

Ganges Township Planning Commission
Regular Monthly Meeting Minutes for February 28, 2023
Ganges Township Hall
119th Avenue and 64th Street
Fennville MI, Allegan County

I. Call to Order and Roll Call

Chair **DeZwaan** called the meeting to order at 7:00 pm

Roll Call: Chair: Jackie **DeZwaan** – Present

Vice Chair: Dale **Pierson** – Present

Secretary: Phil **Badra** – Absent

Commissioner: Edward **Gregory** – Present

Commission Trustee: Dick **Hutchins** – Present

Zoning Administrator: Tasha **Smalley** – Present

Recording Secretary: Jennifer **Goodrich** – Present

II. Additions to the Agenda and adoption

DeZwaan made a motion to move New Business before Old Business. **Gregory** seconded the motion. Motion passed.

III. General Public Comment – None

IV. Correspondence and Upcoming Meetings/Seminar

DeZwaan has letters of support for the Fernweh Farmstead Campground SLU from:

- Jeremy Lund & Mark Johnston – 7077 Larue Ln
- Hannah Lee at Waypost Brewing – 1630 Bluestar Hwy
- Dan & Sarah Kolean -98 Bay Circle Dr. Holland MI – 6671 114th Ave
- Cathy Beckken – Park Twp. resident & an employee of the City of Holland
- Kirsan Doolittle – Resident of the City of Holland MI
- Kirsten Stannis – Owner of Saugatuck On Board
- Christine Ferris – Owner of The Farmhouse Deli Blue Star Hwy, Douglas MI
- Samuel DeBoer – DeBoer Bakery, Holland MI
- Chris & Becky Marlink – Glasshouse Creative Community, Zeeland Twp. MI

- Gordon Stannis – Business owner, Holland MI
- AJ Young & Han Meadway - Dalton ridge Fennville MI
- Modales Vineyards & Winery – 2128 62nd St Fennville MI
- Jack Reynolds
- Lisa M. Wharton – Wharton Law LLC- on behalf of her clients Dr. Stephanie Hughes & Ms. Susan Mackey * conditionally
 - Stephanie Hughes & Susan Mackey – 6645 Foote Trail - overall pleased but have concerns regarding potential trespassing and rule violations

And letters of objection from :

- Maureen Smith – 6676 118th Ave
- Dan & Joan Taff – 6692 118th Ave
- John & Gail Solomon – 6720 118th Ave

DeZwaan also has a letter from: **Smalley** to Aaron Plummer Re: an easement

Michael O'Connor to **Smalley** Re: Campit Tower

And E-mails From: John Hebert to **Smalley** Re: Campground SLU

Smalley Re: Zoning Enforcement

Badra Re: Master Plan updates

Twp. Fire Dept. Re: Fire Equipment access to Campground

DeZwaan also has pamphlets for the Annual Michigan Township Association (MTA) Conference and an upcoming workshop.

V. Public Hearing

The Open Public Hearing was opened at 7:10 PM.

1. The applicant, Jacqueline **Petro** (Fernweh Farmstead LLC) - 6708 118th Ave Parcel #03-07-021-003-00 is requesting a Special Land Use (SLU) for a campground. **Petro** stated that she had received a variance from the ZBA for a section of the driveway that didn't meet the required setbacks for Site Plan approval. **Petro** explained that the driveway was installed prior to her purchasing the property and that it could not be moved because there is a pond in the way. **Petro** made her presentation, explaining that no Recreational Vehicles or tents would be allowed at this luxurious campground and that the property and its parking lot would be landscaped and gated. The 72 spot parking lot would have charging spots for electric vehicles and the property would have 24/7 staffing, with her son Luke **Petro** living nearby and acting as the property manager. Guests will have a 2-3 night minimum stay and the ability to self-checkin/checkout. **Petro** stated that no guests would be driving their cars any further than parking lot. A few golf carts will travel the paths so that employees can transport themselves and equipment/supplies/luggage back and

forth from the office to the campsites, as well as any guests that cannot hike the rest of the way into the camp. A vegetative barrier could be installed along the driveway, where it does not meet the setback, and the parking lot; to protect the neighbors.

