Co-Chairman Kerby called the Paw Paw Township Planning Commission meeting to order at 6:00 P.M. on January 24, 2019 at the Township Hall.

PRESENT: Ivan Olsen, Kip Kerby, Fran Sanders, James Tapper, Phillip Arbanas, Bill Johnson, and Tom Palenick.

ABSENT: None.

ALSO PRESENT: Rebecca Harvey (Planning Consultant), Trevor Sprague, Bert Gale (Zoning Administrator), and Kelly Largent (Zoning Administrator).

APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA:

Kerby requested the agenda be amended to add education/training under other.

Motion by Olsen, supported by Arbanas to approve the agenda as amended. The motion was unanimously approved.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

December 27, 2018: Motion by Tapper, supported by Olsen to approve the December 27, 2018 minutes as submitted. The motion was unanimously approved.

PUBLIC COMMENT: None.

NEW BUSINESS:

Elections.

Nominations for Chairman were opened. Kerby was nominated. No other nominations were made. Motion by Olsen, supported by Sanders to elect Kip Kerby as Chairman. The motion was unanimously approved.

Nominations for Co-Chairman were opened. Arbanas and Tapper were nominated. No other nominations were made.

Olsen commented that Arbanas is active in the Township with various organizations and is the Chairman of the Zoning Board of Appeals. Olsen also commented that Tapper is an excellent...
secretary. Arbanas kindly declined his nomination. Having no other nominees, the Planning Commission voted unanimously to approve Jim Tapper as Co-Chairman.

Nominations for Secretary were opened. Tapper offered to continue as the secretary. No other nominations were made. Having no other nominees, the Planning Commission voted unanimously to approve Jim Tapper as Secretary.

Olsen thanked the Township for providing wonderful people to serve on the Planning Commission.

Sanders asked what the responsibilities of the Secretary were. Ms. Harvey stated the Planning Enabling Act only requires a Chairperson and Secretary. The Secretary is responsible for the minutes unless appointed to another individual and signing the Planning Commission meeting calendar. Sanders asked about employing a stenographer in order to allow more participation by Ms. Largent. She stated she has noticed how difficult it is for the Clerk to participate and take minutes and believes this to be true for Ms. Largent also. Sanders stated she would look into this.

Zoning Ordinance Review.

Ms. Harvey stated the updated document was emailed earlier today. Ms. Harvey provided a memo that addressed the items listed in the Dec 27, 2018 minutes and briefly discussed each item with the exception of the building height and solar panels.

Ms. Harvey discussed solar panels first and clarified the information in the section identified in the minutes. She stated that this paragraph was added at the request of the Planning Commission to give the Planning Commission the ability to modify certain requirements. Ms. Harvey suggested the following approach to solar energy in Paw Paw Township.

1. Planning for it: decide if the Master Plan needs modification
2. Modify the Master Plan to provide the foundation for changes to the Zoning Ordinance
3. Modify the Zoning Ordinance

Ms. Harvey noted that the Planning Commission at this time is not ready to modify the Zoning Ordinance if they use the above approach. She suggested the Chairman could appoint a subcommittee or take 2-3 months as an action item for the Planning Commission for the planning portion.

Ms. Harvey also stated that the Planning Commission should rethink individual solar panels as a Special Land Use. She and Mr. Gale believe that individual solar panel systems should be a permitted use. She stated that if the Planning Commission is concerned with individual systems then maybe there isn’t support for solar energy. The Planning Commission discussed individual solar panels and requested Ms. Harvey modify the draft Zoning Ordinance to allow individual solar panels as a permitted use.
Ms. Harvey stated that the Planning Commission is currently at the point that they can accept the January 2019 draft Zoning Ordinance document. The Planning Commission can then move onto the Zoning Map review. After the review of the Zoning Map, the next stage in the process is a public hearing.

Ms. Harvey stated that the Zoning Map review only has a few decisions that need to be made by the Planning Commission to align the Zoning Map with the changes in the draft Zoning Ordinance and Master Plan. First, the Low, Medium, and High Residential Districts have been combined into the Village Edge District. Secondly, the gateway district needs to be applied to the map.

