

OTTAWA COUNTY PLANNING COMMISSION

APPROVED MINUTES

DATE: October 29, 2007

PLACE: Ottawa County Fillmore Complex, Conference Room A

PRESENT: Betty Gajewski, Matt Hehl, Jim Holtvluwer, Jim Miedema

ABSENT: Bill Miller, Jeff Wincel

STAFF: Mark Knudsen, Tabitha Rowley

GUESTS: Chris Hoard and Jim Nicholas from USGS; George Schippers, Bill Maschewske, Tracy Mulligan, Bernice Berens, and Travis Vugteveen from Robinson Township; Ruth Stegeman from Disability Network; Adam Kantrovich from the Ottawa County MSU Extension; Peter Daining from the Grand Haven Tribune

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:

07-23 Motion: To approve the updated October 29, 2007 Agenda.

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

Approval of the Minutes:

07-24 Motion: To approve the minutes of the September 24, 2007 meeting.

Moved by: Holtvluwer Supported by: Hehl **UNANIMOUS**

Introductions:

The following people were introduced as presenters for the meeting: Chris Hoard and Jim Nicholas from USGS; Ruth Stegeman from Disability Network.

In addition, the following people introduced themselves: George Schippers, Bill Maschewske, Tracy Mulligan, Bernice Berens, and Travis Vugteveen from Robinson Township; Adam Kantrovich from the Ottawa County MSU Extension; and Peter Daining from the Grand Haven Tribune.

Presentations:

A. Ottawa County Water Resources Study – Jim Nicholas and Chris Hoard, USGS Michigan Water Science Center

Jim Nicholas provided information about the United States Geological Services (USGS) Michigan Water Science Center. He stated that USGS is a federal science agency with approximately 40 employees in Michigan, of which 20 are hydrologic technicians. In addition to their Michigan offices, USGS has locations all over the Country.

Chris Hoard presented information regarding the proposed Ottawa County Water Resources Study. Chris stated that Ottawa County would receive the following from the USGS Study: water resource data in a quality assured, publicly available database; a peer reviewed report that would address current concerns with water resources in Ottawa County; and, if enough data is available, a groundwater flow model to analyze current conditions and aid in future water resource management decisions.

Additionally, Chris discussed the types of data that are currently available to USGS. Chris stated that USGS has determined that the current information available is not sufficient to provide a full assessment of Ottawa County's water resources. Therefore, additional data would need to be collected.

Mark questioned whether USGS was certain that enough data would be available to develop the groundwater flow model. Chris stated that USGS was uncertain as to whether enough data would be available to determine whether a groundwater flow model could be developed that would assist them in predicting future water needs and limitations.

A brief question and answer session followed. The Planning Commission decided that they would like USGS to determine the cost of data collection efforts that would ultimately determine whether there is enough data available to develop a groundwater flow model. Mark will meet with USGS again to determine those costs. After this meeting, another discussion will be held with the Planning Commission to decide whether to proceed with the full study.

B. Regional Transportation Study – Ruth Stegeman, Disability Network

Ruth Stegeman stated that her agency has partnered with other disability organizations and Metropolitan Planning Organizations around the region to begin a Regional Transportation Study. She said that funding for the study has been made available from grants, community foundations, and other sources.

Ruth also discussed the different aspects of the Study, including determining transportation options for routes between cities within the region, providing comprehensive planning (air, land, and water routes), and researching land use issues. She stated that her organization is currently talking to community organizations, and asked for feedback regarding the proposal.

Betty Gajewski asked if Ruth's organization had looked at past transportation studies to see what lessons have been learned. Ruth said that this had not been done and asked Betty to let her know if she had suggestions of specific studies that should be reviewed.

Ruth also asked if the Planning Commission members had input on defining our "region". Betty stated that there are currently many different definitions of what areas our region includes. Jim Holtvluwer said that he thought it would be more beneficial to start with a smaller region of Grand Rapids to Holland and Grand Haven.

Generational differences in transportation preferences were also discussed. Many of the Planning Commission members felt that the older generations seem to prefer having their own cars, while younger generations may be more open to traveling via public transportation, i.e. buses or trains.

Additionally, the cost of the Study was questioned. Matt Hehl felt that paying \$3 million for a Study seemed wasteful. Ruth stated that the Study was being paid for by a combination of private, state, and federal funding. Additionally, the \$3 million cost included engaging the community, bringing in national planners, and also acquiring software that will be shared between the region's MPOs to use in determining commuting patterns.

Action Items:

07-25 Motion: To support the Robinson Township Proposed Master Plan Updates

Moved by: Holtvluwer

Supported by: Hehl

UNANIMOUS

07-26 Motion: To approve the amended Resolution of Support for the 'North Bank Trail' and to amend the April 2002 Ottawa County Non-Motorized Pathways Study to include an extension of the conceptual non-motorized pathway

Moved by: Holtvluwer

Supported by: Miedema

The motion passed as shown by the following votes: Yeas: Gajewski, Holtvluwer, Miedema (3)
Nays: Hehl (1)

Announcements:

A. Reports of Meetings Attended

No reports.