Petro also stated that they were operating under the dark sky initiative using downward facing, motion activated, solar lighting. Signage will direct campers around the property and define the edges of the property with no trespassing signs. A fishing pond, walking trails and educational opportunities that involve the flora and fauna on the property would all be part of the experience. Tour vans will also be available to transport guest to and from the local tourist locations like wineries, breweries, and vineyards.

There will be an office and a bathhouse on site. Phase one is a village of 10 Teepees with campfires and all of the amenities you would expect with glamping. The Teepees would be cleaned daily and turndown service would be provided. No excessive noise or guests will be allowed. Alcohol, and dogs would be allowed. Quiet time at 10PM and the gates locked at 11PM .

Audience Comments –

Stephanie **Hughes** & Susan **Mackey** – 6645 Foote Trail (via-phone call) Welcomed the benefit to the community but expressed their concerns to protect their neighboring property from trespassers. They asked what demographic of guest **Petro** was looking for, if traffic studies had been done, and how **Petro** is going to protect the ecosystem. They also wanted to know if the bathhouse was Covid friendly and how any regulation violations would be enforced.

John & Gail **Solomon** – 6720 118th Ave. asked if the EGLE had given their approval yet. He also expressed concerns regarding trespassers and the barrier to be installed between his property and the campground. **Solomon** would like a solid fence to be installed.

Dan **Taff** – 6692 118th Ave. Stated that he doesn't think the thin line of existing trees will be enough to block the lights and noise of the parking lot.

Marsha **Maslanka** – 1811 66th St. asked about the firepits for the campsites, and any fire hazard they might pose. **Maslanka** is also concerned about Fire Department accessibility.

Joshua **Solomon** – 479 Elm St grew up next door at 6720 118th Ave and expressed concerns regarding people getting lost in the woods at night, mosquito spray being used in the wetlands, noise pollution, and traffic.

Petro's attorney Randy **Schipper** tried to address the public's concerns but **DeZwaan** told him could not do that. **DeZwaan** stated that comments could only be directed to the PC and that the PC would answer the public comments/concerns.

Jan **Herman** – 1816 66th St. Asked about the sewer requirements and if there would be electric installed.

David **Tibbler** – 14 E 24th. complimented **Petro** and gave a glowing reference stating she has years of

experience running a business that provides high quality experiences at 205 Coffee Bar.

Dan **Kolean** – 6671 114th Ave Supports the project. Thinks the neighbors need to accept that the future will bring change and development. **Kolean** remind the crowd that State campgrounds have fire pits and you don't hear stories about the forests being burned down.

Jacob **Solomon** – 6720 118th Ave. Stated his worries about the dead ferns being a fire hazard, the jack in the pulpit being trampled by the hikers, and protecting the endangered bats that live in the area.

CLOSE PUBLIC HEARING

The Open Public Hearing was closed at 7:38PM.

VI. Approval of the January 24, 2023 minutes

A motion was made by **Gregory** to approve the January 24, 2023 regular monthly meeting minutes, as presented. **Pierson** seconded the motion. Motion passed.

VII. New Business

Special Land Use (SLU) request Jacqueline Petro (Fernweh Farmstead LLC)
– 6708 118th Ave 03-07-021-003-00

Pierson asked **Petro** if she had experienced noise from Camp-it while on site. **Petro** responded that she had not, since the campsites are so far back in the woods. **Petro** also commented that they would not be spraying for mosquitos since the bats that live there are a natural solution to the problem.

Pierson asked if a market survey had been done. **Petro** responded she was following the local and nationwide trend. **Pierson** asked what the plan would be if the business did fail. **Petro** responded that they would sell the tents, remove the wooden decks that they rested on and build herself a new home on the site.

Pierson asked how long the campground would be open each year. **Petro** responded that it would be closed from October to May. When asked how high/tall the lighting would be **Petro** responded that she had hired a company to determine this but that it would be minimal and down-pointing. **Petro** also stated that pampas grass, trees, fencing would be installed to block the views from both sides of the property lines.

