

YANKEE SPRINGS TOWNSHIP
Joint Meeting: Board of Trustees, Planning Commission
and Zoning Board of Appeals

Monday, January 20, 2025
6:00 pm
Yankee Springs Township Hall
284 N. Briggs Rd., Middleville, MI 49333
DRAFT MINUTES

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YS Joint Meeting
January 20, 2025

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Meeting called to order at 6:00 PM by Supervisor Rob Heethuis

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

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INVOCATION

INVOCATION

ROLL CALL

ROLL CALL

Board of Trustees: Deb Mousseau, Dave VanHouten, Rob Heethuis, Larry Knowles, Tom Hopkins (All Present)

Planning Commission: Larry Knowles, Lee Kooistra (absent), John Frigmanski, Frank Fiala, Ryan Craven, Rich Beukema, Shana Bush (All Present)

Zoning Board of Appeals: Dave VanHouten, John Frigmanski, Tom Mawson, Jake Welch (All Present) Absent with notice: Mike Boysen, Ron Heilman

Staff Present: Brad Williams, Dennis Buist, Sandy Marcukaitis, Joe Shea

Visitors: 3

ADDITIONS/CHANGES TO AGENDA:

Motion by Heethuis with support from VanHouten to approve the agenda as presented. Roll Call Vote: VanHouten: yes; Heethuis: yes; Knowles: yes; Hopkins: yes; Mousseau: yes.

MOTION TO APPROVE AGENDA

Yes: 5, No: 0. **MOTION CARRIED**

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF VISITORS:

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Sandy Marcukaitis – ZA Assistant
Brad Williams – Code Enforcement Officer
Joe Shea – Zoning Administrator

PURPOSE OF MEETING

Annual Report – Board of Trustees

ANNUAL REPORT BOARD OF TRUSTEES

2024 Accomplishments:

1. Monitor the economics of paying off the IPA (Hall/Office renovation) loan. ✓

2. Conduct four elections – Feb. 27 Presidential Primary, May 7 TK Schools, Aug. 6 Primary, and Nov. 5 General Election. ✓
3. Start and complete the park Pickleball/Basketball courts project. Original bids were too high so new bids are being opened at a meeting next week.
4. Formalize more township committee structures (Fire committee and Veterans committee) ✓
5. Work with and assist the township committees to plan and accomplish goals. ✓
6. Complete ARPA funds spending – completed by paying off fire truck. ✓
7. Continue to research funding methods for expanding the capacity of the Township water system to meet current and future needs. ongoing
8. 2024 Township Spring Cleanup Day. ✓
9. Continue to improve the incorporation of the CIP into the township budgeting process for fiscal 2023/2024. ✓
10. Monitor the new fire truck manufacturing, approve additions as needed and take delivery. ✓
11. Create and revise township policies and procedures. ✓
12. Complete the kitchen renovation project. ✓
13. Complete the restroom renovation project – now in the plans for 2025.
14. Start and complete a fire station storage project. Money was allocated but the project has not yet been undertaken.
15. Hall Audio system update. ✓
16. Pass chicken ordinance. ✓
17. Provide Township CPR training. ✓
18. Publish 2024 newsletter. ✓
19. Install 4 steel doors on the Fire Station. ✓
20. Pass Practical Difficulty Ordinance for ZBA. ✓
21. Pass shipping container ordinance. ✓
22. Pass resolution forbidding BOT members from communicating in person or by letter to PC or ZBA meetings. ✓

2025 Plans

1. Already passed amendment to the short-term rental ordinance.
 2. Become a stand-alone Fire Station (ordinance to be presented at the next BOT meeting).
 3. Move our EMS services from Wayland EMS to Thornapple Township (will have an agreement to approve at next BOT meeting).
 4. Monitor the economics of paying off the IPA (Hall/Office renovation) loan.
 5. Start and complete the Park renovation, including pickleball courts.
 6. Continue to research funding methods for expanding the capacity of the Township water system to meet current and future needs. Trustee Knowles and Supervisor Heethuis have already started meeting with other groups to start the process of obtaining grants.
 7. 2025 Township Cleanup Day.
 8. Continue to improve the incorporation of the CIP into the Township budgeting process.
 9. Complete the restroom renovation.
 10. Examine the Fire Station addition project.
 11. Begin the ordinance for gravel mining, including a pond piece.
 12. Research digitizing Township records.
- Zoning Administration (Mr. Joe Shea)
 - Most of the accomplishments are included in the PC's 2024 annual report.
 - A total of 104 permits were issued.
 - Seven rezoning requests, nine SEU requests, and four land divisions.

