

SUPERIOR CHARTER TOWNSHIP

Planning Commission

Regular Meeting Minutes - APPROVED

February 26, 2025, 7:00 PM

Township Hall - 3040 North Prospect

Superior Township, MI 48198

1. CALL TO ORDER

Chairman Gardner called the regular meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

2. ROLL CALL

Present: Jay Gardner, Chair
Dr. Robert Steele, Vice Chair
Thomas Brennan, Secretary
Patrick McGill
Brenda McKinney, Board Representative
Nahid Sanii-Yahyai
Curt Wolf

Absent: None

Also Present: Planning Consultants – Benjamine Carlisle and Diane Mulville-Friel, Carlisle Wortman
Engineering Consultants - Claire Martin, OHM

3. DETERMINATION OF QUORUM

A quorum was present.

4. ADOPTION OF AGENDA

MOTION by Brennan, supported by Sanii-Yahyai, to adopt the February 26, 2025, agenda as presented

Motion passed unanimously by voice vote.

5. APPROVAL OF MEETING MINUTES

A. January 22, 2025 - Regular Meeting Minutes

Sanii-Yahyai requested a correction to the minutes as follows:

6. Citizen Participation

Chair Gardner opened the Citizen Participation portion of the meeting. Superior Township Board of Trustee, Dana Greene Jr., was present and he introduce introduced himself to the Planning Commission as a new Trustee. No other citizens wished public comment.

MOTION by Brennan, supported by Sanii-Yahyai, to adopt the January 22, 2025, meeting minutes as amended.

Motion passed unanimously by voice vote.

6. CITIZEN PARTICIPATION

Chair Gardner opened the Citizen Participation portion of the meeting and asked if anyone wanted to speak on an issue not related to the DTE public hearing case. No other citizens offered public comment.

7. CORRESPONDANCE

Ms. Mulville-Friel provided the Commission correspondance from Bita Lahann and Joerg Lahann (attached).

MOTION by Brennan supported by McKinney, to receive the correspondence.

Motion passed unanimously by voice vote.

8. PUBLIC HEARINGS, DELIBERATIONS AND ACTIONS

A. STPC #25-02 Conditional Use Permit/Preliminary Site Plan - DTE Electric Grenada Electric Substation Expansion

Chair Gardner announced the item as a public hearing and explained how the hearing would proceed: (1) Representative from DTE would provide initial comment and summarize proposal; (2) Township Planner and Engineer would provide overview of their review memos; (3) Commissioner's would offer comments and ask questions; (4) Public would be afforded opportunity to comment; and (5) Commission would make a motion regarding the requested action.

Terry Spryszak, PMO - Corporate Permit Specialist, DTE Energy introduced the Grenada Substation Expansion Project team members who were in attendance:

- Thomas E Teasdale, Senior Program Manager - Distribution Operations, DTE Energy
- Molly A Luempert-Coy, Regional Manager - DTE Energ
- D. J. Burns - Project Engineer - Motor City Electric Utilities Co.
- Gregory Eskola, Engineering Manager, Black and Veatch
- Zachary Wiacek, Site Civil Engineer, Black & Veatch

Molly Luempert provided an overview of the need for DTE to expand the substation to increase capacity and reliability. DTE is making substantial investments in upgrading existing infrastructure such as the Grenada Substation. Improvements to this substation will allow DTE to accelerate its transition to smart grid technology so that power could be restored more quickly when outages occurred. The improvements would also reduce the overall number of outages. She also explained that the noise associated with the substation would not exceed 68 decibels at the substation and that noise would dissipate with distance.

Terry Spryszak provided specifics on improvements proposed with the Grenada Substation Expansion project. He explained that although this is a largely un-manned facility, it is DTE's policy to establish restrooms at substations for the convenience of personnel who will be maintaining the facility and servicing it during outages. The restroom necessitates installation of a well and septic system.

Chair Gardner called for the Township Planner and Engineers reports. Ben Carlisle, summarized the main items of concern outlined in the CWA memo (i.e., noise, lighting, emission, safety and general environmental impacts, and whether the restroom and large septic field were necessary because it requires many more existing trees to be removed and hinders planting of landscape buffers along the northwest corner of the site).

Mr. Spryszak reiterated that during outages, personnel may need to be onsite for extended periods of time and it is DTE's policy to have an onsite restroom facility for "human dignity reasons". Gregory Eskola, Black and Veatch, commented on the size of the septic field and that the Washtenaw County Health Department (WCHD) dictated the size. A portable toilet facilities with a pump out is not a viable solution as there are security issues with persons coming and going from the site and unsecured structures may be a hazard during a storm event.

