

Comins Township Planning Commission Minutes
November 12th, 2020
Reg. Meeting/ Special Use Hearing/ Joint ZBA meeting

Call to order: 7:00pm

Roll Call: Jerry Kunnath, John McConnell, Dan Swartzendruber, Arisa Handrich

Public in Attendance: attached to minutes

Public Comment for regular meeting: no comment

Approval of October 8th minutes: Jerry M/C, John 2nd

Approval of October 29th minutes: Arisa M/C, Jerry 2nd

Open Special Use Hearing

Dan reviewed special mtg. guidelines

Mike (property owner and applicant) presented plan for Berry and Flower Farm.

- property was used as ag land previously even though not zoned ag.
- Rectangle 40 acres, corner of Mast/Mandilk Dr.
- No previous complaints from neighbors
 - Planted garden initially for family
 - Less than 1 acre of berries
 - Passion project and to help supplement income
 - Community oriented/ help from tractor club already
 - Would like to keep small for family and be community oriented
 - Got rid of chickens after a noise complaint
 - Meap certified
 - Want to improve and benefit wildlife
 - $\frac{3}{4}$ acre of strawberries, $\frac{3}{4}$ acre of blueberries, 2 acres of flowers

Public Comment in Favor:

3 neighbor letters in favor of farm

Tom Merritt: directly across from Mike. Mike has made many improvements to his property. There should be no problems. Cares for his place. Fixed up the house. Cares for the wildlife.

Denise Agius: Complaints should be easily addressed. Doesn't think the farm will attract the kind of people that are looking for trouble. Don't think economic opportunities should be squelched by weekenders. 2 week season of berries,

flowers can be spread out. Strawberry season is kind of a big deal around here and we now have an opportunity to get them local and keep dollars local.

Patrick: Son in law. Took complaint about quad from neighbors seriously. Private drive could have a chain with locks. You cannot see the seasonal properties from the fields and parking lot. Only the big red barn.

Dale and Mary Shrock: Fully support. Mike has done a lot. Weekenders bring their own traffic and noise.

Tavia: Noise won't be an issue with people picking flowers and berries, but people on weekends are loud.

Dave Yoder: We should be honored to have this couple in our community.

Comments in opposition to the application:

No comments from public in attendance. 4 correspondances by mail

Finding of Facts:

1. Yes
2. No forest/rec currently. Would like special use for an ag business. Ag. Zoned down the road with farm.
3. NO
4. Meap- environmental impact approval
5. No negative effect
6. Yes, allow us to pursue the dream and benefit community. Articles in paper about community impact. Suzzanne has plans for more community opportunity.
7. No plans to be bigger than already are. Acreage of trees will stay the same
8. Yes
9. Trees that line property already. 55 trees for wildlife to be more of a buffer.
10. Yes
11. Yes, don't expect much noise. Tractor for work
12. No
13. Yes, 8-12 three days a week. By appointment outside of those times. June – September/October for flowers and berries. Blueberries in August
14. Sign to indicate location/parking sign
15. Future owners would have to reapply
16. Retail outlet on property, flower barn to purchase flowers, cookies, prepicked berries, Local made items, An additional service to people picking.

Board Conversation:

Dan – we have zoned land for reasons. Torn in stance because of that. Have to consider neighbors that bought forest/rec next to forest/rec zoned land.

Jerry – have given permits to ag land use for other uses. So why not for this? Leaving 17 acres in back for recreational use. 6 neighbors here to support. We are talking about a few acres out of almost 40.

Rob- this was used as a farm historically.

Jerry – suggest a chain across road, a more detailed sign, no trespassing.

Jerry made motion to approve special use as written for Berry and Flower Farm
John 2nd.

Roll Call Vote: Jerry- yes, John – yes, Dan – no, Arisa – yes.

Adjourn special use hearing

8:15 regular joint meeting with ZBA

Invited ZBA and Zoning Administrator to table

Review of year:

- Started year with Master Plan

- Did a tiny house ordinance

- Sign ordinance done

- Merrien Tappan as new member to replace Lora Freer

- Solar Planning project

- Made plan for survey for Master Plan

ZBA – no updates

Adjournment: Jerry M/C, Tavia 2nd 9:08pm

Next meeting – January 2021

Respectfully submitted by Arisa Handrich