- STR activity and enforcement issues took up a lot of the time of the Zoning Department. Most cases were settled out of court. All court cases were found in favor of upholding the township's ordinance.
- Code Enforcement (Mr. Brad Williams)
 - Pretty standard as far as complaints and enforcement activities.
 - A lot of focus was put into short-term rental units, helping residents with the permit process, and dealing with the residents who were unhappy with the new ordinance. As stated by the ZA, the township was successful in court cases with upholding the STR ordinance.
 - Situation on M179 with Mr. Vanderkam: He was in compliance with the court order when the place caught on fire. The township hasn't pushed forward on any further action at this time. PCI does have the authority to look at it and determine if the area should be condemned if it is a safety issue.
- Discussion:
 - Supervisor Heethuis talked about the strength of the STR ordinance and the need to keep enforcing it properly. He complimented the Zoning Department on their handling of these matters.
 - The "car garden" must be in compliance by October 2025 which seems unlikely at this point. Since the court order is in place, the attorney recommended not taking any different course of action at this point. To be in compliance he will have to have twelve or less inoperable vehicles on the property.
 - B&R Excavating submitted a bill for \$1,200 for assisting with the fire and it needs to be determined how the payment will be handled.

Annual Report – Zoning Board of Appeals

ANNUAL REPORT ZONING BOARD OF APPEALS

2024 Accomplishments

- Another year of reduced variance requests, giving credit to Joe Shea for working with the residents to find ways to comply with zoning requirements.
- Five meetings and one joint meeting with the Planning Commission and the Board of Trustees in attendance were held.
- Completed ZBA duties with minimal expense to the township.
- Increased participation of members in learning opportunities.
- Nine cases were heard by the ZBA.

Major 2025 objectives

1. Encourage attendance at educational and training workshops, including MSU Citizen Planner sessions.
2. Provide feedback to the Planning Commission on frequent requests for interpretation or variance approval.
3. Continue to strive for complete application submissions in support of achieving accurate ZBA findings.
4. Support fair and consistent enforcement of the Zoning Ordinance.
5. Attend and participate in scheduled joint meetings with the Township Board and the Planning Commission.

- Discussion:
 - Appreciate the PC taking a look at the Practical Difficulty Standards and helping to get them updated.
 - Supervisor Heethuis stated the Board's appreciation of the ZBA and the work

they do.

Annual Report – Planning Commission

2024 Accomplishments:

- Consistent attendance at meetings.
- Worked on many Special Exception Use cases and site plan reviews.
- Addressed several requests for rezoning.
- Recommended to BOT – contracting with Granicus to assist with STR ordinance enforcement efforts, and an updated fee for the STR application/renewal.
- Zoning Amendments sent to the Board of Trustees include:
 - Article IV Special Exception Uses Section 4.5: added V. Keeping of Chickens.
 - Article X Short Term Rentals (Feb 2024): Many text changes most notable was allow nonconforming STR as a “grandfathered” permitted use for those with prior permits and does not allow STRs in the following zoning districts: SR, RSF, RLF and GLRLF.
 - Article XX Section 20.8 Authority of the Board of Appeals: amendment regarding the determination of practical difficulty justifying a variance.
 - Article X Short Term Rental (November 2024): Language “clean-up” and clarification, amend definition of short-term rental to include units that share a property line with or directly across the street from the legal residence of the owner.
 - Article XII Section 12.16: added Portable Storage Containers.
- Kicked off our Master Plan review/update. Public feedback survey results tallied with 430 responses. The responses have been summarized and posted on the website.
- Completed the Annual Capital Improvement Plan to recommend to the BOT.
- Population changes stay steady until another census is completed.
- Costs for professional planner were \$1,500 and legal services (excluding December) were \$1,976.
- All members have completed some training this year and those who have achieved Master Citizen Planner maintained that. Ryan Craven received his Master Citizen Planner certification.

