

Springfield Township
Planning Commission – Business Meeting
Minutes November 15, 2010

Call to Order: Vice-chairman Commissioner Baker called the November 15, 2010 Business Meeting of the Springfield Township Planning Commission to order at 7:30 p.m. at the Springfield Township Civic Center, 12000 Davisburg Road, Davisburg, MI 48350.

Attendance:

Commissioners Present:

Ruth Ann Hines
Bill Leddy
Dean Baker
Roger Lamont
Beverly Shaver

Commissioners Absent:

John Steckling
Neil Willson

Staff Present

Mike Trout, Supervisor
Greg Kazmierski, Ordinance Officer

Consultants Present

Brian Oppmann

Approval of Agenda: Approved.

Commissioner Shaver moved to approve the agenda as presented. Support by Commissioner Lamont. Vote on the motion: Ayes: Leddy, Baker, Hines, Lamont, Shaver. Nayes: None. Absent: Steckling, Willson. Motion Carried.

Public Comment: None.

Consent Agenda: Minutes of the October 18, 2010 meeting.

Commissioner Hines moved to approve the minutes of the October 18, 2010 meeting as presented. Support by Commissioner Lamont. Vote on the motion: Ayes: Leddy, Steckling, Baker, Willson, Hines, Lamont, Shaver. Nayes: None. Absent: Willson, Steckling. Motion Carried.

Public Hearing: None.

Old Business:

1. Dixie Highway Corridor Plan-presentation.

Commissioner Baker stated that in 2009 the Planning Commission and Township Board participated in joint discussions that were focused on trying to look at the

area of Dixie Highway basically between Davisburg Road and I-75. They looked at this area as being an area of commercial development in the future; it is the principal commercial district in Springfield Township and there have been developers that have approached the Township in the past regarding this area. He stated that the Commission thought there would be value in collecting thoughts on what type of development would best suit the available infrastructure, roads and utilities. He stated that they questioned how traffic would move and how would they manage to serve sites. He stated that they hoped to develop some type of a basis for sharing this information with prospective developers. He stated this view would represent what development the Township would look favorably upon. He stated that we will also have a discussion on the best way to manage the properties along this strip with regards to signage. He stated that there are a number of commercial properties with various sizes and business types. He stated that the discussion revolves around how to best balance the aesthetics of the corridor as well as the business needs. He thanked the business owners who are present at the meeting for their attendance and participation.

Brian Oppmann presented a Power Point presentation to the Commission which summarized the current Dixie Highway Corridor Plan. He provided the history in the development of the plan including the revamping of the 2000 model and the input from the joint workshop of the Township Board and Planning Commission held in November of 2009. He explained the land use concepts which divide Dixie Highway into 3 distinct redevelopment zones; local redevelopment zone (in front of the Kroger complex), BVV redevelopment zone (section that would ideally be linked with Bridge Valley) and the regional development entry zone (at the I-75 and Dixie Highway interchange). He outlined the goals of the redevelopment concept and implementation strategies including possible funding options.

Wanda Bothermel, Old House Inn, asked why the businesses north of Davisburg Road were left out.

Supervisor Trout stated that the study was focused south of Davisburg Road initially. He stated that the Commission is now cognizant of the fact that they should include the businesses that are north of Davisburg Road, especially in the sign discussion. He stated that these businesses north, although limited, will affect the corridor. He stated that it was not a deliberate attempt to omit the businesses; they needed to focus on a particular section and this is the first phase.

Mr. Oppmann stated that when the study was updated in 2008, they were updating the study from 2000. This study established the overlay district which was I-75 to Davisburg Road. He stated that they were aware of the businesses north of Davisburg Road. He stated that the sign discussion started in the overlay area and it has evolved into many different topics allowing significant changes for all businesses.

Calvin Bordine, Bordines Nursery, stated that there is an additional study for the businesses in Downtown Davisburg.

