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5333 Airline Road

Sheila's Scrapping Studio

By Larry J. Pellet

Ruffled would be an apt word for Fruitport business owner Sheila Prenger, owner of Sheila's Scrapbooking Studio located at the former Clark Stamp Collecting building at 5232 Airline Rd. After running a successful business inside the village



of Fruitport for 7 years, Prenger decided to expand and move out to Airline Rd. Lo and behold, after sending in the application in February 2019 to the Planning Commission, it took 8 months to finally settle into her building. She didn't realize how many hoops she had to go through just to change to a new location.

"I had to keep going back and forth between Michigan Township Services, the Fruitport Board and the Planning Commission", she lamented. "There were all these different dept's....so many



codes and ordinances, then letters had to be sent out to the neighbors. In the last meeting, I spent 2 ½ hours waiting for my turn to speak, and they still couldn't agree on whether to approve me."

According to Prenger, business codes had been previously changed for new business licensees. She says first she had to be approved for a business, then to lease the building out. The parking lot had to be blacktopped or paved, and then she was charged for inspection.

"The owner of the building, Jeff Wright (in Arizona at the time), threw a fit more than I did," she exclaimed.

However, 3 year Fruitport Supervisor Heidi Tice stated the ordinances are not as complicated as they appear, and are available for public viewing either through email, hand-outs or the U.S. Postal Service. New business being built must present with a Site plan, which has a checklist on what needs to be addressed before the business can be approved. It goes to her and then through the Planning Commission.

In the case of Scrapbooking, Tice acknowledged, "It was frustrating for her. Had she bought the building (instead of leasing), and had an architect meet the Site plan checklist from the start, it would have been much easier." Other delays involved zoning, since the previous occupant of the building involved manufacturing, and an existing statute declaring all public hearings involving new business must be published through a locally circulated newspaper. In this case, that meant the Muskegon Chronicle. "If they printed something inaccurate, it needed to be republished...totally out of my hands," Tice added. Of course with all communities, fire and building codes needed to be met for safety as well.

"I just think the process should be refined, so that the next person who goes through all this won't be in the dark...I didn't really know what was going on."

Prenger's business, which involves getting



together with a group of women 3-4 times per month, takes digital pictures people send in and puts them together into a book form. They also create crafts, albums, cards and envelopes, stamps, and door prizes.. Classes are being added to help customers learn the trade. Prenger has also served as an independent consultant for "Close to my Heart", a paper crafting company for the past 8 years, along with owning Dust and Vac Maids, LLC in Fruitport Village. Those interested in learning more or joining Scrapbooking can find more info on the Facebook page, Sheila's Scrapbooking Studio.

"It looks like the business is going good...there are always cars there when I drive by," commented Tice on Prenger's establishment. "I wish she would come back in and let us know how she is doing," she reflected.

Editorial Comments

by Ron Cooper

> The building has been in use for possibly 40 or 50 years for a similar retail type business, but with the new ordinances and rules that the current board has enacted, a architect was now required, a paved parking lot, the business has to be approved by a township employee, and other obstacles are now required before she could move her business from one location to another. We are talking 8 months of obstacles and each obstacle has a cost. Most people would have given up!

> The current township administration has not seen a anti-business ordinance they did not think was great. In my memory, this is the most controlling anti-business administration this township has ever had.

Norton Shores Becomes Home to Plane Watch Food Park

AMG Developments has begun building the Plane Watch Food Park, located adjacent to the Pointes Shopping Center in Norton Shores, just west of the US-31 East Sternberg exit, with the grand opening scheduled for June 1.

Jon Mills of WZZM13 reported that site work started the last week of April, and that after the park opens, "customers will be able to choose from eight food trucks offering a variety of different options. Food park customers will be able to grab a quick meal and occasionally get a close look at planes flying just overhead. The park will have utilities for the food trucks to use, and portable restrooms for customers."

AMG Developments' goal is to make the food park more than just a destination for a meal. According to Mills, phase one of development will "focus on site work, infrastructure, and opening with additional amenities for customers to follow."

AMG Developments General Manager Jeff Zaloga told Mills: "In subsequent phases we can allow [customers] to watch live music, play games outside, bring their kids and sit around an outdoor fire ring." Since the Plane Watch Food Park is also close to the Norton Shores Industrial park, Zaloga believes that those who work in these nearby businesses will take their short lunch breaks to visit.

Mills reports that Zaloga said a number of vendors have already inquired about space. Evidently, it's partly because their schedules for the spring and summer have been canceled due to COVID-19. "All these festivals are getting canceled everywhere, so lots of these people need a place to go," Zaloga said. "We think they're going to be inclined to go where there's a great deal of traffic and it's easy in and out."

The Plane Watch Food Park may soon provide a convenient place for many people in the Norton Shores area to find good, family-friendly options for food and entertainment.

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