



**PLANNING COMMISSION
2023 ANNUAL REPORT**

Covering activity from January 1 to December 31, 2023

The Michigan Enabling Act states that “A planning commission shall make an annual written report to the legislative body concerning its operations and the status of planning activities, including recommendations regarding actions by the legislative body related to planning and development.”

Introduction:

The Planning Commission is an important part of the Village of Empire and its operations. The Michigan Planning Enabling Act No. 33 of 2008 (MPEA) is the foundational statutory authority for the Planning Commission. MPEA allows for the establishment of local planning commissions, master plans, and other associated activities. The Village of Empire Planning Commission is established in Village Ordinance No. 117 of 2008.

The Village of Empire Planning Commission consists of seven members who shall be representative of important segments of the community. Commissioners are appointed by the Village President subject to approval by a majority vote of the Village Council. Other than ex officio members, members serve a term of three years.

Matters to be considered by the Commission:

- Developing the community's master plan which provides a framework for orderly growth and redevelopment.
- Creating a zoning ordinance to translate master planning goals to land use regulations.
- Reviewing and approving development requests.
- Drafting a capital improvements plan.
- Studying special topics or conducting other special projects as requested by Village Council.

Membership:

In 2023, the following Planning Commission members presided:

Name	Meetings Attended	Member Since	Term Expiration
Peter Schous, Chair	8/8	12/2014	02/29/2024
John Collins, Vice Chair	6/8	05/2020	02/28/2025
Margaret Ellibee, Secretary	7/8	03/2023	02/28/2026
Robert Chase, Treasurer	8/8	12/2020	02/29/2024
Maggie Bacon, Ex Officio Member	8/8	12/2014	11/30/2024
Phil Deering	7/8	03/2000	02/28/2025
Steve Stepanek	5/5	03/2023	10/04/2023
Carey Ford	1/1	12/2023	02/28/2026

Meetings:

The Planning Commission typically meets once per month on the first Tuesday of the month at 7:00 p.m., in the Empire Township Hall, 10088 W. Front Street, Empire, MI 49630. (Specific dates and times can be found on the village website and are subject to change). All meetings are open to the public.

The MPEA requires that local Planning Commissions meet at least four times a year. The Village of Empire Planning Commission held a total of 8 meetings in 2023.

Meeting Date	Summary
March 7	New Member Binders, Sign Ordinance, Recreation Plan
April 4	Sign Ordinance, Discussion to Codify the Zoning Ordinance
May 2	Sign Ordinance
June 6	Sign Ordinance
September 5	Sign Ordinance, Master and Recreation Plan, RRC Essentials Update
October 3	Sign Ordinance, Recreation Plan
November 1	Recreation Plan
December 13	Renovare Presentation for new Village Office, Zoning Amendment Request in LI District, Short-term Rental Committee Appointments, Recreation Plan

Planning Commission Actions:

Some highlights from the Commission's actions in 2023 are as follows:

MASTER PLAN STATUS

The Planning Commission is responsible for regularly reviewing and updating the master plan to ensure it continues to be relevant to the community's needs. The community's [current master plan](#) was adopted on September 24, 2019 and amended to include an [addendum on Coastal Community Resiliency](#) on September 1, 2020. The MPEA requires a formal review (and update or reaffirmation) occur at least every five years.

In addition to the MPEA required five -year review, the community's efforts to maintain alignment with the Redevelopment Ready Communities Best Practices includes annual progress assessments to determine if the community is on track for meeting the plan's goals and actions.

In order to align with RRC expectations the following item needs to be addressed:

While the plan identifies goals, objectives and actions, there is no timeline or responsible parties. An action-oriented plan that has timelines and responsible parties helps drive the implementation of the plan. This can be created using a separate document and reviewed annually.

The Planning Commission will be performing a full five-year review of its master plan in 2024.

ORDINANCE AMENDMENTS

None.

ZONING MAP AMENDMENTS

None.

DEVELOPMENT APPLICATION REVIEWS

None.

REDEVELOPMENT READY COMMUNITIES

Village Council adopted a resolution on September 14, 2023, that authorizes the Village of Empire to participate in the Michigan Economic Development Corporation (MEDC) Redevelopment Ready Communities (RRC) Program. The program has two paths, the Essentials Path and the Certified Path. Empire has selected the Essentials Path. The baseline evaluation of Empire's alignment with the RRC has been completed and a [community snapshot](#) has been prepared by the MEDC community planner. Currently, Empire is fully aligned with 26% of the Redevelopment Ready Communities expectations. 2024 will provide opportunities to integrate and implement these RRC Best Practice expectations.

Planning Commission Sub Committee Activity:

Sign Ordinance Sub Committee: 06/14/2023, 07/17/2023

The Sign Ordinance Sub-committee was formed to revise and recommend a Sign Ordinance for Planning Commission consideration. Members Chase, Stepanek, and Ellibee worked on this committee.