Mr. Oppmann stated that Downtown Davisburg is also different due to it being a hamlet. He stated that it has different characteristics that involve different types of signage. He stated that it is impossible to do a traditional ground sign in Davisburg.

Commissioner Baker stated that the Dixie Corridor Plan was largely an offshoot of a number of commercial interests beginning to express interest in Springfield Township in a localized area; south of Davisburg to I-75, this became the highest interest area for the Township to be concerned with.

2. Sign Ordinance Overview-discussion and presentation.

Commissioner Baker stated about six to eight months ago, the Planning Commission started to review the existing signage language in the zoning ordinance. The Commission recognized that there were fairly divergent commercial areas; Dixie Highway, Hamlet of Davisburg and additional industrial/commercial areas. He stated that the Commission felt that the language that existed did not provide balance between the businesses and the aesthetics and appeal that the Township wanted to present. He stated that the businesses are different, speed limits are different, volume of traffic is different and set back requirements are also different. He stated that the sign ordinance as it is written did not service the diverse business needs. He stated that the Commission has had a multitude of sign discussions. He stated that Carlisle Wortman did provide discussion information on this issue. He stated that the Commission also decided that they wanted involvement from the businesses.

Mr. Oppmann stated that there was discussion last month that led to the memo that was provided in all of the Commissioner's packets. He stated that Dixie Highway started as the focal point; but was expanded into many more issues. He stated what was important was separating out the normal commercial area that is known as Dixie Highway with Downtown Davisburg because they are so vastly different. He stated that Downtown Davisburg should be allowed to have projecting signs, which are currently not allowed in our ordinance. He stated that all that is allowed in Downtown Davisburg currently is a wall sign which does not provide the best visibility. He stated on Dixie Highway, 80% of the properties are over three acres in size. He stated that if a business is zoned C-2, a business owner would be able to put up a 10 foot high sign which is 50 square feet of signage. He stated that this is greater than what is allowed in Independence Township; although there is a higher speed on Dixie Highway than in Independence. He stated that he also looked at communities along M-24, Orion Township and Oxford Township. He stated that they do not allow this much and it is the same speed on M-24. He stated that he wanted to point out to the Commission that they looked at different communities to get an idea about how to proceed. He stated that it was discussed if there should be an incentive to having a large property;

there maybe some opportunity there. He stated that he wanted to caution the Commission that if they are allowing taller and bigger signs and it happens on properties that are close together; there may be issues of clutter and blight and this is not ideal. He stated that options need to be offered. He stated that one major concern in the central overlay district is the right of way that encroaches significantly into properties and there is a consistently an issue with the Zoning Board of Appeals. The property owner is forced to go to the Zoning Board because he cannot put a sign up in his front yard because the right of way is so deep. The ordinance required a setback from the right of way; there needs to be a way to accommodate this situation. For example, if you meet a set of criteria, the setback will be lessened. He stated that general statements mentioned concerned LED signs and setting up some type of standards. This might alleviate the need to have temporary signage. He stated that you need to proceed with caution, but this is something that needs to be looked at. Industrial developments could have directory signs; this is an easy thing to add. He stated that he felt it was best to summarize what they had done to date and then get some input and discuss it further. The intent is to get a revision to the sign ordinance completed. He stated that this is more comprehensive than just concentrating on Dixie Highway. They need to focus on a number of areas and the only way to do this effectively is to look at the entire sign ordinance. He stated that he felt the best thing to do is to start at page one of the sign ordinance and work through it.

Commissioner Baker asked if Brian's letter was circulated to the attendees.

Supervisor Trout answered no, they only received a copy of the current sign ordinance.

Commissioner Baker stated that this is not a public hearing. He stated that the intent is to give background information about the Dixie Corridor and also to let the business owners know of the interest of the Commission in looking at the sign ordinance. He stated that the Commission is recognizing a variety of areas within the Township, Downtown Davisburg with a speed limit of twenty-five versus Dixie Highway with a fifty mile an hour speed limit and addressing both with similar language. He stated that the intent is to engage the business owners in this discussion and all Planning Commission meetings are open. He encouraged the business owners to come and participate and give input on these discussions so the Commission can get some sense of what their needs are.

