

Freedom Township Planning Commission
September 10, 2020 Public Hearing

Chairman Lindemann called the public hearing to order at 7:30 p.m.

Members present: Matt Little, Susan Ochs, Dan Schaible, Karen Flahie, and Larry Lindemann. Planner Rodney Nanney was also present and served as acting secretary for this hearing. Susan Ochs experienced initial technical difficulties with being heard, which were resolved. A total of 18 persons were in attendance during the hearing, which was held via video and telephone conference in accordance with the Open Meetings Act and Governor Whitmer's executive orders authorizing electronic meetings.

New Business:

1) Public Hearing for the conditional use permit application from Stoneco of Michigan for expansion of the existing Stoneco-Burmeister gravel pit to include parcels N-14-26-300-007 and -014 totaling 43.41 acres of land:

A motion was made by Flahie with support from Schaible to open the public hearing. Motion passed unanimously.

At Chairman Lindemann's request, Mr. Nanney introduced the agenda item and summarized the purpose of the hearing. He also summarized his July 24, 2020 report and recommendations on the Zoning Ordinance standards that apply, and explained how participants can be recognized to speak during the hearing through the electronic "raise hand" function. Chairman Lindemann opened the floor to public comment.

Cheryl Helber, 10141 Bethel Church Rd., spoke against the application, noting that the existing operation is noisy and unsightly and expressing concern about impacts on the water table. Chairman Lindemann acknowledged that a letter was also received from Dave and Cheryl Helber dated September 7, 2020, which had been distributed to the commissioners.

Clerk Valisa Bristle, 8795 Pleasant Lake Rd., expressed concerns about noise, vibration, and dust from the expanded operation, and impacts on the Bethel Church of Christ building.

At Chairman Lindemann's invitation, representatives from Stoneco of Michigan spoke during the hearing to answer questions and provide additional information about their application. Sue Hanf spoke about construction industry concerns about access to adequate reserves and potential scarcity in the future. Todd Pester presented information about evaluation of vibration and noise impacts. Chip Tokar answered questions raised about impacts on the water table.

The public hearing was closed by Chairman Lindemann at 8:13 p.m.

Freedom Township Planning Commission
September 10, 2020 Special Meeting

Chairman Lindemann called the special meeting to order at 8:14 p.m.

Members present: Matt Little, Susan Ochs, Dan Schaible, Karen Flahie, and Larry Lindemann. Planner Rodney Nanney was also present and served as acting secretary for this meeting.

Old Business:

1) Conditional use permit application from Stoneco of Michigan for expansion of the existing Stoneco-Burmeister gravel pit to include parcels N-14-26-300-007 and -014 totaling 43.41 acres of land:

Chairman Lindemann opened the floor to Planning Commission discussion and a presentation from the applicant. Commissioner Schaible asked about the possibility of a farmland deed restriction in response to written comments from Dave and Cheryl Helber, who confirmed that no formal restriction existed to their knowledge. Commissioner Little asked questions about increased noise and vibration, and possible alternative of reopening the Pleasant Hills gravel pit as an alternative to the proposed expansion. Commissioner Ochs asked about reclamation and the possibility of establishing a general 500-foot setback line across the entire Bethel Church Rd. frontage. Commissioner Flahie asked about mitigation of noise, dust, and other impacts.

Todd Pester from Vibratex provided a slide presentation detailing his evaluation of the potential for vibration and noise impacts on off-site structures and residents from anticipated gravel pit operations, equipment, and machinery. Austin Fisher from Stoneco spoke about the quality of reserves, the relative demand for the types of gravel products from the Burmeister and Pleasant Hills gravel pits, and the existing operation's compliance with state environmental regulations. Sue Hanf from Stoneco emphasized their plans to maximize the reclaimed land for farming and the importance of sand and gravel as a natural resource to the construction industry. She also noted the company's preference to make full use of the existing plant equipment on the Burmeister site to mine all available reserves before reopening the Pleasant Hills gravel pit.

Further Planning Commission discussion included farming activity on the subject parcels, existing uses of surrounding parcels, soil conditions, existing topography in the area, and impacts on neighboring residents, land uses, and property values from the proposed expansion area and the extension of gravel pit impacts for six more years. Lindemann made note of an article on extraction operations in the current edition of the MTA Township Focus magazine.

A motion was made by Lindemann with support from Little to postpone further deliberation on this application until the October 6, 2020 regular meeting. Motion passed unanimously.

Chairman Lindemann declared the meeting adjourned at 9:25 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Rodney C. Nanney, AICP, Acting Secretary