

**LEROY TOWNSHIP**  
**8156 4 Mile Road**  
**East Leroy, Michigan 49051**

**PLANNING COMMISSION MEETING MINUTES**  
**April 10, 2024**

**CALL TO ORDER-**

The meeting was called the meeting to order at 5:45 pm.

**INTRODUCTION OF NEW BOARD MEMBERS-**

Meeting Secretary Behnke introduced Lori Bagwell as the newest member of the Leroy Township Planning Commission. Lori was appointed by the Leroy Township Board to replace Bobbi Suchan.

**ROLL CALL-**

Members present: Pete VanVranken, Randy Lang, Kevin Smith, Phil Qualls, Travis Arbogast, Lori Bagwell, and Mark Christoff (arrived at 6:00 pm)

Members absent/excused: None

Others present: Township Supervisor Laveta Hardish, Planning & Zoning Administrator Rob Behnke, Michael Armitage, Calhoun County 911 Dispatch Director, Ben Varney, Project Manager, Pyramid Network Services, Rob Ridgeway, Superintendent, Harper Creek Public Schools, Pat Norman (Township Resident), 4415 B Drive South, and Bree Gunning (Township Resident), 5811 B Drive S.

**ELECTION OF OFFICERS FOR 2024-**

Lori Bagwell made a motion to approve the following slate of officers for 2024:

Pete VanVranken, Chairperson, Travis Arbogast, Vice-Chair, and Kevin Smith, Secretary, supported by Phil Qualls. **The motion carried with unanimous approval.**

**APPROVAL OF MEETING MINUTES-**

A motion was made by Travis Arbogast to approve the December 6, 2023 meeting minutes as presented, supported by Randy Lang. **The motion carried with unanimous approval.**

**CALL TO ORDER OF THE CALHOUN COUNTY CONSOLIDATED DISPATCH AUTHORITY PUBLIC HEARING  
REVIEW OF SUBMITTED SITE PLAN-**

Chairperson VanVranken called the Public Hearing Review of Site Plan to order at 6:00 pm.

Planning & Zoning Administrator Rob Behnke explained that a public site plan review for this project is required under the Leroy Township Zoning Ordinance. He also noted that this particular project is considered an 'Essential Service under Sec. 38-199 (Permitted Uses) and did not require a Conditional Use Permit.

Presentation of the proposed Site Plan for the construction of a new 320-foot radio communications tower was led by Ken Varney of Pyramid Network Services and Michael Armitage, Calhoun County 911 Dispatch Director. Mr. Varney explained that the proposed tower would be 300 feet high with a 20-foot lighting rod attached to the top with a proposed location along B Drive S (the west end of the property owned by Harper Creek Public Schools and near Sonoma Elementary). He further explained that the new tower is needed to enhance the overall communications systems for Police, Fire, and Ambulance dispatching. He also explained that Motorola conducted a radio signal study of proposed tower locations that would meet the criteria outlined by the CCCDA. The discussion then focused on the safety of the tower and its proximity to Sonoma Elementary School. Mr. Varney explained that the tower would be a 'zero fall tower' meaning that if the tower ever collapsed it would fall onto itself (basically folding in half). It was noted that all FAA and FCC approvals had been obtained for the tower. The entire tower area would be fenced with an 8-foot fence.

Michael Armitage explained that this project is part of the millage that was approved by the voters in Calhoun County for improvements to radio communications. This proposed tower would greatly enhance communications for area Fire Departments- especially those fire departments located in Athens, Township, Newton Township, and Leroy Township. The system will have a built-in redundancy which is lacking in the current system and was proven when a tornado swept through the area in March 2024.

#### **BOARD MEMBER QUESTIONS/COMMENTS-**

Travis Arbogast asked how long would the tower last. Michael Armitage indicated that the tower would last 50 years and the equipment approximately 20 years with required maintenance.

Randy Lang asked about the ice and wind and whether the tower would have a partial collapse or full collapse. Ben Varney explained that if there happened to be a collapse, which is extremely rare these days, the tower would fold in half.

Lori Bagwell asked if Harper Creek Schools were receiving any fees for allowing the tower and its equipment on their property at Sonoma Elementary. Rob Ridgeway indicated that the contract between Harper Creek Schools and the CCCDA is for zero dollars. He noted that the tower would greatly improve radio communications between their schools and school buses.

Ben Varney noted that construction of the tower would take about 60 days to complete- weather pending.

