THORNAPPLE TOWNSHIP PLANNING COMMISSION

Regular Meeting, July 28, 2025

1. Call to Order:

   A. The meeting was called to order by Tom Kilgore at 7:00 p.m. at the Thornapple Township Hall located at 200 East Main Street Middleville, Michigan 49333.

   B. Present: Tom Kilgore, Sandy Rairigh, Bryan Finkbeiner, Elaine Denton, Linda Gasper, Craig Wandrie, and Elizabeth Hansson. Also present: Nichole Lyke, Sydney LaDere, Brad Brown, Jennifer Carey, George Carey, Kim Jachim, Larry Jachim, Steve Fitzgerald, Dan Price, Katy Price, Dan Beyer, Tim Kelley, Robin Kelley, Scott Olthouse, Shirley Olthouse, Sheila Workman, Jordan Workman, Kerrie Nalbach, Tom Wunderland, Kassidy Saurman, Jacob Saurman, Haley Scholzen, Zach Scholzen, Jessia Eggers, Brian Eggers, Kathy Wynsma, Bill Wynsma, Kaylee Ketchum, Brandon Boonstra, Dakota Boonstra, Todd Boonstra, Leslie Boonstra, Kaedon Jordan, Rose Herbert, Lisa Spit, Phil Gensterblum and Brenda Hess.

2. Approval of Agenda:

   MOTION by Denton, **SUPPORT** by Rairigh to approve the agenda as written. **MOTION CARRIED** with 7 yes voice votes.

3. Approval of Minutes:

   MOTION by Rairigh **SUPPORT** by Finkbeiner to approve the June 23, 2025, meeting minutes with adjustment to margins in sections two and three. **MOTION CARRIED** with 7 yes voice votes.

4. Citizen Comments: None.

5. Public Hearings:

   A. Special Land Use #177 – Parent Dwelling Accessory Dwelling – Jennifer Carey

      I. Applicant Presentation: Jennifer Carey is requesting SLU #177 to construct an accessory dwelling for her aging parent who is experiencing medical problems requiring twenty-four-hour care. This will be a "modular" style building with 2 bedrooms and an office space. Following the applicant's retirement, she plans to utilize the office for freelance work. The extra bedroom will allow for someone to sleep over when necessary.

      II. Planning and Zoning Administrator: Gensterblum shared a letter from the doctor caring for the applicant's mother. He noted they have approximately nine secluded acres and will put the dwelling to the north of their existing home.

      III. Public Hearing: Opened at 7:04 pm. - No public comment

      Public Hearing: Closed at 7:05 pm.

      IV. Commission Questions and Deliberation: Rairigh asked a clarifying question as to the specific type of dwelling it would be. Finkbeiner asked about septic service. Applicant has worked with the health department regarding the septic and drain field being told she will need an additional septic tank, but the drain field is of ample size to service both structures, as will the current well. Finkbeiner noted a current accessory building would need to be moved and inquired if there are plans to create a separate parcel for the new dwelling. Kilgore noted the ordinance does not allow two permanent residences on one parcel and it becomes multifamily. When the family member passes away, the structure will need to be removal. Finkbeiner noted if the property is divided into two separate parcels, both would require a driveway. Rairigh asked about the potential homebased business and

the applicant stated her business would be for internet sales and would not have traffic to the property. Rairigh suggested applicant meet with Gensterblum discussing options moving forward. Frontage was discussed at length and the property map was examined by all. Gasper noted there is little information regarding the appearance of the structure and it must match the current dwelling. Applicant was again encouraged to meet with Gensterblum to further discuss dividing the property into two separate parcels. Kilgore stated that this SLU can be approved now, but with the stipulation of compliance with all sections of the ordinance.

MOTION by Rairigh, **SUPPORT** by Finkbeiner to approve special Land Use #177 at 3450 Eagleview Court subject to conditions one through eleven of the ordinance . **Roll Call Vote:** Finkbeiner-Yes, Denton-Yes, Gasper-Yes, Hansson-Yes, Kilgore-Yes, Rairigh-Yes, Wandrie-Yes. **MOTION CARRIED** with 7 yes roll call votes and 0 no votes.

B. Special Land Use 178 – Accessory Building for Dog Kennel Business - Kassidy Saurman

I. Applicant Presentation: Applicant reviewed the history of her current successful dog kenneling business located in Hastings. She would like to have her business move to 3199 Loop Court so she can spend more time with her young family. She found the Loop Court property and has a purchase agreement pending approval of the SLU. Applicant reviewed the process she went through up until this point. She addressed concerns about the number of cars visiting her property and reported she would only board a maximum of ten dogs with the average stay being five days. She estimated there would be an average of three vehicles per day open and she would not be accepting Sunday drop offs nor pick-ups. She does not expect to always be at capacity. She pointed out that there is already a lot of traffic for home deliveries of packages, groceries, and other deliveries. She said she would be willing to pay double the share of the private road maintenance. She shared she does not like barking dogs and has high standards for dog behavior, and that waste is taken off site by her refuse company. She noted she does not want to run a large commercial dog kenneling business, but her main goal is to spend more time at home.

