

**ANN ARBOR CHARTER TOWNSHIP
PLANNING COMMISSION MEETING MINUTES
Township Hall – 3792 Pontiac Trail
April 3, 2023 7:30 P.M.**

I. ROLL CALL

Chair Kotila called the meeting to order at 7:30 pm. Per the Open Meetings Act members of the public could participate in person or participate via the ZOOM webinar platform. Members of the Commission must be physically present to participate as Commissioners at the meeting.

Present: John Allison
Richard Bunch
Lee Gorman
Peter Kotila
Karen Mendelson
Randy Perry
Linda Young

Absent: None

Also Present: Township Attorneys Alexandra Dieck and Sinead Redmond, Township Planner Sally Elmiger, Township Staff Debbie Mariani, Supervisor Diane O’Connell, Building Official and Zoning Administrator Peter Pace, Fire Chief Mark Nicholai, Code Savvy Consultant Michael O’Brian

II. CITIZEN PARTICIPATION

Reserved time for citizen participation on agenda items only. Call the Township office for reserved time at 734-663-3418 before noon on the day of the meeting. Public comment regarding non-agenda items is at end of the meeting.

None.

III. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

- A. March 6, 2023 Draft Ann Arbor Charter Township Planning Commission Meeting Minutes**
- B. March 14, 2023 Draft Ann Arbor Charter Township Planning Commission Workshop**

MOTION by Young, support by Gorman, to approve the March 6, 2023 meeting minutes as submitted.

Motion carried by voice vote.

MOTION by Young, support by Allison, to approve the March 14, 2023 workshop meeting minutes as submitted.

Motion carried by voice vote.

IV. COMMUNICATIONS**A. March 20, Draft Ann Arbor Charter Township Board of Trustees Meeting Minutes**

Commissioner Allison reviewed the draft March 20, 2023 Ann Arbor Charter Township Board of Trustees meeting minutes.

Commissioner Perry asked that the Board push for the rehabilitation of Warren Road.

V. PUBLIC HEARINGS

None.

VI. NEW BUSINESS

A. SP-04-20 Toyota 1555 Observation Pad and Battery Storage – Applicant is requesting a major/minor determination for an amendment to the original site plan for placement of an EV observation pad and two battery storage units on 71.59 acres located at 1555 Woodridge, Parcel ID I-09-24-000-011.

Marshall Azar, Toyota Senior Manager, was present with other members of the Toyota development team.

Utilizing a PowerPoint presentation, Mr. Azar and his team provided the following information:

- The purpose of tonight’s request was to review some of the upcoming projects for the Toyota campus and request the determination for minor site plan approval for a proposed concrete observation pad and a battery storage pad. The construction will represent a .21% sf increase on the site.
- Toyota has had discussions with the Fire Chief, the Building and Utilities Departments, and Planning regarding this request.
- The proposed concrete observation pad will be 20’ x 30’, with masonry walls, a roof and a gate, a heated concrete access apron and a new roll up access door on the north side of the building. The observation pad will be used to observe suspect electric vehicles before they can be transported off site.
- The observation pad will be located adjacent to a conservation easement next to the wetlands. The pad will be located more than 25’ from the wetlands, and will not impact the conservation area. The pad will be monitored 24/7.
- The battery storage units will include the installation of two 15’8” x 13’6” prefabricated units. The battery storage units are double wall fire rated self-contained units with a sump; these will be placed on a concrete slab with footings, and will be used to store new batteries when they are delivered to the site. The ceiling will have a one-hour fire rating. Ventilation will be provided so the units don’t become pressurized.

Mr. Azar reviewed some indoor uses and activities – not related to the request – relative to additional chargers being located inside the buildings. Toyota was introducing a “level 3” charger, which allows a vehicle to be charged in 30 minutes. Toyota had been working with the Fire Chief as well as 3rd party consultants and Toyota’s insurance carriers to develop countermeasures and protective measures for the building and its occupants, in case of a fire event. Building sprinklers will increase in density, and additional carbon monoxide detectors and LEL detectors will be provided.

Toyota will work with the Township to finalize an emergency response plan, will confirm smoke ventilation requirements, and again, will increase sprinkler densities.

A schematic showed the design (cells combined into modules, with 10 or so modules in a battery), size, and appearance of a battery, which essentially was the size of the bottom of a vehicle.

The facility had no destructive testing. They did have a drive range to test the chassis dynamometers, charging systems, and cells.

Mr. Azar concluded his presentation.

