

The Athens Township Zoning Commission
Regular Meeting September 18, 2019
6pm The Plains Public Library
Meeting Minutes

The Athens Township Zoning Commission met in regular session on Sept 18, 2019 at 6pm at The Plains Public Library, 14 S. Plains Rd.

CALL TO ORDER/ROLL CALL

Meeting was called to order by Chairperson Sean Jones at 6pm
Commission members Sean Jones, Brian Dearing, Ken Robinson, Thurlin Maynard, and Rick Fernow in attendance.

Also present was Bob Eichenberg, Round River Planning & Design, and community member Michael Hornsby.

MOTION TO ACCEPT MINUTES FOR 9/11/2019

Mr. Dearing motioned that the minutes for the previous meeting appeared to be in good order, and for the Commission to accept the minutes as entered. With no comment on the minutes, Mr. Jones seconded. 5 votes in favor.

PUBLIC COMMENT

No comments from members of the public

INTRODUCTION OF BOB EICHENBERG AND REVIEW OF ROUND RIVER CONTRACT

Mr. Eichenberg of Round River Planning & Design distributed copies of his contract proposal to serve as a consultant to the Zoning Commission. Mr. Eichenberg wished to respond to Mr. Fernow's question from the previous meeting about the inclusion of a comprehensive plan in his proposal. Mr. Eichenberg noted that, while a comprehensive plan is not required and many communities allow their zoning statute to serve as their comprehensive plan, it puts the Commission in a better position to argue their case when it comes to zoning issues and future land use, including the growth of the community. Mr. Fernow questioned if the comprehensive plan would help when the Regional Planning Commission had their review of the Commission's recommendations. Mr. Dearing wondered if a comprehensive plan would assist the township trustees in obtaining governmental grants. Mr. Eichenberg encouraged the Commission that it should have a goal of June 1, 2020 for completion of their zoning proposal. A short discussion of the terms of the contract followed, including compensation. Mr. Eichenberg offered that he had working knowledge of GIS software to assist the Commission.

MOTION TO ACCEPT CONTRACT OF MR. EICHENBERG

Before voting on Mr. Eichenberg's contract proposal, Mr. Dearing commented that he had questioned Trustee Steve Pierson about the need to bid out the contract. Mr. Pierson replied that proposals of less than \$50,000 are not subject to bid. Mr. Robinson confirmed this was state statute. Mr. Jones made a motion to accept and sign the contract from Mr. Eichenberg, Round River Planning & Design, at a rate of \$80 per hour. Mr. Robinson seconded. 5 votes in favor.

DISCUSSION OF CODE TEMPLATES UNDER CONSIDERATION

Mr. Jones lead a discussion of existing zoning code templates in force in other communities to use as models for the creation of our own code. The merits and drawbacks of both the Albany Zoning Code and the Devola Zoning Code were discussed extensively. Mr. Dearing remarked that he liked Devola's Zoning Code as a model for The Plains. Mr. Robinson liked the simplicity of the Devola Code. Mr. Maynard felt the Albany Code was lengthy and tedious. Mr. Robinson stated that the best codes he had looked at were the ones presented in simple, easy-to-understand language and not those "written for lawyers by other lawyers". Mr. Fernow felt that Devola's Code may not have enough detail, especially in regards to rural districts. He recommended that we take a look at the Lithopolis Zoning Code as a model. Unofficial agreement was made to research the Albany, Devola and Lithopolis Codes for the next meeting. A short discussion of the positives and negatives of "mixed use" and "conditional use" zoning followed.

DISCUSS MERITS OF USING GOOGLE MAPS FOR CREATING ZONING MAPS

Mr. Jones provided a demonstration of using Google maps as a tool for the creation of our zoning area template. Google maps utilize available GIS data to display lot lines. He noted that Google lacks parcel number and property ownership, which is where the auditor's mapping will come heavily into play. We should be able to load the auditor data as a layer to Google maps. Google's zoom and topography features were seen as advantages. Mr. Jones felt Google maps was a solid choice. Mr. Eichenberg recommended looking at the overriding issues that will determine our map outline, including township lines, highways, and rivers. Mr. Dearing questioned if a natural land barrier like the river was better than lot lines; Mr. Eichenberg recommended using parcel lines to determine our map.

