

**Springfield Township
Planning Commission -- Business Meeting
Minutes August 17, 2009**

Call to Order: Chair John Steckling called the August 17, 2009 Business Meeting of the Springfield Township Planning Commission to order at 7:30 p.m. at the Springfield Township Civic Center, 12000 Davisburg Rd., Davisburg, MI 48350

Attendance:

Commissioners Present

Frank Aiello
Dean Baker
Ruth Ann Hines
Roger Lamont
Bill Leddy
John Steckling
Neil Willson

Commissioners Absent

None

Staff Present

Mike Trout, Supervisor

Consultants Present

Brian Oppmann, Planner

Approval of Agenda

Chair Steckling asked if anyone had changes to the Agenda. Hearing none, the Agenda was accepted as presented.

Public Comment:

None

Consent Agenda:

1. **Minutes of June 15, 2009**
 - **Commissioner Lamont moved to approve the Consent Agenda, support by Commissioner Aiello. Vote on the motion: Yes: Aiello, Baker, Hines, Lamont, Leddy, Steckling and Willson. No: None. Absent: Motion Carried.**

Public Hearing: None

Old Business: None

New Business:

1. Capital Improvement Plan – (CIP) Discussion

Supervisor Mike Trout presented an updated version of the CIP. He explained that the CIP was adopted last year after the budgets were approved but this year he wanted to look at the CIP before the budgeting process for 2010. Supervisor Trout wanted to be able to give the Planning Commission an opportunity to see what items he thought were important and get some feed back from the Commissioners. Supervisor Trout went over various items listed on the CIP:

Buildings/Fire Station #1: Supervisor Trout said that not a lot had changed other than Fire Station #1 item was added and this is part of a grant that he had recently applied for and the figure listed is the township matching funds, if we received the grant. We applied for \$850,000 for a new station through Homeland Security and the Township Board had approved a \$150,000 match, see years 2010 and 2011 at \$75,000 each. There is a need for an updated Station #1, because of its size we are not able to put in larger trucks. Supervisor Trout suggested that the property at Station #1 may have a higher value and better use to serve the downtown business district. The next question is: if Station #1 is relocated, where would it go? Perhaps go further south in the Township, so that instead of having a third station at the Farley Road property, a different location could service both the central and southern portion of township. There are many scenarios to consider and he would like the Planning Commission's thoughts on this or other alternatives.

Buildings/Sheriff's Dept. Sub-Station: Regarding the Sheriff's Sub-Station, due to budget constraints the Board is split on relocating from Colombiere to Station #2. The Township Board has voted not to proceed with that plan however, in a better economic climate moving the sub-station would be an easy decision. Visibility is the best deterrent to crime, and there is still a need for increased visibility..

Supervisor Trout explained that in spite of current economic conditions, the Township still needs to have a vision for the future. We may not have the funds for projects at this time, but we still need to have a sense of our priorities and what direction we will go when we do.

Infrastructure/Davisburg Septic: Supervisor Trout mentioned the downtown Davisburg septic needs, since it is a smaller area, it may be a project that would be manageable. Perhaps a Davisburg overlay district would be helpful in future planning and to address issues related to parking, signage, setbacks and etc.

Land Acquisition: Supervisor Trout said that while many think that the Township property we own, we have to be able to maintain, also, how much is too much? Does all property become park land? Does it all become public service land? There are many opportunities right now for the township to use some of its reserve funds to purchase land in Davisburg, along Dixie Hwy., or adjacent to the park. The Rose Township Transfer is presently in the lawyer's hands and Trout has seen a draft of the transfer of this portion of the west Shiawassee piece that's in Springfield Township, but Rose Township owns it. The transfer would occur in consideration for some resident rates for our park programs.

There is a Miscellaneous Area under Land Acquisition in the CIP to address opportunities in parking for the downtown Davisburg area or some other use that would support the businesses. The old lumberyard is for sale, we have had some indications that part of the Fountain development would be available and the Masonic hall on Andersonville Rd. may be going up for sale.

Roads: Supervisor Trout said that we will continue to pursue the signal at Davisburg/Dixie, the Township has already spent \$16,000 for an engineering study to support what we already knew and that is, we definitely need something for that intersection. Oakland County is seriously reviewing a left turn lane signal and an upgrade of the entire signal system which the county will pay for, and if that happens, the \$16,000 spent by the Township will be money well spent. Even if it turns out not to happen, the county will be doing some re-timing of lights to help with Davisburg/Dixie/Kroger area.