Zoning Board of Appeals Activity:

The Zoning Board of Appeals (ZBA) is tasked with hearing appeals, zoning ordinance interpretations, and variance requests. It consists of five members and two alternates who would be assigned to a meeting in the event a regular member is absent or has a conflict of interest. No cases for appeals, interpretations, or variance requests were heard by the ZBA in 2023.

Section 9.02.1 of the Village of Empire Zoning Ordinance allows for the adoption of ZBA rules or procedures that may be necessary to conduct its meeting and carry out its function. In 2017, a draft ZBA Bylaws document was prepared. The ZBA should review this draft and adopt its Bylaws to fulfill the RRC Best Practices requirement.

Zoning Administrator Activity:

PERMIT #	TYPE	ZONE	PARCEL ID #	NAME(last) NAME(first) - BLDR	SITE ADDRESS / LOCATION
2023-01	ND	PUD	45-041-550-059-00	McNutt, Stephen and Sharon-Pathway Homes	9974 W. South Street
2023-02	SIGN	G-RES	45-041-719-011-00	St. Philip Neri Catholic Church	11411 S. LaCore Street
2023-03	FM-MKT	FSD	45-041-824-009-10	Leelanau Farmers Markets Baril, Bob	N/A - West Front Street
2023-04	RA	G-RES	45-041-824-052-00	Greisiger, Joe	11472 S. Lacore Street
2023-05	RA	PUD	45-041-550-005-00	Evans, James and Kaye	9888 Wilce Street
2023-06	TEMP	REC-CON	WITHDRAWN	Quinn, Robert - Benzie Community Band	Niagra Street- S. Bar Lake
2023-07	RA	V-RES	45-041-702-018-00	Jacob, Karen and Cortright, David	10138 W. Wilce Street
2023-08	SIGN	FSD	45-041-702-022-00	Glen Lake Community Library	10115 N Front Street
2023-09	FENCE	G-RES	45-041-719-011-00	St. Philip Neri Catholic Church	11411 S. LaCore Street
2023-10	ND	PUD	45-041-325-065-00	Ford, Carey	11757 S. Roen Road
2023-11	RA	VR	45-041-300-058-00	Weber, Tima and Beth	11857 S. Lake Street
2023-12	RAD	G-RES	45-041-200-002-00	Schueler, Guy and Nikki	11231 S. LaCore Street
2023-13	RA	PUD	45-041-550-020-00	Greenwoods of MI, LLC-Ernst, Dan and Jeanne	11914 S. Ontario Street
2023-14	ADU	G-RES	45-041-824-037-00	Chase, Robert and Linda	11364 LaCore Street
2023-15	C-ACC	G-COR	45-041-719-003-01	Blarney Castle EZ Mart	9988 W. Front Street
2023-16	DECK	G-RES	45-041-730-003-00	Palmer, Sue	12089 S. Wood Street
2023-17	FENCE	G-RES	45-041-103-011-00	Stacewicz, Ricahard and Goethals, Ann	10125 Washington Street
2023-18	SPR	G-COR	45-041-036-00 and 049-00	VanEsley, Joseph and Elizabeth	10017 W. Front Street
2023-19	ADA	G-RES	45-041-703-007-00	Baker, Trish - North Coast Cont.	10185 W. Wilce Street
2023-20	ND	G-RES	45-041-500-045-00	Heart & Homes LLC	11530 S. Crescent Drive
2023-21	ND	G-RES	45-041-500-046-00	M22 Development	11524 S. Crescent Drive
2023-22	ND	G-RES	45-041-500-048-00	M22 Development	11512 S. Crescent Drive
2023-23	ND	G-RES	45-041-400-049-00	M22 Development	11506 S. Crescent Drive
LD-2301	LD	PUD	45-041-450-007-00	Ford, Carey and Surber, Don-Trust	Lots 7 and 10 of Storm Hill Subdivision

Trainings:

Training is essential to providing the community with the tools needed to achieve local goals. The Planning Commission's training plan encourages commissioners to attend at least one training session or conference annually.

Member	Summary of Training and Seminars
Peter Schous	
John Collins	
Margaret Ellibee	Planning and Zoning Essentials, Housing North Conference Oct 26-27, OMA and FOIA Training Mar 29
Robert Chase	OMA and FOIA Training Mar 29
Maggie Bacon	OMA and FOIA Training Mar 29
Phil Deering	
Carey Ford	
Alacia Acton (Staff)	RRC Training

Looking Ahead to 2024

The Planning Commission can look forward to the following objectives in 2024:

- Hold a public hearing on the Sign Ordinance and recommend to Village Council for approval. Remove it as a Village Ordinance and incorporate it back into the Zoning Ordinance.
- Consider a Zoning Amendment request in the Light Industrial District.
- Updates to the Zoning Ordinance as determined necessary.
- Begin the 5-year review and update of the Master Plan and Recreation Plan.
- Work on action items to achieve Redevelopment Ready Communities Essentials status.
- Training opportunities.