Gregory congratulated **Petro** on her success at 205 Coffee Bar and suggested that she set up

monthly meetings with the neighbors to ensure that any concerns would be heard and addressed. **Petro** assured him that she wants to be a good neighbor and that there would be someone on site 24/7 and that there would be signage with her contact information. **Hutchins** stated that he thought it would be a good addition to the community and asked how many Phases there would be to the development. **Petro** responded that there would be 3 Phases with the first one being 10-15 Teepees and Safari Tents.

DeZwaan asked if EGLE approval should be required as part of the SLU approval. **Smalley** explained that **Petro** would go through State campground licensing if the PC approves the site plan and that the driveway and any work that may be done in any of the wetland area would be approved then. **Petro** assured them that no work was going to be done in those areas.

DeZwaan questioned whether or not the driveway culvert would support the weight of a fire truck. **Smalley** responded that the Township Fire Chief had given an approval for the driveway.

DeZwaan asked if Drain commission approval would be required due to the fact that the parking lot was so close to the pond. The general response was that any fluids leaking from a car would be too imperceptible to require an oil/water separator and would not transmit through the gravel parking lot and into the pond, over 100 ft away.

DeZwaan asked if the Charcuterier boards, that would be offered to guests, would be prepared on site. **Petro** responded that they would be made by catered in. **DeZwaan** requested that some typos on the site plan be corrected. **DeZwaan** also wants the applicant follow up with the EGLE to ensure that the wetlands were properly delineated on the site plan and that the driveway had received their final approval, as well as confirmation from the Fire Dept regarding the culvert, and confirmation from the Drain commission that the parking lot would not require their approval. Handicap parking requirements, pond depths, and fencing around them, as well as obtaining Soil Erosion permits for a proposed additional pond were also discussed.

Gregory made a motion to approve **Petro's** request and **Hutchins** seconded it. **DeZwaan** opposed and made a motion to postpone the decision until the next meeting so that **Petro** can contact EGLE, The Allegan County Drain Commission and the Ganges Township Fire Department to obtain approval for the site plan's wetland delineation, the driveway installation, the parking lot drainage, and the culvert load capability. **Gregory** seconded the motion. Motion passed.

Solomon expressed how upset he was that his, and all of the other letters, were not read outloud; during the meeting.

VIII. Old Business

The Master Plan (MP) discussion continued with Danielle **Bouchard** from McKenna. **Bouchard** stated that she had received the feedback from the PC and had incorporated their notes into the MP amendments. Future land use and the Zoning plan were discussed. A change to the minimum lot size in the AG district, from 3 acres to 5 or 10 acres, was debated; but it was determined to keep it the same. Other verbiage changes were presented and the possibility of adding a summary of the survey, to support the PC decision making process, was also discussed.

Bouchard explained to the PC that she would be taking all of the changes that had been discussed up to this point and creating a rough draft of the updated MP. This would be provided to the PC before the public hearing with updated maps and images. **Bouchard** will be at the meeting to present the updated MP to the public and then take their comments and make further revisions during the 63 day public comment period. The possibility of an open house before the meeting was also discussed. **DeZwaan** stated that she would be requesting approval for a special meeting for the PC, before the public hearing, so topics like preserving farm land, wedding barn venues, and accessory dwelling units could be discussed.

IX. Administrative Updates

a. **Township Board** - None

b. **Zoning Board of Appeals**

Pierson reported that the ZBA had approved the Zaleski's setback relief requests for roof overhangs and denied the balcony at 7142 Ridgeway. Pierson also reported that they had also approved the Fernweh Farmstead setback variance request for an interior driveway for the proposed Campground at 6708 118th Ave.

c. **Zoning Administrator** - None

X. **Future Meeting Dates** – March 28th and April 25th

XI. General Public Comments

Taff asked if the PC has the authority to place stipulations on their approval, how they would be enforced, and if the approval could be revoked. Bob **DeZwaan** stated that he disagreed that any leakage from a vehicle wouldn't reach the pond and/or county drain; asserting anecdotal evidence.

XII. Adjournment

DeZwaan Adjourned the meeting at 10:28

Respectfully Submitted

Jennifer Goodrich

Ganges Township Recording Secretary