

MANCHESTER TOWNSHIP PLANNING COMMISSION

Manchester Township Hall, 275 S. Macomb, Manchester, Michigan 48158

Regular Meeting June 3, 2021

8:00 p.m.

A. CALL TO ORDER BY CHAIR

The meeting was called to order at 8:00 p.m.

Members Present: Mike Walter, John Seefeld, George Daubner, Dave Thompson, and Doug Brooks

Members Absent: Sybil Kolon, Michelle Stace

Notetaker: Nathan Booth

Others Present: Ron Milkey (8700 Sharon Hollow Rd.), Tasha Hawkins-Bullock (Sow Good Farms), Robert Thompson (14930 Ely Rd.)

B. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

A motion was made by Seefeld with a second by Thompson to approve the agenda as amended. All ayes. Motion carried.

C. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

A motion was made by Brooks with a second by Thompson to approve the minutes of the March 6th regular meeting. All ayes. Motion carried.

A motion was made by Daubner with a second by Brooks to approve the minutes of the March 6th public hearing meeting. All ayes. Motion carried.

D. PUBLIC COMMENT --- (Limit to 2 minutes, please state name and address)

Hawkins-Bullock - I am the owner of Sow Good Foods and Sow Good Farms. The plan is to build a year-round growing facility for fruits and vegetables. The property is at 0 Lemm Rd. occupying about 150 acres. I am here to show the material that is going to block the light from the sky. The material will be on a timer.

Daubner- You haven't begun anything yet, right?

Hawkins-Bullock - No

Enos- Will you start farming the land before the greenhouse projects start.

Hawkins-Bullock - We are hoping to start both this year. The greenhouses can be here in 4 weeks. We will start healing the soil this year because the water has to be perfectly clean.

Hawkins-Bullock - Johnson sign company did create a sign to meet ordinance requirements. The online educational program will be starting in the next 6 weeks.

Walter- "We are going to move on and I will get back to you in your part of the meeting."

E. REPORTS AND CORRESPONDENCE

I. Report of Chairperson

There is nothing to report at this time.

II. Report of Township Board Representative

There was a discussion of the Township Board Meeting. Minutes of the meeting are on file.

III. Report of Zoning Board of Appeals

There have been no meetings and no requests.

IV. Report of Planning Consultant

There is nothing to report.

V. Reports of Committees

i. SWWCOG

There has not been a meeting.

ii. Joint Planning Commission

Walter- We went over things that have been going on. There was discussion over the newly approved social zones, allowing people with special provided cups, to drink on the sidewalks within the zones. A business is close to moving into the old Acorn Market building. The bicycle shop is doing well and there are other businesses looking at the empty buildings in town. The Dairy Queen building has had no change. Remaining in the Joint Master Plan was approved by both governmental agencies. Next meeting is September 7th at 7p.m.

VI. Correspondence

There is no correspondence at this time.

F. UNFINISHED BUSINESS

I. Sow Goods Farms Site Plan Review

Enos- They did a nice job on the plan. I drafted a resolution stating that there was a public hearing for the site plan, a discussion on the support of the project, and the conditions of approval from outside agencies and the lighting of the greenhouses are screened. If it was a commercial operation that customers could go to, it would require a conditional use permit. My recommendation would be to approve the site plan.

Thompson- I have a few issues. This property is pretty rural. Without a public hearing, how would surrounding residents react? Next, the roads are not very wide and are not in good condition. On top of that there is no direct way to M52 or US12.

Hawkins-Bullock - Trucks will only come in and out Wednesdays and Saturdays in the morning. There are no plans to expand the property.

Thompson- How was the property selected?

Hawkins-Bullock - Location and the soil. It met our site selectors wishes.

Brooks- "What kind of soil were you looking for?"

Hawkins-Bullock - We looked for soil without a lot of Roundup and chemicals.

Brooks- It has been farmed with Roundup for at least 15 years.

Hawkins-Bullock - I know that. The samples were sent to MSU and soil surveyors and had the water tested.

Brooks- I was also wondering why you chose this location, and why in such a rural area?

Hawkins-Bullock - The location, number of acres, price, and the fact that it was in a rural area made it perfect.

Enos- Like it was said, if you wanted to add on and have an event facility, like you said in earlier meetings, that does not fit into the plan, you would need to come back to the commission.

Thompson- Where are you going to transport the produce to?

Hawkins-Bullock - To our manufacturing facility in Illinois, Wisconsin, and Ohio. It will be in a chilled truck.

Brooks- What is your route that you plan on taking out of the back roads?

Hawkins-Bullock - I do not know that. We also limited the size of the trucks into cube trucks instead of semis.

Seefeld- In case it doesn't work out, what is the reclamation/exit strategy.

Hawkins-Bullock - I do not know if I need one.

Thompson- This does not seem like a very efficient way to transport anything. Especially in a cube truck going all the way to Illinois, unless it is a high dollar item.

Hawkins-Bullock - Our food products are medical grade, so it justifies the cost. A feasibility study has been done and we are comfortable with it.

Seefeld- So this is the first Sow Good Farms?