B. Road Commission – Non-Motorized Pathways (11/26/2007)

This item was not postponed until the November meeting.

C. Rick Harrison – Excellence Through Training (1/24/2008)

Mark briefly discussed an article written by Rick Harrison regarding sprawl. Mark asked if he could bring Rick in for an Excellence Through Training presentation in January, and the Planning Commission agreed.

Petitions and Communications:

A. FYI Folder

B. Excellence Through Training Survey Results from Risk Management Seminar on 9/20/2007

C. Letter of correspondence from Blendon Township, dated 9/19/2007, regarding the preparation of revisions to its Master Plan

D. Letter of correspondence to Blendon Township, dated 9/25/2007, acknowledging receipt of correspondence regarding preparations to revise its Master Plan

- E. Letter of correspondence from Polkton Township, dated 9/24/2007, regarding a PA 116 application for Paul and Patricia Lindberg**
- F. Letter of correspondence to Polkton Township, dated 10/2/2007, acknowledging receipt of a PA 116 application for Paul and Patricia Lindberg**
- G. Letter of correspondence from Wright Township, dated 9/25/2007, regarding a PA 116 application for Leo and Patricia Rasch**
- H. Letter of correspondence to Wright Township, dated 10/2/2007, acknowledging receipt of a PA 116 application for Leo and Patricia Rasch**
- I. Email correspondence to Ottawa County On-Staff Planners and Zoning Administrators, dated 10/10/2007, regarding Electronic Message Center Signs**
- J. Letter of correspondence to Spring Lake Township, dated 10/15/2007, regarding Spring Lake Township's proposed Master Plan**

Public Comments:

None

Discussion Items

A. Timberland Resource Conservation & Development Area Council – North Bank Trail Proposal

Mark stated that grant writing assistance for non-motorized pathways is one of the services offered by the Timberland Resource Conservation & Development agency. The agency will also serve as a fiduciary for these types of grants. Mark said that Meghann has drafted a project proposal to send to Timberland RC&D for the North Bank Trail Project. If approved, the Friends of the North Bank Trail would be the primary point of contact for the grant project, but the grant would be administered by Timberland RC&D.

Mark asked if the Planning Commission would support the proposal as drafted. The PC made a minor wording change and indicated that they would support the submission of the project proposal.

B. US-31 (M-231) Bypass – River Crossing & Non-Motorized Path Update Regarding Federal Funding

This item was postponed to the November meeting.

C. MSU Citizen Planner Program

This item was postponed to the November meeting.

D. Local Units of Government Zoning Ordinance and Master Plan Updates

This item was postponed to the November meeting.

E. Meeting with Local Units of Government to Discuss Wireless Internet and Urban Smart Growth Architectural Guidebook Portfolio (Week of December 3-7)

The Planning Commission members suggested that Tabitha set a meeting date, and they would attend if their schedules permitted.

Input and Strategy Session

A. PDR Program

As had been discussed at the last meeting, Mark stated that the Board of Commissioners has approved the concept of a PDR program within the County. A scoring system to rank farms that apply for the PDR program has been developed by a team of people, including Mark, Adam Kantrovich, Chuck Pistis, and Bill Robb from the MSU Extension Office, and Mike Bronkema from the Farm Bureau.

In order to determine the form's understandability and ease of use, and also to determine how farms would rank in the scoring system, Mark and Adam asked a number of farmers in the County to complete the scoring sheet. The different types of farms that were surveyed included: apple, dairy, soybeans and corn, pullet and commodity crops, blueberries, and a nursery.

Mark distributed a list of how each farm scored. He noted that the apple farm scored the highest, and the nursery scored the lowest. Due to the many different factors that are considered in the scoring process, these scores were not necessarily due to the type of crop or product at each farm.

Mark reviewed the scoring system with the Planning Commission members and discussed each item on the scoring sheet. Mark stated that the scoring calculations of many items would need confirmation from a local or government agency to ensure the accuracy of each item.

One of the factors on the scoring sheet was that applicants would receive additional points for having locally processed products. The definition of "locally processed" was discussed, with a determination being made that any product processed in Ottawa County or an adjacent county should be included as locally processed.

Matt Hehl stated that he thought a Centennial farm should receive additional points, due to the fact that the land had to be farmed by one family for 100 years or more. The other Planning Commission members agreed to add this consideration.

Additionally, it was determined that a farm that was certified by the US Department of Agriculture as Organic would receive the same amount of points as a farm certified by the Michigan Agriculture Environmental Assurance Program (MAEAP).

Mark said that after a final draft of the scoring system was approved by the Planning Commission, a public hearing would be held at a future Planning Commission meeting to receive additional input on the PDR program.

B. Ottawa County Trails Fund

Due to a lack of time, this item was postponed to the November meeting.

The meeting adjourned at 10:00 PM.