DISCUSS MERITS OF FACEBOOK PAGE VS WEBSITE FOR PUBLIC COMMUNICATION

Furthering last meeting's discussion, Mr. Jones pointed out that Google website domains are no longer free but setting up a Facebook page to communicate with the public was of zero cost. Commissioners discussed moving all business to email accounts set up for exclusive use by and for the commission, instead of utilizing any personal email accounts. Mr. Jones and Mr. Robinson argued that the most simplistic would be to create entirely free Gmail accounts for this purpose, which would also provide us with a suite of Google productivity apps for use by the Commission. Commissioners agreed to set up their accounts and begin communicating through the new email addresses. Mr. Jones will look into setting up a Facebook page. Mr. Dearing had contacted Trustee Ted Linscott about piggybacking on the Trustees' website, but had not received a response.

TERMS OF COMMISSION OFFICERS AND PROCEDURE IN THE CASE OF A TIE VOTE

Mr. Robinson had noted that terms of commission officers and an agreed-upon procedure in the case of a tie vote had not yet been discussed. Mr. Robinson made a proposal that all officers serve in their capacity for a term of one year. Maynard seconded. Motion passed 5/5

In the case of a tie vote, the commission agreed that a tie vote tables the vote to the next meeting for further deliberation. Mr. Dearing motioned, Robinson seconded. Motion passed 5/5.

RECORDS RETENTION POLICY

Mr. Robinson provided a proposal for a records retention policy as a necessity to comply with state sunshine law. Mr. Robinson's proposal was based on the Local Government Records program at the Ohio Historical Society, which serves as the official State of Ohio archives. Mr. Dearing questioned the permanency of records. Mr. Robinson noted that permanent means just that, even if the records are kept digitally. Mr. Robinson voiced that some records must be kept in paper form, at least for a time, but digital archives should be fine. Mr. Jones asked if Commission minutes needed to be included in any website or Facebook account the Commission creates. Mr. Robinson said that most community zoning websites include copies of the minutes, readily available for the public to read. Mr. Jones made a motion to table the discussion to give ample time to ask the township trustees about the retention of records. Maynard seconded. Motion passed 5/5.

DISCUSSION OF APPOINTED SPOKESPERSON

Mr. Eichenberg wished to discuss having an appointed spokesperson for the group to deal with public comment and media coverage. Mr. Robinson noted that the Commission had decided at the previous meeting that part of the elected chairperson's duties was to serve as the singular voice of the Commission and to deal with any media inquiries.

DISCUSSION AND CREATION OF PRELIMINARY ZONING MAP

The commission began creating their first rough draft of a zoning map as Mr. Jones led a lengthy demonstration of using Google mapping tools as a primary resource. Following a comment by community member Mr. Hornsby concerning firearms and farm animals, Mr. Jones suggested that the Commission's Facebook page should include a section about what "zoning can and can not do". Dearing noted that The Plains did not have typical lot sizes or dimensions like other communities but that acreage could be used as a factor in allowing livestock. Mr. Eichenberg encouraged us to be more liberal rather than restrictive. Mr. Eichenberg reminded the Commission that you can't zone agriculture use if the parcel is five acres or more.

A discussion of various zoning boundaries commenced. The border of the township with Dover seemed to be the obvious choice as the northern boundary. Mr. Dearing questioned Mr. Eichenberg about having a "buffer" parcel, and made the point that zoning should include both sides of a street where possible. It was stressed that, where possible, the entirety of a landholder's property should be included in any zoning map (the Athens High School Land Lab being used as an example). Mr. Eichenberg noted that a comprehensive plan will take into account potential growth areas and where zoning might be necessary in the future. No official action was taken as the Commission will continue to create potential zoning maps over the next few months.

With no other new business, Mr. Dearing made a motion to adjourn. Maynard seconded; all 5 members agreed.