

**Minutes from the  
Almira Township Planning Commission Meeting  
May 04, 2021  
6:00 p.m.**

**Call to Order:** Chairperson Ratajczak called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m. at Almira Township Hall in the Village.

**Members Present were:** Bill Ballard, Vince Edwards, Don Ellis, Duane Newman, Ryan Ratajczak, Lori Florip

**Members Absent were:** Simon Wolf

**Additions/Deletions to Agenda:** Harmony Pines Campground - Discussion

**Approval of Agenda:** Motion by Edwards, supported by Newman, to approve the agenda as amended. All ayes, motion passed.

**Approval of Minutes:** Motion by Edwards, supported by Newman, to approve the minutes of April 6, 2021 as amended. All ayes, motion passed.

**Brief Public Comment:** Mark Gabrick clarified ownership of Kaiser property on Herendeen Lake. Mike Ferguson owns four acres with his home on them and has been in discussion with Z/A Williams about splitting the property into two 2-acre parcels, so he could build three Yurts. Mr. Ferguson's property is located on Co Road 669 and is zoned R 1.

**Zoning Administrator:** Williams provided his written report via e-mail. There were no questions from the commissioners. Z/A Williams verbally reported on his preliminary discussions with Mr. Ferguson regarding his desire to build three Yurts on the 4 acres he owns and lives on. Z/A Williams also reported on the status of House Bill 4722 which would remove local control of Short Term Rentals throughout the state of MI. Williams also noted that he talked with the new Fire Chief, regarding the Chief's request to be forwarded notices of new Land Use Permits being issued, so the Fire Department knows where these properties are, in case there is a fire, or other emergency. In March, there were several contacts regarding permits, junk complaints and various other zoning questions.

**Township Board Representative:** Twp Board Member Florip reported: Large turnout for the annual township cleanup day. Scrap metal collected during the cleanup will be taken in and funds will be used for the Veteran's Memorial in the Township Park. The Township roads are being brined. Brad Drury was hired as the new fire chief. There has been a bid process opened to the public regarding the township owned parcels near Mistwood golf course.

**Zoning Board of Appeals Representative:** NA

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**Intergovernmental Representative:** Edwards reported the village is reviewing the need for STR and is considering holding a public hearing on May 18th.

**Conflict(s) of Interest:** NA.

**Guests:** Mark Gabrick, Mike Ferguson

**Old Business:**

**A. Proposed Zoning Amendment #19-02 - commercial use review**

- a. Waiting to address this amendment due to the nature of hosting a public hearing currently.

**B. Proposed Zoning Amendment #20-01 – rental cabins**

- a. Much discussion on this subject. Chairman Ratajczak opened the conversation by confirming the commissioners desire to move forward with the amendment at this time. Newman was interested in getting a better idea of the number of STR's currently approved in the township before we add another category to the list of what is allowed under the current ordinance. Ballard stated, that IF we proceed, we need to 'Do it right', based on what is happening in Grand Traverse and Leelanau Counties. Continued discussion included Florip's recommendation to review the current Site Plan Application template and the potential need to make updates. Newman also stated his concerns with STR status being automatically transferred with the sale of the property. Newman recommended we divide up the past minutes to review, and each Commission member sort through a percentage of them and start a list of the STR's that have been approved. Florip also recommended searching the Internet and see who is advertising a STR and verifying they have completed the STR application process. Ballard stated that what we have is a systems failure, as we have written the ordinance, reviewed and approved the STR applications, but we are dealing with a 'systems failure' in that we are not keeping track of which or how many STR's we have approved. In addition, keeping documentation as to which, if any have caused problems. He also considers this a form of 'Home Occupation', as money is changing hands for services. Also, STR's can be considered a type of hotel or lodging that brings increased traffic, noise, etc. into residential neighborhoods.

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- b. Chairman Ratajczak recommended we continue to accept STR applications. He also agreed that the process of identifying all STR's within the Township was a good idea. The process will involve the review of past Planning Commission minutes to identify any approvals dating back to the inception of this ordinance. Newman stated that he would begin by reviewing the first few years of minutes to gain more clarity on the process. Chairman Ratajczak moved that we table further discussion of Zoning Amendment 20-01 until further notice. Second Ballard. Motion passed, All Ayes

**C. Zoning Map Review:**

- a. As we have not yet received the Enlarged maps, as requested, Florip will check at the Township office to see what they have, regarding maps of appropriate scale that show both the Zoning Districts and the property lines. Edwards stated that Network Northwest may have some that are digitized that we can use, as these are mentioned in Network Northwest's proposal for the new Updated master Plan.

**D. Master Plan Review:**

- a. Network Northwest's proposal to assist in the review and update of the Master Plan was reviewed by the commission. Specific questions were asked regarding the handling of the survey and collection of data which were not in the original scope of work. Edwards will follow up with has been

**New Business:**

**A. Presentation of Business Plan - Harmony Farms**

- a. Chairman Ratajczak reported that the Special Use application was received at the Township office today. Z/A Williams reports he has been in discussion with the Harm family regarding this application. Chairman Ratajczak noted that in the existence of the Dune grass Festival the Harm Family has always been cooperative with the permitting process and that there has never been a complaint during the festival. ZA Williams discussed the potential to issue the family a seasonal venue permit, as opposed to permitting on a case by case basis. Additional information is necessary for Williams to adequately assess the application. He will work with the Harm's to complete the application and then bring it back to the commission for formal review.

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**Extended Public Comment:**

**Commissioner Comments:** None.

**Chair Comments:** None

**Adjourn:** 8:30 p.m.

William Ballard  
Recording Secretary

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