

OTTAWA COUNTY PLANNING COMMISSION

APPROVED MINUTES

DATE: June 25, 2007

PLACE: Ottawa County Fillmore Complex, Conference Room A

PRESENT: Betty Gajewski, Bill Miller, Jim Miedema, Jim Holtvluwer, Gary Scholten, Matt Hehl

ABSENT: Jeffrey Wincel

STAFF: Mark Knudsen, Tabitha Rowley

GUESTS: Mike Galligan, Ottawa County Equalization Department; Rick Pulaski, Nederveld Associates

Call to Order:

Chair Gajewski called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. A quorum was present to do business. Invocation was given by Jim Miedema.

Approval of the Agenda:

07-09 Motion: To approve the June 25, 2007 Agenda.

Moved by: Holtvluwer Supported by: Miedema **UNANIMOUS**

Approval of the Minutes:

07-10 Motion: To approve the minutes of the March 26, 2007 meeting.

Moved by: Scholten Supported by: Holtvluwer **UNANIMOUS**

Introductions:

Mike Galligan and Rick Pulaski were introduced as the presenters for the meeting.

Action Items:

A. None

Announcements:

A. Reports of Meetings Attended

Bill Miller reported that most fruit crops were approximately two weeks ahead of their normal schedule, due to the warmer than average weather.

Matt Hehl had nothing to report.

Gary Scholten attended a Joint Planning Commission meeting between Holland Township, Zeeland City, and Zeeland Township. Roads and traffic issues were the key discussion items at the meeting, and they would like to invite a representative from the Michigan Department of Transportation to attend their next joint meeting.

Jim Miedema had nothing to report.

Jim Holtvluwer reported that he had attended a Georgetown Township Planning Commission meeting.

Betty Gajewski attended a Parks and Recreation Commission meeting and reported that Park 12 continues to present interesting challenges. The Commission is attempting to identify all encroachments to County property, per a court order. Parking has posed the biggest encroachment issues. Betty also reported that a bike path for the park is under development at this time.

Betty said a Master Plan is being prepared for the Community Haven property. The site is proposed to be a farmland education area for the County and will also be available for equestrian use.

B. Excellence Through Training – Fall Schedule

Mark reported that the fall schedule for Excellence Through Training has not yet been finalized, but that there will be a Planning & Zoning Risk Management seminar in September and a seminar in October regarding Traffic Impact Studies.

Petitions and Communications:

A. FYI Folder

B. Letter of communication to City of Ferrysburg, dated 4/12/2007, acknowledging receipt of the City of Ferrysburg Master Plan

C. Letter of communication from City of Holland, dated 4/17/2007, regarding a draft amendment to the City of Holland Master Plan

D. Letter of communication to Olive Township, dated 4/24/2007, acknowledging receipt of US-31 Overlay District and Zoning Ordinance updates

E. Letter of communication to Ottawa County Farm Bureau, dated 4/30/2007, regarding the Scratch and Sniff Brochures

F. Letter of communication from Grand Haven Charter Township, dated 4/15/2007, regarding a Community Recreation Plan

G. Letter of communication from City of Holland, dated 5/30/2007, giving notice of intent to revise the City of Holland Master Plan for the Columbia Avenue neighborhood area

H. Letter of communication from Port Sheldon Township, dated 6/5/2007, regarding proposed rezoning of parcel #70-11-01-400-016 and proposed amendments to Ordinance #32

- I. Letter of response to Port Sheldon Township, dated 6/12/2007, regarding proposed rezoning and amendments**
- J. Letter of correspondence to Jamestown Charter Township, dated 3/22/2007, regarding requested Village Overlay zoning districts**
- K. Letter of correspondence to City of Hudsonville, dated 3/23/2007, regarding conditional rezoning research assistance**
- L. Letter of correspondence and survey to selected communities, dated 5/4/2007, regarding recently built developments and ordinance standards**
- M. Letter of correspondence to Blendon Township, dated 6/20/2007, regarding New Holland Street/Port Sheldon Street Overlay District meeting**
- N. Letter of correspondence to Chester Township, dated 6/25/2007, regarding an Application for Farmland Agreement (PA 116) for parcels #70-01-11-300-008 and 70-01-11-300-007.**

07-11 Motion: To receive for information Items A - O

Moved by: Scholten

Supported by: Holtvluwer

UNANIMOUS

Presentations:

A. How Property Tax Rates are Set – Mike Galligan, Ottawa County Equalization Department

At the last meeting, the question was asked how property tax rates are set, and how farmland rates differ from residential rates. Mike discussed various scenarios that result in farmland and residential property tax values. Mike indicated that the taxable value of farmland remains unchanged if the owner promises to keep farming the land. The average taxable value for agricultural property is 20.95% of the land's worth. The average taxable value for residential property is 40%. Commercial property's taxable value is approximately 43%, and industrial is approximately 46%.

