

OTTAWA COUNTY PLANNING COMMISSION

APPROVED MINUTES

DATE: September 24, 2007

PLACE: Ottawa County Fillmore Complex, Conference Room A

PRESENT: Betty Gajewski, Bill Miller, Jim Holtvluwer, Jeff Wincel

ABSENT: Matt Hehl, Jim Midemea

STAFF: Mark Knudsen, Tabitha Rowley

GUESTS: Kathy Staton, Spring Lake Village; Ryan Cotton, Spring Lake Village; Peter Daining, Grand Haven Tribune; Ann Tabor, Grand Haven Area Community Foundation; Bernice Berens, Robinson Township; Patrick Reagan, Ottawa County Administrator's Office; Nancy Krupiarz, Michigan Trails and Greenways Alliance; Barry Culham, Michigan Trails and Greenways Alliance

Call to Order:

Chair Gajewski called the meeting to order at 7:04 p.m. A quorum was present to do business. Invocation was given by Jim Holtvluwer.

Approval of the Agenda:

07-16 Motion: To approve the September 24, 2007 Agenda, with the following amendments:

- Under "Discussion Items", add "Item E – Update on PA 116 Parcels in Ottawa County", and, under "Input and Strategy Session", postpone "County Development Plan – Vision Statements" to next month's agenda.

Moved by: Holtvluwer

Supported by: Miller

UNANIMOUS

Approval of the Minutes:

07-17 Motion: To approve the minutes of the August 27, 2007 meeting.

Moved by: Holtvluwer

Supported by: Wincel

UNANIMOUS

Introductions:

The following people were introduced as presenters for the meeting: Kathy Staton and Ryan Cotton from Spring Lake Village, Ann Tabor from the Grand Haven Area Community Foundation, and Nancy Krupiarz and Barry Culham from the Michigan Trails and Greenways Alliance.

In addition, the following people introduced themselves: Peter Daining from the Grand Haven Tribune, Bernice Berens from Robinson Township, and Patrick Reagan from the Ottawa County Administrator's Office.

Presentations:

A. Ottawa County Trails Fund – Ann Tabor, Grand Haven Area Community Foundation

Mark Knudsen stated that the Ottawa County Non-Motorized Pathways Plan was completed a few years ago. To this point, funding has not been available to construct the proposed connector pathways included in the Plan. There has been discussion regarding the creation of an endowment fund with the Grand Haven Area Community Foundation (GHACF).

Ann Tabor distributed additional information regarding the GHACF, including the 2006 Annual Report. The Report lists every fund handled at this time through the GHACF. Ann stated that the Community Foundation's job was to make sure that the agreement for each of those funds was followed forever. Additionally, services provided by GHACF include: investment of the funds, distributing a quarterly statement, issuing receipts to donors, and the handling of all tax reporting. Ann also discussed the advantages of an endowed fund versus a non-endowed fund, which include the Michigan Tax Credit being available to donors.

B. Spring Lake Village Proposed Master Plan Updates – Ryan Cotton, Village Manager and Kathy Staton, Community Services Director

Ryan Cotton discussed the highlights of the Village's updated Master Plan. Goals of the Plan included maintaining a quaint, historic, village feel; participation in the M-104 Overlay process; Connectivity over M-104; and Connectivity over the Grand River. Additionally, the Plan was intended to be visual, showing example photos of desired and non-desired aspects of the community.

Kathy Staton stated that she felt it was fortunate that Spring Lake Township's Master Plan was being updated at the same time. She felt that the two plans were complementary of each other.

Betty Gajewski expressed appreciation for the Village's presentation and for the process they went through to create the Master Plan.

C. Connecting Michigan Statewide Trailways Vision and Action Plan – Nancy Krupiarz, Michigan Trails and Greenways Alliance

Nancy Krupiarz stated that the Connecting Michigan Plan was released in May. Since that time, she and her colleagues have been offering presentations to local communities and asking for endorsements of the Plan.

Nancy stated that the Trails movement is alive and well in Michigan, and there is a high level of public demand for Trails at this time. The Plan was created by a group of ten task forces. The task forces included stakeholders at the regional and local level, along with officials from the Michigan Department of Transportation, Michigan Department of Natural Resources, and Michigan Department of Community Health.

