

**SANDS TOWNSHIP PLANNING COMMISSION
MINUTES**

May 1, 2018
Special Meeting

1. Call to Order at 6:30 by Planning Commission Secretary S. Brauer
2. Roll Call: S. Brauer, J. Yelle, A. Burbey, P. Lajewski-Pearson & S. Sundell
 - a. Absent: R. Titter & E. Anderson
 - b. Others in Attendance: Randy Yelle, Carolyn Kerkela, Dave Hall, Stacy Haughey, Tom Seablom, David Kallio, Betsy Rochon, Nancy Machalk, Curtis Jay, Tom Johnson, Gary Ruhinen, and other members of the public.
3. Approval of Agenda: Motion by P. Lajewski-Pearson, Supported by A. Burbey, to approve agenda as presented. Ayes: 5 Nays: 0 Motion Carried.
4. Approval of Minutes:
 - a. April 17, 2018: Motion by S. Sundell, Supported by P. Lajewski-Pearson, to approve the minutes of the April 17, 2018 meeting as presented. Ayes: 5 Nays: 0 Motion carried.
5. Public Comment: *See Appendix A*
6. Business:
 - a. RZ2018-03 (MDNR) – *Tabled from April 17, 2018 meeting.*

Discussion followed among Commissioners, with questions being asked of the DNR. Concern was raised over a recreation area being near an Industrial site, and conflicting uses with surrounding properties. Questions were asked regarding the sound study, the construction of berms, the current plan for operations at the site, and regulations. Other potential sites were mentioned as possibly being a better site, with less nearby residences.

Motion by A. Burbey, Supported by P. Lajewski-Pearson, that, after conducting the required public hearing, and required posting, the Sands Township Planning Commission, supports the concept of a State shooting range within the County of Marquette, and understands that Sands Township would be a central location for the requested State shooting range. The request before this Commission is to rezone a 20 acre parcel from Industrial to Open Space. The Sands Township Planning Commission is hereby recommending the Sands Township Board of Trustees deny request RZ2018-03 for the following reasons:

- Rezoning to Open Space will allow any and all other activities allowed within the O.S. district,
- No support from the surrounding/adjoining township residents,
- No support from the adjoining business (A. Lindberg and Sons, who alludes to increased traffic and concerns for safety of employees and equipment),

- **Loss of townships already limited Industrial zoned property,**
- **Not in compliance with township's Master Plan. (The property along Marquette County Road 480 & State Highway, per Master Plan should be zoned Commercial and/or Industrial.)**

7. Administrative Report: None
8. Public Comment: *See Appendix B*
9. S. Brauer adjourned meeting at 7:34.

Ron Titter
Chairman

S. Brauer
Secretary

C. Kerkela
Recording Secretary

**Appendix A
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5. Public Comment

Jerry Trudell, Resident on 480, stated he is opposed to the zoning change because of noise pollution. When he first moved to the area, it was remote and quiet. There is a lot more noise now. He questioned the noise study, and how the tree removal will affect the noise. He also asked if this would affect his property value.

Scott Erbisch, Marquette County Administrator, read a letter from the County Board in support of the project, dated early 2017.

Gary Ruhinen, Resident in Oakridge, is in favor of the rezoning. He agrees the project should be focused on an area where people will go, because people will not drive to a remote area. He wants young people to be able to enjoy firearms and learn safety. This could be an outstanding recreational facility for the area.

Dave Kallio, Resident on 553, said the State controls little of the surrounding area. Tree cutting is being done that needs replanting. He prefers to start over and have discussions on sharing the monies. He feels the best thing is a partnership with an existing range, and also mentioned partnering with the university. There is a danger to the shooter, the environment, and water, and the safest ranges are enclosed, with correct ventilation. He mentioned contamination at the current site and groundwater concerns. He has been investigating the new range downstate, and an environmental assessment was done there. He questioned the caliber of rifle used for the sound study.

Stacey Haughey, DNR, said NMU is in support of the project. They have met with UPAWS several times, who are in support if the project stays within certain parameters. The DNR assessed 12 sites extensively, and this site was chosen overwhelmingly. They will follow health and safety guidelines. There will be a full containment and liner system. She addressed other concerns and is available for questions.

Al Sevegney, Feather Ridge Resident, understands the concerns, but feels proper steps have been taken. People using the areas currently are a danger, and he would rather see a range that is safer, where kids can go. This is a good place and he is in favor of the project.

Bob Stephenson, Township Resident, said UPAWS has had several meetings with the DNR. They are in favor of a different site, and question the noise study.

Nancy Machalk, Resident on 480, questioned if this is a land swap with the Road Commission. She asked what happens to surrounding areas if this is approved. She questioned if there was a benefit to the Township (increased tax base? increased tax

revenue? employment?) The majority of people in support are not residents. If more shooting happens in the area, what does that mean for sound? Will the noise coverage be affected by the logging? Repetitive and continued sound is a nuisance. The DNR owns other lands, and she urges to look at moving responsible shooters there.

Curtis Jay, Resident, urges the Commission to approve the request. He is embarrassed by the current situation out there, and he shared two different stories of unsafe behavior he witnessed in the area. A proper range and facilities will help eliminate the problems and is a long time need.

Melody Wagner, Forsyth Township Resident, said she talked to several people who felt they had no say in the project and she was speaking for them. Many had concerns for noise, both for animals and houses in the area. There will be an impact on the community and a focus should be safety.

Betsy Rochon, Resident on 480, said that nearby residents and the nearby business are unified against the project. She questioned the accuracy of the noise study. She questioned other areas owned by the State that could be a better spot. She felt statements were made by the DNR with no guarantees. For young shooters, a club is more advantageous than this proposed range, because it will not be manned and there is no enforcement. She explained the regulations and rules for the proposed site, and why law enforcement will not use the site.

Appendix B
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8. Public Comment:

Stacey Haughey, DNR, thanked everyone on behalf of the DNR. She appreciates the comments and support. They will work to assess other areas for a possible site. On a personal note, she wanted to clarify that she would never intentionally slant comments.

Gary Ruhinen asked how long it would take to examine other sites. Tom Seablom & Stacey Haughey were not sure, because 12 sites have already been assessed. They also mentioned the cost of a sound study as a hindrance.

Dave Kallio talked about the soundproofing being used at the shooting range near Traverse City currently under construction. He would like to see a group of people work together to find a site where a shooting range could work. He would like to see a place where people could be smart, educated shooters.

Andrew, City of Ishpeming resident, is in favor of a shooting range, especially for youth. There is currently no opportunity to go to a site that is manned. He implores the group to find another location where this could work.

Mike is also in favor of the range; he has 3 boys and he would like to give them the opportunity to shoot at a range and learn safety. Something needs to be done about the current area, because of contamination and safety. He explained some of the results from the sound study and why a high powered rifle may not have any more decibels of sound than the rifles used in the study. He sympathizes with surrounding property owners and would like to find a solution, because there are benefits.

Nancy Machalk, Resident on 480, thanked everyone for their consideration and offered to purchase memberships to the Negaunee Rod & Gun Club for the youth in the audience because she would like to see responsible youth.

Tom Seablom thanked the public, both in support of the project and against, and thanked the Township. He understands being a public servant is not easy.

Dave Hall, Ewing Township resident, heard the discussions on safety and the majority support. He hopes the DNR, the Township, and the community can come together to make it happen. This project is not paid for with tax dollars, and is a win/win for everyone.

Betsy Rochon, Resident on 480, said the Negaunee Rod & Gun Club is great for youth. She thanked Tom Seablom and wished things had went in a different manner from the beginning.