

2021 Annual Report

Ontwa Township Planning Commission
Edwardsburg, Michigan

Planning Commission Members

- Chris Marbach, Chairperson
- Robert Thompson, Vice Chair
- Sandra Seanor, Secretary
- Dawn Bolock (Twp. Board Rep.)
- Don Delong
- Richard Gates
- Bill Mahaney
- Mike Mroczek
- Shane Szalai
- Brigid Forlenza, Recording Secretary



Prepared December 2021
Planning Commission Approved: January 5, 2022

INTRODUCTION

The Planning Commission of Ontwa Township is governed by the Michigan Planning Enabling Act, State of Michigan Public Act 33 of 2008, and by the Ontwa Township Zoning Ordinance.

The 2021 Planning Commission was staffed by the Ontwa Township Zoning Administrator; this position was held by Leroy Krempec.

Williams & Works, a consulting firm, was also selected by the Township Board to assist the Township in zoning, planning and land use matters.

Under the Planning Enabling Act, the Planning Commission must provide an annual report to the Ontwa Township Board, as the legislative body of the Township. This report discusses:

1. Activities of the Commission during the past year
2. The status of any on-going planning activities
3. Recommendations to the legislative body related to planning and development

PLANNING COMMISSION ACTIVITIES

The Planning Commission was scheduled to meet the first Wednesday of each month in 2021. The February, July, September, October, November and December meetings were cancelled for lack of business items. The other six meetings were conducted on Zoom due to COVID-19 restrictions.

One of the duties of the Planning Commission is the review of all Land Division and Lot Line Adjustment applications. In 2021 the Planning Commission reviewed three applications and they were all approved.

During the January meeting, the Planning Commission recommended approval of the 2021-2025 Five Year Parks and Recreation Plan to the Ontwa Township Board.

The Planning Commission reapproved the 10 current Home Occupation permits at the March meeting.

Also at the March meeting, the Planning Commission recommended approval to rezone a large area East of Christiana Creek from R1A to LR.

PLANNING COMMISSION ACTIVITIES

In April the Planning Commission conducted a public hearing to rezone 62 acres along Brady Road from AR to R1. This application was sent to the Township Board with a favorable recommendation.

The May meeting was focused on reviewing a Short Term Rental ordinance. The Township Board returned this item to the Planning Commission in June for additional review and revisions.

Also during the June meeting, a public hearing was conducted for discussion regarding an Accessory Dwelling Units ordinance.

Other activities by the Planning Commission in 2021 included the following:

The Bike & Pedestrian Committee was chaired by Mike Mroczek. The committee is ongoing and is considering various options and potential projects. This will be done with the assistance of MACOG, Niles-Buchanan-Cass Area Transportation Study (NATS) and the Southwest Michigan Planning Commission (SWMPC). Jeff Kozinski, Township Trustee, spearheaded a spending resolution to the Township Board to have Wightman investigate the possibility of a walkway on Elkhart Road between ~May Road and M-62 (Taco Bell). The village will share in the project cost but Ontwa will pay for the feasibility study.

Other activities by the Planning Commission in 2021 included the following:

The Zoning Ordinance Committee met regarding four matters in 2021:

- **Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs)** were not authorized under the Ontwa Zoning Ordinance. The group worked with the Ontwa Planner (Williams & Works) and Zoning Administrator to develop an ADU Ordinance, which was presented to the Planning Commission and passed June 2, 2021 and by the BOT July 12, 2021.
- A citizen requested guidance from the Planning Commission on **Short Term Rentals**. The Zoning Review Committee along with the Ontwa Planner and Zoning Administrator reviewed the various STR ordinances. Short Term Rentals were not specifically allowed in Ontwa Township. The Ontwa Board of Trustees passed a Township Ordinance allowing STR in compliance with their regulations on 6/14/2021.
- A citizen brought a concern regarding the use of **Ice Retardant Systems (Bubblers)**. The Zoning Ordinance Committee, again working with the Ontwa Planner and Zoning Administrator, reviewed the various issues surrounding Bubblers. The Ontwa Planner developed an Ordinance for the BOT's adjustment and review. The final BOT Ordinance was approved October 11, 2021.
- **Golf carts** are not legal in Michigan unless a local unit of government with a population of 30,000 or less adopts a resolution to allow the use of golf carts under PA 491 (2014). Trustee Bolock and Chief Westrick suggested that the Zoning Review Committee consider developing a resolution authorizing the use of golf carts as allowed by the state. The Ontwa Township Planner (Williams & Works) is preparing the resolution for consideration by the Ontwa Township Board of Trustees in early 2022.

ONGOING PLANNING ACTIVITIES

- As a result of the Township Master Plan, the Planning Commission will continue to work on updating the Zoning Ordinance in 2022 as the primary implementation mechanism to achieve the Master Plan goals.
- Williams & Works will continue to assist us in updating our Zoning Ordinance.
- Andy Moore, AICP is the Williams & Works planner assisting Ontwa Township.

RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE ONTWA TOWNSHIP BOARD

As a result of the Planning Enabling Act, the Planning Commission is requesting that the Township Board exempt the Planning Commission from having to prepare a Capital Improvement Plan. This can be accomplished by means of the Township Board creating an ordinance that delegates this task to the Supervisor or to a non-elected administrative official.

Respectfully submitted,



Chris Marbach, Chairman

Ontwa Township Planning Commission

January 5, 2022