Nancy also stated that some of the topics that the task forces studied were funding, private easements, multi-use accommodations, tourism promotion, education and advocacy, on-road connections, and coordination at state and local levels. The Plan includes 39 goals and 109 action steps, which lay the foundation to move forward with implementation.

In addition to seeking endorsements, Nancy stated that her organization was also hoping to raise awareness of the Plan through local newsletters and presentations.

E. Letter of correspondence from Chester Township, dated 9/7/2007, regarding an application for Farmland Preservation (PA 116)

F. Correspondence from Citizen Planner, received 9/12/2007, regarding Citizen Planner Training online

G. Correspondence to Ottawa County On-Staff Planners and Zoning Administrators, dated 9/13/2007, regarding noise ordinances

07-22 Motion: To receive for information Items A - G

Moved by: Wincel

Supported by: Holtvluwer

UNANIMOUS

Public Comments:

None

Discussion Items

A. Water Quality Study

At last month's meeting, Mark had said that he would be inviting a representative from the US Geological Survey (USGS) to attend the September meeting to help answer questions regarding their proposal for the Water Quality Study. Mark reported that the USGS representative was not available for this month's meeting but would instead be attending the October meeting.

B. Purchase of Development Rights (PDR) Program

Mark stated that the County Board of Commissioners has approved the concept of a PDR program, but a plan to administer the program must be developed. The following items must be created: a comprehensive plan, an ordinance, and a scoring system. Additionally, an administrative agency must be identified, and funding would need to be obtained.

Mark reported that many counties which have a PDR Program appoint an Agricultural Board to oversee applications and overall program administration. Mark asked if the Planning Commission would like to consider being the Agricultural Board, or if they would prefer to see the County Board should appoint a separate Agricultural Board. The Planning Commission members supported having the County Board appoint an Agricultural Board because they did not feel that they had the expertise needed to oversee the PDR Program.

Patrick Reagan discussed the proposed scoring system. He stated that it was based on other counties' examples, and it also incorporated many of the state's requirements. The team that helped with the creation of the scoring system included Chuck Pistis, Adam Kantrovich, and Bill Robb from the MSU Extension Office, and Mike Bronkema from the Farm Bureau.

Bill Miller wondered how a farm would score if it produced different kinds of crops (i.e. apples, corn, dairy, and soybeans).

Patrick stated that if a farm had specialty and commodity crops, the farm would receive points for both specialty and commodity crops in the scoring system.

Mark stated that, prior to next month's meeting, they would calculate the points for a number of different types of farms to see how they would rank in the scoring system. Ideally, real farms in the County would be used as samples.

Jeff Wincel asked if a farmer would be allowed to build an ethanol factory on his farm if it was in a PDR agreement. Patrick was not certain, and he stated that he would contact the Department of Agriculture to determine whether that would be allowed.

C. US-31 (M-231) Bypass – River Crossing & Non-Motorized Path Update

Mark stated that MDOT has designated the US-31 Bypass as M-231. He also stated that staff have been in discussions with MDOT regarding the creation of a bike path/pedestrian crossing over the Grand River. At this time, the state does not have the funding available, but the crossing could be built if local funding was obtained. Mark stated that MDOT does not have a cost estimate yet.

Betty asked if federal funding would be available. Mark was not certain, but said that he would investigate to see if any options are available.

D. New Holland Street – Railroad Crossing

In a previous meeting, Jim Holtvluwer had stated that MDOT had been considering closing New Holland Street at the railroad crossing near Chicago Drive. Mark had a discussion with MDOT concerning this issue. MDOT officials stated that, as a result of the upcoming Chicago Drive realignment, MDOT is unlikely to consider closing New Holland Street.

E. Update on PA 116 Parcels in Ottawa County

Mark distributed packets that included copies of charts showing the total acres, average acres and number of parcels in PA 116 agreements in Ottawa County. Additionally, maps showing the location of PA 116 properties were distributed.

Input and Strategy Session

None

The meeting adjourned at 9:45 PM.