Referencing her March 29, 2023 review memorandum, Township Planner Elmiger said that the pad and storage area will add approximately 1,760sf of pavement to the site. This project did not meet any of the criteria for a major change listed in Section 74-179, and she recommended that the Planning Commission find that the proposed change constitutes a minor amendment.

Building Official and Zoning Administrator Pace said that Toyota had brought this battery technology proposal to the Township about 8 months ago, and the Township had brought in Michael O'Brian, Code Savvy, as consultant on this matter. Pace did agree with Elmiger that this proposal constituted a minor amendment, and while this technology was new to Township staff, further issues could be worked out administratively, with the help of Township consultants.

Consultant O'Brian gave some background to EV battery technology, specifically in terms of managing risk such as fires. The preferred way to manage an EV fire was to let it run its cycle, allowing it go through its thermal event without putting much water or other fire suppressants on it. Pad distance from the building needed to be in alignment with Toyota's emergency response guide.

Emergency response was different inside a building, in terms of those things already mentioned – sprinkler density, early detection, and ventilation to handle any off-gas consequences of an interior risk event.

Discussion:

- Mannik Smith staff had walked the area close to the natural wetlands to confirm there were no natural features impacts resulting from this proposal. A completed survey will also confirm this. If the survey showed the pad encroached on the 25' buffer, the applicants would need to return to the Planning Commission for a natural features permit.
- A fire event occurring on the observation pad should not impact nearby flora or fauna, or nearby property.
- Township Engineer Humesky had been part of initial conversations and could be brought back in as appropriate. Consultant O'Brian had been brought on board as an expert in this field.

Township Attorney Redmond reviewed the draft resolution approving this application as a minor change to the final site plan. The resolution included Recital F., which indicated the Applicant should submit a revised Final Site Plan incorporating the changes for the Township's

records. Commissioners asked that the wording be changed to “shall” submit, and the following motion was offered:

MOTION by Allison, support by Gorman, that the Planning Commission approve RESOLUTION APPROVING MINOR CHANGE TO FINAL SITE PLAN FOR TOYOTA MOTOR ENGINEERING-1555 WOODRIDGE, DATE: April 3, 2023, with the condition that:

- **The applicant shall submit a revised Final Site Plan incorporating the changes for the Township’s records.**

Motion carried unanimously by voice vote.

VII. OLD BUSINESS

None.

VIII. ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION

A. Home Occupations – Review draft ordinance

Township Planner Elmiger led the continuing discussion of proposed language for the draft ordinance relative to home occupations. Changes made based on the most recent Planning Commission discussion included:

- Definitions had been modified or added regarding tourist homes and telecommuting.
- Descriptions of home occupations in Category A and Category B were condensed and simplified.
- *Standards Applicable to Home Occupations* was amended and edited.
- *Nonconforming Home Occupations* was updated.

The Commission continued to wordsmith the home occupation ordinance, and continued their discussion of which home occupations should be required to obtain a permit, how long a permit should last (consensus appeared to be 3 years), the benefit of the permit process relative to educating residents, whether or not the permit process would be primarily enforced as a result of nuisance-based complaints, etc.

Building Official and Zoning Administrator Pace spoke in favor of requiring a permit in the instances outlined in the draft ordinance, as requiring a permit with the accompanying process allowed the Township to monitor a situation over time, and gave the Township recourse should someone use their residential home for a clear commercial purpose.

Further discussion included:

- The ordinance should not present heavy penalties to residents who might not know they were in violation. Residents should be given reasonable time to come into compliance.
- On the other hand, ordinance requirements could be effectively communicated via the Township newsletter.
- Commissioner Mendelson was concerned that some parts of the ordinance were invasive; many people operated businesses from their homes, and they should have the right to do that.

- Commissioner Mendelson also believed that someone residing in a home, whether or not they had a lease or were an owner, should be able to operate certain businesses such as telecommuting. The Commission suggested in that case, written permission from the owner should be required.
- The long list of prohibited home occupations seemed unwieldy.

Discussion also included:

- Removing any references to a registry or record, as the permit itself served this purpose.
- Strike “in any district” where that occurs.
- Requiring a permit for some telecommuting uses that met category B criteria.

As discussion continued and the hour grew late, the consensus was to continue to discuss this draft ordinance at a work meeting scheduled for April 11, 7pm.

B. Fences and Gates – Review draft ordinance

Postponed.

IX. INFORMATIONAL ITEMS

None

X. PUBLIC COMMENT

None.

XI. ADJOURNMENT

MOTION by Gorman, support by Young, to adjourn the meeting at 9:45pm.

Motion carried by voice vote.

/cem