



Minutes of **SPECIAL MEETING – JOINT
TOWNSHIP BOARD AND PLANNING COMMISSION**

Held **JANUARY 21, 2014**

Township of Springfield

Laura Moreau, Clerk

Call to Order: Chairperson Baker called the January 21, 2014 Joint Meeting of the Township Board and the Planning Commission to order at 7:30 p.m. at the Springfield Township Civic Center, 12000 Davisburg Road, Davisburg, MI 48350.

Attendance:

Board members Present:

Marc Cooper
Jamie Dubre
Judy Hensler
Dave Hopper
Laura Moreau
Denny Vallad
Collin Walls

Board Members Absent:

Commissioners Present:

Dean Baker
Dave Hopper
Bill Leddy
Kevin Sclesky
Linda Whiting
Neil Willson

Commissioners Absent

Ruth Ann Hines

Consultants Present

Doug Lewan, Planner, Carlisle Wortman, Associates

Approval of Agenda:

Commissioners Willson moved to approve the agenda as presented. Seconded by Commissioner Leddy. Voted yes: Baker, Hopper, Leddy, Sclesky, Whiting, Willson. Voted no: None. Absent: Hines. Motion Carried.

Public Comment: None

Consent Agenda:

1. Minutes of the December 16, 2013 Planning Commission meeting

Commissioner Whiting amended the minutes as follows: Page #2, 3rd paragraph, add “meet the” after “site plan”; page #6, paragraph #5, correct “; sheet number”.



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Commissioner Leddy moved to approve the minutes of the December 16, 2013 meeting as amended. Seconded by Commissioner Willson. Voted yes: Baker, Hopper, Leddy, Sclesky, Whiting, Willson. Voted no: None. Absent: Hines. Motion Carried.

Public Hearing: None

New Business: 1. Strategic Plan Discussion

Mr. Lewan stated that this is intended to be a regular agenda item for Planning Commission meetings. This is a year long process and will involve the Township Board and he will keep the Board updated through written updates. He reviewed the process of the strategic plan which is a plan that will give the Township a detailed set of goals, policies and strategies in moving forward. He provided an electronic presentation describing the strategic plan process. He stated that the development of a strategic plan is a directed effort to identify measurable, short term goals targeted at specific areas and issues. These strategies are then incorporated into the overall Master Plan document. The current Master Plan has a whole series of goals and policies that seem to be more positions of the Township. It lacks specific language on how the Township is going to get there. The first step is to define the specific issues and areas that of concern to the members and determine how they are going to solve them. The goal for tonight is to get a new set of issues particularly for the public input portion of this. The MICommunity Remarks tool is a website and online tool allowing the public to comment on categories. They need to have specific targets to get useful information from the residents. They will also be holding a traditional visioning session with the public. The categories that the public will comment on are determined by the Planning Commission and Township Board, hopefully tonight. Mr. Lewan provided a summary of the process. Mr. Lewan referred to and reviewed the handout materials provided to the meeting members. He provided a summary of the current Master Plan goals. He outlined the SEMCOG data that was included in the meeting packets including the population forecast.

Commissioner Willson stated that he noticed that 30 years out in the population forecast, it becomes stagnant. He asked if that was a State of Michigan issue.

Mr. Lewan answered that the flattening out is typical in the State.

Commissioner Willson asked if growth could be moving back in the area in 30 years or so.

Mr. Lewan answered that some areas are going up in population.

Supervisor Walls stated that it is interesting to look at surrounding communities.



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Mr. Lewan stated that in the late 1990's, everything was growing, but this trend is not there anymore. However, these forecasted details are only as good as the data that goes into them for the last 5 to 10 years.

Commissioner Whiting stated that she noticed the aging population and asked how much of that is the young people are moving out or is it due to smaller family size.

Mr. Lewan stated that this is a statewide phenomenon. The number of people per household continues to decrease. The population is generally aging.

Trustee Hensler stated that she takes exception to the SEMCOG study saying that the population is getting older and the property values are going down because it is based on ten years of numbers going down. She believes that the population is going to go up based on the real estate market and the fact that the community has everything that a family is looking for except shopping, although it is moving out this way. She stated that the housing is affordable and that combined with library, schools, parks, etc. provides an environment for families. When a subdivision gets to be 25 years old, there tends to be a turnover.

Mr. Lewan stated that some of the numbers are not extrapolated; the population change by age is based on the direct census numbers. These numbers change very much and can be done different ways but he provided this as a starting point.

Clerk Moreau stated that looking at the SEMCOG projections from the 2000 census, they were way too high based on what could happen in the Township.

Mr. Lewan stated that there are so many variables that can occur that affect a build out study.

Trustee Vallad and Supervisor Walls concurred.

