

Minutes of  
**PLANNING COMMISSION  
REGULAR MEETING  
March 28, 2023**



**Call to Order:** Chairperson Baker called the March 28, 2023, Regular Meeting of the Springfield Township Planning Commission to order at 7:02 p.m. at the Springfield Township Civic Center, 12000 Davisburg Rd., Davisburg, MI 48350.

**Commissioners**

**in Attendance:** Dean Baker, Chair  
Ruth Ann Hines  
Dave Hopper  
Kevin Sclesky

**Absent:** Jamie Costigan  
George Mansour  
Chris Moore

**Consultants Present:**

Julia Upfal, Giffels Webster  
Stephanie Osborn, Giffels Webster  
Jill Bahm, Giffels Webster

**Staff Present:**

Laura Moreau, Supervisor  
Joan Rusch, Planning Administrator

**Approval of Agenda:**

Commissioner Hines moved to proceed with the agenda as presented. Supported by Commissioner Sclesky. Vote: Yes: Baker, Hines, Hopper, Sclesky. No: None. Absent: Costigan, Mansour, Moore. Motion approved.

**Public Comment:** None

**Approval of Consent Agenda:**

Commissioner Sclesky moved to approve the consent agenda as presented. Supported by Commissioner Hopper. Vote: Yes: Baker, Hines, Hopper, Sclesky. No: None. Absent: Costigan, Mansour, Moore. Motion approved.

1) Approve minutes from February 28, 2023, Regular Meeting

**New Business:**

1. Proposed Waste Transfer Station – Land Use Recommendation

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Chairperson Baker explained that the Planning Commission has been presented with a proposed use within the Township that is not defined within the ordinance. This proposed use is a waste transfer station. The Planning Commission's task is to gather information regarding this type of use and recommend to the Zoning Board of Appeals items for them to consider when the ZBA makes a land use designation. The ZBA makes the final decision on whether this use is allowed and in what district. Once the land use designation has been made, then the Planning Commission can review the site plan. This meeting is not a site plan review for the applicant. It is an opportunity for the Planning Commission to learn about how land is used at a waste transfer station and to provide guidance for the ZBA.

Ms. Upfal explained the nondesignated land use process. The Planning Commission should consider the precedence that will be set. This is not just a designation for this particular situation but will be applied generally throughout the Township. She has no model ordinances to share but has provided a list of considerations for the Commissioners. It would be helpful for the Commissioners to discuss these considerations to guide them in making recommendations to the ZBA. If this specific site plan comes back before the Planning Commission for site plan review as a special land use, then the Commission can set site specific parameters.

Casey Leach, Kieft Engineering, provided an overview of the intent of use for this site. He explained what would happen on the site, how trucks maneuver, how materials are sorted, and noted that 50-60 vehicles a day would make trips in and out of the site.

Adam Christensen, developer, stated that smaller contractors would be utilizing this site. This site would sort and recycle concrete, wood, and metals. Other types of materials would be moved to a landfill. He expects contractors/residents from Springfield and surrounding townships to utilize this site as there are no other locations nearby for waste transfer.

Chairperson Baker reminded the Commissioners that since this use is not in the ordinance, the Commission should consider all future sites within the Township that could be used for this intent, not just this site and this proposal. The ordinance language may be amended in the future.

Ms. Upfal confirmed that a precedence will be set for this type of use, based on what the Planning Commission recommends to the ZBA this evening, even if the ordinance is not amended after the meeting.

Commissioner Hines asked if sorted and recyclable items would be put into dumpsters.

Mr. Christensen replied that recyclables would go in the dumpsters – wood, metals, and concrete. All other items including glass and plastics would be considered waste. He does not have another business of this type - just a dumpster rental business.

Chairperson Baker commented on the volume of trips on this site per day. In an 8 hour day, there might be 12-15 trips in and out of this site per hour. He wondered if the site could accommodate this volume of traffic, which would include idling vehicles and maneuvering of vehicles. He is

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concerned if there is enough space on a 3.5 acre site to manage this effectively, considering the buildings already on site and the one proposed.

Mr. Christensen explained that the intent is to get materials off the site as soon as possible, and that the process goes quickly. He does not think that he would have the volume of traffic that would cause problems.