II. Planning and Zoning Administrator:

III. Public Hearing: Opened at 7:28 pm.

a. Dan Beyer is a neighbor of the property, and his backyard is adjacent to the applicant's property. He shared concerns about barking dogs affecting enjoyment of his property and the effects the noise would have on wildlife. He shared concerns about property values as well as odors. Shared photos from phone. He is not in favor of approval of SLU 178.

b. Haley Sholzen is a current client of the applicant and has been boarding her dogs at applicant's Hastings facility. She reports applicant is a kind, respectful neighbor, and reports dogs are not left outside to bark excessively. She would like approval of SLU 178 so applicant can spend more time with her family.

c. Robin Sulley is a current resident in close proximity to proposed kennel. She shared concerns of excessive traffic, dirt road maintenance and changing conditions during the different seasons and the possibility of unfamiliar drivers causing damage to the road. She is also concerned about barking and possible loose dogs. She expressed concern that there would also be more traffic should grooming and/or training services be offered by the applicant. She is not in favor of granting SLU 178.

d. Kim Jacim has been a resident of Loop Court for many years. She has concerns if this SLU is granted, how many more businesses will be allowed. She mentioned the petition submitted by nearby residents and noted all residents are concerned about the extra traffic and the effect on the

dirt road. The road is maintained privately by the current residents. She welcomes having a new family in the neighborhood but is not in favor of granting SLU 178.

e. Dakota Boonstra supports the applicant and is a current client. Boonstra noted applicant is respectful of neighbors, is responsible, and has high standards of care for the dogs she boards. Also noted was the fact that because the client has very young children, she herself would not want barking. Boonstra is in favor of granting SLU 178.

f. Steve Fitzgerald lives near the entrance of Loop Court and sees all traffic coming in and out. He reports dust from cars travelling on the dirt road in the summers is a big problem. He shared concerns about unfamiliar drivers navigating the road in winter and noted the road gets very icy. He has lost his mailbox more than once, getting hit by a car. He is not in favor of granting SLU 178.

g. Cathy Bruinsma is a long-time resident and notes the area is peaceful and quiet with ample wildlife. She reports that because the road turns sharply at the entrance to her driveway, motorists frequently end up at her house because they miss the turn resulting in overuse of her driveway. Has concerns about increased traffic and if grooming is offered it will exacerbate the problem. She reports losing four mailboxes during winters when people lose control of their vehicles and has noted phone infrastructure could be damaged as it is near the road. She is not in favor of granting SLU 178.

h. Stephanie McDonald is a current client of the applicant. She reported that the applicant's current business is on a dirt road and applicant already contributes to the care and maintenance of the present road. She also reported the applicant gives clear directions to clients visiting her business, so they don't cause issues for neighbors. She is in favor of granting SLU 178.

i. Leslie Boonstra is a current client, and she noted the applicant is responsible and a successful businesswoman. Noted people sometimes get worked up and start being dramatic before they have all information. She noted applicant would be responsive to concerns and noted that progress is inevitable and that all drivers experience driving on dirt roads with snow and ice. Stated the applicant should be given a chance and is in favor of SLU 178.

j. Bill Wynsma is a resident and noted the road is not a full two lanes, but closer to one and a half. Has concerns that Loop Court is not a main road, but merely a side road, and more traffic will add to holes and ruts, noting that someone will need to do additional repairs. Because the residents own the road for their own ingress and egress, more traffic will mean additional work for residents. Does not want more traffic and is not in favor of granting SLU 178.

k. Larry Jacim reports he is looking at it from a different perspective. He noted that the applicant and her family are a great family and will do a great job, but the overall concern is the traffic and its effect on the road. He would like to see Loop Court remain business free and does not want the extra liability and possible accidents. He questioned who would be responsible for accidents. He has no issues with the care of animals but is not in favor of SLU 178 solely because he does not want businesses on the private road.

l. Katy Price has property directly adjacent to the kennel and has a pond. She expressed concerns about dog waste and where it would go and does not want it in her pond or the nearby river. She is not in favor of SLU 178

m. Shelly Olthouse is the applicant's mom, and she clarified that the only business would be for boarding and not any other services related to dog care. Reiterated previous point that the road already has traffic from delivery vehicles, and the applicant will pay an extra portion of road

maintenance costs. Explained the kennel's yard has turf with gravel below for liquid waste and the applicant thoroughly cleans the area daily. She acknowledged there would be some barking, but it would not be any more excessive than the barking from the current resident's dogs and would not be constant. She reported that none of the applicant's current neighbors has complained, and she is in favor of granting SLU 178.

Public Hearing: Closed at 7:57.

