

MIAMI TOWNSHIP ZONING COMMISSION
Minutes --January 16, 2024, Mtg.

The Miami Township Zoning Commission held its annual business meeting on Tuesday, January 16, 2024, at the Miami Township Administration Office, 101 E Herman Street, Yellow Springs, Ohio. Present were Commissioners Brian Corry (chairman), Dale Amstutz, Fred Legge, and Joe Fulton; Miami Township Trustees Chris Mucher, Marilan Moir and Don Hollister; Miami Township Interim Zoning Inspector Denise Swinger; interested citizens Jennifer Adams, Scott Fyffe, Fred Stockwell, and Richard Zopf; and minute-taker Charles Swaney.

A quorum being present, Mr. Corry called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m., and welcomed the Township Trustees and members of the public. Mr. Corry noted the business to be conducted at this first meeting of the new year: review of 2023 proceedings; election of officers; and discussion/identification/outline of matters to be considered by the Commission during 2024.

Turning to the election of officers for 2024, upon motion and second (Amstutz/Legge), the Commissioners unanimously elected Mr. Corry as chairman and Mr. Shrader as vice-chairman.

Mr. Corry reviewed the Zoning Commission's activities/operations during 2023, including its deliberations regarding a possible revision of Subsection 18.52 of the Zoning Resolution (Temporary Use Exceptions), and its consideration of whether the Resolution might be tweaked to accommodate small-scale solar arrays under certain conditions. He emphasized the Commission's ongoing efforts to revise the Resolution to better reflect the objectives described in the 2012 Miami Township Comprehensive Land Use Plan, principally preservation of agricultural land and of the rural/agricultural nature of Miami Township.

The Commissioners and the Trustees discussed whether an update of the Township's Comprehensive Land Use Plan should be considered/undertaken. The Trustees indicated that they were always willing to provide funding for the Commission to retain legal or planning expertise to assist in efforts to update the Zoning Resolution and/or the Comprehensive Land Use Plan.

Mr. Zopf, who served as Miami Township Zoning Inspector during 2023, distributed paper copies of his 2023 annual report, including 20-year historical information on the number of new homes constructed in the Township. His report noted the increasing pressure from landowners to use their land for purposes other than traditional agriculture, including agritourism, commercial events and solar energy generation.

The Commissioners summarized the issues the Commission intends to consider during 2024: solar arrays designed to generate energy for personal/on-site use; small-scale commercial solar arrays (less than 50 megawatts); temporary use exceptions; and accessory dwelling units. In terms of priorities, the Commissioners will first button-up their consideration of solar arrays designed to meet personal/on-site energy needs, including both roof-mounted and ground-mounted arrays. Secondly, the Commissioners intend to move forward with their proposed revision of Section 18.52 of the Resolution (Temporary Use Exceptions) by submitting same to the Greene County Regional Planning Commission (GCRPC) for its input. Once feedback is received from GCRPC, and any appropriate adjustments made, the Commission will schedule a public hearing on the proposed revision, as required by law.

The Commissioners and the Trustees discussed the regulation of small utility-scale solar installations (under 50 megawatts). Currently, the Miami Township Zoning Resolution does not accommodate any utility-scale solar use (such being a commercial rather than an agricultural use), and the Commissioners are not convinced that a revision of the Resolution to accommodate same would be appropriate/consistent with the Comprehensive Land Use Plan. The Commissioners and the Trustees agreed that any conversion of agricultural land for small utility-scale solar development raises a number of issues that merit further study: how would such developments impact the "rural feel" of the Township? How might such development affect real estate taxes (loss of current agricultural use valuation for the converted land is a given)? Could the economic advantages of solar development be a disincentive for landowners to remain engaged in agricultural production? Would such development undermine the stated vision, goals, policies, and purposes of the Comprehensive Land Use Plan? What areas of the Township are most accessible/attractive for solar development? How much agricultural land might potentially be lost to solar development? What conditions might be placed on the installation of solar arrays to minimize problems in connection with the eventual restoration of the land to agricultural use?

At length, the Trustees thanked the Commissioners for their continuing efforts to improve the Zoning Resolution, and indicated that they recognized no deadline for the Commission to complete its deliberations with respect to solar development of Township land.

The Commissioners set their next meeting for Tuesday, February 20, 2024, and adjourned the meeting at 8:40 p.m.

Brian Corry, Chairman

Charles Swaney (secretary for meeting)