Chairperson Baker stated that there is residential zoning across the street, and he is concerned with the amount of traffic that would be generated.

Mr. Leach stated that the plans provide for 9 stacking spaces with actual room for 12, and that there is landscaping in the front to buffer neighboring properties.

Ms. Upfal commented that this review is not site specific and that the Commissioners should focus on the considerations outlined in the packet, especially the ones that would directly impact the proposal and what the developer is trying to do.

Chairperson Baker stated that the M-2 District is the most intensive industrial district in the Township and would likely be the only district that fits. Similar uses are already stated in the ordinance.

Commissioner Hopper agreed with this statement. He also noted concern that other waste transfer centers could be very intense, especially those that may process organic materials. If waste transfer stations are allowed, they should be in M-2. There is a place in the Township for waste transfer centers, and the Commission needs to consider all possible scenarios.

Ms. Upfal stated that the Commission could include provisions about what type of waste is allowed and prohibit the processing of organic materials.

Chairperson Baker stated that when placing waste transfer centers in the ordinance they could prohibit organic, hazardous, and certain other materials, and place only in the M-2 District. Chairperson Baker stated that the type of approval required would either be a permitted use or a special land use. He suggested requiring a special land use.

Commissioner Sclesky asked if a special land use could be site specific.

Ms. Upfal stated that with a special land use, the Planning Commission could add conditions to its motion. A special land use also requires noticing of nearby properties.

Chairperson Baker stated that this type of use is an intense activity. A business of this nature is hoping to attract people to bring to this site items to discard, and the more customers they have, the better. The idea that vehicles of a significant size would be coming to the site and the volume of traffic, with only one way into the site, would be significant. This site borders a residential area. The Commissioners must consider how this type of use would get vehicles off Andersonville Road,



or any road, far enough, so they would not be an impediment to the travel portion of a two-lane road. Also for consideration would be how the site places vehicles far enough away from residential property before conducting the business of waste transfer. He would like to create separation between the activity on the site and residentially zoned property. The M-2 district zoning ordinance currently calls for a separation of 500 feet between the activity on a sanitary landfill and a residence or residentially zoned property. He would like to see these same considerations for a waste transfer station.

Ms. Upfal reviewed all the considerations outlined in her memo, to help the Commissioners focus their discussion on the more important items to comment on.

Chairperson Baker stated that other conditions to consider are buffers, landscaping, and screening. He is concerned with keeping this activity away from residentially zoned properties and would like to create a separation between land uses. He commented that the ordinance provides separation regarding landfills and truck terminals. Chairperson Baker explained that a waste transfer center is different from other M-2 uses. This activity happens in an open area and that key elements are truck traffic and dumping of materials. He stated that significant setbacks should be in place, especially for nearby residential properties.

Commissioners Hopper and Sclesky agreed with Chairperson Baker regarding these items.

Chairperson Baker stated that acreage minimums would be a way to accommodate setbacks.

Commissioner Hines commented on road access. Perhaps an interior road on the site could address issues with traffic.

Ms. Upfal suggested that the Commissioners focus on the major considerations for this site, which are acreage, setbacks, and location. The other considerations can be discussed if this particular site comes back to the Planning Commission as a special land use. This particular proposal could not come back as a site plan if the ZBA concurred that the site must be 5 acres or not adjacent to residential. Recommendations for these key items should be decided tonight, and the other items can be addressed if the proposal comes back to the Planning Commission for site plan review.

Chairperson Baker reviewed that the Commissioners have reached consensus that this use should be allowed only in the M-2 District. The Commissioners have discussed, but not reached any conclusion, that setbacks should be in place to separate this use from residential zoning and structures. Chairperson Baker stated that he thinks there should be a setback from residentially zoned parcels or residential structures suggested by similar uses in the M-2 district, which is 500 feet. He would like to see a separation of 500 feet from the tipping location to a residential structure or residentially zoned property.

Mr. Christensen commented that the noise from tipping would not be as loud as the Commissioners think it would be.

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Mr. Leach stated that a 500 foot setback is quite large. The proposed site plan use would be an improvement over the use currently located on the site.

