

**WEST TRAVERSE TOWNSHIP  
REGULAR PLANNING COMMISSION MEETING & PUBLIC HEARING  
MARCH 10, 2021**

Chairperson Mooradian called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. via telephone conferencing.

Roll Call: Baiardi, Uutinen, Varner, Moore, Repasky, Wallin, Mooradian.

Visitors: David White, Denise Cline, Jimmy Spencer, Jim Palmer, Marc and two unidentified people.

The Pledge of Allegiance was recited by all.

Approve Agenda: The Agenda was approved by consensus.

Public Comments: None.

Approve Minutes: **Uutinen made a motion to approve the meeting minutes of February 10, 2021 as presented. Varner seconded the motion.**

**Vote: All yes.**

Public Hearing for a Special Land Use Permit for Pond Hill Farm: The Public Hearing was opened at 7:05 p.m. for Case #01-2021, a request for a Special Use Permit for Pond Hill Farm, located at 5699 S. Lakeshore Drive (Parcel #24-16-12-33-100-001, 24-16-12-32-200-002, 24-16-12-32-200-004)(Parcel #24-16-12-32-200-005 which is not part of Pond Hill Farm, 24-06-12-29-400-017 which is in Friendship Township). This permit would be to operate a commercial events facility at Pond Hill Farm. The Public Hearing was advertised in the Harbor Light Newspaper on February 17, 2021 and it was posted on the Township website.

Denise Cline, Township Planner, presented an overview of the application. This is an existing Agri-Tourism facility applying for a commercial event facility Special Use Permit. She reviewed what documents each Planning Commissioner should have to review.

Jimmy Spencer stated what he thinks Pond Hill Farm offers to people in the community as well as to tourists who visit the area. He said that events at the Farm are broken down into public events and private events. He stated that they could have as many as 2,400 people in a day during a public event such as the annual Fall Harvest Festival. The size of some of these events could fluctuate from 20 to 100 as a normal range. He reviewed the types of events that had been presented in their application. Spencer stated that when they host a wedding event, the rest of the farm is closed. Uutinen stated that he sees a lot of growth at Pond Hill Farm in the future, so the Township has to plan for a larger volume of people at the Farm. All aspects of this permit have to be looked at in regards to growth. Baiardi asked Spencer if he had any idea how many private events they might have throughout a year. Spencer said that they have less than ten private events in a year. Spencer reviewed the parking that is available for visitors. He said that there are a total of 593 parking spots available in various places. Varner asked if there is a ratio in play when determining how many handicap spots have to be available. Uutinen asked how

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the parking spots would be defined when they are out in the field. Spencer said that they measure it all out and run strings plus a parking attendant helps to keep people where they need to be. Uutinen pointed out that when there are large crowds, there is the possibility of medical emergencies and that they should be prepared for that type of event. Repasky stated that there are regulations that rule how many handicap parking spots are required per lot. Wallin said that he has some concerns about traffic on Middle Rd.

Spencer said that they had contacted MDOT and they were told that they did not have to make any changes to their driveways. Mooradian asked Spencer if they had submitted the same event plan to MDOT that he had submitted to the Planning Commission. Jim Palmer stated that they did not submit the same plan because of the difference in the permitting process. He said that MDOT came out for an in person examination of the site and did not think that the number of cars expected was too many.

The normal business hours at this time are 11:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. When there are school field trips scheduled, they might start at 9:00 a.m. They are hoping to extend the closing hours to 11:00 p.m. for special events, especially during the summer. They are requesting the hours of operation to be expanded to 9:00 a.m. to 11:00 p.m.

Spencer has been working with the Health Department to figure out the sanitary facilities. They have indoor restrooms as well as portable restrooms and washing stations. They will be following the National Sanitation Association chart for the number of restrooms needed for event size.

Spencer stated that they would like to be able to use amplified sound during events. They are situated on 190 acres, at least 1,000 feet from any adjoining property lines and neighbors are at least a half mile away. The topography of the property is hills and trees which would muffle any sounds. There are no close neighbors or any future building due to the known purpose of surrounding properties.

Spencer reviewed the impact statement that he had presented.

Spencer presented a new plan for an expansion of the existing drain field.

There were no public comments. The Public Hearing was closed at 8:00 p.m.

## NEW BUSINESS

### Case #01-2021 Special Land Use Permit, Pond Hill Farm to Operate a Commercial Event Facility:

Denise Cline had presented her report which follows Section 506, Site Plan Review, Section 604, Special Use and Section 733, Commercial Event Facilities.

Mooradian asked Spencer if the property where his driveway accesses his property is owned by the Little Traverse Conservancy. Spencer stated that they had worked it out with the Conservancy, but he doesn't remember exactly how it was settled. Mooradian pointed out that it should have been pointed out that that small piece of property is an easement on the Site Plan. Moore said that he was glad they had updated a walking path from the large parking lot. He

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thinks that there could be a handrail along that path for safety. He wondered about lighting during an event that could go on until 11 p.m. and if there was sufficient lighting in the parking areas. Mooradian pointed out the area where the pedestrian walkway merges with the driveway and stated that could be a problem. Spencer has proposed about 18 post lamps, but those do not cover the large field parking lots.

Repasky questioned the width of the secondary road, because it looks like it could only be a one-way lane. He asked how pedestrians could be deterred from using the gravel outward entrance mixed with the traffic during a large event. Spencer stated that when they have a large event, they have a traffic coordinator and make that secondary road one-way. On an ordinary day, that secondary road is used for both directions. Spencer said that there is enough room for a vehicle to pull over to allow cars to pass each other.