Commissioner Lamont stated that the Commission starting looking at temporary signs eight months ago and it evolved to the sign discussion that they are having today. He stated that the current sign ordinance is one size fits all and as the Commission explored different business communities, they found that each area is unique and requires something different. He stated that they have studied other community's ordinances and have looked at new technologies including LED lighted signs, but another secondary goal is to enable businesses to get what they need in a struggling economy and at the same time, clean up sign clutter. He

stated that this led to the Commission looking at a temporary sign ordinance. He stated that this is why the Commission invited the business owners, to give input and help the entire community become a destination location. He stated that he was happy to see the business owners at the meeting; he stated whether input comes tonight, or through a phone call to Mike Trout. He stated that this starts the thought process. He stated that they wanted to enable each business to do more than the current ordinance allows and at the same time, clean up and improve the overall look.

Commissioner Hines questioned Calvin Bordine as to the sign regulations that Bordines encounters in other communities. She stated that this would be helpful to hear what works and what things Springfield could do to benefit businesses and consumers.

Wanda Bothermel stated that according to the ordinance, the guy that is selling wood has a big sign with his cell phone number and should not be allowed to put up this type of sign.

Commissioner Hines answered that this is why they were starting this process.

Supervisor Trout stated that this is the current sign ordinance that was given out and it is this ordinance that the Commission is considering revising. He introduced Greg Kazmierski as the Township Ordinance Officer. He stated that it is a challenge to find the balance to enforce what we are required to enforce, but still allow the businesses to do things that will help their business. He stated that the Township wants to be business friendly. It is hard in enforcement to find that balance because if we give to one, we have to give to everybody. He stated that they do work with some businesses, the car dealerships in particular, on the promotional sales since the Township has become more aware of what is needed. He asked the businesses to give the Commission their feedback.

Commissioner Baker stated that the meetings are held on the third Monday of every month starting at 7:30 and the agenda is posted in advance. He asked the business owners to set the time aside and become involved as they move forward because they take comments during the meeting. He stated that the sign ordinance will be present on upcoming agendas and input is appreciated.

Supervisor Trout stated that if the comments are recorded for the record, it reminds the Commission of the exact nature of the concerns.

Calvin Bordine, Bordines Nursery and a resident at 9930 King Road, stated that he thinks that the redevelopment that he pays a lot of attention to is the Chevrolet dealership in Clarkston. They threw out every single ordinance and did whatever they could to keep the dealership where it is. They added on very close to the road. He stated that he thought to add on, it had to make the entire site conforming. He has experienced this in Rochester Hills. He stated if you look at

the Chevrolet dealership and compare it to what it was three years ago, the lighting is more extensive. He stated that there is no underground water storage, but they were allowed to do many things. They did not have to have their sign come down. He stated that it is very interesting and pro-business what was done on that site and the dealership will be there for many years to come. He stated that this approach needs to be taken. He stated that when Bordines requested a flexible approach, they got the exact opposite. He stated that he has been at the Planning Commission meetings and he hears that his site is different. Every site is different. He stated that this needs to be considered in every realm to be fair. He stated that he would like signs to be closer to the road and he would like to update the signs to have newer technology. He stated that this is the reality of the technology today. He stated that shoppers today come in with their smart phones and scan barcodes, playing the video while they are looking at the product. He stated that there are also programs that tell the consumer where the same product is available for a cheaper price. He stated that this is reality and they need to bring it up to date. He stated that north of the Township; the Food Castle has an LED changeable, flashing sign. He stated that another business cannot compete with this. He stated that it has to be fair with signs that are closer to the road and that are changeable.

Commissioner Hines asked Calvin Bordine what he thought about the allowable height for signs.