Carlisle asked about the site lighting and Eskola explained that security lights would be mounted to the restroom and control house buildings and would only be on when staff were servicing the site.

Commissioner Nahid Sanii-Yahyai asked for more clarity on the question of safety. Carlisle opined that DTE was more concerned about people getting inside the substation fence where high voltage equipment was housed.

Commissioner Steele asked for clarification as to why a new Conditional Use Permit was required. Carlisle confirmed that it was required because the existing facility is proposed to be expanded beyond what was initially approved to be constructed in 1990.

Chair Gardner asked for clarification on the height of the equipment and the tree mitigation plan. Zachary Wiacek of Black & Veatch, confirmed that the height of the lightning mast was ~70 feet, the height of other onsite equipment ranged from 12-16 ft, and the security fence would be 8 feet in height. Chair Gardner asked about the feasibility of installing more buffers and planting more and taller trees. Wiacek explained that the trees proposed for planting would all be fast growing and be 6-8 feet in height. Gardner brought up another facility in Superior owned by DTE where 12 foot high evergreens had been planted and that they created an solid screen for the other facility. He asked DTE to consider much taller trees to be planted initially to provide an immediate buffer. Gardner recommended more trees to be planted at the Grenada Substation rather than paying into the Township's tree fund which developers are required to pay in lieu of planting replacement trees onsite. Gardner also recommended a landscape maintenance plan.

Township Engineer, Claire Martin summarized some of the outside agency approvals that were required as outlined in the OHM memo. She stated that OHM had minor comments. Martin asked applicant whether they had met with the Washtenaw County Road Commission (WCRC) about the driveway approach and the DTE member explained that they have had preliminary discussions with WCRC and the approach looked feasible.

Chair Gardner then called for public comment. The following eight (8) citizens were in attendance and provided public comment:

- 1) Ray Franzen
- 2) Paul Guttman
- 3) Lori Franzen
- 4) Claudia Doyle
- 5) Mary Guttman
- 6) Tom Kenney
- 7) Jack Goodnoe
- 8) Andrew Grant

All comments were in general opposition with the following concerns/comments voiced:

- Landscape buffers and durable landscaping installed with a diversity of tree species and mixture of understory, shrubs, grasses, and canopy trees.
- Stormwater run-off due to increased impervious surface.
- Whether the expansion would actually increase capacity and directly benefit Superior Township residents by reducing outages.
- Proximity of substation to sensitive natural areas (i.e., Botanical Garden and Flemming Creek).
- Visual impact of industrial scale substation to residential areas and the Village of Dixboro.
- Potential health effects of electromagnetic radiation from transformers and other equipment.
- Transmission structures constructed outside of the fenced areas.
- Changes to local aesthetics and viewsheds.
- Noise constant humming or buzzing noise may be audible several hundred feet from the substation.
- Potential light pollution.
- Reduction in property values for adjacent owners.
- Tree maintenance and vegetation management now and in the future.
- A curved entrance drive needed to help with screening.
- Concern that the Dixboro Design Review Board would not be provided with a formal opportunity to comment on the expansion project.

After public comment, Chair Gardner called for a motion to close the public hearing.

MOTION by Brennan supported by Sani-Yahyai, to close the public hearing.

Motion passed unanimously by voice vote.

Chair Gardner asked for discussion amongst the Commission.

Gardner reiterated the importance of planting trees on site to buffer and that preliminary plans submitted did not adequately address this need. There was more exchange between the Commission and the DTE team regarding the landscaping.

Brennan stated that he understood the need for a restroom on site. Carlisle stated that the Township would be willing to meet with the WCHD and DTE to determine whether a septic field of that size is really necessary given the intermittent use of the onsite restroom.

After Commissioner comment period, Chair Gardner called for a motion regarding action on the Conditional Use Permit/Preliminary Site Plan - DTE Electric Grenada Electric Substation Expansion. Carlisle summarized the conditions Commissioner may want to consider in a motion.

Brennan made the motion to postpone the Conditional Use Permit and Preliminary Site Plan for STPC 25-02 - DTE Electric Grenada Electric Substation Expansion to allow the applicant to address the following items:

- 1) Confirm/justify the need for expansion of the substation facility (e.g., elaborate on how much additional electrical capacity and/or stability will be brought to Superior Township and the region as a whole).
- 2) Explore alternative restroom options including elimination of septic field. Staff will reach out to County Health to coordinate conversation.
- 3) Preserve and reduce the number of existing trees removed.
- 4) Increase the size, height (at least 12 ft), and diameter of mitigation/landscaping trees required to be planted on site. Staff can work with DTE to relieve mitigation tree numbers in exchange for larger trees planted on site.
- 5) Ensure planting provides year-round screening and is comprised of diverse Michigan native species that are fast growing but durable to storm damage and that provide immediate screening to the fullest extent possible. The object of the screening should be that the surrounding fence and the 16 ft high equipment inside the fence are not visible from any of the four sides of the property at the completion of the project. Further, the object is that growth of the plantings will shield the 16 ft high equipment inside the fence within a relatively short period of time.
- 6) Provide a maintenance plan that describes the specific practices and products that will be used to implement the landscape management plan, along with a schedule of annual maintenance practices.
- 7) Provide a visual 3-D model of the facility from all four cardinal directions with landscape screening in place.
- 8) Photometric plan and description of when and how light sources will be used.
- 9) Provide an environmental impact statement (EIS) that outlines the environmental and potential health and safety risks of the proposed substation expansion.

Commissioner Steele second the motion.

Roll Call Vote:

Yes: Brennan, Gardner, McGill, McKinney, Sanii-Yahyai, Steele, Wolf

No: None.

Abstain: None.

The motion carried.

9. REPORTS

A. Building Department Report

Ms. Mulville-Friel provided the Commission with an overview of the status of building permits issued in January broken down by category (e.g., comm/multi-family, residential). There were 104 issued permits issued in January with an estimated construction costs of \$2,1 mil. Approximately \$35K in permit fees were collected. Fees are based on a percentage of construction costs.

B. Zoning Administrator Report

Ms. Mulville-Friel provided the Commission with an overview of active development projects (Prospect Pointe West, Brookwood, and Garrett's Space), the status of recent Zoning Board of Appeals (ZBA) cases, future cases to be reviewed by the Planning Commission, and other business/news.

MOTION by Brennan supported by Wolf, to receive the reports.

Motion passed unanimously by voice vote.

10. OLD BUSINESS

None.

11. NEW BUSINESS

12. POLICY DISCUSSION

A. Size of plans submitted for Commission packets: full-sized plan sheets (24 in x 36 in), Tabloid size (11 in x 17 in), and/or digital PDF

Ms. Mulville-Friel asked the Planning Commission whether they wanted to continue receiving full-size (24 in x 36 in) copies of the site plan with their meeting agenda packets or if Tabloid size (11 in x 17 in) combined with a digital PDF would suffice. She explained that the Zoning Ordinance currently requires applicants to submit sixteen (16) full-size plan sets with every application and subsequent revision for technical review. This is an historical procedure and most reviewers as well as Planning Commissioners do not need hard copies of plan sets and prefer digital copies of the plans.

The Planning Commission as a whole agreed that 11 in x 17 in hard copies of the plans along with a digital PDF would be sufficient to include with the agenda packets going forward and that applicants should only be required to submit three (3) full size sets for the Township to have available for the public to view.

B. Zoning Ordinance Rewrite

Ms. Mulville-Friel reiterated that the Zoning Ordinance Rewrite Committee is comprised of three (3) Planning Commission members: Gardner, Brennan, and Sani-Yahyai. There have been two (2) ZO Rewrite Steering Committee meetings to date (December 13, 2024, and January 15, 2025). The existing Zoning Ordinance has been re-organized, and the table of table contents revised.

Proposed changes to Articles 1-4 have been reviewed by the Steering Committee. We anticipate that Articles 6 and 7 will be ready for review by the Steering Committee at the next meeting on March 26th.

At the last PC meeting, CWA was asked to provide insight into the following:

- (1) How does CWA plan to transition from the Steering Committee’s review of the Zoning Ordinance rewrite to getting input from the whole Planning Commission? Ms. Mulville-Friel stated that CWA can start sending sections of the ordinance to the PC after the Steering Committee reviews and have it as a standing item on the agenda each month or CWA can wait until all articles have been reviewed and there is a complete draft available.
- (2) What is planned for receiving and incorporating public input on the Zoning Ordinance rewrite? Ms. Mulville-Friel stated that when the final draft is ready, CWA will hold a public hearing to gather input. Ben Carlisle reiterated that unlike the Master Plan which is a policy document, a Zoning Ordinance is a technical (legal) document and there is typically not much public input. The only requirement by the State Zoning Enabling Act is that one (1) public hearing be held once the draft Zoning Ordinance is written. Carlisle explained that if there are specific sections of the Zoning Ordinance that the Steering Committee would like to discuss with the Planning Commission as a whole we can bring that forward at a regular scheduled meeting. The Commissioners generally agreed with this approach.

13. ADJOURNMENT – *next regularly scheduled meeting on March 26, 2025*

MOTION by Brennan, supported by Sanii-Yahyai to adjourn the meeting.

Motion passed unanimously by voice vote.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:47 pm.

