

**Laketon Township Planning Commission**  
**April 19, 2023 Regular Meeting Minutes – APPROVED 5/10/2023**

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**CALL TO ORDER:** Chairperson Bob Marine called the meeting to order at 6:00 pm

**ROLL CALL:**

- Present: Paul Hoppa, Suzanne Hayes, Dave Mieras, Eric Anderson, Chris Simpson, June Earhart and Bob Marine.
- Absent: None.
- Also present: Zoning Administrator Heidi Tice, Recording Secretary Veronica West, Twp. Supervisor Kim Arter and one citizen.

**APPROVAL OF AGENDA:** Paul Hoppa moved to approve the agenda as presented. June Earhart supported the motion and the motion carried by voice vote.

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES:** Suzanne Hayes pointed out one typographical/spelling error in the minutes and then moved to approve them with the correction noted. Eric Anderson supported the motion. The motion carried by voice vote.

**PUBLIC COMMENTS ON AGENDA ITEMS ONLY:**      **NONE**

**CORRESPONDENCE:**

- **Monthly Permit Report:** provided for informational purposes, with ZA H. Tice noting an increase in shed permits this spring.
- **Training Opportunity:** ZA H. Tice informed the PC of an upcoming training seminar. It is offered in person on 3 different dates/locations or online. Let ZA H. Tice know by May 1<sup>st</sup> if there is a session you can commit to attend.

**NEW BUSINESS:**

- **Open House results/discussion–** ZA H. Tice tallied up the responses from the public open house, noting the top three results were requests for: pickleball courts, a dog park and a bike path on Scenic Drive. She also read aloud several emails from area residents that were unable to attend the open house and they were asking for pickleball courts, a dock at Horton Park and for bike paths on Dykstra Rd to connect to the path on Whitehall Rd. Eric Anderson commented that the Laketon Township Board is working with Fruitland Township to put together a proposal to widen Scenic Drive from Fenner Rd to Duck Lake State Park (approx. 5 miles in length) to incorporate bike lanes on both sides of the road. He stated an advisory board has been put together and agreed to fund a feasibility study for this project. He also added the bids for the feasibility study are a bit more costly than anticipated, there are lots of steps to this project and grant funding would also be needed. There was discussion of using the information gathered from the open house to develop a community recreation survey and a past survey was reviewed, discussed and amended to add more relevant questions and to delete irrelevant questions. Several PC members commented on keeping the survey short and simple. There was additional discussion regarding survey respondents being residents vs non-residents. ZA H. Tice noted that the State requires the township to seek input from adjacent communities and other affected bodies/organizations as well as members of the public. ZA H. Tice will bring the draft survey and a draft survey for the online version on Survey Monkey to the next meeting for their approval.

**UNFINISHED BUSINESS:**

- **Draft Solar Energy Ordinance:** ZA H. Tice provided the members with a revised draft copy with changes highlighted in yellow. They took some time to review. Eric Anderson began the discussion pointing to provisions for screening to be required for small scale ground mounted solar collectors, feeling this is quite strict and somewhat onerous. Bob Marine asked if the screening really necessary if these things are required in the rear yard. Eric Anderson additionally noted that screening is not required for things like swing sets and RV's that some people find ugly to look at and suggested deleting this paragraph/screening requirement. Chris Simpson asked if we could just require a 100' setback similar to the utility scale solar collectors. Eric Anderson stated a large setback like that could be a practical difficulty and could be grounds for a variance. Bob Marine also pointed out that the maximum height of

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the solar collectors is 10 (ten) feet, fences are only allowed to be 6 feet, which means screening would have to be trees or bushes that may take a long time to grow. He commented he feels screening would be difficult and probably impractical. Suzanne Hayes commented she feels these regulations are getting very complicated and while regulations are necessary to protect residents, she doesn't feel people should need an engineer to figure it out. Bob Marine asked about a size limitation and ZA H. Tice explained the minimum lot size needed to even have a ground mounted system is 2.5 acres and then the maximum lot coverage requirements of each zoning district of about 30 – 35%, which includes driveways, homes, pools, patios, accessory buildings etc would then limit the sized of these solar collectors.

Eric Anderson moved to strike paragraph B.b.7, which requires screening of small scale ground mounted systems from the draft ordinance language and to then forward to the Laketon Township Attorney for his review and comment. June Earhart supported the motion. The motion carried by voice vote.

- **Parks and Recreation Plan Update:** ZA H. Tice provided an updated timeline and noted she is preparing letters to send out to area municipalities. She added the initial letters will be mailed, but will then do all future correspondence electronically unless the organization asks for paper correspondence. She is including instructions on that in the letter. She also provided each member with an updated draft Parks and Recreation Capital Improvement Plan to review and provide any input/comments next month. Suzanne Hayes commented that she felt Heidi did a great job on the community open house - it was unfortunate that more people did not attend.

**PUBLIC COMMENTS:**

- **Kim Arter, 170 S Bear Lake Rd, Laketon Twp. Supervisor:** Supervisor Arter had several points of comment:
  - She thanks the PC for their hard work and noted that there is potential legislation or possibly even a ballot proposal regarding solar energy, with the intent to ban solar farms on property zoned agricultural.
  - She reminded everyone of the upcoming county hosted recycling event this Saturday 4/22/23 for scrap tires, electronics or hazardous materials. Flyers are available and have been posted online and emailed.

**BOARD REPORTS:**

- **Board of Trustees: Eric Anderson** reported the Township Board completed the budget and approved a small pay increase for the PC and ZBA. He added he is always available for questions.
- **Zoning Board of Appeals – Suzanne Hayes** - No activity to report.

**ADJOURNMENT:**

- Eric Anderson moved to adjourn. Chris Simpson supported the motion. The motion carried and the adjournment occurred at 6:50 pm.

Respectfully Submitted:

Veronica West  
Recording Secretary