Calvin Bordine stated that there needs to be a restriction. He stated that he does not know what this height would be, but ideally they would all be the same height. He stated that he does not favor the tall, crazy signs. He stated that right off I-75, there is a tall Nissan sign and the Jesus sign just north of this interchange. He stated that every single person knows where this sign is. He stated that when he reads all of the words in the ordinance; it is difficult to know what it really means. He stated that there is a disconnect. He stated that there needs to be values given, but you need to deal with the signs that are nonconforming and give them a time limit. Rochester Hills tried to make a sign ordinance in which five years from now, everybody would have to change their sign to one standard. He stated that they backed off. He stated that Rochester Hills is becoming much more pro-business and they are looking for ways to help businesses and to encourage people to shop locally.

Tom Delke, part owner of Nissan of Clarkston, stated that the signs have two purposes. The first is to identify where you are and who you are, but the other thing is that there is not enough money in today's market to get the different messages out to be successful by traditional media. He stated that the last time he advertised in the Detroit News, it was six thousand dollars to put one ad in for a full page Sunday ad. He stated that he has the advantage in location in having thousands of cars drive by the business every day. He stated there is a need to get temporary messages out there in an economic way. He stated that right now he has a banner up. He stated that it needs to be controlled; maybe you need to get a

permit with a definite time frame, this would be acceptable. He does not like being sited every time he puts out a temporary sign. He stated that all of the trees in the corridor plan concerned him. He stated that you cannot have so many trees that block the visibility and identity of the business. He stated that you can control how tasteful the vision is through the ordinance, but does not see the need to have so much green in front of the businesses that is an obstruction. He stated that the dealership depends on drive by traffic, if the consumer cannot see what is available, this is a lost opportunity for him. He stated that the temporary nature needs to be addressed to get a message across; it is the only economic way.

Wanda Bothermel stated that her business is on a hill. She asked how she competes with street level businesses.

Supervisor Trout stated that all conditions need to be looked at.

Tom Lowrie, Lowrie's Landscape, 9539 Dixie Highway, stated that he agrees with Calvin Bordine. He stated that he has taken in Plum Hollow as a tenant and their sign is now below his sign. He stated that he is not able to put up his messages now which were weekly fresh messages. He stated that it is amazing the power that signs have. He stated that he has been in business there for close to twenty years and he still has people that come in every year asking how long he has been there. He stated that he appreciates having the meeting, they should work together and there is no single answer. He stated that it is important that everyone gives their different perspective.

Commissioner Baker reiterated that the Commission meets every third Monday and any proposed ordinance language is posted for a public hearing before any recommendations are made to the Township Board. He stated that no finalized ordinance language is agreed upon by the Commission and then placed into ordinance language. He stated that the Township Board ultimately has the decision making ability as to whether or not ordinances are approved.

Calvin Bordine asked the Commission to look at for sale, for lease and election signs at the same time. He stated that most people now look online for housing. He stated that the Township does not follow their own sign ordinance. He stated that the Heritage Festival sign was put up at the corner of Davisburg Road and Dixie Highway right by the road. He stated that it was hypocritical that the Township is not following their own sign ordinance.

Steve Ferrell, New Horizons Rehabilitation Services, stated that he has a different problem. He stated that his business deals with the disabled population. He stated that he has safety concerns because there are a number of times that Springfield Fire needs to be called because one of the consumers is having seizures or another medical emergency. He stated that the Fire Department drives by the business and needs to turn around and come back because there is not a sign close enough to the road to warn people. He stated that every single time, the ambulance goes

right by them and has to go to East Holly Road to turn around and come back. He stated that from a safety standpoint, if a sign would be allowed by the road, it would make it easier to identify for firefighters, police officers and ambulance services.

New Business:

1. None.

Other Business:

1. Priority Task List/CIP-discussion.

Commissioner Baker stated that the Commission reviewed this last month in detail.

Supervisor Trout stated that they are addressing all points and we will keep the Commission up to date on our progress.

Commissioner Hines asked if there were still considering administrative site plan extensions and if they were waiting on information from Brian Oppmann to move forward.