B. Urban Smart Growth, Hudsonville Downtown Design Plan – Rick Pulaski, Senior Project Manager for Nederveld Associates

Rick Pulaski was introduced as a member of the team working on the Hudsonville Downtown Design Plan. Rick said that in February of 2005, Hudsonville received a MSU Small Town Design Initiative Grant that was submitted by the Ottawa County Planning Department as a part of the Urban Smart Growth Program. As a result of receiving the grant, the City completed a SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats) assessment. Their top three weaknesses were businesses moving away from the City, the layout of the City, and a lack of bike paths/easily accessible pedestrian areas.

The first phase of the Urban Smart Growth Development Project was to create an Architectural Design Elements Portfolio, which provides architectural standards for the City. Rick showed examples of a few businesses that have been designed under the new guidelines.

Rick said the Downtown Design Plan is currently being developed. There have been three public meetings to discuss what residents and business owners would like to see in the Plan. The current plan is loosely based on the community of Lake Forest, IL, and includes a village green. The business owners are excited about the new plans and are supportive of the project. He estimated that it would be two to three years before the infrastructure will be in place to begin implementing the Downtown Design Plan.

Rick reported that the next step in the project will be to develop a Frontage Code, which would include guidelines for trees, curbs, sidewalks, street lamps, benches, etc.

Public Comments:

None

Discussion Items

A. Local Planning Commission Meeting Assignments

Based on discussion from the last meeting, a calendar-style list was created of all the local planning commissions' meeting days and times. Tabitha mentioned that it would be wise to confirm any meeting dates and times before attending, due to frequent changes in schedules.

B. Water Quality Study

Mark reported that the Scope of Work for the Water Quality Study had been sent to the United States Geological Survey (USGS). They are reviewing the list and will present an itemized cost for each of the work elements by the end of July or early August. At that point, the Planning Commission will need to determine the priorities of the study and whether to accept the USGS bid or to send the proposal out for additional bids.

At the last meeting, Betty had asked what Kalamazoo had found valuable from their Water Quality Study. Mark reported that Kalamazoo is using the study findings primarily to determine where areas of contamination exist.

C. Transit Funding (JARC and SDNT Grants)

Mark reported that, due to a hold on state grant funding, the Transit Study has been placed on hold. In October, the state will notify the County as to whether grant funding will be reinstated for 2008. If funding is reinstated at that time, the Planning Department will begin to implement the Transit Study.

Additionally, Mark reported that in 2008, the County will no longer be a pass-through for the JARC funding. As of next year, that funding will go directly to Pioneer Resources.

D. Planning Commission and Zoning Board of Appeals Basic Training Survey Results

Mark reported that both the Planning Commission and Zoning Board of Appeals Basic Trainings were rated as "good" or "excellent" by all participants. There were 29 attendees of the Planning Commission Training, and 22 for the Zoning Board of Appeals Training. In addition, Mark reported that roughly 60-70% of the attendees were from Ottawa County, and the remainder were from other counties, with attendees coming from as far away as Mason County.

E. On-Staff Planner/Zoning Administrator Email Questions and Answers

A few years ago, E-Talk Ottawa was developed as an online forum for on-staff planners and zoning administrators to discuss issues. That forum never became popular, but there has been recent interest in the idea again.

Mark reported that on-staff planners and zoning administrators have been sending in their questions to the Planning Department. In response, Chris Clement has been sending the questions out to all of the planners and zoning administrators for input and responses. Once the responses have been received, they are compiled and sent back out to all of the on-staff planners and zoning administrators. Mark said that this has been positively received and has helped local planners determine how other communities are addressing specific planning and zoning issues.

F. New Holland Street/Port Sheldon Street Overlay Districts

Mark reported that there have been two meetings regarding the New Holland Street/Port Sheldon Street Corridor. At the most recent meeting, there was discussion regarding building-setbacks. The communities involved will be discussing the issues with their boards, and there will be a follow-up meeting scheduled for July.

Input and Strategy Session

A. County Development Plan – Vision Statements

As Mark had reported at the last meeting, the Planning Department has begun work on a new County Development Plan. This will be a project-driven, results-based document and include a vision for the County. Mark reported that there was discussion about the County Development Plan at previous On-Staff Planners meetings, and based on those discussions, the Plan will not include any land use maps, but rather a vision for the County and a list of projects to support the vision.

At the last meeting, the Planning Commission had asked to see vision statements from the local units of government in Ottawa County. Those were compiled, and Mark reported that most of them were very broad and will likely not provide much assistance in formulating a County vision.

Mark created a draft of a vision statement and said that he was trying to create a picture of a vision of what Ottawa County could look like after 30-50 years if the Development Plan objectives and projects are implemented. He asked for input, and there was discussion about how to make this vision uniquely describe Ottawa County. Some of the unique qualities of Ottawa County that were mentioned included Lake Michigan, the Grand River, blueberry fields, and the diversity of agriculture in Ottawa County, preservation of rural townships.

At the next meeting, Mark would like to focus on the vision statement and would like input as to what should be included in the vision.

The meeting adjourned at 9:12 PM.