

CATO TOWNSHIP PLANNING COMMISSION
MEETING MINUTES
FEBRUARY 17, 20201

The Cato Township Planning Commission met for their regular meeting on Wednesday, February 17, 2021, at the Lakeview Community Center and via Zoom. Members present included:

David Behrenwald
Jourdan Lindsey

Kim Carr
Phil Morrow

Carol Kelsey

Also present: Dave Kelsey, Cato Township Zoning Administrator

CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 7:05pm by Chairperson, Phil Morrow. Phil opened the meeting by stating this is the Commission's first experience of hosting a Zoom meeting and asked for patience and respect.

GROUND RULES

Phil set ground rules for the meeting asking public comment participants to please respect one another, to mute their lines when they are not speaking, to raising hands in Zoom if they have something they would like to add in public comment. Each participant with public comments will be expected to state their name, address and telephone number and each will have 3 minutes for their comments. Phil stated he will call on each member for their comments.

MEETING MINUTES

Minutes of the October 14, 2020, meeting were reviewed by Kim Carr. Motion was made by David Behrenwald and supported by Jourdan Lindsey to approve the minutes as presented. Motion carried through roll call vote.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Phil opened public comment noting that there are several people in Zoom who have an interest in the Wind Energy subject. He stated that the current Wind Ordinance was put into effect in 2015 and recognizes that the Ordinance is in need of revisiting and restructuring. He reminded everyone that each participant will be called upon and will be awarded 3 minutes to state their comments.

Brandi Clark-Hubbard / Lakeview (Cato)

- Referenced a letter she sent to the commission in December.
- Approached a bird biologist that was parked near their property and learned of the potential of up to 75 turbines @ 600 feet to the tip in height. A test area has been set up.
- Noted these turbines would be 200 feet taller than any tower in Grand Rapids.
- Reviewed the 2015 Cato Township Ordinance Book and discovered there is no limited noted for number of turbines, does not address height.

Brandi Clark-Hubbard (continued)

- Shared concern regarding setbacks, shadow casting and red flashing lights.
- Requested that the Township and the Commission work together and conduct a thorough review of the ordinance.
- Requested 6 month pause for this project.

Attorney Jourdan Rasmussen / Lakeview (Cato)

- Has spoken concern to various members of the community.
- Experiencing a nuisance problem of a barking dog.
- Neighborhood states this has been a problem for several months.
- Drafted an ordinance based on review of other communities' ordinances and asked commission to consider the civil infraction.

Phil Morrow responded that the commission has received copies this evening and will review/discuss at the next Cato Township Planning Commission meeting.

Jim Schnick / Lakeview (Cato)

- Stated opposition to wind turbines.
- Acknowledged great first step of looking at the current wind ordinance as it is outdated.
- Asked township to consider wildlife, the bald eagles on Gravel Ridge and the effects on them.
- Suggested that the community should be involved in what the ordinance should be.

Laura Tanning / Lakeview (Cato)

- Has lived in the area for 14 years and owns 75 acres
- Stated she has the same concerns as the others.
- Concern for the noise and the farming community.
- She takes pride in her "perfect small-town community" and wonders how this plan will affect there will be on property values, the eagles in the area.

James Mantey / Greenville

- Questioned when the Township's Master Plan was last reviewed and stated that the Michigan Zoning and Enabling Act suggests review ever 5 years.
- Believes developers have a big bag of dirty tricks.
- Believes this program destroys relationships.
- Concern for shadow flicker, setbacks and sound.

Eric Ford / Six Lakes (Cato)

- Concern for shadow flicker, audible/inaudible noise, wildlife.
- APEX is a predator as wildlife leaves the area. There has been a study in India regarding eagles.
- Concerned for impact to the community.

Ryan Tanning / Lakeview (Cato)

- Taxpayer.
- Served in US military and enjoys quiet countryside.
- Concern for flicker, noise, beauty of township.

Ryan Toning (continued)

- Yes voters will get paid off.
- Enjoys outdoors as it is with his children and is concerned for child endangerment.

Jennifer (Bean) Ehle / Lakeview (Douglas)

- Has lived in area entire life – 34 years.
- Works hard for presentation and value of home.
- Concern that neighborhood relationships will be destroyed.
- Concern for pets.
- Hoping for proactivity.
- Community has no say in leases.

