. Attorney Bloom said a condition of approval for the addition to the Magna
47 building was to point outdoor lighting downward away from neighboring property, and it appears
48 that they have still not done so. He asked that this issue be turned over to the Zoning Administrator.
49 John Tipson introduced himself as a property owner on 64th Street and asked the opinion of the
50 Commission what they might wish to see on that site in the future. He believed housing was likely
51 not a good option. Discussion about whether commercial development was appropriate for the site
52 ensued. Mr. Tipson stated that he also purchased a property on M-50 near an existing outdoor
53 storage facility. He asked the same question of what the Planning Commission may wish for the
54 site's future. He also told the commission he was waiting on a driveway permit from MDOT. There
55 were no other comments.

56 **7. COMMISSIONER COMMENTS**

57 No comments.

58 **8. PUBLIC HEARINGS:**

59 a. **none**

60 **9. OLD BUSINESS:**

61 a. Attorney Bloom stated that concerning the SKS Renewable Natural Gas Biodigester
62 discussion from November, Consumer's Energy submitted final materials, and a draft

63 resolution will be presented to the Planning Commission soon. The review would occur at
64 the March Commission meeting.

65 **10. NEW BUSINESS:**

66 a. 2024 Annual Report. Planner Kotrba explained the purpose of the Annual Report of the
67 Planning Commission from 2024. He listed several of the Commission's activities from the
68 past year, including rezonings and review of the biodigester. He also stated that a Master
69 Plan update should be coming soon, and he would begin to start that process. Chairman
70 Oosting noted that he wished to see farmland preservation be a new goal of the Planning
71 Commission. Commissioner Larson motioned to approve the 2024 Annual Report
72 distribution to the Township Board. Commissioner Barnhart supported it. Motion carried.

73 b. Election of Planning Commission Officers for 2025. Planner Kotrba explained that this
74 election occurs yearly to nominate a Chair, Vice Chair, and Secretary. Currently, the Chair is
75 James Oosting, the Vice Chair is Larry Wingeier, and the Secretary is Sarah Larson.
76 Commissioner Larson motioned for existing officers to remain in their respective positions.
77 Commissioner Hoekstra supported it. Motion carried.

78 c. Event Venues Ordinance Amendment Discussion. Planner Kotrba introduced the discussion
79 topic and reminded the Commission that a moratorium is currently in place to halt any new
80 applications with liquor licenses from coming to the Planning Commission. In the process,
81 potential Zoning Ordinance amendments were reviewed. He stated that when the
82 Ordinance was written, it was intended that event venues would be used as accessories for
83 farm properties. Kotrba presented the Planning Commission with a draft amended
84 ordinance.

85 Attorney Bloom discussed details of the new Ordinance further, including new definitions
86 and differences from the existing Ordinance. The primary purpose of the Ordinance is to
87 permit event venues only as accessory uses to active farms, not as stand-alone facilities. A
88 minimum lot size of 60 acres was proposed to be added to the Ordinance. He stated that the
89 main intent of the Ordinance is to ensure that the Township is not promoting new
90 commercial activities in agricultural areas that are not actively farmed. Some discussion
91 ensued. Commissioner Larson motioned to schedule a public hearing for the Event Venues
92 Ordinance amendment. Commissioner Fuss supported it. Motion carried.

93 **Public Comments**

94 Chair Oosting asked the public if there were any further public comments. A member of the public
95 asked for more information and justification for the new criteria of the proposed event venue
96 ordinance. Attorney Bloom reiterated that the Ordinance would not permit commercial activities on
97 vacant agricultural land. He believed the original intent of the Ordinance was to preserve farmland
98 and avoid new development. Chairman Oosting furthered those comments and clarified that there

99 was a desire to preserve the rural nature of the Township. The same member of the public asked
100 about the provision requirement of a historical structure of a certain age in the Ordinance. Attorney
101 Bloom clarified the historical nature of the amendment's intent. Another member of the public
102 asked about the definitions of minimum lot sizes and farming activities. Bloom explained the
103 difference between farming activities under the Right to Farm Act and those more aligned with
104 commercial activities, which the ordinance amendment intends to regulate. Discussion between
105 Attorney Bloom and a member of the public ensued.

106 **11. Adjourn**

107 Commissioner Hoekstra made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Commissioner Oesch supported it.
108 Motion carried. The meeting was adjourned at 7:40 PM.

109
110 **Bradley Kotrba**
111 **Recording Secretary**