#### **PUBLIC COMMENTS/QUESTIONS-**

Pat Norman, 4415 B Drive S, expressed concern about the proposed location of the new tower- which is next to her vacant farm property. She wondered why the tower was being proposed at Harper Creek High School where there is a lot of open land. It was explained by Michael Armitage that the high school location was too far northeast for the needed 95% coverage.

Pat Norman wanted to know if the tower area could be moved closer to the school. It was explained that the edge of the tower complex is at least 25 feet from her property line. Mrs. Norman also said that the tower would lower her property values on farm land she owns. A response was obtained from the Leroy Township Assessor, Kara Dougherty, via text, indicating that communication towers do not reduce the

value of adjoining properties. Michael Armitage explained that the proposed site would have a natural buffer of existing trees that would pretty much hide the complex from public view.

It was noted that the Township received a note and a copy of an article from David Mitchell. The article was from *Military Medical Research* on the effects of microwave radiation on brains. Mr. Mitchell is concerned about the microwave antennas that will be attached to the tower and their effect on the students at Sonoma Elementary. It was explained that the microwave antennas would be located at different heights on the tower with the lowest at 130 feet in the air and that there would be zero impact on the students.

Michael Armitage also stated that once the new tower is operational, Motorola would remove the current 190-foot dispatch tower located at the back of Sonoma Elementary.

#### **CLOSURE OF THE (CCDA) PUBLIC HEARING REVIEW OF SUBMITTED SITE PLAN-**

Chairperson VanVranken closed the Public Hearing at 6:37 pm

#### **NEW BUSINESS-**

A motion was made by Travis Arbogast that the Leroy Township Planning Commission recommend to the Leroy Township Board the **APPROVAL** of the Site Plan, as submitted by the Calhoun County Consolidated Dispatch Authority, associated with the construction of a new 320-foot radio telecommunications tower on property located at 4640 B Drive South (Property No. 13-14-020-012-00), supported by Kevin Smith.

#### **ROLL CALL VOTE-**

**Smith- YES**

**Arbogast- YES**

**Christoff- YES**

**VanVranken- YES**

**Qualls- YES**

**Lang- YES**

**Bagwell- YES**

**Motion approved.**

#### **CALL TO ORDER OF THE LOVELAND RE-ZONING PUBLIC HEARING-**

Chairperson VanVranken called the Public Hearing to order at 6:39 pm

Presentation of the re-zoning request was led by Bree Gunning (for Don Loveland). Bree explained that they purchased the property at 5811 B Drive S with the intent to split the property into (2) sections- with one section being added to their current parcel at 5753 B Drive S (self-storage business) and the other section would remain with the current residential dwelling at 5811 B Drive S.

Planning & Zoning Administrator Rob Behnke explained that the parcel at 5811 B Drive South is currently zoned Agricultural (AA). To divide off proposed Parcel #2 it would require a re-zoning to Medium Density Residential (MDR) due to the size of proposed Parcel #2 and that if proposed Parcel #2 was going to be used in the future to house more self-storage buildings it would need to be re-zoned to Neighborhood

Commercial (NC). Once the re-zoning is done, Mr. Loveland will be permitted to split the property up at 5811 B Drive S.

**BOARD MEMBER QUESTIONS/COMMENTS-**

There were no questions or comments.

**PUBLIC QUESTIONS/COMMENTS-**

There were no public questions or comments. Planning & Zoning Administrator Rob Behnke indicated that the Township did not receive any letters, emails, or telephone calls concerning this public hearing.

**CLOSURE OF LOVELAND RE-ZONING PUBLIC HEARING-**

Chairperson VanVranken closed the Public Hearing at 6:53 pm

**NEW BUSINESS-**

A motion was made by Phil Qualls that the Leroy Township Planning Commission recommend to the Leroy Township Board the **approval** of the two-part LOVELAND re-zoning request for the property at 5811 B Drive South (Property No. 13-14-010-027-00) as follows:

*Proposed Parcel #1 to be re-zoned from Agricultural (AA) to Neighborhood Commercial (NC)*

*Proposed Parcel #2 to be re-zoned from Agricultural (AA) to Medium Density Residential (MDR)*

Supported by Lori Bagwell.

**ROLL CALL VOTE-**

**Bagwell- YES**

**Lang- YES**

**Qualls- YES**

**VanVranken- YES**

**Christoff- YES**

**Arbogast- YES**

**Smith- YES**

**Motion approved.**

**ADJOURNMENT-**

A motion was made by Lori Bagwell to adjourn the meeting at 6:55 pm, supported by Travis Arbogast. **The motion carried with unanimous approval.**

Respectfully submitted,

ROB BEHNKE  
Zoning Administrator  
Meeting Secretary