Baiardi asked if additional permanent restroom facilities would be added. She pointed out that with the multiple private events that they have, she does not think that there are enough facilities being available. Baiardi said that she would not want to see porta potties brought out for these events. She asked if they planned on building a permanent facility and what the provisions would be in it. Spencer said that they are not planning on building an addition on the building with the bathrooms. He said that they have not had any problems in the past with the facilities that they already have. Mooradian had questions about the capacity of the proposed septic system and whether it would be enough with the large groups. Spencer stated that they are planning on adding an additional 6,000 sq. ft. to the current 1,200 sq. ft drain field. Repasky stated that the plan shows a 3,000 sq. ft. field with a 3,000 sq. ft reserve field. Mooradian asked what the necessity input is for a 300–400-person average use. He stated that if the Planning Commission is going to put a people capacity to the event location, they need to understand what the sanitation capacity is. He would like to see something in writing to let the Planning Commission define what the capacity of this facility is going to be. Varner and Wallin both agreed that the Health Department is the expert on this issue and it is up to them to decide what is needed. Wallin stated that he has concerns about the ingress and egress for Pond Hill Farm. There are two roads that lead to Pond Hill. The roads are M-119 and Middle Road. He said that he had received some calls from residents on Middle Road stating that they are concerned about the traffic.

Utinen agrees with the prior comments and said that he also has some concerns about the secondary road. He asked whether the secondary road would support emergency vehicles. He wondered if it needs to be a little wider, does it need more gravel put in for support. Repasky said that he does not want to make assumptions about the capacity or the width of the secondary road. He would like to have it certified. Baiardi stated that in the Ordinance, under Outdoor Gatherings, there is a different code when it comes to 1,000 people, you need to have more provisions for the emergency vehicles.

Repasky suggested that Spencer review the Township Zoning Ordinance. He also asked if the well is certified for commercial use. Mooradian pointed out that the Health Department did submit a letter stating that the onsite water supply system is classified a non-community public

water system and uses ground water source for drinking. The supply is in good standing with the monitoring requirements of the Michigan State Drinking Water Act 399. Testing of the water is done quarterly.

Repasky stated that ADA parking is required as well as access from the parking to the establishment must meet ADA requirements.

Utinen said that there are enough unanswered questions that the Planning Commission will not be able to act on this application tonight.

Mooradian had some comments about the ingress and egress driveways. He thinks that will need more discussion.

Mooradian asked Spencer what the Trainee cabin is on the far east portion of the Site Plan.

Spencer said that it is a summer cabin and it is used for an overflow of people. Mooradian asked if it is employee housing. Spencer said no.

Mooradian stated that the Planning Commission would like to know more about capacity from the Health Department once they have had their proper review. There are some concerns about the interior roads. The PC would like to know about the outdoor lighting as far as it needs to be shielded and it should have a height limit. There is an existing sign at the Farm right now and Spencer was asked if there was any additional signage being planned. Moore stated he does not feel the intention of the Outdoor Gathering was meant to apply to this type of business and that the board may want to revisit the language. Varner agreed with Moore. Utinen and Repasky both felt that the Outdoor Gathering Ordinance has to be looked at and reviewed.

There was conversation about lighting and what the requirements are.

Any decision on this application is going to be postponed at this meeting along with asking the applicant to come back with more information regarding: making sure that they have proper title to the entrance, making sure that they have a septic capacity that they can tell the PC what it is, as well as the information for improving the secondary road.

**Mooradian made a motion that the Planning Commission postpone Case #01-2021, Special Use Permit request for Pond Hill Farm, and to have it re-scheduled for the next meeting of April 14, 2021 at 7:00 p.m. The reason for the postponement would be for the applicant to provide further information regarding the capacity of their septic proposal to the Health Department, so that it would help the Planning Commission to understand the total capacity of the events; we would want to have them look at the secondary roads with their engineer and propose a greater width and to make sure that they are of a sub base or a base that is capable of supporting emergency vehicles; we would like to know that they have either a recorded easement or title to the entrance as it is right now; we would like to have you submit your lighting cut sheets to the Zoning Administrator to make sure that they are a shielded down directed light that meets our code; we would like some clarification on the well situation, and it is only 50 feet from the existing drain field, it is not listed on the plans that were submitted to the Health Department; we would like to confirm the ADA compliance. Utinen seconded the motion.**

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**Roll Call Vote: Baiardi – yes, Uutinen – yes, Varner – yes, Moore – yes, Wallin – yes, Repasky – yes, Mooradian – yes.**

Mooradian stated that M-119 is not aligned with in its road right of way. There is a 100 ft. minimum setback for parking and other things. The plans show that this was measured off the boundary line, but the road overlays the boundary line. The code says that it has to be the edge of the road right of way, which means that the parking spaces are about 50 ft. too close to the line.

Zoning Administrator's Report: David White presented his written report.

Township Board Representative: Baiardi stated that the Township Secretary will be leaving as of next month.

Correspondence: None.

Planning Commission Comments: None.

Public Comments: None.

Adjourn: **Wallin made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Repasky seconded the motion.**

**Vote: All yes.**

The meeting was adjourned at 9:48 p.m.

The next regularly scheduled meeting will be April 14, 2021 at 7:00 p.m.

Submitted by:

Dawson Moore, Secretary

Transcribed by:  
Susan Matsko  
Township Secretary

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