Chairperson Baker stated that he is proposing an acreage minimum to give enough room for setback minimums and vehicle stacking. He is of the opinion that 5 acres would be an acceptable minimum.

Commissioner Hopper agreed that Chairperson Baker's suggestions were reasonable. He stated that other M-2 special land uses such as incinerators and landfills require large setbacks. There are other concerns as well, such as screening, dust, and residentially zoned parcels nearby.

Mr. Christensen stated that he understands the concerns regarding traffic, dust, and so forth. He noted that seldom will the material brought to the site be dangerous or unacceptable.

Chairperson Baker summarized the process set before the Planning Commission at this meeting, how their recommendations would proceed to the ZBA, and what that would mean for this specific proposal. He asked Ms. Upfal for guidance on how to proceed at this point.

Ms. Upfal stated that the items the Commissioners would like to see in the ordinance as ongoing provisions regarding waste transfer centers in general should be part of the recommendations tonight. Such key considerations would include size of the site and proximity to residential. These items will be of most help to the applicant. Other specifics could wait to be addressed during a specific site plan review.

Chairperson Baker stated that when this land use designation is returned from the ZBA, then the Planning Commission could apply proposed ordinance language that allows a waste transfer site to be placed in the M-2 district with these special considerations.

Ms. Upfal suggested that the Planning Commission wait to develop ordinance language until the Master Plan is complete and a zoning ordinance review has been conducted. Ms. Osborn shared language for a proposed motion that referenced M-2 parcels that are 5 acres in size with suggested setbacks for the dumping/tipping area from residentially zoned property. Ms. Upfal stated that the motion should also include a condition for special land use approval.

Commissioner Hines asked why a 5 acre minimum was better, and if this type of parcel was even available in the Township.

Chairperson Baker stated that the ordinance requires 40 acres for a landfill and, currently, there are no parcels of this size available in an M-2 district. However, M-2 parcels could be combined to meet minimum acreage requirements.

Mr. Leach stated that a special land use could be denied for any reason. There does not have to be cause. The stipulation of a 5 acre minimum is not necessary because a waste transfer station proposal would be a special land use anyway.



Chairperson Baker stated that the acreage minimum is needed to maintain distances from residential zoning or residential properties and for vehicle stacking and maneuvering.

Following more discussion, the Commissioners determined that this topic was ready for a motion.

**Commissioner Hopper moved that, as part of the nondesignated land use process, per section 40-63(c)(2) of the Springfield Township Zoning Ordinance, the Planning Commission provide this memorandum to the Zoning Board of Appeals in the matter of allowing a waste transfer station in the Township. This recommendation is general and not site specific. Looking at waste transfer stations more closely, the use resembles what is found in heavy industrial M-2 zoning and would require a special land use approval, so the public would have a time to comment on this type of project prior to approval. Further, due to waste transfer stations' intensity, this use could fit into M-2 zoning with a minimum lot size of 5 acres, with no portion of this site within 500 feet of residentially zoned or used property, with buffers and setbacks consistent with other M-2 special land uses.**

**Supported by Commissioner Sclesky. Vote: Yes: Baker, Hopper, Sclesky. No: Hines. Absent: Costigan, Mansour, Moore. Motion approved.**

**Old Business:**

**1. Proposed Ordinance Amendments for Continuing Discussion**

**a. Expanding and Extending Nonconformities**

Ms. Upfal reviewed the items discussed at the February meeting regarding expanding and extending nonconformities. She explained how the ordinance language is not clear, and that the ordinance could be interpreted in two different ways. Ms. Upfal reviewed the recommended language provided and explained how the language is clarified to ensure that the ordinance is interpreted clearly and uniformly. If the Commissioners agree with the amended language, then this could be set for public hearing at the next PC meeting.

Chairperson Baker commented that the diagrams in the memo make the interpretations clear.

Commissioner Hines stated that this revised language will help the ZBA. She asked if situations could still go the ZBA to request a variance.

Chairperson Baker stated that an applicant could make an appeal to the ZBA if needed. This revised language will also ensure that certain situations go before the ZBA and are not decided inappropriately outside the ZBA.

