EMMET COUNTY PLANNING COMMISSION
SPECIAL MEETING MINUTES
THURSDAY JUNE 8, 2017, 7:00 P.M.
EMMET COUNTY BUILDING
200 DIVISION ST
PETOSKEY, MI 49770

MEMBERS PRESENT: Kelly Alexander, John Eby, David Laughbaum, Tom Urman, Toni Drier, Jonathan Scheel, Betsy White, Steve Neal

MEMBERS ABSENT: James Scott, David Laughbaum

STAFF: Tammy Doernenburg

FACILITATOR: Ann Chastain

I Call to Order and Attendance
Chairman Eby called the meeting to order at 7:03 p.m. All members were present except Urman (arrived 7:15pm), Scott and Laughbaum.

II Introduction and Work Session
Doernenburg introduced Ann Chastain, Strategic Discussions, MSU Extension Educator Emeritus. Chastain gave a brief explanation of her work history and experience. She explained her role in the process of reviewing land uses sometimes conducted in conjunction with a farm-use, but which are not farm-use activities. An introduction of the Planning Commission and all of those in attendance was requested. There were members from the Bear Creek Township Board of Trustees, Planning Commission and their building official. Also present was the McKinley Township Supervisor and a citizen of Bear Creek Township.

Chastain asked the Planning Commission to think about what farming or agriculture in Emmet County is in 2017 and share their thoughts. The workshop was conducted so that the public could participate in the discussions. Thoughts included: Asset, encouraged, an opportunity, is needed, priority for citizens, tying traditional agriculture, evolving and developing (value added activities), strengthening relationships between food and people, a tourism experience, expanding novelty, a way of life, a sustainable way of life, and slowly deteriorating due to other land uses.

Chastain then summarized the history of the past year of review by the Planning Commission which included discussion at nearly every meeting. She then laid out options for moving forward which included appointing a sub-committee to review and discuss and return to the full Commission with a recommendation, determine which direction to move as a whole, decide how to move forward. There was discussion regarding the benefit of a sub-committee and making the decision as a whole. It was decided to move forward with the discussion and try to make the decision as a group.

The history included: June 2016 Discussion regarding Right-to-Farm Act (RTFA), discussion on what should be regulated on farms, a suggestion to form a sub-committee was made, “hot spots” were identified including concerts, festivals, and social events, and staff was directed to research what other communities are doing. July 2016 information was provided regarding Cheboygan County when they approved a wedding venue at a farm using a section of their ordinance which allows land uses similar to other land uses allowed in the district. Recommend uses addressed in the Ordinance be listed and focus on uses needing regulation – establish criteria, staff requested direction from the Commission regarding uses regularly requested for farms. August 2016 the matrix of land uses was provided and a list of land uses exempt under the RTFA, Bay Township standards were provided to the PC. Public input during the meeting provided information regarding small scale agriculture and how farming now requires a different business model to be successful. MSUE Product Center Counselor indicated that 25 of 26 farms in Northwest Lower Michigan using her services have some value-added component to
their current business model. Michigan’s top three priorities for economic growth includes automotive, tourism, and agriculture. October 2016 Emmet County and Bear Creek Township hosted a Michigan RTFA program. November 2016 staff asked for direction on how the Planning Commission would like to address land uses on farms which are not agriculture. PC generally felt Special Use Permit would be appropriate. December 2016 staff presented a draft ordinance amendment to allow social events (weddings) as accessory use on a FF-1 or FF-2 property as a Special Land Use. The application would be reviewed once. March 2017 a draft amendment prepared by David Coveyou a Bear Creek Township Planning Commission member was presented. Staff was directed to provide more research. April 2017 Staff requested direction, a suggestion to form a committee was made, the PC decided to request a facilitator to work with them to move this topic forward. All of this history lead up to the current work session meeting.

Questions posed to the group to prompt discussion included: Should commercial activities be regulated differently from non-commercial activities? If there is potential impact on an area (people), should we regulate that use? Can uses of concern be regulated through “special use” including specific conditions to meet? Can townships enact “event ordinances” as well? Should “special uses” be limited to FF districts, or be allowed in other specific zoning districts? If certain uses seem appropriate for that district, can they be listed with specific conditions in that (FF) district? Which on-farm activities/uses that can be regulated locally would the ECPC like to address?

Public comments suggested that the density of residential development impacts nuisance factor. There should be clear definitions on what is being regulated. Perhaps some uses could be reviewed by the Zoning Administrator. Objectives should be to help traditional farmers, to attract potential new owners, to attract tourists, and not to detract from neighborhoods.

Through discussion, the consensus was to look at regulating social events like weddings, receptions, and concerts and wineries/breweries. The purpose of the regulation is to manage noise, parking/traffic, lighting, impact to neighbors/setback and determine which zoning district(s) to allow uses (FF or others too?). There was discussion regarding regulating noise by decibel level, setbacks and/or hours of operation. Lighting Ordinance could apply to non-traditional farms with value-added activities.

Additionally, staff will prepare drafts for each use proposed to regulate 1) Social Events and 2) Wineries and Breweries. Staff will provide the list of uses which can be subject to local regulation and resend the previously prepared draft text amendments.

Suggestions were made regarding resources including Leelanau Peninsula and County Parks Ordinance (related to time). Additionally the regulations should be the minimum necessary to ensure safety. Other codes such as building, electrical, etc. will need to be followed, but should not be a part of the Zoning Ordinance.

The topic will be placed on the July 6, 2017 Planning Commission agenda.

III Public Comment: None

IV Other Business: None

V Adjournment

There being no other business Eby called the meeting adjourned at 9:00 p.m.