Mr. Lewan stated that this is why they update the Master Plan every 5 years. He continued to summarize the SEMCOG projections presented in the packet. He summarized that road systems and access to roadways systems are very important points.

Mr. Lewan continued his electronic presentation with the 5 goals of the current Master Plan. He stated that these are good and he suggested using something very much like this, however somewhat modified. Associated with these goals are policy statements that are arranged under these topics. These planning issues or target areas are natural resources, historic preservation, residential land use, community services, recreation, transportation and commercial, industrial, office and mixed use development. These are broad topic areas. For tonight, he wanted these types of statements finalized to start the next step which is setting up the visioning date and set up the website. He asked the meeting members to think about these and think about changes that they wanted made. They are trying to come up with some planning issues that the public will react to and during the visioning session



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will be able to make comments about. During the visioning session, residents are able to write down comments at each station and make comments guided by a facilitator. He asked the members what are other ideas or issues that the public should be able to comment on and he provided some examples of issues like redevelopment opportunities, utility access, community economic vitality, environmental preservation, parks and recreation, non-motorized transportation, road improvements and Township Services. He stated that he is trying to direct some of the goal and issue statements so they can organize the website. These topics will be the basis of the Community Remarks tool. He encouraged the meeting members to think about these questions as they look at the existing Planning Issues that he handed out and consider if they still relevant, how are they relevant and based on those issues, what do they expect to learn from the public. He gave the members about 5 minutes to think about those things and jot ideas down so they can be shared with the group.

Trustee Vallad answered that these topics are relevant however some of these goals were developed in an era when they were experiencing significant growth. The community has evolved over time because of a lot of different factors.

Supervisor Walls stated that the base document for the current Master Plan was written in the early 1980's.

Trustee Vallad stated that the goals are relevant but they need to reflect what the community is today in those goals and where some of the projections are taking the Township. He stated that we are in transition and we cannot expect a lot of huge economic development because of the size of the Township.

Treasurer Dubre stated that we have limitations based on the lack of water and sewer.

Trustee Vallad concurred. He asked if there was some way to incorporate some sewer treatment to get where we needed to be. The aging community is real.

Trustee Hensler stated that she agreed that the aging population is real but the question is are they going to stay here. She stated that things like community services are limited. Our historical preservation is great but we could use a lot more signage. Invasive species are a hot topic and we should deal with this. We have the ability to control them in the Township.

Commissioner Whiting stated that she has lived in the Township for 23 years and she has seen a lot of residential development in that time. She stated that the population has peaked and they are going to start to go down. We should encourage restaurants and services to come into the Township. Independence has a thriving senior citizen program and services should be increased for them in this Township. She stated that they need to promote services that do exist including trails and walking paths. They should partner with businesses for charitable events; for example, Neiman's partnered with Clarkston Schools for Stuff-A-Bus in Independence Township. She encouraged the promotion of recreational



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opportunities. The peaceful atmosphere is a positive benefit of living in the Township. She encouraged paths to be safely off the road for both bikes and walking. She wondered about the deer accidents being high on the accident list and encouraged public education. New residents should receive New Residents packet. The businesses should be promoted in downtown Davisburg.

Trustee Vallad stated that if we look at the road incidents in the area; the section at I-75 and Dixie needs to be addressed especially if there is an aging residential population.

Supervisor Walls stated that all of the planning issues are too broad. The goals need to be looked at, but they are very general. If we are trying to gain insight into planning issues, they need to get much more specific. For an aging population, we don't have the services available or the housing available to meet the need. This would fall under residential land use, but that in and of itself is too broad.

Treasurer Dubre stated that they have also talked about water and sewer. She asked how this would work for road improvements for the website.

Mr. Lewan stated that they would edit the website and if someone was abusing it, they could block them.

Treasurer Dubre stated that we want a true response from the public.

Supervisor Walls stated that we should not ask for public opinion on something that we can't do anything about.

Treasurer Dubre stated that we have prioritized road improvements with the Road Commission and maybe they should use those. We should give the public the opportunity to comment on road improvements that we have already discussed as possible.

Trustee Hopper stated that since we are going to redo this anyway in 5 years; he suggested that population projections would not be any closer in 5 years. He stated that he has an issue with some of the topics that are in the current Master Plan. We are not going to allow more traditional lake front development or more mobile home parks. We do need to look at more apartments and condominiums because the population is aging.

Commissioner Whiting stated that the key is affordable condos with access to services.

Members concurred.

Commissioner Whiting stated that we should encourage more restaurant developments.

Commissioner Willson stated that this a water and sewer problem.



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Clerk Moreau concurred with Commissioner Whiting but having more restaurants is not something that they want on the website because it is out of their control. She asked if the goal of the meeting was to make a wish list; many ideas have been discussed but we aren't getting to the vision for the Township. She stated that she is not sure that the Planning Commission, the Township Board and the residents have the same vision for the Township. She needs to understand what we are striving to be. When we last spoke in August, we talked about when the Dixie Corridor Plan was finished, this would help determine the goals of the Township and the Plan is still in process. She would prefer to talk about the vision and the "curb appeal" of Dixie Highway.