Supervisor Trout answered yes.

2. Transient and Seasonal Sales-Section 16.24.

Commissioner Baker stated that all Commissioners received a current copy of this section of the ordinance.

Supervisor Trout stated that the reason for looking at this was to see if we could apply some of the situations that the businesses encounter on a temporary basis. He questioned if there was language that could be added or taken away to allow the Township a little more latitude. He stated that one twenty square foot sign was allowed. He stated that the intended use is for Christmas trees and pumpkins, but the car dealerships also have seasonal sales.

Commissioner Lamont stated that he would like to review and compare what other communities are doing. He stated that the planner has access to Independence Township, Orion Township and others that face similar situations. He stated that such sales are to only be allowed in C-1 or C-2, this means that we have some businesses that are not located in this zoning and they could not sell pumpkins. He stated that they need to review where this is allowed. He stated that if the idea is to become more business enabling then it should be applied across the board. He stated that it needs to be reviewed and align it with the business needs.

Mr. Oppmann stated that the current sign ordinance does not allow any type of pennants or balloons, these things are typically used by the car dealerships. He

stated that if the Township wants to allow these types of things, the sign ordinance can be altered to allow them only under a transient or seasonal permit. He stated that the car dealerships are trying to use this to allow for these types of displays. He stated that this is really just for the Christmas trees or pumpkin sales. He stated there is a way to be more flexible.

Commissioner Lamont stated that they should be more flexible. He stated that he does not want it to come to van sales in parking lots with the sides painted.

Supervisor Trout stated that many businesses promote items seasonally.

Greg Kazmierski, Ordinance Officer, stated that most of the challenge for existing businesses that have seasonal sales is display of their message. .

Commissioner Hines asked if Bordines had to get a transient sales permit to sell Christmas trees in the parking lot. She stated that Kroger has mums and furniture outside and asked if this qualified for transient sales.

Mr. Oppmann stated that this was outdoor storage and display.

Commissioner Lamont stated that this was not allowed.

Commissioner Hines stated that it is wrong that it is not; this is how they do business. She asked Calvin Bordine how the ordinance should be written to allow a business to compete with Bordines for two months.

Mr. Oppmann stated that across the street from Bordines Nursery in Oxford there existed a small nursery that was in the community for twenty-five to thirty years. He stated that this business asked the Planning Commission in Oxford to not allow Bordines because it was in direct competition with him. The Planning Commission said they could not stop it.

Calvin Bordine stated that in Lake Orion, there is a stipulation that a competing business cannot be within a certain number of feet of another business.

Mr. Oppmann stated that in most communities the term transient is represented by temporary use.

Commissioner Lamont concurred that he prefers temporary use or temporary business to replace the word transient.

Mr. Oppmann stated that the definition of transient is a person coming from one place to another.

Commissioner Lamont stated that this would be the individual selling out of the back of his truck. He stated that this was brought up eight months ago because they knew it needed to be looked at because what they had was not working.

Bette Moen, Cedar Crest Academy, stated that she put out a temporary sign for the open house but she has taken it down.

Supervisor Trout stated that this was a prime example of a business trying to let people know what was going on. He stated that a car dealership that is on M-24 has the exact same sign as Randy Hosler, but it was twice as big. He stated that if it was in the right place and done tastefully, it will get noticed.

Calvin Bordine asked about the American Water sign.

Commissioner Hines stated that this was one parcel and why were multiple signs allowed on this parcel.

Mr. Oppmann stated that if you are leasing to multiple tenants, you need to devise a sign that incorporates all of the tenants on the sign. He stated the sign on Citation Drive has enough space for all of the tenants and it meets the Ordinance standards. He stated that this is an investment, but it makes sense.

Supervisor Trout stated that according to Mr. Oppmann's letter, the business could have a certain square footage for the entire sign.

Commissioner Shaver stated that the difference with Citation Drive is that it is only twenty five miles per hour.