Environmental: Supervisor Trout said that Springfield Township, Independence Township and the City of the Village of Clarkston, along with Carlisle/Wortman are exploring some energy efficiency grants on projects that we can all benefit from such as pathways, lighting in parking lots and our downtown, that might be similar and to lend more character to these areas.

Supervisor Trout invited the Commissioners to talk about any of these or other items on the CIP.

Commissioner Aiello said he wanted to talk about **Downtown Davisburg**. Aiello asked Trout what kind of uses does he envision for the **fire station**?

Supervisor Trout responded that a bar or coffee shop, perhaps. The lower level may have use for supporting some type of Park function such as parking, small maintenance facility or a location where visitors could pick up trail maps. The parking to support a restaurant or coffee/donut shop or bar would have to be explored. Perhaps if an overlay district was developed, the fire station could be given some relief.

Aiello expressed support for Trout's ideas being done in a controlled and smart way. Aiello talked about the possibility of a farmers market in **Downtown Davisburg**. He feels that Davisburg has the rural/agricultural feel to support something like a farmers market.

Supervisor Trout relayed to the Commissioners that the Township Board approved at their August meeting, an investment in the **downtown** to take out some of the overgrown trees, repair sidewalks and clean up the streets by doing some stripping, and some improvements in Rotary Park. This is in preparation for the Heritage Festival on October 10, 2009. Trout says the Township needs to take the lead in this and has done so by committing almost \$7000.

Commissioner Lamont also expressed support for Trout's ideas and the recently approved work for the **downtown**, while small, will be very noticeable. Perhaps this can be a catalyst for the business owners to become involved. Lamont also talked about the Heritage Festival and the Township's partnership with Oakland County Parks. Oakland County is donating some money and other resources.

Commissioner Hines asked about **septic** issues regarding bar, restaurant or coffee shop.

Supervisor Trout responded said that the Township has not taken the step to do a full engineering study for the Township's options in the downtown area. Trout said that under **Infrastructure in the CIP** he does show draft budgets for years 2010 – 2012 for that purpose. Trout said that the Drain Commission is aware and they are looking at it from the stand point of tapping into some historic preservation funds that might be available to help. Trout feels that if the Township puts in the basic infrastructure, then perhaps eventually the business owners can join in. Trout feels that the current **septic** conditions in the downtown area are restraints to developing that area.

Commissioner Hines said she has observed a major difference in the number of people in the Millpond Park and downtown area since our **Parks** department has eliminated lifeguards. Hines said in the past the park would be packed with people on the week-ends. It was a draw for families on the week-ends, but now not so much. Could we look at budgeting money to harvest weeds, restore swimming and picnicking and try to get the park more active?

Trout said that when budgets have to be cut, weed harvesting and treatments become luxuries in some people's minds but then it does eventually affect people using our parks and coming into the Davisburg area.

Supervisor Trout asked Commissioner Lamont to give a perspective regarding **Fire Station**. Trout said that we have property on Farley Road for a possible 3rd location for a fire station.

Lamont said that we would want to raise our service ratings to provide a better level of service to our residents. **Fire Station #2** has been recently upgraded, it is a large facility for this area but compare it to **Station #1** and the limitations that come with the way that property is configured. Since **Station #1** is small, we have to purchase special fire trucks to fit in the building and when the vehicles are in the bays with the doors down you cannot walk around them to service them nor can you get into the passenger side when the fire truck is inside the building. The apron in front of the fire station doesn't accommodate the entire length of the fire truck, so if you pull it completely out, the front of the truck is into Davisburg Road. At one point it was looked at to expand the station to the rear, but the property drops off and it would involve a two level building and making the building able to support the weight of a larger fire truck. Even with that expansion there would still be limitations and the cost would be phenomenal. Lamont said the Township Board has also talked about **Station #1** and how to upgrade it. Lamont said it is his viewpoint of the Township Board consensus that we need to explore other options for **Station #1** whether we go ahead with **Station #3** or look for a new location for **Station #1**. Population growth is stopped for now but this would be the time to take all this under serious consideration. Now would be the time to look at population density and distance and time for emergency response. It could even turn out that the Farley Road property would not turn out to be the best location for a fire station. If the best location for **Station #1** remains in **downtown Davisburg**, then a building with architecture that is harmonious to the downtown could be done.