Sanders stated that the Planning Commission at one time had discussed having a joint meeting with the Township Board. She asked about having the joint meeting at the same time the public hearing is scheduled. Ms. Harvey stated that a joint meeting is a good idea, but it may be cumbersome to have it at the same time as the public hearing. She stated the joint meeting could be held prior to the public hearing.

Ms. Harvey continued with the process of adopting the draft ordinance. She stated that after the public hearing, the Planning Commission makes its recommendation to the Township Board. Then the document is provided to the County Planning Commission for feedback. The County Planning Commission has 30 days to review the document and provide feedback. Once the 30-day review period has expired the draft Zoning Ordinance is then submitted to the Township Board. At this time, the Township Board can make changes, adopt, or send the draft back to the Planning Commission for change.

Ms. Harvey stated that she will make the change for individual solar panels. The Planning Commission asked Ms. Harvey for her opinion about the current standards in the draft ordinance for solar panels. Ms. Harvey stated that the standards in the draft ordinance are conservative.

The Planning Commission and Ms. Harvey discussed the definition of building height next. Ms. Harvey stated she had provided several alternative definitions in her memo. They basically stated the same thing as the definition in the draft ordinance with slight differences in wording. The Planning Commission decided to use the first alternate definition and graphic.

Motion by Arbanas, supported by Tapper to accept the January 2019 draft Zoning Ordinance with the following exceptions: the definition of building height and solar panels for individual/residential and utility scale operations. The motion was unanimously approved.

Solar Panels - Utility Scale.

Mr. Trevor Sprague from Heelstone Energy addressed questions from the Planning Commission regarding Utility Scale Solar Farms, technology, and cost effectiveness. Mr. Sprague stated that Ms. Harvey utilizing documents from MSU extension was excellent and the MSU extension is an excellent third party for information regarding solar energy. Mr. Sprague addressed the questions of why so many developers and so much activity at this time. He stated that solar energy is coming down in the cost at an average rate of 18% per year for the last 10 years.
driving factors were the federal tax credits and subsidies are decreasing starting with this year. He also stated that the State of Michigan is making regulatory changes.

Mr. Sprague stated that utility scale solar farms bring construction jobs and increased property taxes to the local community with no infrastructure drain. The power generated by these facilities stays in the local community.

Mr. Sprague addressed the concerns of flooding the community with solar farms. He stated there are three main points that limit solar farm locations. They are flat land, no wetlands, and 3-phase feed to a substation.

Tapper stated he had no opposition to utility scale solar operations.

Mr. Sprague discussed the new technology for solar panels and why there are changes/differences between wind and solar. He also stated that the solar industry does not want glare from the panels since this would be a loss of energy. Olsen asked about DC current versus AC current. Mr. Sprague explained that the panels produce DC current. The current is converted to AC by equipment on site prior to connection to the transmission lines.

The Planning Commission discussed revisions to the solar panels section of the draft Zoning Ordinance regarding inclusion in the lot coverage and changing the maximum height of the solar panels.

Ms. Harvey urged the Planning Commission to consider a subcommittee for solar panels. The Planning Commission accepted the establishment of a subcommittee by the Chairman for the purpose of investigating solar energy and to report back to the Planning Commission in February.

OLD BUSINESS: None.

OTHER BUSINESS:

The Co-Chairman stated he had received a training flyer in the mail from MAP. There is a training session on Mar 20 located in Oshtemo at the Township Hall. He stated that the Township has money in the budget for Planning Commission members to attend training sessions and asked if any one was interested. Sanders stated she will make a list and take it to the Clerk/Deputy Clerk to sign up for this class. Five members stated they will attend.

Next meeting is Feb 28th.

Ms. Harvey asked about the zoning map update and what the objective was for the tour of the Township. She stated that this type of tour was typically done more for a planning perspective such as when updating a Master Plan. She stated she is willing to mark up the current zoning map to identify the changes and bring this map to the February meeting.
ADDITIONAL PUBLIC COMMENT:

Olsen stated excellent job to Kerby.

ADJOURNMENT:

Motion by Tapper, supported by Olsen to adjourn the meeting at 8:11 PM. The motion was unanimously approved.

Respectfully submitted,
Kelly Largent
Zoning Administrator