

The Athens Township Zoning Commission  
Regular Meeting October 23, 2019  
6pm The Plains Public Library  
Meeting Minutes

The Athens Township Zoning Commission met in regular session on October 23, 2019 at 6pm at The Plains Public Library, 14 S. Plains Rd. The Plains

### **CALL TO ORDER/ROLL CALL**

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

### **MOTION TO ACCEPT MINUTES FOR 10/16/2019**

Mr. Jones motioned that the minutes for the previous meeting appeared to be in order, and for the Commission to accept the minutes as entered. Maynard seconded. Mr. Dearing abstained because he had not yet had time to read the minutes.

Jones: Yes; Dearing: abstained; Fernow: Yes; Maynard: Yes; Robinson: Yes

### **PUBLIC COMMENT**

Mr. Jones opened the meeting to public comment. Tina Thorton from The Plains was the only member of the public in attendance and offered no comment.

### **DEVOLA VISIT**

Mr. Dearing visited the census-designated area of Devola, Ohio. Devola is being used as a model for The Plains zoning. Devola has had zoning since 1954. Mr. Dearing offered his observations. Like The Plains it is an unincorporated bedroom community. However, unlike The Plains, there is very little business and is much smaller in size; Devola also has more agricultural area. Mr. Dearing felt the look of the Devola community reaffirmed the value of zoning. Mr. Jones wondered how zoning was enforced; Mr. Dearing offered to contact the Devola area township trustees to see how their zoning works and how and by whom it is enforced.

### **WEBSITE**

A discussion began to bring Mr. Jones up to date on Roman Warmke's presentation from last week on website creation. Mr. Robinson said Mr. Warmke, through Eden Marketing, would provide creation of a tab on the Athens Township Trustees website billed at \$75 per hour to the Trustees. The same rate would apply to the maintenance and updating of the webpage. Mr. Dearing noted that Mr. Warmke advised it would take around 1.5 hours for work to upload three Microsoft Word docs and/or graphic jpegs. Mr. Dearing felt it was a better idea for Mr. Warmke to teach a member of the Commission how to do it since it appears to be a relatively simple process. Mr. Robinson agreed. Mr. Dearing and Mr. Jones also felt the site needed to be mobile-friendly. Mr. Jones requested that Mr. Robinson contact Mr. Warmke to see how much it would cost for website creation and for instructional time in the use of Wordpress and the uploading of documents.

Mr. Jones formally motioned for Mr. Robinson to obtain a quote from Eden Marketing so that the Commission could approach the trustees to fund the project. Dearing seconded.

Jones: Yes; Dearing: Yes; Fernow: Yes; Maynard: Yes; Robinson: Yes

## **SURVEY DISCUSSION**

Mr. Eichenberg discussed how surveying the public was essential to the overall process and that we should release a survey soon. Mr. Jones felt that Facebook would be a great way to reach the public and post a survey. Since Eden Marketing was reluctant to take on the Facebook project, Mr. Dearing offered to create the Facebook page but advised it would take some time before he could get to it. Mr. Robinson agreed that social media was crucial. Beyond Facebook, further discussion about how to reach residents with surveys included the use of Google Forms (which compile results automatically); door-to-door residential canvassing; contacting organizations like the Community Improvement Group, the Lions Club, churches, and the fire department to get their input; and distribution of paper surveys at businesses in The Plains. Mr. Robinson asked Mr. Eichenberg if he would formulate the survey, which he was willing to do.

Mr. Jones noted that the survey should ask an essential question of the public: what are you afraid of concerning zoning?

## **ZONING PLAN DISCUSSION**

Zoning plan discussion continued, with a review of the initial decisions and a continuation of going through the Devola plan line-by-line as our example zoning code. Topics included the government exemption from zoning; moving permitted farming uses from residential zoning to agricultural use; the allowed square footage of temporary and accessory buildings; permitted home occupations in residential areas; signage; the sizing of fences and hedge; and storage of recreational vehicles. Mr. Eichenberg was asked to give his opinion on a number of these issues. Of note was Mr. Eichenberg's advisement that what constitutes a home occupation should be clearly defined, and that limiting the square footage allowed for home occupations prevents the business from becoming a nuisance to neighbors.

## **COMPREHENSIVE PLAN**

Mr. Eichenberg wanted to keep us posted on his progress concerning the comprehensive plan. He is traversing The Plains to document what catches his eye; he mentioned the strength of the diversity of The Plains and how improved setbacks, screening, and landscaping would go a long way to make it a better community. Mr. Eichenberg had spoken with Rich Kasler about water and sewer growth and capacity, and asked the Commission if we were willing to do an overlay zone to protect the Native American mounds and other historic structures.

## **WEEKLY QUESTION PERIOD**

Mr. Dearing reminded us that public commentary should take place before and after the meeting, and that the public should refrain from interrupting the business of the Commission. A five-minute question period has been set aside at the conclusion of each meeting to minimize distractions to the agenda. Mr. Hornsby recommended that we clearly state this at the beginning of each meeting so that the public is aware. The Commission wishes to set precedent with this structure before greater public participation takes place.

Ms. Thorton asked when the public could expect to see the zoning initiative on the ballot. Mr. Jones stated the Commission plans for the proposal to be voted on in November 2020.

**MOTION TO ADJOURN**

Mr. Dearing made a motion to adjourn at 7:47pm. Mr. Maynard seconded.

Jones: Yes; Dearing: Yes; Fernow: Yes; Maynard: Yes; Robinson: Yes