Commissioner Lamont stated that the proper LED sign would allow you to be able to add to and take away tenants every month. He stated that this is something to consider.

Supervisor Trout asked if they were considering the message portion of the sign to be separate from the sign itself.

Mr. Oppmann stated that a LED billboard looks like a giant TV. He stated that they should concentrate on the changeable copy of LEDs as opposed to allowed signs that are TV screens. He stated that there is one on I-275 by the airport and now the Palace sign is completely LED. He stated that driving through Waterford on Dixie; it is easy to see how it looks there. He stated that he is sure that the Commission does not want to see it look like that. He stated that schools are exempt from any planning and zoning; he stated that high schools are using LED signs so that they can promote activities.

Supervisor Trout asked if the LED, or changeable could be a portion of the overall size.

Mr. Oppmann stated that the items that needed to be regulated with LED signs are the flashing, blinking, pulsating and scrolling and making it more of a static message for a period of time. He stated that there have been studies done that based on the speed of the road; there is an established set of rate of change.

Commissioner Hines asked if the party stores would then take everything off of their windows.

Mr. Oppmann stated that if the Commission was going to allow LED signs, they need to consider the fact that they could end up with a lot of LED signs, as in the case of Waterford.

Commissioner Hines asked Mr. Oppmann how they could regulate that.

Mr. Oppmann stated that they should look at what they have right now on the ground for existing businesses and draft language that would apply. The party stores that are up against the right of way are an additional challenge. The goal is to get businesses to comply. He stated if they continue to consider temporary signs, they have options available to them. He stated that LEDs may work for Bordines and not for Cedar Crest; it needs to depend on the business and the product. He stated that fifty foot signs and four or five pole signs per property are not the goal.

Bette Moen asked if there are two or three guiding principles behind the process.

Mr. Oppmann stated that the Township had drafted the entire set of zoning ordinances based on the goal and objectives of the community and because of the economy, some of those are changing. The business side of things are changing and they have to respond to that. It is necessary to be competitive and they are working with Oxford and Orion Townships to open up their entire ordinance to mixed use to allow everything. He stated that these communities feel that they have to be competitive.

Commissioner Hines stated that they have to determine what they want Dixie Highway to look like. She stated that she has been in the community for a long time and has no use for a Target or Home Depot in the area. She stated that there are different viewpoints on the Commission.

Mr. Oppmann stated that over the last twenty or thirty years the Township has established sign regulations based on what the goals, visions and objectives are for the community. He stated that they do not want to lose the goals, but you have to weigh how to still make it competitive. He stated that in Independence Township, many pole signs were present. It has taken twenty or thirty years for almost all of them to go down. He stated that there are only three or four left. He

stated that the Bordines sign is nonconforming sign and it is to their advantage to keep it this way and not to bring it down to ten feet high and fifty square feet.

Calvin Bordine stated that he objects to a road way being shown in front of his property on the Dixie Highway Corridor Plan. He stated that this interferes with his business and he does not want this. He asked what they could do about the large Jesus sign.

Commissioner Shaver stated that she assumed that as long as it is standing, it is grandfathered in.

Commissioners discussed some possible changeable sign usages.

Commissioner Baker stated that the ordinance section titled Transient and Seasonal Display is fair game for revisiting, renaming and redefining so that it captures a broader scope and is not so focused on the concept of agricultural transient non-premised activities. He stated that maybe this could be incorporated into the updates that are being made to the overall sign ordinance.

Diana Walls stated that she hoped the Commission would not allow LED lighting in Downtown Davisburg. She stated that she would like to see another type of sign allowed, perhaps a perpendicular, suspended sign.

Public Comment: None

Adjournment:

Commissioner Lamont made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 9:13 pm. Supported by Commissioner Hines. Vote on the motion: Ayes: Leddy, Baker, Hines, Lamont, Shaver. Nayes: None. Absent: Steckling, Willson. Motion Carried.

Erin Mattice, Recording Secretary