

NORTH EAST TOWNSHIP PLANNING COMMISSION
Tuesday September 5, 2023 7:00 PM
Minutes

Call to Order: Vern called the meeting to order at 7:00. Present: Vern, Char, Matt, LeAnn and Jay. Dennis was excused.

Minutes of August 7, 2023 meeting: Matt motioned for approval after agreeing to strike out the 3rd and 4th sentences in the first paragraph under discussion (regarding the solar farm conditional use permit) as it happened at the Supervisors' meeting after our meeting. Char seconded. Approved unanimously.

Old Business:

1. Neil McCord, East Lake Road, presented his final plan to subdivide property parcels 37-001-001.0-012.01 (A-2) and 37-001-001.0-012.02 (R-1). PC gave preliminary approval at its July 5, 2023 meeting. No changes have been made since the preliminary approval. Matt motioned for approval; LeAnn seconded. Approved unanimously.
Final A-2/R-1
2. Edgewater-- Attorney Chris Orton presented the final plans for the former Dohler Property subdivision. DEP has approved Component 3M allowing for final subdivision plan approval. The Supervisors will be reviewing the update to the Holding Tank ordinance during their scheduled meeting tonight. GPI has reviewed the waiver request for a revision to the already approved Stormwater Management plan and has approved the revised SWM plan. The developer can proceed with selling the lots, but no construction can begin until the sanitary sewer service or holding tanks are provided. Matt motioned for approval; Char seconded. Approved unanimously.

New Business:

1. Craig Zonna, attorney for the Evandale Farm property, discussed the overall plans for the development of the properties of Evandale Farm LLC, located on Cole Road. Property parcels 37-029-131.0-008.00, 37-029-116.0-038.00, 37-029-134.0-001.00, and 37-029-116.0-028.00 R-1. Mr. Zonna introduced Jack Gartner (Jack and his sister, Stacy Gartner Frost, own the property), Mario Cote (farm manager), Daron Joffe, an agricultural community planner, and Eric ?, a hospitality, restaurant partner. Both have known Stacy for over 2 decades and have worked on numerous similar projects.

They are proposing the expansion of agricultural uses and adding related uses, and are here to discuss whether they are permitted, conditional, or accessory uses, as well as the process that they need to go through. They are in the initial stages of planning and will complete a more comprehensive plan after the questions are answered tonight. Stacy prepared a map, which they shared with the Board.

Jack discussed their plans to do ag activities, plus events, educational activities, models for best practices, walking and biking trails, glamping and ag tourism. He mentioned that they also purchased the Haynes House, which they want to tie in with Evandale Farms

with events, pop-up restaurants, art shows, classes, weddings, and cultural and educational events that tie in with the farm.

Jack mentioned that the projects are fully funded; they do not need any grants or loans. The Haynes House will cost an estimated \$4-5 million, and that money is currently set aside.

Jack and Stacey are former residents of North East, Jack currently living back in the community. Both would like Evandale farms to be a legacy project where they can give back to the community.

Daron ("Farmer D") stated that they are just getting involved in the project at this time. He has 25 years of farming experience and has been involved in preserving small family farms. In WI he has/had 173 acres of vegetable and animal farm. His concern is how to keep farms closer to the community, while preserving rural character. He partners with village planners emphasizing conservation (habitats), prime agriculture and development with minimal impact on agriculture.

Daron said he works all over the US planning village farm-based communities, determining where development should go best with conservation and agriculture. He built lots of farms working with schools, colleges, food pantries, church ministries, and non-profits for youth education and workforce development. He has worked with Eric for 25+ years.

Eric discussed his work with community supported farms. He specializes in destination travel, hospitality, food and beverages, outdoor education and creating a sense of place. He owns a restaurant in Berkley CA. He and Daron worked on a 650-acre retreat for glamping that took 5 years.

Jack said his expertise is 30 years in urban redevelopment and construction. They have a number of vacation rentals that he and Stacy built on the Jersey Shore.

When asked about water and sewer—they will be using holding tanks and pump the sewage off site in tanks or trucks. They will not be putting a wastewater system in. They will get approval for water and sewage disposal for the campground.

The house on the south side of Cole Road has been gutted. There were mold issues. The low ceilings and small footprints leave them unsure of its future purpose. Could be housing for farm help.

Vern mentioned that Cole Road is tar and chip so they may have to post a bond for the road, and that they will need a stormwater management plan. Several ponds are noted on the map. When asked about any neighbors that could be impacted, they jokingly said they will give them free tickets!

A stage/event area is noted in the NE corner of the property. This property is closest to the neighbors and furthest from Cole Road. We all agreed it may not be the best area for a stage or events. They will revisit that.

It was mentioned that there would be glamping, but no more than the twelve shown on the map, although temporary tents may be used for special events.

Mario mentioned that they are working on the manure management plan with Tom McClure of the Erie County Conservation. Soil testing folks are working with them also regarding manure management. They have forty-five head of cattle now and if they expand, they are determining where best additional cows could go. There has been conversation with NE Township, Road Foreman Gus Neff with respect to water runoff in the areas of Cole and German Roads.

We asked that they consider and clarify where parking might be located on the map.

When asked about a timetable, Jack said they would like to have things up and running within 2 years.

We reviewed their list of proposed activities and compared them to our current zoning ordinance, as well as our proposed zoning ordinances, list of permitted and conditional uses. We determined the following:

- Farming and Ag—crops and livestock—P in both current and proposed codes.
- Hiking/biking trails—not listed in either code but included in definition of “golf course” which is P in new code. We will ask John McGranor to address this better in the update.
- Camping/glamping—We need to define glamping in a new code. Camping is C in both codes.
- X country skiing/snow shoeing (same as hiking above).
- Cabin rentals—Need to ask McGranor to help us define if this is campground or not. These proposed cabins may be like small mobile homes.
- Horseback riding- “animal raising” is C in current code, “riding stables” are P in new code.
- Winery—not included in current code. P in the new code.
- Event/music/festivals—not included in current code –P and C in new code. Need to discuss specifics further.
- Ag Tourism—Farm to Table—Is this considered a restaurant or an event?
- Retail farm store-- P in ag in new code (May not want to call them “roadside stands”).
- B&B—C in both codes.
- Equine activities—see above.
- Tours/classes--same as events?
- U-Pick fruit & veggies—P in both codes since it is agricultural.

They will be refining their plans and getting back with us. We suggested that they start with permitted uses and give us time to complete our zoning ordinance update, then come in to discuss conditional uses. Great group discussion.

Char motioned to adjourn.