IV. Commission Questions and Deliberations: Applicant was offered three minutes to respond to speaker's comments. Applicant clarified she would not be offering training or grooming and she would pay more for the maintenance of the road. Additionally, she would only offer 2 pick up and drop off times to lessen the amount of traffic on the road. Gasper inquired about the disposal of dog waste and applicant explained it is taken away by her refuse company and the rest is washed away into the turf which has limestone gravel beneath. Rairigh inquired about barking and the applicant clarified the dogs do not have constant outdoor access and they are only let out for short periods of time for daily exercise. Dan Price was asked to clarify how the maintenance of the road worked in regards to planning repairs and how payments were obtained from residents. Larry Jacim explained he is the one that grades the road and helps fill potholes. He noted that the Petes collect the payment for road repairs from the residents. He noted the most significant cost was gravel and plowing. Sometimes the bills for repairs are split amongst residents by the company providing the service and at others one resident will pay and be reimbursed by the other. The Commission was asked if it would be zoned commercial and no, it would not be. Gasper commented she did not see this as a total detriment to home-based businesses and just because residents don't want something in their backyard, does not mean they don't have a legal right to conduct business on their property, acknowledging the concerns regarding wear and tear on the road. Finkbeiner shared concerns about the private road. Hansson inquired about the need for an HOA so residents could regulate the road better and Finkbeiner noted it's more of an easement and there is nothing in writing regarding the road. Gasper expressed the opinion that the owner answered all of the Commission's questions.

MOTION by Gasper **SUPPORT** by Rairigh to approve Special Use #178 with all of the conditions of the ordinance being met. **Roll Call Vote:** Finkbeiner-No, Denton-No, Gasper-Yes, Hansson-Yes, Kilgore-No, Rairigh-Yes, Wandrie-No. **MOTION FAILED** with 3 yes roll call votes and 4 no votes.

6. New Business: None

7. Unfinished Business: SLU-174 – Daycare Second Address – Sydney LaDere

A. Applicant reviewed fence construction and reviewed the site visit findings. Gensterblum reviewed the site visit findings noting the fence has been installed and the square footage requirement has been met. He noted the space was clean and well maintained. Reported area above garage is more of a bonus room rather than an office and looks like an apartment as it has utilities. Applicant states that there has been an misunderstanding and the space is for visitors and her children. She reports the salon area is for family and friends and is not a business run from the home. Rairigh asked for clarification if the space is a bonus room or an office for the daycare. Applicant stated it's a workspace that's separate from the daycare for her paperwork. Kilgore asked which address was for the bonus room/office. Applicant stated it was for the bonus room/office. There was much discussion of the office, apartment space, and the salon. Gasper expressed concerns over the applicants future plans for the salon as only one business is allowed per parcel of land. Applicant stated the salon business is of a traveling nature and no clients come to her home. She said she would close the travel salon business if necessary. Finkbeiner stated that applicant is already approved for the daycare and that will remain. After discussion,

MOTION by Finkbeiner to deny the new address. **NO SUPPORT**

Further discussion centered around the bonus room/office area and if it was actually an apartment based on observations from the site visit. Applicant restated the space is for family activities and no one would live there. She added that utilities are not connected. The entrance was noted to be from the garage and not separate. There was discussion about the status of the original SLU and how it would pertain to the new SLU. The property will remain one parcel.

Previous **MOTION** withdrawn by Finkbeiner.

MOTION by Hansson **SUPPORT** by Wandrie to approve Special Use #174. **Roll Call Vote:** Finkbeiner-Yes, Denton-Yes, Gasper-Yes, Hansson-Yes, Kilgore-Yes, Rairigh-Yes, Wandrie-Yes. **MOTION CARRIED** with 7 yes roll call votes and 0 no votes.

8. Committee Reports:

   A. Ordinance Committee – [Kilgore, Finkbeiner, Rairigh, Gasper (alt)] – Committee will meet Tuesday, July 29 at 9:00 a.m. Kilgore noted that the ordinance revision project was moving along nicely and will be very good when it is finished.
   B. Site Plan Committee – [Finkbeiner, Denton, Wandrie, Hansson (alt)] – None, however, Hansson inquired as to why SLU 178 did not have a site visit. Gensterblum explained it was because the structure was a simple thirty by forty accessory building with a forty-by-forty fenced area. There was ample screening by trees therefore there was no need for a visit by the committee.
   C. Joint Planning Committee – [Rairigh, Gasper, Denton, Kilgore (alt)] – The next Joint Planning Committee Meeting will be on September 16, 2025, at 6:00 p.m. at the Middleville Village Hall.

9. Administrator's Report:

   A. Zoning Ordinance Audit: None
   B. Zoning Report: Gensterblum reported an increase in the number of permits being requested with most being for accessory buildings and one or two for single family homes.
   C. Code Enforcement Report:

10. Commissioner Comments: None

11. Adjournment:

    MOTION by Gasper, **SUPPORT** by Finkbeiner to adjourn the meeting at 8:49 p.m. **MOTION CARRIED** with 7 voice votes.

Sandra Rairigh

Sandra Rairigh, Secretary

Brenda Hess

Brenda Hess, Recording Secretary

Approved 9-22-25