Supervisor Trout mentioned that the property at Big Lake Road and Andersonville Road, across from Marc Cooper's house, is for sale. That is north of the current Farley Road property, but could it be a better location? Is it too far south? Could it serve as a location that combines #1 and #3 together be a possibility? The decisions that we make now, will be serving our Township for many years.

Chair Steckling asked what Chief Oaks thinks about our station needs.

Trout said that Chief Oaks hasn't said much, he appears to be very happy at **Station #2**. Trout said that they have talked a little about **Station #1**. The Farley Road property is not even on our radar for a fire station. For now it is just a rental house that the fire department maintains, that is Chief Oaks only role for the Farley Road property at this time.

Additional discussion was held by several Commissioners regarding other various locations throughout the Township as potential fire stations sites, depending on population density and commercial businesses.

Supervisor Trout mentioned that Oakland County indicated that the Fairgrounds (Springfield Oaks Youth Activity Center) could be a suitable location, that they might consider a portion of their property for a **fire station site**.

Trout said that perhaps the Planning Commission needs to do some type of cursory evaluation of the various locations mentioned. Trout asked the members if they thought that the locations mentioned were options to consider?

Commission Baker said that his approach would be to not look at what property is available but starting with where are the response requirements? Where do the residents live within the township? Where are the critical sites for **downtown Davisburg**? Along Dixie Highway? Evaluate response times based on the roads, ability of the large vehicles to move up and down Andersonville Road versus Rattalee Lake, as an example. Baker said his experience at Consumers is helpful for this, as they have to consider these same issues regarding emergency response to gas leaks. We need to evaluate where the most efficient location would be after everything has been considered, then look for a location within that target area that is available and properly sized for our needs.

Supervisor Trout said we should be able to get the information about our current response locations and then add where we think it will be in the future and get an idea of best locations. Trout said he believes this is a true need of our Township.

Commissioner Lamont asked how we proceed at this point? Do we want a motion that the CIP stays as it is? Just a consensus of the Planning Commission members? Lamont reviewed that most of their discussion has centered around **land acquisition, downtown Davisburg and related septic for downtown**.

Trout said that a consensus would be sufficient for now. His suggestion is to keep the CIP open to revisions and review and keep it updated as needed.

Commission Baker asked about **Wind Turbine under Infrastructure** in year 2011. Baker asked what was behind that being listed on the CIP.

Trout said it is sort of a placeholder for all things “green”, **solar** and wind energy technology. Not sure how it will all fit in, but it is up and coming technology and having it on the CIP helps keep us reminded of its potential. If something comes along that fits into this area, then we could be somewhat prepared to deal with it.

Brian Oppmann, Planner responded about **Wind Turbine**. He said that Orion Township is looking at installing two small turbines just to demonstrate to residents that this is an option. Perhaps it would be used to light a pavilion in their Parks or restrooms. It is a smaller investment that is manageable and could be viewed as a public relations move. The cost for the two turbines will be \$50,000 - \$75,000. Oppmann says they should be installed within the year.

Commissioner Baker suggested that re-titling that area to something else, perhaps “Emerging Technologies”.

Commissioner Hines said she would like to see Tindall Road paving on the CIP under **Roads**. Hines asked how projects like that are prioritized.

Trout said that they are prioritized through the Federal Highway Priority list, which is updated every year. To get on the list the preliminary engineering has to be done, so we would have to make that commitment, which is eventually re-imbursable. However, the project that we are currently working on is Oakhill Road because it is the border between Groveland and Springfield and two communities supporting a project gets a

much higher priority. It is the portion of Oakhill between Dixie and Kier, which is a fairly heavily traveled road.

Hines asked how long it would be before a Springfield Township road would move up the priority list?

Trout said we can get roads on the list by getting our Congressman involved.

Trout said he thinks it makes sense to get Tindall Road paved because it serves so many neighborhoods, and it would help if the residents could help financially, even if only part of the cost.

Hines pointed out that most of the neighborhoods serviced by Tindall Road, are paved within the subdivision.

Supervisor Trout told the Planning Commission that 250 feet of Tindall Road will be paved, starting from Davisburg Road, north 250 feet. It has been about a year long process, but it should be done soon.

Trout also suggested that the Township compile a list of intersections that could be improved by paving, especially where the pavement ends.

Commissioner Hines said that a good example of that would be Tindall and Rattalee Lake Road, if the paving had just gone past the intersection.

Commissioner Lamont asked if once they come to consensus to items on the CIP, then they could be moved to a priority list, then make recommendation to Township Board to get things moving.

