



**THORNAPPLE TOWNSHIP  
PLANNING COMMISSION  
Meeting Agenda  
Monday, November 25, 2024  
7:00 P.M.**

- 1. Call to Order (7:00 P.M.)**
- 2. Approval of Agenda:**
- 3. Approval of Minutes** October 28, 2024
- 4. Citizen Comments:**
- 5. Public Hearings:**
- 6. New Business:**
  - a. None
- 7. Unfinished Business:**
  - a. Discussion/resolution plan for non-compliance within watershed areas  
(Jeff Sluggett's response regarding this in the packet)
- 8. Committee Reports:**
  - a. Ordinance Committee – *[Kilgore, Finkbeiner, Rairigh, Gasper (alt)]*
  - b. Site Plan Committee – *[Finkbeiner, Denton, Wandrie, Hansson (alt)]*
  - c. Joint Planning Committee – *[Rairigh, Gasper, Denton, Kilgore (alt)]*
- 9. Administrator's Report:**
  - a. Zoning Ordinance Audit
  - b. Zoning Report
  - c. Code Enforcement Report
- 10. Commissioner Comments:**
- 11. Adjournment**

## THORNAPPLE TOWNSHIP PLANNING COMMISSION

Regular Meeting, October 28, 2024

1. Call to Order:

- a. The meeting was called to order by Chairperson Tom Kilgore 7:00 p.m. at Thornapple Township located at 200 E. Main St. Middleville, MI 49333.
- b. Present: Bryan Finkbeiner, Elaine Denton, Linda Gasper, Tom Kilgore, Sandy Rairigh, Craig Wandrie and Liz Hansson. Also Present: Tim Kelley, Phil Gensterblum, and Brenda Hess

2. Approval of Agenda:

**MOTION** by Gasper, **SUPPORT** by Rairigh to approve agenda. **MOTION CARRIED** with 7 yes voice votes.

3. Approval of Minutes:

**MOTION** by Rairigh **SUPPORT** by Denton to approve the August 26, 2024 meeting minutes. **MOTION CARRIED** with 7 yes voice votes.

4. Citizen Comments: None.

5. Public Hearings: None.

6. New Business: Discussion/Resolution Plan for Non-Compliance Within Watershed Areas – Gensterblum reported a complaint he received in July regarding the construction of a structure on Duncan Lake which was going to block the view of the lake and questions regarding proper permitting. Gensterblum visited the site, spoke with the homeowner who then pointed out non-compliant structures of the 50-foot setback ordinance. Construction was paused. Upon further study, Gensterblum determined that there are many accessory buildings out of compliance both for older homes that fell under the 30-foot ordinance, as well as newer homes with the required 50-foot ordinance. Discussion centered around how to resolve issues regarding unpermitted structures already in existence and steps to take to ensure future construction will be compliant. Concerns were raised about setting a deadline for compliance and the possibility of a rush of construction may result. Others shared concerns regarding the demolition and moving of existing structures. It was noted structures on other bodies of water, including the Thornapple River, could be affected as well. Gensterblum noted it is difficult to view structures in backyards from the road which further complicates the process. It was agreed that a solution would not come easy. Gensterblum noted the new county GIS coordinator will start the following week and should be able to help with historical information determining which structures are grandfathered. After much discussion, a motion was made.

**MOTION** by Gasper, **SUPPORT** by Finkbeiner for the Planning Commission to recommend to the Thornapple Township Board of Trustees that a letter be sent to all waterfront property owners regarding the requirement of a setback of 50 feet for lakes and 100 feet on the Thornapple River for accessory buildings with enforcement of new buildings effective November 11, 2024. **Roll Call Vote:** Denton: yes, Gasper: yes, Kilgore: yes, Rairigh: yes, Wandrie: yes, Finkbeiner: yes, Hansson: yes. **MOTION CARRIED** with 7 yes votes.

7. Unfinished Business: None

Committee Reports:

- a. Ordinance Committee – [Kilgore, Finkbeiner, Rairigh, Gasper(alt)] – Renewed discussion regarding home-based businesses and screens for equipment. Decision was made to retain existing ordinance.
  - b. Site Plan Committee – [Finkbeiner, Denton, Wandrie, Hansson (alt)] - None.
  - c. Joint Planning Committee – [Rairigh, Gasper, Denton, Kilgore (alt)] - None
8. Administrator’s Report: Gensterblum reported he has taken a position in Grand Haven and has made arrangements with the Township Supervisor and Clerk regarding his work hours for the Township.
- a. Zoning Ordinance Audit - None
  - b. Zoning Report – Gensterblum reported that the process of ordinances being “searchable” online has begun along with reformatting of existing ordinances.
  - c. Code Enforcement Report - None
9. Commissioner Comments - None
10. Adjournment:

**MOTION** by Finkbeiner **SUPPORT** by Wandrie to adjourn the meeting at 7:42 p.m. **MOTION CARRIED** with 6 yes voice votes.

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*Sandra Rairigh, Secretary*

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*Brenda Hess, Recording Secretary*

Approved \_\_\_\_\_

Phil:

Given this a bit more thought considering your email from yesterday; on balance I would think your initial plan as I understood it is still the best option.

So, something like:

1. Send a letter to all property owners abutting whatever body of water you are referencing (Duncan Lake, etc.). Letter would state that it is being sent to all abutting property owners of \_\_\_\_\_ (i.e., no one is being singled out)
2. Letter would state that it has come to the Township's attention that there may be property owners seeking to install accessory buildings/sheds within the minimum setback area of 50'
3. Letter would then state that as a reminder, installation of such a structure requires a permit from Township (if that's the case) and, in any event, setbacks need to be maintained for public health, safety and welfare purposes
4. Finally, contact information if questions

Approaching in the above manner is, in my mind, preferable as it avoids appearing to give a "blanket immunity" to those who have already installed improperly. It also has the benefit of acting to clarify the need to comply and the process to do so.

We then leave it alone and if we get particular, focused complaints in the future, we can deal with those on a case by case basis.

Jeff

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