

Champion Township Planning Commission
Public Hearing Minutes on Clubs in Champion Township
Tuesday, July 2nd 2024
6:30 p.m.
Champion Township Hall

Members present: Jim Belpedio, Cindy Simula, Amy Cevigney, Jamie Strawder, Blayne Marek.

Also present: Zoning Administrator Mike Simula, Roy and Mary Pascoe, Lee Sanders.

Chair Amy Cevigney called the public hearing on the Clubs text amendment proposal to order on Tuesday, July 2, 2024 during the public hearing section of the Planning Commission meeting to obtain public input regarding the proposed changes to be made to the Champion Township Zoning Ordinance. The hearing was turned over to Zoning Administrator Mike Simula for an explanation of the proposal. The Zoning Administrator read the proposal in its entirety to all members and guests present.

1. Use the existing definition of “club” from our zoning ordinance: “ A private non-profit organization of persons associated for a common social, recreational, or political purpose.”
2. Add “clubs” as a Special Land Use by Conditional Use Permit in the following zoning districts: Residential (on lots of at least 2 acres),* Rural Residential, Resource Production, Town Development.
 - A motion was later made and approved to remove the 2 acre requirement

Zoning Administrator Mike Simula stated this is the second version of this proposal that has been brought to a public hearing. The planning commission decided that the definition for “Clubs” that exists in our Zoning Ordinance is adequate. The change would be to add “Clubs” as a Special Land Use by Conditional Use Permit in the following zoning districts: Residential (on lots of at least 2 acres), Rural Residential, Resource Production, Town Development. Any “Club” that would want to come into Champion Township would have to apply for a Conditional Use Permit and go through that process. That process entails a public hearing in itself. Then the Planning Commission would have to decide what, if any, conditions they might impose on that “Club”, whether it has to do with parking or noise or hours of operation etc. That would all be determined at that time of application. Then there would be a public hearing and everyone would

have a chance to give their input. The Planning Commission would then make a recommendation which would go to the Township Board for approval, revision, or denial. Zoning Administrator Mike S. stated that if this is approved tonight and the Planning Commission recommends it, we will have to send it to the County Planning Commission just like we did with the previous proposal.

Lee Sanders asked what is the difference with this proposal compared to the one from three months ago? Jim B. replied that in the one from three months ago we had put things into two categories: That being clubs serving alcohol and clubs not serving alcohol. Marquette County planning recommended that we change it to ALL Clubs having to obtain a Conditional Use Permit, then impose the conditions through that process. So, basically we are just simplifying it in a way.

Lee Sanders commented so what you're doing is pushing it through as all clubs. Then, if this gets approved you're going to come back and start defining Conditional Use restrictions for clubs that serve alcohol and clubs that do not serve alcohol? Jim B. replied yes. Any kind of club such as the Boy Scouts etc, would all have to go through the Conditional Use Permit Application process as we cannot be prejudicial to any one club. Any new club that would want to come in would all have to go through the same process.

Roy Pascoe asked the question: Previously we had the American Legion that served alcohol. Why was that allowed? Zoning Administrator Mike S. replied that is because that predated zoning in the township so none of this would have applied to them and that "club" doesn't exist anymore.

Roy Pascoe also asked the question why did we go from 20,000 square feet to two acres? Two acres is 87,120 square feet. That is a big parcel of land? Zoning Administrator Mike S. stated that we don't want to just say ANY residential lot, no matter what size where somebody who just has a quarter acre lot can have a club there. We are trying to make enough room for parking etc. Roy Pascoe asked the question: Is it making it so stringent or are you actually setting it up to an area that could accommodate? Zoning Administrator Mike S. replied it is the latter. Roy P. replied that he understands. Zoning Administrator Mike S. stated otherwise someone could start a club in their backyard. Roy P. stated that two acres is just a lot of land. Jim B. stated that he agrees with Roy P. two acres is a lot of land. Jim B. stated that he would like to not put a size requirement in the suggested proposal. That can happen at the time of the Conditional Use Application phase. Zoning Administrator Mike S. stated that this can be changed in the proposal as it is not set in stone and this is why we have a public hearing. Roy P. stated that as an example he just had a survey done on the back side of

the school and that the surveyor broke it down into three sections depending on what a person may do. It's a half an acre., 0.7 acres., 0.6 acres., so, if you took the two lots and put them together you would basically have a little less than one and a half acres which is a large chunk of property. So, in Roy P. opinion he would say an acre or more would be sufficient because basically there's nobody uptown who has an acre.

Jamie Strawder commented that he understands the Township's stance on the fear of having a club pop up here or there and not having any way to regulate it. But, in Jamie Strawder's three years of living here and looking around the town he does not see that as being a problem. It's like we are trying to come up with a solution to a problem that does not exist. It may in the future, but two acres is a lot. There is a lot more to having a club besides having land and a building.

Jim B. agrees that two acres is a lot of land and we could take it out of the proposal. Zoning Administrator Mike S. stated that he is not necessarily in favor of the two acres himself. We could make it a half acre, or one acre , or no size limit at all. Since you would have to go through the Conditional Use process you can impose those conditions at that time. Jim B. stated that we could end up just like we did with the last one. Overthinking it. Jamie S. asked the question: If a person did not have the land couldn't they apply for a variance from the Township just like you would when it comes to buildings and things like that? Zoning Administrator Mike S. replied just as a cautionary note that a variance should not be seen as a license to violate the rules. It should be seen as a way to overcome a certain hardship, but yes it could go that route if appropriate. Jim B. stated that he would like to just see the size out of it altogether which levels the playing field for everyone.

Lee Sanders commented that five years from now if somebody that wants to do something with a club at that time you could apply the two acre or acre and a half requirement on the Conditional Use part? Roy P. replied, depending on where it is you can make any amendment you want. Jim B. replied that any future board could make changes on the Conditional Use requirements.

Jamie Strawder made a motion to approve the proposal with the removal of the phrase (on lots of at least 2 acres) section. Supported by Jim B. 5 Ayes. 0 Nays. Motion carried.

No more comments on this topic.

Chair Amy Cevigney adjourned the Public Hearing on this topic.