Kay Scott (refused to share demographics)

- Owns a cottage on Nevins Lake
- Washington Monument – 45 feet shorter than 600 feet turbine.
- Seattle Space Tower – 605 feet tall
- Statue of Liberty – one half the size of a 600 feet turbine.
- APEX talked about 600 feet turbines but gave no limit; already talking of 680 feet to 800 feet.
- Shared a picture of Cato Township with areas highlighted where leases have already been signed.
- Leases have already been signed by APEX lawyers which will benefit them.
- Ordinance proposed by APEX is intended to benefit APEX.

Norm Stevens / Carroll, MI (east of Saginaw)

- Lives 25 miles east of Saginaw.
- Would like to email information to Chairperson/Phil Morrow.
- Encouraged commission to look at the current ordinance.
- Concerns with lights, flicker, audible/inaudible noise.
- 475 turbines in the area.
- People voted in 2017 and the proposal failed (62% to 37%) despite wind folks spending significantly more on advertising.
- Setbacks were revised from 1,000ft to 1,320ft to 1,640feet

Ken Bunting / Lakeview (Douglas)

- Encouraged folks in favor to drive 45 minutes east and stand under a turbine on a windy day noting the impact is more than the research.

Dave Sheehan / Howard City

- Kids attend Lakeview schools.
- Part of the Lakeview VFW.
- Concern for his family.
- Enjoys outdoors and wildlife, deer movement, etc.
- Combat vet – don't want to hear it.
- Concerned for costs to put up and take down.

Albert Jongewaard /Apex Lakeview office (Cato)

- Working on project.
- Recognizes many names tonight.
- Would like to talk about the Texas situation where turbines were built differently and for a different climate. They were not built for sub-zero weather.
- Over 50% of Texas' power does not come from wind.
- Much information tonight is not new.
- Encouraged folks to go see Carson City and talk to landowners there.
- Willing to take people to visit the sites if they would like the opportunity.
- Stated the program has not changed quality of life for the community in a negative way.
- Has not decreased property values of any significance,
- Is not destroying wildlife.

Ann Lavery (Douglas)

- Local insurance agent for 19 years.
- Resident for 40 years.
- The project has created research and analysis and is considered a huge liability.
- Competitor at Fremont Mutual shared they refused to sign a homeowner's policy due to the distance of setback.
- Another competitor will not write policies for turbine properties due to likelihood of loss, safety and fire.
- Suggests looking into it for residents and consider risk versus gain.

Jessica Kwpkel (Cato)

- Life expectancy of turbine is 20-30 years and APEX won't be around to take them down in 20-30 years.
- Leases signed are close to her on the map.
- Seeing bald eagles daily and concerned for them.
- Enjoys looking at the stars and constellations so is considering relocating.

Marcie Myers / Lakeview (Cato)

- Has been a real estate broker in the area for 25 years.
- Believes property values will go down.
- Requested to see APEX property values information and how it does not reduce values.
- Has only seen 2015 research.
- People relocate here from Grand Rapids and other cities for the country environment.
- The foreclosure market has decreased over the last few years.

Brad Delamater / Lakeview (Cato)

- Shares same concerns regarding hunting, fishing, wildlife and the bald eagles.
- Questioned what the setbacks would be for the eagles and the airport.
- Questioned whether this would affect crop dusting.
- In travels, has seen them everywhere. The flickering in Alma is nothing he is interested in looking at.

Brad Delamater (continued)

- Works in the city and lives in the country because of the rural beauty.
- Requested the commission look at the ordinance and update it.

Brandy Bunting /Stanton (Douglas)

- Two turbines by a homeowner who now sleeps in a walk-in closed due to flicker and high pitch squeal.
- Physician advised individual to move from their 150-year family home due to effects.
- Husband spoke at Douglas Township meeting.
- Two horses aborted in the spring and the turbines are only 2 years old.
- Encouraged commission not to decide lightly and to consider future generations.

David Bean / Lakeview (Pine)

- Per Albert, lots chime in from connecting townships and talk to one another.
- Montcalm County is a broken-up area.
- Albert is a salesman, giving information that will best suit him.
- A possible 75 turbines in Montcalm County with 35-40 people being rewarded.
- To those who have signed, consider your neighbors.
- Personally, would not subject neighbors. Need to stick together as a county.

Marcia Long (Bushman)

- Father owns a three-generation farm on Derby Road, north of Sidney.
- As an audience of Gratiot County, Bloomer Township, 8 miles from here, can see the sunrise plus turbines. At night, blinking lights.
- Albert will not show loud turbines.
- This has caused big problems for children with autism,
- Rethink ordinance and look at Pierson Township, an excellent example.

