The Athens Township Zoning Commission
Regular Meeting February 5, 2020
6pm The Plains Volunteer Fire Department Firehouse
Meeting Minutes


The Athens Township Zoning Commission met in regular session on February 5, 2020 at 6pm at The Plains Volunteer Fire Department Firehouse, 29 Connett Rd. The normal meeting location at the library was not available.


**CALL TO ORDER/ROLL CALL**

Chairperson Sean Jones called the Commission to order at 6pm.
Commission members Sean Jones, Rick Fernow, Brian Dearing, Ken Robinson, Mike Hornsby and alternate Teena Thornton were in attendance. Consultant Bob Eichenberg was also present.


**MOTION TO ACCEPT MINUTES FOR 01/29/2020**

Meeting Minutes were tabled as they had not been produced. As Secretary Robinson was not present at the previous meeting, it was deemed necessary to submit the agenda for use as the meeting minutes for the 1/29/2020 session.


**PUBLIC COMMENT**

No public in attendance


**WEBSITE UPDATE AND PROPOSED DRAFT MAP**

Mr. Jones led a short discussion about making the website live and getting the FAQ section up for the public to view. Mr. Robinson will contact Mr. Warmke to get the web page up and running.  With the upcoming media releases and anticipated articles about the zoning commission, the members feel it is essential to get information out to the public as quickly as possible. It was agreed that a draft map would also be posted on the website. A draft map will be released at the meeting on February 12th.


**REVIEW SURVEY**

Mr. Dearing continues work on the survey and hopes to have it completed soon. The Commission wishes to have the survey available to the public by the 19th of February.  We will be using Google Surveys as our platform.


**DISCUSSION OF ELIMINATION OF R1 DISTRICTS**

Following up on a suggestion from a member of the public at last week's meeting, the Commission considered his proposal to eliminate R1 residential districts. This has been done elsewhere, including Minneapolis. Mr. Dearing argued that The Plains is an entirely "different animal" than other towns and cities, where the multiple residential districts have been eliminated. This could mean the construction of high-rise apartments next to single family residences. The Commission feels that the proposed residential districts have value and wish to see how the matter plays out within the public sphere.

**REVIEW OF PRELIMINARY ZONING CODE**

The Zoning Commission began its review of the proposed zoning code, as written by consultant Bob Eichenberg. The Commission members have access to the Google Docs version and can make proposed changes online to be debated, changed, and/or agreed upon at regular meetings. Mr. Fernow proposed doing away with almost the entire first section of general provisions, which was not in accordance with our desire to keep the plan "zoning light" and free of legalese. Mr. Eichenberg and the Commission agreed.

Duplication of information between the text of zoning and tables - and the inherent redundancy that makes the code longer – was discussed. Permitted uses in R1s, accessory buildings, specificity of where manufactured homes can be located, residential businesses, home occupations, and fencing regulations were debated topics. The use of permits to ensure compliance with the code was seen as essential.

How best to deal with both street parking and the allowed property allotment to one's driveway was a matter of contention. Signage compliance was also discussed, as well as short-term rentals as a conditional use in R2 and landscape screening in B1 business districts. Ensuring that all types of businesses have a fair and proper lawful pathway within the code, pending permit, was recognized as fundamental to avoid potential legal conflict. The Commission will continue to review the code section-by-section, line-by-line over the next few meetings.

**PUBLIC Q&A**

No public present

**MOTION TO ADJOURN**

Mr. Jones made a motion to adjourn at 7:47pm, seconded by Mr. Hornsby.
Jones: Yes; Robinson: Yes; Fernow: Yes; Dearing: Yes; Hornsby: Yes