Hawkins-Bullock - Yes, and then the other ones will be in other parts of Michigan.

Thompson- This project does not make a lot of sense to me. You do not have a working operation yet and you are going to truck a long way for just growing fruits and vegetables.

Hawkins-Bullock - Like I said, we had a feasibility study and I own it all, it is my money.

Thompson- There is nothing here. There is no sign. The only thing that has been done is the property has been staked. I just hate to see the township stuck with a bunch of greenhouses one day, and the screening is not much, I can cut it with my pocketknife.

Hawkins-Bullock - No you cannot cut that with a pocketknife.

Enos- The property is an agricultural use and people can do ag. uses in the township. Every farming operation is difficult and runs the risk of losing money.

Thompson- I really think we need a public hearing for the people around here to know what is going to be happening, if they are fine with it then it is all good. "We are not here to decide things for everybody, we are here to represent the people that are out there." This is a very rural part of the township.

Hawkins-Bullock - Are you disputing my use of greenhouses or the business.

Thompson- The business just doesn't make a lot of sense to me.

Hawkins-Bullock - "I am bringing quality and clean foods to people who do not have access to them."

Thompson- I understand that. I just do not understand how you can do that here on poor quality farmland that also has a lot of wetlands. On top of that you are going to truck this all out of state.

Hawkins-Bullock - I understand, I have walked the property. If I could have found a facility in the state, meeting my requirements, I would have the business here.

Thompson- I am here representing the people in the township. It seems like you don't care about that.

Hawkins-Bullock - I do care about them. I will be employing them. I will also be using local businesses.

Thompson- Have you talked to any of the people?

Hawkins-Bullock - "The lady that lives way down there at the end of the road?"

Thompson- There are reasons people decide to live in rural areas. I think it is different from where you are from.

Hawkins-Bullock - It is different from Ann Arbor?

Thompson- I am not voting on this tonight. We need to have a public hearing, or at least information given to the public. It is not set up well, the roads and infrastructure is not there to support it.

Brooks- You mentioned the food will be medical grade. What does that mean?

Hawkins-Bullock - Medical grade foods are sold to hospitals for those who are unable to swallow.

Thompson- Originally you said the food was going to go to Detroit.

Hawkins-Bullock - It will, in CSA boxes. I also manufacture food.

Brooks- Would the greenhouses be considered a permanent structure?

Enos- I do not know. If she will need electrical, footing, concrete, and the tension on the greenhouses, she will have to pull a building permit.

Brooks- I am in favor of the right to farm, but I also see the other side of the situation.

Thompson- I am in favor of the right to farm, I am more concerned with the rural character being disturbed.

Enos- You guys will not have to read the resolution, you will just have to make a motion for approval or denial, then a roll call vote.

Walter- I believe we have heard enough for a motion to approve the site plan.

Brooks- What happens if we do not pass this?

Enos- "Then it dies and she cannot reapply for a year."

A motion was made by Seefeld with a second by Daubner to approve the site plan. There was a roll call vote. The site plan was approved.

II. Thorn Lake Solar Update

There are no updates.

III. Short Term Rentals

Enos- The supervisor requested us to resurrect this discussion. I provided a detailed process that was submitted when we were talking about this. This is good language for short term rentals. The attorneys told us we were protected. What I have heard from you guys is there is not a real interest in allowing this use in the township.

Daubner- Interest may arise when people go south for winter and want to rent their house while they are gone.

Enos- This language is for weekend type things.

Walter- My concern is that the legislation that is going through the state right now makes it sound like it has a good possibility of superseding anything we put into place.

Enos- That is what I have been reading as well. If the state says we have to allow it, we can still regulate it.

Milkey- The Michigan Realtor Association is in favor of the state taking it over while the MTA and the Michigan Municipal League is not in favor.

Enos- I think we should have a joint meeting between the board and the commissioners, especially with this topic.

G. NEW BUSINESS

Enos- If I hear anything from Thorn Lake Solar I will let you guys now.

H. COMMENTS FROM COMMISSIONERS

Thompson- I do not believe we are being told the truth by Sow Good Farms. We also keep talking about keeping the rural character of the township. If it was okay with the

surrounding residents, it would be fine with me. We need to remember why we are here, we need to represent people in the township. I think we failed this time.

Brooks- The property will need major upgrades like tile work. The ground is mostly hard clay, and she needed to look at more things than just if Roundup was in the ground.

Seefeld- Some things that Dave mentioned made me question my opinions. There is a budget workshop meeting at 5 p.m. next Tuesday, then a couple weeks later is a budget hearing.

Daubner- I have to agree on some of Dave's points, but I agree with some of the other

Walter- With the farming use proposed, there isn't too much option but to approve the project. This may be a mistake, but if it is, we will learn from it.

I. PUBLIC COMMENT --- (Limit to 2 minutes, please state name and address)

There is no public comment at this time.

NEXT MEETING: *Regular Meeting - July 1, 2021 8:00 p.m.*

J. ADJOURNMENT

A motion was made by Brooks with a second by Thompson to adjourn the meeting. All ayes. Motion Carried. Adjourned at 9:24 p.m.

Agritourism

Event Barns