Discussion was held by various Commissioners about **Roads** as related to **Gravel/Chloride/Paving**, Tri-Party funds are suspended for at least the next three years and possibly permanently. The Commission looked at the amounts budgeted for those three items and that Springfield Township will be on their own to pay for them.

Commissioner Lamont pointed out that starting in year 2010, the CIP shows a budget of \$75,000 for **paving**, which won't do very much paving. At a rate of \$75,000, the most paving that could be done would be one intersection each year or maybe only part of an intersection. Lamont supported having **Gravel/Chloride/Paving** listed on the CIP.

Commissioner Baker asked if the upcoming paving of the 250 feet on Tindall Road, changes the Right of Way? When it gets paved, will there be tree removal.

Trout answered there is no acquisition for that, so he feels that it is all within the existing R.O.W.

Supervisor Trout asked for thoughts on **Pathways/Trails**. It is viewed as more of a Parks issue, but it is a Township issue too. Is **Pathways/Trails** a luxury? Is it something the Township should actively be pursuing?

Aiello said it is his opinion that **Pathways/Trails** should be a priority. He thinks that future homeowners would view them as important, as people are looking for a place to live, **Pathways/Trails** would be something they would look for.

Hines said that she agreed, but that it needs to be balanced with the fact that we are not taking advantage of one of the big benefits that we have at the Mill Pond Park. Hines would rather put money in a budget to harvest weeds and take care of the park, to make it a draw for people to our community. She would place that above the priority to develop one mile of a **Pathway/Trail**. Hines clarified that she is not opposed to **Trails**, but feels that we really need to pay attention to what is not being done at the MPP.

Commissioner Baker said that Springfield Township has a lot of very viable, well cared for, park facilities, that if you want to get to them you have to load up your car and drive for about 4 miles to bike around. If you don't want to do that, then you are forced to ride your bike up Andersonville Road, which has no paved shoulder. Linking up our facilities is important. Springfield Township has the opportunity to develop outdoor recreation, right here, whereas other communities don't have that. We have a challenge to come up with a way for our residents to be able to get on their bikes at home and ride to these facilities without riding on the side of a 50 mph speed limit road, where your only choice is to ride on the road or an unpaved shoulder.

Aiello pointed out that the **downtown Davisburg**, even though it is not a park, could be linked up with the **Trails** to allow people to ride their bikes into downtown Davisburg to get an ice cream cone or coffee. Aiello said he would not even consider riding a bicycle on Davisburg or Andersonville Road currently, certainly not with his toddler.

Lamont talked about previous joint workshops between the Planning Commission and Township Board where safety **paths/trailways** were moved higher and higher on the priority list. We have suffered without funding, even though we have ranked them as important. Springfield Township has the natural beauty that people are looking for, but we don't have an easy way to get to it. We are not a walkable community at all. **Safety paths/Trails** should be a priority on our CIP, but Lamont is not sure they should fall under **Parks** exclusively. It really depends on the location of the **pathway**, a trail from around the Civic Center to downtown might be a **Parks** issue but doesn't see where a **safety pathway** along Dixie Highway from I-75 to Davisburg Road would be **Parks**. Lamont says that we already have a plan in place, so that in case grant money or matching funds became available we would be ready as a community. We have adopted the plan, we have put the plan in our recently updated Master Plan, so from a planning standpoint we are very well prepared. The CIP for year 2010 shows \$10,000 for **Parks/Fencing/Trails**, that might be for trails within the parklands or access the parklands. The different uses need to be separated out, **safety pathways vs. trails**.

Aiello asked about the pluses and minuses of having **pathways** within the **Parks** domain or not. Does he mean from a control and execution standpoint?

Lamont said yes. If you look at other communities, such as Orion Township, they have a millage and a Trailways Committee. They have a dog-walking park with internal pathways inside the park. But down Joslyn Road, there are paths that are more for jogging/biking, that lead to the dog park. Lamont said he doesn't know if they separate that or put it all under one line item in their budgets, but he feels they do a good job with that.

Brian Oppmann responded that from his experience, those communities who have millages designated for that use, do well, because they have the dedicated funding. Oxford and Independence Townships have millages and developed **pathways** system. Holly Township has a **safety path** plan, but no way to fund it unless the Township takes the initiative, you won't see improvements until a developer does something, but then it won't connect to anything.

Lamont asked Oppmann, if he knew how other communities run their **pathway/trails** systems. Do they run it from the Township Board level, or from the Parks?