Strategies for 2025

1. Continue to strongly encourage all Planning Commissioners to attend Michigan Township Association, Michigan State University and Michigan Planning Association Training opportunities- especially those needing continuing education credits to maintain Master Citizen Planner credentials. Encourage Master Citizen Planner accreditation.
2. Continue execution of the plan to complete a review and update of the Yankee Springs Township Master Plan.
3. Assist the Township Board to undertake a “Strategic Planning” effort that conducts
 - a. Identification of major goals and establishing priorities
 - b. Prioritize implementation on those goals
 - c. Assign goals to specific township officials for leadership

Work Plan 2025

1. Review and propose a modification to the existing Mining Ordinance that will bring us back into compliance with the recent changes in Michigan law.
2. Develop and propose text to provide regulations for creating ponds.
3. Continue work on the review and update of the Township Master Plan.
4. Review the current ordinance regarding permanent docks and provide

recommendation to BOT.

5. Explore an ordinance to address blight and make a recommendation to the BOT.
6. Timely preparation of Capital Improvement Plan.

Discussion:

- Supervisor Heethuis briefly reviewed the items on the CIP and what has already been completed as well as future items on the schedule.
 - Improvements have been made to our recycling set up and there will be continued discussion on future expansion.
 - Kitchen has been completed and the bathroom renovations are being undertaken at this time.
 - Water and sewer projects are ongoing, including replacement of generators.
 - It is expected that an ordinance will be passed at the next Board meeting to establish the Yankee Springs Fire Department as a stand-alone department. Discussed some of the steps that need to be taken in order to make that a reality. This will likely be a cost savings to the township, an improvement to services to the township, and improvement of the morale of the department.
 - It is hoped that the pickleball and basketball courts will be completed this year as well as resurfacing the walking path.
 - Trustee VanHouten asked if the Parks Committee would consider taking over the Veterans Memorial and turning it into the Veterans Memorial Park. By being designated as a township park it could qualify to apply for grants to do some additional things. The Veterans Committee would still handle the public events.
 - Acquisition of additional park property and trail between the park and the state recreation area slowed last year but that could be discussed again based on what the state says.
 - Permanent bathrooms at the park have not been moved forward but trees will be planted and continued maintenance of the park is ongoing.
 - Digitizing township records (particularly cemetery records) is anticipated to begin this year as well as replacing the office copier.
 - Township roads: The Board has approved increasing our contribution to \$150,000 per year for the next three years.
 - Ambulance services are being moved to Thornapple, who is already responding to a large percent of our township calls due to the location. This is expected to be a significant savings to the township.
 - Mr. Beukema requested that bathroom improvements include grab bars.
 - Mr. Mawson asked if the Recycling Committee should be looking into funding sources (such as grants) for improvements to the Recycling area and the Board feels this is a good idea.
 - Trustee VanHouten brought up the possibility of asking local businesses to stop using plastic bags.

Motion by Knowles with support from VanHouten to accept the Capital Improvement Plan.

Roll Call Vote: Knowles: yes; Hopkins: yes; Mousseau: yes; VanHouten: yes; Heethuis: yes.

Yes: 5, No: 0. **MOTION CARRIED**

Training

- It is always important and all members are encouraged to attend either via Zoom or in person and will be reimbursed for expenses incurred.

**MOTION TO ACCEPT
CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT
PLAN**

PUBLIC COMMENT:

Catherine Getty (County Commissioner): She expressed her appreciation of the improvements she sees every year in how the Board operates. The board does a great job of recognizing the work that has been done and setting up a clear plan for the future.

BOARD COMMENT:

Mousseau: Thank you everyone and thanks to Travis for coming in to assist with the screen.

VanHouten: Appreciate everyone and all the work, it does get better and better.

Hopkins: Thanks everyone for the input that they have given for the last 5 weeks to help get me up to speed and I really appreciate all the extra effort and the wisdom that has been shared.

Knowles: Appreciates this group and very proud and thankful. This is a great group and is working out well.

Heethuis: So proud of Yankee Springs and the work we are doing and I hear it when I go to other meetings. The talent in this township is incredible and everyone gives so much.

ADJOURNMENT:

Motion by Fiala with support from Beukema to close the Planning Commission meeting.
Approved by all. Motion Carried.

Motion by Welch with support from Mawsan to close the ZBA meeting. *Approved by all.*
Motion Carried.

Motion by Heethuis with support from Hopkins to adjourn the meeting at 7:02 PM.
Approved by all. Motion Carried.

Approved by: _____ Date: _____
Tom Hopkins, Township Clerk

Respectfully submitted by:
Betsy Frigmanski, Recording Secretary
January 21, 2025

DRAFT MINUTES

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PUBLIC COMMENT

BOARD COMMENT

ADJOURNMENT