

MINUTES OF JOINT MEETING  
VILLAGE OF NORTHPORT PLANNING COMMISSION  
&  
LEELANAU TOWNSHIP PLANNING COMMISSION  
Thursday, March 23, 2023  
Leelanau Township Hall

At the appointed time of 6:30 p.m. Leelanau Township Planning Commission Chairman, Steve Kalchik, called the meeting to order. Township Commissioners introduced themselves and a quorum was announced.

Township Commissioners present: Steve Kalchik, Gina Harder, Bridgid Hart, Kristi Fischer, Brian Mitchell, Gerald Shlatz, and Tom Weber. Steve Patmore, Zoning Administrator, was present and managed the Zoom attendees.

Immediately thereafter, Village of Northport Planning Commission Chair, Nicole Arbury, called the meeting to order. Village Commissioners introduced themselves and a quorum was announced.

Village Commissioners present: Nicole Arbury, Laura Cavendish, Jane Gale, Bob Newell, Kathy Wessell, and John Woomer. Joni Scott, Zoning Administrator was present.

There were eighteen remote attendees participating by use of Zoom technology and three public attendees present in the room.

A motion was made by Brian Mitchell, seconded by Gina Harder to accept the agenda as presented. A motion was made by Jane Gale, seconded by Kathy Wessell to accept the agenda as presented. The members of both Planning Commissions approved the motion by simultaneous unanimous voice vote.

Steve Patmore was recognized to provide an update of recent activity undertaken by the Township Planning Commission. Patmore spoke of the review and approval of revisions to the township's commercial and recreational zoning district (including public endorsement of the changes via referendum); three zoning changes were presented to the board during the last year (2 approved and 1 withdrawn); no requests for zoning changes are pending; the Planning

Commission is nearing a final review of draft #1 of the rewrite of the township's Five-Year Master Plan and is eager to begin working on draft #2 of the document this spring.

Nicole Arbury offered a review of activities underway at the Northport Village Planning Commission. The village contracted with the consulting firm Wade-Trim to audit the village's zoning ordinance. The village commissioners are pleased with the scope of the project and the review is well underway. The commission continues to evaluate and prepare a summary to present to the Village Council concerning disposition of the village's six-and-a-half-acre property on 7<sup>th</sup> Street that formally housed public works facilities and has brownfield issues. The Village Planning Commission will begin the Five-Year Master Plan process this year.

Chairman Arbury replied to a question from Gina Harder that the consultants review and audit of the village's whole zoning ordinance was enormously helpful. A discussion followed concerning the application of "form-based code" as an alternative approach to just a "land use" distinction. The key element is to provide flexibility for commercial/residential compatibility and to eliminate barriers to housing.

Commissioners talked about statewide resources they routinely access such as the Michigan Township Association, Michigan Association of Municipalities, and the Michigan Planning Association. The commissioners expressed the desire to make the best use of these resources and to share information about meetings, training sessions, seminars and tools that may be helpful.

At 6:45 Chairman Kalchik recognized Zach Hillyer, an invited guest representing Housing North, to make a presentation. Mr. Hillyer spoke on the topic "Creating Pathways and Partnerships for Housing in Northwest Michigan" and presented members with printed copies of an eight-page power point presentation. The program focused on housing data, affordability, and supply issues.

Hillyer answered a couple of questions and was seated by 7:05 as the commissioners continued with a lengthy discussion on housing issues that only came to conclusion as the eight o'clock adjournment hour approached.

Major themes discussed and proposed for future consideration were:

- 1) A suggestion by Commissioner Schatz that both Planning Commissions incorporate common language in their respective Five-Year Master Plan documents that define and offer a common approach to attainable and affordable housing.
- 2) The lack of long-term rental property is recognized as a problem.
- 3) Chairman Arbury stated the Village Council is undertaking an assessment of short-term rental property in the village. The village does not currently have an inventory of short-term rental property. The township has a short-term rental ordinance.
- 4) Commissioner Weber asked what government and marketplace incentives are working to create workforce housing development. Donated land, payment in lieu of taxes (PILOT), layered government subsidy plans, brownfield remediation, and land bank transfer were mentioned.
- 5) Commissioner Mitchell suggested the commissions drill down further to better understand the local data. He observed that the backlog of housing demand is such that early projects will be quickly acquired.
- 6) Commissioner Mitchell observed that the long-standing 10-acre land divisions associated with agricultural property must be reviewed, especially where agricultural property is adjacent or near the village. Related limitations that could be revisited in the village include lot size and density measures.
- 7) It was observed that local governments can not control market forces or construction costs, but they do not have to present barriers or obstructions to development.
- 8) There are long-term vacant residences in the village that some might consider abandoned and properties where sustained intermittent construction over several years warrant consideration as to whether these parcels could be returned to being viable housing stock.
- 9) The village has vacant lots and open space that could be inventoried for potential residential "in-fill".
- 10) Employers have inquired about providing workforce housing on property zoned commercial and industrial use.

Commissioners acknowledged a great deal of work is underway in the area to resolve housing needs. Locally, the commissioners will continue to follow and participate in the Leelanau Township Community Foundation's housing programs. In addition to resource Housing North provides, there is an awareness of numerous initiatives in the county and the region by Home Stretch, Habitat for Humanity, Leelanau County Brownfield Development Authority, Leelanau County Land Bank Authority, Networks Northwest, and projects in Suttons Bay.

The Commissioners agreed that the joint session was a valuable undertaking and worthy of repeating. It was agreed to tentatively establish September 28 as the date for a second joint session.

Under Public Comment: Four individuals offered public comment.

Under Commissioner's Comments: Gerald Schatz asked the record show that although he is an attorney his participation and comments should in no way be construed as offering legal advice or representing legal opinion on behalf of the Leelanau Township Planning Commission. He is acting as a citizen appointee and not as a legal advisor.

The two Chairpersons simultaneous gaveled the meeting adjourned at 8:20 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,  
Douglas Whitley  
Volunteer Scribe