

Village of Bear Lake Planning Commission

Meeting Minutes

Date: June 12, 2025

Time: 6:05 PM - 7:04 PM

Location: Village Hall, 12016 Russell Street, Bear Lake, MI 49614

1. Planning Commission Members

- **Chairperson:** John Virga
- **PC Members:**
 - Meg Kieskowski
 - Ian Myers
 - Jason Care
- **Village President:** Shelly Lynnes
- **President - Pro Tem:** Janene Gee

2. Call to Order

- **Pledge of Allegiance:** Recited at the beginning of the meeting.
- **Welcome and Roll Call:**
 - Attendance taken: Jason Care, Ian Myers, Meg Kieskowski, and John Virga were present.
 - Janene Gee was noted as absent due to being late.
- **Approval of Previous Meeting Minutes:**
 - Motion to approve previous minutes was made by Meg Kieskowski and seconded by Jason Care.
 - Vote: Meg, Ian, and John approved. Jason abstained.

3. New Business

C. Historic Bank Building Development Plans

- **Discussion:**
 - Overview of meetings with Mike from the county enforcement and Jim Reed, the building owner, and John Virga.
 - Identified mutual goals among stakeholders to restore and repurpose the historic bank building.
 - Draft development plan has been created:
 - First floor: Commercial space for leasing.
 - Second floor: Residential living area.
 - Discussed parking constraints and access issues related to the property.
 - The draft development plan could be reviewed with Hannah Yurk, from Michigan Economic Development Corporation (MEDC), to refine the list of grant opportunities.
 - Importance of collaboration and quickly getting to a solid scope that is flexible to the potential commercial (first floor) and residential (upstairs) in order to secure funding to ensure project success.
 - Historical efforts to stabilize the building and previous grant application challenges.
 - Future steps include refining the business plan and coordinating with Jim Reed for structural improvements.
- **Action Items:**
 - John Virga was assigned as lead to continue to work closely with Jim Reed on the development plan and soon we will include David Jarhvi from the Manistee County Planning Department..
 - Follow up with Hannah from MEDC to identify suitable grants and application requirements.
 - Schedule meetings with relevant stakeholders to finalize plans and narrow down the list of grants to apply for to secure funding within the next 1-2 years.
 - Prepare visual materials, such as historical photos and project renderings, to support grant applications and stakeholder presentations.

D. Irrigation System Improvements

- **Discussion:**
 - Review of irrigation system proposal to enhance landscaping near the Bear Lake sign.

- Tammy presented a development plan with a budget of approximately \$700, seeking to split costs with local Bear Lake Promoters and Triginta Club.
- Proposed installation includes micro-irrigation and a pump system drawing water from the lake.
- Emphasis on low maintenance and seasonal operation.
- **Action Items:**
 - Tammy Puite was assigned to continued leading this project
 - Plan to designate a point person to present the irrigation plan to the village council next month.
 - Finalize the irrigation draft plan and secure necessary approvals.
 - Coordinate with Triginta and promoters to finalize cost-sharing agreements.
 - Schedule installation for spring to align with landscaping and foliage cycles.

E. Sidewalk Condition Assessment

- **Discussion:**
 - The "ClickFix" app to assess and report sidewalk conditions.
 - Proposal to evaluate ClickFix on a small scale to determine that it meets our needs, then engage volunteers, including National Honor Society students, to use the app for data collection.
 - Objective to prioritize sidewalk repairs based on collected data.
- **Action Items:**
 - John Virga was assigned to do the first pass evaluation
 - Meg Kieskowski was assigned as the lead to run the program with volunteers.
 - Download and evaluate the "ClickFix" app for compatibility with municipal reporting systems.
 - Train volunteers on using the app effectively.
 - Assign specific areas of the village to volunteers for comprehensive coverage.
 - Compile and analyze collected data to inform repair scheduling and funding allocation.

4. Old Business

F. Master Plan Update

- **Discussion:**
 - Emphasis on reviewing and updating the Village's Master Plan every three years.
 - Importance of aligning the master plan with current community needs and priorities.

- Reference to a previous survey conducted three years ago which highlighted key community concerns:
 - Reducing blight
 - Improving accessible sidewalks with ramps
 - Replacing streetlights
 - Establishing venues for local artists and marketplaces
- Agreed to conduct a new survey to gather updated community input.
- **Action Items:**
 - John Virga was assigned as the lead to create and post the first draft of the survey
 - Develop a new survey, potentially utilizing digital platforms for broader reach.
 - Distribute the survey to current village residents to gather updated feedback.
 - Analyze survey results to identify trends and prioritize initiatives for the master plan.
 - Schedule a session in the next meeting to review survey findings and integrate them into the master plan.

5. Public Comment

- No public comments were made during this meeting.

6. Adjournment

- **Details:**
 - The meeting was adjourned at 7:04 PM.
 - Future meetings scheduled for the second Thursday of each month.
 - Final remarks emphasized the efficiency and focus of the current meeting compared to previous lengthy sessions.

Action Items Summary

- **Appointment:**
 - Michelle Swanson's application will be taken to the next Village Council meeting for a vote on appointing Swanson as secretary.
- **Zoning Changes:**
 - Members to review and mark up zoning ordinance changes.
 - Consolidate feedback and present to Village Council.

- **Bank Building Project:**
 - Assign lead for development plan.
 - Secure grant opportunities with MEDC.
 - Finalize business plan and structural improvements.
- **Irrigation Project:**
 - Assign point person for council presentation.
 - Finalize and approve irrigation plan.
- **Sidewalk Assessment:**
 - Evaluate and implement the ClickFix app.
 - Recruit and train volunteers for data collection.
- **Master Plan Update:**
 - Develop and distribute a new community survey.
 - Analyze results and update the master plan accordingly.

Follow-up Points

- **Survey Distribution:** Determine the most effective method to distribute the new survey to village residents.
- **Grant Applications:** Follow up with MEDC representative Hannah for grant application guidance.
- **Project Coordination:** Schedule meetings with Jim Reed and other stakeholders to advance the bank building restoration.
- **Sidewalk Repair Data:** Begin data collection using ClickFix app and prepare reports for prioritization.