**Commissioner Hines moved to set for Public Hearing at the April 25 Planning Commission meeting to consider amendments to Section 40-931(c) – Nonconforming Structures as reviewed during tonight's meeting. Supported by Commissioner Hopper. Vote: Yes: Baker, Hines, Hopper, Sclesky. No: None. Absent: Costigan, Mansour, Moore. Motion approved.**



**b. Setbacks for Nonconforming Lots; Accessory Structures**

Ms. Upfal explained that as the PC is working on revising these ordinances, there are some cascading issues that are arising. Once the Master Plan is finished, the intent is to conduct a comprehensive zoning ordinance overhaul. Last month the Commission discussed whether or not to allow accessory structures in front of the principal structure. Currently, these are allowed in Springfield, although most communities do not permit this. In Springfield there are large lots and many places where the accessory structure is in front of the principal structure. Within the Township there are many nuances with parcels where restricting accessory structures in this way would create difficulties. The revised amendment language removes the restriction for accessory buildings in front of the principal structure. The next recommendation for amendment language provides clarification that the side setback of 30 feet for structures with a side entrance is for those entrances intended for vehicles, machinery, or equipment, not a pedestrian entrance. Another recommendation for ordinance language change is to definitions. Because the language for accessory structure discusses the front building line, and this also comes up when discussing nonconforming lots, the definition of building line was studied. The current definition of building line is the same as setback line. So, the definition of building line has been revised for clarification. This definition change impacted the definition of lot width, so that has been revised as well.

Commissioner Sclesky asked if the Commission had decided where setbacks were measured in regard to the road.

Ms. Upfal explained that the setback is measured from the property line or road right of way line. This is a section of the ordinance that the Commission may want to revisit at another time, especially as it pertains to the Dixie Highway, as discussed at the last meeting.

Chairperson Baker asked Supervisor Moreau if accessory structures in front of principal structures was a problem in the Township.

Supervisor Moreau stated that this is common in Springfield and not a problem for residents. Only rarely does the Supervisor's Office get inquiries on this issue.

Chairperson Baker commented that the examples provided to the Commissioners from the Supervisor's Office indicate many parcels have accessory structures in front of principal structures and most appear to be aesthetically pleasing and the large lots are accommodating to them.

The Commissioners discussed this topic and reached consensus to continue to allow accessory structures in front of principal structures.

Ms. Upfal explained that the next item was clarification that the side entrance provision was for side entrances used for vehicles, machinery, and equipment.

The Commissioners discussed the side entrance provision and decided to adopt this clarification to the ordinance.



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Ms. Upfal recommended that the Commissioners adopt the clarification for the definition of building line as this comes up when discussing setbacks for nonconforming lots. This is an important clarification and also affects the definition of lot width.

Supervisor Moreau commented that the definition of building line currently means the area where a person can start building, which is the same as the setback line. Our Building Official interprets the building line as the face of the building where it exists, not the setback line.

The Commissioners discussed these proposed changes.

Ms. Upfal explained the changes to the language regarding accessory structures for nonconforming lots. She stated that an administrative waiver can be granted based on calculations. This revision would modify how calculations are performed for front and rear setbacks. The revised method for calculations is more likely to grant relief to an applicant than the current calculations.

Chairperson Baker commented on a recent situation that was brought to the ZBA and explained how the revised language presented would have impacted that situation. He feels this ordinance revision would be an improvement. He noted that the word “principal” should be removed, as this ordinance pertains to all structures.

**Commissioner Hopper moved, based upon the draft ordinance text received from the Township Planner and reflected in the minutes of this meeting, to set for public hearing the proposed amendments to Chapter 40 Zoning, sections 40-2, 40-649(1)(c), and 40-932(3)(b), as corrected, at the earliest opportunity. Supported by Commissioner Hines. Vote: Yes: Baker, Hines, Hopper, Sclesky. No: None. Absent: Costigan, Mansour, Moore. Motion approved.**

**Public Comment:** None

**Adjournment:**

**Commissioner Hines moved to adjourn the meeting at 9:08 p.m. Supported by Commissioner Sclesky. Vote: Yes: Baker, Hines, Hopper, Sclesky. No: None. Absent: Costigan, Mansour, Moore. Motion approved.**

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**Joan Rusch, Recording Secretary**