Oppmann said that Oxford, Orion and Independence all have separate millages. Independence has a **Safety Path** Department, with a few employees, and that operates under the umbrella of the Building Department. He thinks that Oxford is under the Parks because they don't have a DPW. Orion has a DPW but he is not sure who oversees their safety paths. Orion has a flowchart on their website that shows who is running what programs. Most communities have a separate committee.

One of the Commissioners asked how likely it would be that Springfield Township would pass a millage for **pathway system**?

Trout felt it was possible, if residents were informed and sold on the idea. Having a **pathway system** is huge.

Commissioner Lamont made comment regarding residents of Pebble Creek and their use of the **pathway** that is through a weedy field, behind the sewer treatment plant but also leads to the Kroger parking lot. Parents will not let their children go down to Davisburg Road and go around the corner along Davisburg and Dixie, they use the path through the weeds instead because they feel it is safer.

Tom Weiler, 9171 Hillcrest, Clarkston, made comment about a fire access behind Kroger and additional comments regarding all the various accesses that people don't know are there. He also said that Oakland County said no to a **pathway** for Davisburg Road, across Dixie, to Bridge Lake Road, engineering was too expensive.

Lamont explained that fire access is the sewer treatment plant, in case there is a power outage, a large generator can be brought in to run the treatment plant.

Commissioner Leddy talked about hard it is to get started with the **pathway system**. He suggested starting with something simple like at Civic Center through downtown Davisburg to Dilley Road, that would connect up the three parks, Shiawassee Basin Preserve, Millpond Park and Dilley Park. When the residents see, then perhaps we could go for a millage.

Chair Steckling said that the feedback so far is positive and the Planning Commission is onboard with what Supervisor Trout has suggested.

Lamont asked about **Sheriff Dept. Sub-Station, year 2010**, the amount shown on the CIP is \$50,000, of which the sources would be Township Operating Funds, Federal Grant, State Grant, Local Grant and Other (peg). Lamont reviewed the recent proposal that was before the Township Board to utilize space at Station #2, for the Sheriff's Sub-Station. Lamont said he supports a Sub-Station at Station #2. Lamont feels it is important for us to have an identity, so that potential residents know that we have police services. Lamont would like to go on record as saying he supports relocating the Sheriff's sub-station to Fire Station #2.

Commissioner Aiello asked what the objection was to relocating.

Lamont said economic conditions and that we would give up a room that is used for voting. Lamont feels that there would still be room for voting.

Trout suggested that due to the current economic times that the same \$50,000 would actually be \$100,000 if the economy was more prosperous. That perhaps we would be getting a higher value doing it in a down turn. Trout suggested that perhaps labor and materials could be donated.

Other Business

1. Priority/Task List Discussion

Sign Provisions-Building Signs: Supervisor Trout suggested creating an inventory of Building signs, have pictures and descriptions, so that we know when the signs change. Sometimes those changes happen over night.

Supervisor Trout reviewed other items on the Priority/Task List with the Commissioners.

Brief discussion was held regarding ordinance codification.

Downtown Davisburg Plan: Supervisor Trout wanted to discuss the downtown Davisburg Plan and the possibility of an overlay. Brian Oppmann is going to work on a map for the next meeting to determine the boundaries and to see if there are any setback issues, signage issues, parking, overnight parking or other problems.

Dixie Corridor Study Update: Consider incentives for current businesses to do improvements without being hit by the additional tax burden. Brian Oppmann talked about the Commercial Rehabilitation Act., which was originally designed for Summit Place Mall in Pontiac, but they ended up going a different direction.. He explained about setting up districts which could lead to tax abatements. There are specific criteria to qualify. Oppmann said he is working with Independence Township currently and using the Commercial Rehabilitation Act. Oppmann went onto say that even after everything is in place for the abatements, that it presents a challenge to the Assessing office, the formulas to calculate the abatements are very confusing.

Commissioner Steckling mentioned that the Dixie Highway Traffic Study was completed and that he would like a copy. Is there anything in that study that might impact the Zoning Ordinance?

Trout said he will get copies of that study out to the Planning Commission members.

Public Comment: Commissioner Lamont thanked Tom Weiler for attending the meeting.

Adjournment:

- **Commissioner Steckling moved to adjourn the meeting at 9:09 p.m. Support by Commissioner Lamont. Vote on the Motion: Yes: Aiello, Baker, Hines, Leddy, Lamont, Steckling and Willson. Nays: None. Absent: Motion Carried.**