Meeting Minutes Respectfully submitted,

Thomas Brennan III, Planning Commission Secretary
Diane Mulville-Friel, Recording Secretary
3040 N. Prospect, Ypsilanti, MI 48198, 734-482-6099

Attached: Communication from Bitia Lahann and Joerg Lahann

COMMUNICATION RECEIVED

Subject: Petition to Oppose the Expansion of the Power Substation at N. Dixboro Road & Plymouth Road

Dear Members of the Charter Township Planning Commission,

As a resident of 5052 Plymouth Road, I am writing to express my strong opposition to the proposed expansion of the power substation at N. Dixboro Road and Plymouth Road (J-10-18-261-012). This expansion, within a designated single-family residential zone (R4), raises serious concerns about its compatibility with our community's well-being and our property values.

While I understand the need for reliable power infrastructure, the location of this expansion in a residential area is highly problematic. The potential health risks associated with increased electromagnetic fields, particularly for children and vulnerable individuals, are a major concern.

Furthermore, the expansion is projected to significantly increase noise levels, disrupting the peace of our neighborhood and impacting our quality of life. The potential for accidents and equipment malfunctions poses a safety risk, and the expanded facility's vulnerability raises security concerns.

The negative impact on property values is undeniable. The presence of an expanded power substation, with its associated equipment and power lines, will diminish the aesthetic appeal of our neighborhood and inevitably affect property values. This directly impacts our investments and the desirability of our community.

Beyond the visual and noise pollution, I am deeply concerned about the environmental impact. The expansion threatens local wildlife and ecosystems, particularly given the proximity to a nature reserve and the botanical garden.

I urge the Superior Charter Township Planning Commission to prioritize the well-being of our community and the preservation of our property values. Please deny the proposed expansion and explore alternative solutions that do not negatively impact residential areas.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Bitia Lahann". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "B".

Bitia Lahann

5052 Plymouth Road, Dixboro

Joerg Lahann
5052 Plymouth Road
Dixboro, MI 48105

To: Superior Charter Township Planning Commission

3040 N. Prospect

Ypsilanti, MI 48198

Subject: Petition to Oppose the Expansion of the Power Substation at the east side of N. Dixboro Road, south Plymouth Road (J-10-18-261-012)

Dear Members of the Charter Township Planning Commission

I, the undersigned residents of 5052 Plymouth Road, am writing to express my strong opposition to the proposed expansion of the power substation located at N. Dixboro Road, south Plymouth Road (J-10-18-261-012). This expansion, situated within a single-family residential zone (R4 zoning), presents several significant concerns that negatively impact our community.

I understand the need for reliable power infrastructure. However, the location of this expansion within a residential area raises serious questions about its compatibility with the health, safety, and well-being of our families. My specific concerns include:

- **Potential Health Risks from Electromagnetic Fields (EMF):** While the long-term effects of EMF exposure are still being studied, we are concerned about the potential health risks associated with increased EMF levels from the expanded substation, particularly for children and vulnerable individuals in our community.
- **Noise Pollution:** The current substation already generates some noise. We anticipate that the expansion will significantly increase noise levels, disrupting the peace and quiet of our neighborhood and potentially impacting our quality of life.
- **Safety Concerns:** Expanding the substation increases the potential risk of accidents and equipment malfunctions, posing a potential danger to nearby residents. We are also concerned about the security of the expanded facility and its potential vulnerability.
- **Negative Impact on Property Values:** The expansion of a power substation in a residential zone can negatively impact property values, affecting our investments and the overall desirability of our neighborhood.
- **Aesthetic Degradation:** The expanded substation, with its associated equipment and power lines, will further detract from the aesthetics of our residential neighborhood, diminishing its character and visual appeal.
- **Environmental Impact:** Beyond the visual and noise pollution, we are concerned about the potential environmental impact of the expansion, including potential impacts on local wildlife and ecosystems, which abandonly live and breed in this particular area. The proximity to a nature reserve and the botanical garden further potentiates this concern.

I believe that the continued utilization, and even more so, the expansion of this outdated Grenada substation is incompatible with the character and zoning of our residential neighborhood zoned as R-4 (Single-Family Residential). I urge the *Superior Charter Township Planning Commission* to deny the proposed expansion and to explore alternative solutions that do not negatively impact residential areas.

I, the undersigned, respectfully request that you consider our concerns and reject the proposed expansion of the power substation at N. Dixboro Road, south Plymouth Road (J-10-18-261-012).

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Joerg Lahann', with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

Joerg Lahann

(Wolfgang Pauli Collegiate Professor of Chemical Engineering)

5052 Plymouth Road, Dixboro