

## VILLAGE OF BEULAH PLANNING COMMISSION

Keith Behm, Chair – term expires 10/2025

Annie Browning, Village Council Rep - term expires 12/2024    Barb Skurdall - term expires 10/2026

Ed Popour – term expires 10/2026

Debbie Smith – term expires 10/2024

**PLANNING COMMISSION MEETING**  
**Tuesday, March 19, 2024 – 4:00 p.m.**  
**Village of Beulah Office**  
**7228 Commercial Street, Beulah, MI 49617**

### DRAFT MEETING MINUTES

- I. Call to Order – Pledge of Allegiance –  
Called to order by Behm at 4:00 p.m.  
Roll Call, all members, ZA Cypher, and Recording Secretary Bufka present,  
Barb Skurdall excused
- II. Approval of Agenda (additions/subtractions)  
Browning motions to approve, Smith seconds, all present vote aye and the motion is approved
- III. Declaration of Potential Conflicts of Interest - none
- IV. Approval of Minutes: February 20, 2024  
Browning motions to approve, Popour seconds, all present vote aye and the motion is approved
- V. Correspondence  
ZA Cypher – only received an email about the watershed group. Browning will provide an update about the watershed meeting.
- VI. Public Comment - (limited to three minutes per person unless extended by chair)  
2 attendees, no comment
- VII. Presentation of Area Reports  
Browning attended the Watershed overlay meeting on March 5<sup>th</sup>. The next meeting is April 2<sup>nd</sup> at 4 pm at the Lake Township Hall, with the Benzie Conservation District in attendance. The various townships are trying to find common ground. The goal is to have a uniform ordinance to protect Crystal Lake. Clarification that watershed overlay is trying to standardize how they protect the lake.  
West Benzie joint planning commission meeting coming up – first Thursday of the month. The PC discussed being grandfathered in on new zoning. ZA Cypher clarifies that if the original action wasn't taken properly, i.e. permits, it could cause a problem for the current homeowners. He has tried in Leelanau County to standardize setbacks for adjoining properties.
- VIII. NEW BUSINESS - None

## IX. OLD BUSINESS

### a. Election of Officers

Returning to this topic from last month. Popour likes where they are at. Browning moves that the officers remain unchanged, Popour seconds, all vote aye, the motion is passed.

### b. 2023 Village of Beulah Owner/Resident Survey – continued

ZA Cypher asks for general comments from the PC. Smith is confused by the x2 or x5 and Cypher clarifies that it is the number of people. We are working on the formatting to put the survey online now. There is an interface issue with the website and formatting.

General population comments/questions: The mix of population in the survey is not known.

Jeff Bowlby doesn't think the campground people should be able to respond, and he also voiced that at the Board meeting. Cypher said the Board wanted to give them an opportunity to voice their concerns. Anyone with an address was sent a survey and they could also pick up a survey at the VoB offices.

The discussion turned to only taxpaying residents being able to voice their opinion. Behm clarifies that the original surveys were sent out with water bills. Cypher – the Board wanted as much input as they could get from residents, business owners, campground.

Bowlby stated that anyone renting at an RV park shouldn't be given the same weight as homeowners. Smith finds that the survey shows only 6% of the respondents are from the campground. Behm says they need to be cautious about identifying who says what. Bowlby feel strongly that campground people shouldn't have any weight in the survey. Smith points out that they took renter input too.

Popour reminds the PC and Bowlby that Beulah is supported by tourists. Bowlby wants to separate the data. Cypher asks if the PC wants the data separated out. Behm initially says yes, but they continue to discuss. ZA Cypher to provide breakdown with more about who took the survey. Popour states that at the Village meeting it was brought up that business owners who don't live here don't have a vote. Cypher: Initially the goal of the Village was to be broad. Smith: also interested in attracting people, but there is limited housing and jobs. Discussion about NMC setting up a satellite building here. Clarification that NMC wants \$3M a year, but no building necessarily. Smith – would like the survey updated annually. She thinks there will be a new IT person who can facilitate getting the survey out.

### c. Master Plan update – continued

Cypher and PC discuss the timeline for having a public hearing about the survey and master plan. Waring is looking for vision for 2050 in the master plan. Smith says that's what we're doing, and reminds the audience that the PC was recently reestablished and has been working on bylaws, but now they are focusing on the master plan.

Cypher has the experience to do a master plan in a few months but everyone has to do their homework. General comment on the sewer: get the issue resolved so there can be more growth. Cypher: growth has to be considered and we need to be reasonable about expectations. If sewer rates go through the roof, that can impact businesses. Master Plan is a general overview primarily related to zoning.

The PC discussed reviewing the survey again, giving comments to ZA Cypher, and they will be incorporated for the next meeting. Smith discusses Master Plan and what she learned in her course. She thinks a goal and objective is important, to state early in the Master Plan. She thinks Beulah is lacking a facility that brings people in.

The PC discusses that the Benzie wellness and aquatic center was sold and could potentially be something to attract people later. Cypher: eventually there will be a transfer of property from older to younger businesses and homes. They discuss that the sewer issue is a huge issue. This happens in smaller and resort communities. Most sewer systems are about 30 years old, because no one predicted the growth.

Cypher reminds everyone that the Master Plan is a guidance document only. This is the first draft of a new plan since 1990. The Survey and Public will provide input for this. Behm says we will have to rework the Master Plan after public hearings and the survey results. The PC agrees that they need to give the community a chance to provide input. There's a lot of mixed zoning. Cypher: we have a chance to set the tone with this master plan. Things have changed since it was done previously. The PC discusses and agrees that the agenda for next meeting is primarily working through the Master Plan.

X. Zoning Administrator Comment – no comments

XI. Planning Commission Comment

a. Crystal Lake Overlay Meeting Update from March 5 – Browning – covered earlier in the discussion.

XII. Public Comment - (limited to three minutes per person unless extended by the chair)

Comments made earlier during Survey discussion: Tom Waring: What do you think of the marketing for Beulah? Crystal Mountain makes a lot of noise and all budgets moved to TC. They pay the TC Chamber. VoB is paying but not getting representation – a 2% tourism tax. Now it is 11%. Each motel, restaurant, etc. must send it to TC per guest each month. PC discusses, no one likes this and not sure how it started. There is no chamber in Beulah, which could be part of the problem.

Waring - Would also like to see the demographic shift over time, and suggests giving the survey to younger people to see what could be done to make them stay in the area.

Cypher warns that going to high school kids isn't relevant because they aren't paying taxes, their parents are. Waring wants to see how to attract a younger generation to stay or move here. Current demographics are a lot of 50 and older.

Thank you for your service.

XIII. Adjournment – Browning moves to adjourn, Popour seconds the motion, and all present vote aye, the meeting is adjourned at 5:23 p.m.

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**NOTE:** No Village of Beulah Council business will be conducted at this meeting.