

**Village of Lawton**  
**REGULAR PLANNING COMMISSION**  
**125 S. MAIN, LAWTON MI 49065 269.624.6407**  
**Tuesday, February 4, 2025 - 7:00 PM**

**MINUTES**

- 1. Call to Order:** J. Peterson called the meeting to order at 7:01 p.m.
- 2. Roll Call:** Present: J. Peterson, P. Rathbun, P. Chmiel, and M. Dudek. Absent: B. Allen, C. Knapp and K. Hellman. Also Present: T. Hackenberg (via Zoom), M. Leonard and three (3) guests: Brian French, Dan Deboer, and Seth Barr.
- 3. Approval of Agenda:** P. Chmiel, supported by M. Dudek, made a motion to approve the Planning Commission Agenda as presented. Motion approved by unanimous voice vote.
- 4. Approval of Minutes:** P. Rathbun, supported by P. Chmiel, made a motion to approve the Planning Commission Minutes of December 03, 2024, with the change of a grammatical error. Motion approved by unanimous voice vote.
- 5. Public Comment / Communications:** None.
- 6. New Business:**

**A. Site Plan for 825 N Main St.:**

Brian French, owner of the property located at 825 N Main St., presented a fact sheet outlining the services his material sorting and recycling company will provide. He explained that his company specializes in converting solid waste materials into usable solid fuels, which serve as substitutes for traditional fossil fuels. His immediate goal is to create 3-5 jobs, with plans to expand to 20 jobs within the next five years. B. French also operates a similar facility in Mishawaka, IN, which produces the same types of fuel; however, the proposed Lawton facility will be three times larger.

In response to a question from J. Peterson about his decision to locate the facility in Lawton, B. French shared that Lawton is his hometown, where he grew up, and he hopes to give back to the community.

B. French also presented some modifications to the site plan. Seth Barr, representing Bosch Engineering, provided details on the proposed changes, which include the following:

- The elimination of a loading dock, reducing the amount of concrete needed.
- Raising the building by one foot due to water table issues on the property.
- The omission of gutters and downspouts from the current plan, with the option to install them at a later date.
- The building will be sufficiently set back from the property line to ensure that water runoff remains contained on the property.
- MDOT has approved the drive, which is the only access point from Main St.

B. French noted that there is ample space for future expansion on the property. When asked about the timeline for breaking ground, he stated that construction would begin as soon as the site plan is approved.

J. Peterson inquired about truck parking, to which B. French clarified that there will be no general parking; instead, trucks will drop off materials and leave, with an expected daily traffic of at least six trucks.

The topic of water usage was addressed, and B. French assured the Planning Commission that no water will be discharged into the creek, as all treated water will be reused within the facility.

After discussing the proposed changes, the Planning Commission concluded that the site plan meets the necessary requirements. P. Rathbun made a motion, supported by M. Dudek, to approve the site plan for 825 N Main St. The motion was approved unanimously by voice vote.

#### **B. Wind and Solar Ordinance**

The Planning Commission discussed the potential for placing solar panels in both residential and commercial areas. It was decided that solar panels should not be allowed on commercial properties, as this could lead to the development of solar farms. The consensus was to permit solar panels on residential homes and businesses, specifically mounted on roofs rather than installed on the ground.

As there is currently no existing ordinance for solar panels, this would require the creation of a new ordinance. The Commission agreed that a site plan would be required, followed by a building permit, and the installation of solar panels would be treated similarly to an accessory building. Additionally, proposals would need to include sizing details, ensuring that the solar panels are proportional to the size of the structure (for example, a 1,000 sq ft house should not have more than 500 sq ft of panels).

The lifespan of solar panels and their potential impact on blight were discussed, with consideration given to how they might affect the aesthetic or condition of properties over time. T. Hackenberg will review neighboring permits and compile these ideas into formal verbiage for the new ordinance.

No further action is required from the Planning Commission at this time.

### **7. Unfinished Business:**

#### **A. Cell Tower Ordinance**

T. Hackenberg inquired if the Planning Commission had any questions for Suzanne from Progressive AE, as he is scheduled to meet with her in the coming week. The Planning Commission recommended that the ordinance be prepared for an upcoming public hearing.

### **8. Public Comment / Hear from the Audience: None.**

### **9. Planning Commissioner Comments:** J. Peterson informed the Planning Commission that Kevin Hellman has resigned from his position. She praised his dedication to the master plan and noted the valuable experience and knowledge he brought to the commission. The Planning Commission has received two applications for the vacant position. It was suggested that the vacancy be publicly advertised. M. Leonard confirmed she will post the announcement on social media, in the *Courier Leader*, and in the Village Newsletter.

J. Peterson called for a motion to approve the resignation of K. Hellman. P. Chmiel made the motion, supported by M. Dudek, to approve the resignation of K. Hellman.

### **10. Adjournment:** M. Dudek, supported by P. Rathbun, made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 8:10pm. Motion approved by acclamation.

Respectfully Submitted,  
Melina Leonard