Melissa Bannen / Lakeview (Pine)

- Asked that the commission review and amend the ordinance and don't be hasty.
- Believes the community will be torn apart.
- It is the board's job to protect people.
- Made life here with 100 acres and now at retirement age.

Pamela Hemmes (border of Pine and Montcalm Townships)

- Protected by trees so not concerned for her.
- Albert stated, "will not affect property value to any extreme".
- Finland suggested 9 miles from habitat.
- Isabella County person showed video online (noise and lights)
- APEX is asking up to 600 feet tall.
- Appreciates the township considering community input.
- Husband is on Pine Township Board.
- Albert does not have the community's best interest in mind.
- Turbines require an average of 13mph to make them work and we don't even get that here.

Quanah Striker

- Don't have enough property to participate. On a private lake.
- Amish are being approached aggressively and we all know how little they make in a year.
- The Amish are being offered huge dollar amounts and are being promised butterflies and rainbows.
- Concerned for them and their knowledge
- They have no voice.
- Power lines in town

May _____ (refused to share last name and demographics) (Winfield)

- Listen to people in townships and residents.
- 68 participants tonight.
- Work toward ordinance protecting all people.

Dave Kelsey / Six Lakes

- Updating the ordinance is needed and will be good.
- Many people are totally against the wind options but are not considering the fracking that is occurring and the fracking that will only increase over time.
- Fossil fuel making tremendous pollution.
- Levels of mercury are on the rise.
- Need to consider supplemental energy.
- Prices in 2050 are expected to increase by upwards of 40% for electricity. Something new needs to be considered.
- An alternative to wind is creating more nuclear power plants, which is a very unhealthy alternative.

Jeremy Kwekel (Cato)

- Against wind turbines.
- Renewable energy is risky.
- A minimum of 13mph of wind is needed.
- Fossil fuels are used to power windmills.
- APEX and others started at Lakeshore, but they have more money and could say no.
- Farmers are receiving quarter million dollar promises and then leaving a huge liability for their kin.
- The more turbines that go up, the harder it will be to get them down.

Pat Clark / Lakeview (Cato)

- Has lived here in this small community for 45 years with generations of farmers.
- Money tears people apart.
- Small farms here – too small.
- Questioned whether there is even a 200-acre field in the county.
- Need to understand what this will do to the area.
- There is nobody in Michigan trained to fix them.

Pat Clark (continued)

- The only investment in Michigan is the tons of cement being poured in the holes.
- Ordinance needs to be reviewed.
- Awesome job on this meeting.

Robin Poulson / Trufant

- Great meeting tonight.

Chairperson, Phil Morrow, thanked everyone for their participation, respect for one another and their professionalism during this first time zoom experience for the Cato Township Planning Commission. Those who may have further questions or comments may reach out to Phil at 989-352-5230 or via email at morrowphil64@yahoo.com.

A motion was made by Kim Carr and supported by Dave Behrenwald to close public comment at 9:04pm. Roll call voting was unanimously in favor of closing public comment.

PERMITS

Dave Kelsey, Zoning Administrator, reported the following zoning activities have occurred since the October 14, 2020 meeting.

October 2020	4 permits 1 variance
November 2020	None
December 2020	2 permits
January 2021	1 permit

TOWNSHIP BOARD

Jourdan Lindsey stated he had nothing new to report as the Township Board has not met.

OLD BUSINESS

Wind Energy Ordinance - Discussion ensued around the approach for commission review and updating of the current Cato Township Wind Energy Ordinance. Motion was made by Jourdan Lindsey and supported by Dave Behrenwald to review the current (2015) Cato Township Wind Ordinance in its entirety (Section 3.4). Phil asked the commission to become familiar with the section and he would make assignments at the next meeting. (April 14)

ROUND TABLE

Kim Carr congratulated Phil Morrow on a successful first zoom meeting and his outstanding job in facilitating a very controversial subject.

NEXT MEETING

The next meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, April 14, 2021. A zoom link will be provided.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business to come before the meeting, motion was made by Jourdan Lindsey and supported by Kim Carr to adjourn the meeting at 9:12pm. Roll call vote was unanimous.

Recorded by,

Kimberlee J. Carr
Secretary
Cato Township Planning Commission