Mr. Lewan stated that this conversation became about specifics but that is not what this first step is about. This first step is to establish broad topics and what the vision is for the community.

Clerk Moreau concurred with Trustee Hensler regarding addressing invasives and she concurred with Commissioner Whiting regarding trail maps and promotion. She stated that she can't say that nothing good is coming out of the conversation but her starting place might be somewhere else. She agreed with the goals section and she believes that the value statements are worthy and they still have a place and play a role in what Springfield is. She stated that renaming it Guiding Principles and adding a goals section that is specific and identifies a vision is helpful. She stated that they could take a lot out of the policy section and agreed with removing a lot of the detail contained in it now. She would like to see in Policy #6, removing the definitions that could be found in the zoning ordinance but fine tune it to include something about meeting the needs of the residents and responding to population projections, this means that we are looking ahead and responding. She would like the items slimmed down and refined and they should add a goals section that is specific and targeted to a vision.

Mr. Lewan stated that they are far from writing the goals and strategy statements. They have to start somewhere with asking the questions and forming an overall vision.

Commissioner Leddy stated that they should be thinking about community sustainability and suggested preserving farmlands and historic barns. He suggested that to prevent blight, they should look at properties that don't have a future. They have a lot of housing in the area that is built cheaply and is not sustainable and they should look to rebuild on these. He suggested on Dixie Highway, they should encourage builders to take down the old useless buildings and rebuild on these properties. He encouraged the use of the railroad tracks that run through town and suggested that they could run between Davisburg and Holly. One of the problems with the woodlands is that there a lot of tree diseases that are killing their trees and we should address this.



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Mr. Lewan suggested that there are creative ways to manipulate the ordinance to allow and promote the continuing use of farming property.

Trustee Cooper stated that they should encourage the plan for Dixie Highway to extend north past Davisburg Road. They should also define non-motorized transportation.

Treasurer Dubre stated that we called them extended paved shoulders for bike traffic.

Commissioner Sclesky stated that he has lived here his whole life and his daughters are raising their families here. The country atmosphere is what appeals to him but the Dixie Corridor should be developed for convenience. The Master Plan should identify the different areas of the Township.

Mr. Lewan stated that they could have sub areas in which it makes sense to have common feature or common similarities.

Commissioner Sclesky stated that they have a new downtown district which the Master Plan does not identify. They have a historical district now and they also have this future development area in Dixie Highway which are opposite ends of the spectrum, but both need to be addressed.

Commissioner Whiting asked how to share the message of the benefits of Springfield Township.

Commissioner Leddy stated that we possibly should wait on future residential developments until the current ones are filled.

Meeting members discussed current residential developments.

Commissioner Baker stated that the Township is blessed with natural features and it has been managed well. It is part of the attraction of this area. He does feel that there is a problem with the interconnectivity within the Township. It is difficult to bike to the Metro Park and an extended shoulder for Andersonville Road would be valuable. This is an aspect that residents would benefit from and this is an item that he would like. He concurred with Trustee Copper regarding the section of Dixie Highway north of Davisburg Road being included. He stated that he likes the concept of the transitional land uses, but there aren't many calls for this use. He stated that he likes the historic quality of the Hamlet of Davisburg, but doesn't necessarily think that should pertain to all historic structures including pole barns. He stated that he understood the concept of asking if these items are still relevant, but we need to develop more detail.

Mr. Lewan stated that to help with identifying planning issues, they could be listed on the website and when they click on it, there would be information available too.



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Commissioner Baker stated that he concurred with Commissioner Whiting on promoting areas that have been set aside for recreational use. He used the new property located off of Andersonville as an example.

Commissioner Whiting suggested involving social media for promotion.

Commissioner Leddy suggested allowing smaller homes to be built to make them more affordable for retired residents and they should be able to make mobile homes more durable.

Supervisor Walls answered that you can build a 1000 square foot ranch now but garages are bigger today.

Mr. Lewan suggested that anyone could email additional comments to him after the meeting. He continued with his slide presentation regarding the Strategic Plan process and timeline that they will follow. He provided a sample of the MICommunity Remarks website tool. They will continue to have this appear as a regular topic on the Planning Commission agenda every month.

Adjournment:

Commissioner Hopper moved to adjourn the meeting at 9:25 PM. Supported by Commissioner Sclesky. Voted yes: Baker, Hopper, Leddy, Sclesky, Whiting, Willson. Voted no: None. Absent: Hines. Motion Carried.

Collin W. Walls, Township Supervisor

Laura Moreau, Township Clerk