

OTTAWA COUNTY PLANNING COMMISSION

APPROVED MINUTES

DATE: June 30, 2008

PLACE: Ottawa County Fillmore Complex, Board Room

PRESENT: Matt Hehl, Jim Holtvluwer, Doug Kamphuis, Jim Miedema, Bill Miller, Roman Wilson, Jeff Wincel

ABSENT: None

STAFF: Mark Knudsen, Tabitha Rowley

GUESTS: Nicki Arendshorst, Park Township; Jeff Cunningham, Advance Newspapers; Gary Karr, Wright Township; Arlan Meekhof, State Representative; Erik Nordman, Grand Valley State University; Mike Rasch, Rasch Farms; Russell Rasch, Jim Rasch Farm; Denise Ruwersma, Wright Township; Dan VanDyke, Wright Township

Call to Order:

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

Approval of the Agenda:

08-38 Motion: To approve the June 30, 2008 Agenda

Moved by: Holtvluwer

Supported by: Wincel

UNANIMOUS

Approval of the Minutes:

08-39 Motion: To approve the minutes of the May 8, 2008 meeting

Moved by: Kamphuis

Supported by: Hehl

UNANIMOUS

Introductions:

All of the audience members present introduced themselves.

Public Hearing – County Development Plan Amendment:

08-40 Motion: To open the Public Hearing

Moved by: Hehl

Supported by: Wincel

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Mark Knudsen stated that he would like to make minor modifications to the proposed amendment to the County Development Plan. Mark reviewed two minor wording changes and one change to the placement of an item within the document.

No public comments were given.

08-41 Motion: To close the Public Hearing

Moved by: Hehl

Supported by: Wincel

UNANIMOUS

Action Items I:

A. County Development Plan Amendment

08-42 Motion: To approve the proposed amendment to the County Development Plan, as modified

Moved by: Wincel

Supported by: Wilson

UNANIMOUS

B. Ethanol Production Facilities Model Ordinance

At the last meeting, a discussion had ensued regarding how to determine an objective measure to limit the size of ethanol production facilities. Mark Knudsen stated that Scholten Fant had determined that the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, and Firearms (ATF) had defined a small plant as one that produces up to 10,000 gallons of ethanol annually. This designation would be used in the model ordinance. Further, Mark stated that the model ordinance would allow by right any plant that is surrounded entirely by agriculturally zoned property and produces 10,000 gallons or less per year. However, if a facility wanted to produce more than 10,000 gallons or was next to any residentially zoned property, they would need to apply for a special land use permit. Additionally, no provisions were made for selling ethanol commercially.

Jeff Wincel asked if a clause should be included that would allow for a special use permit to be revoked if a facility does not follow regulations. It was determined that language to that effect would be added to the model ordinance.

08-43 Motion: To approve the Ethanol Production Facilities Model Ordinance, with an amendment to allow a special use permit to be revoked if an ethanol production facility violates any applicable regulations

Moved by: Miedema

Supported by: Holtvluwer

UNANIMOUS

At this time, Commissioner Hehl had to leave to attend another meeting.

Presentations:

A. Michigan Sea Grant Proposal – *Locating Wind Energy Facilities in Michigan’s Coastal Counties: An Integrated Assessment for Muskegon and West Michigan* (Dr. Erik Nordman, Grand Valley State University)

Dr. Nordman stated that his proposal was a response to a Request For Proposals (RFP) from the Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) and Michigan Sea Grant. The objectives of his proposal are as follows: identify why some communities reject wind projects; apply the lessons of past successes and failures to West Michigan; explore the potential of economic, social, and biophysical (technical) policy and management options to reduce conflict over wind power among residents of coastal communities; and engage stakeholders in the upstream process of siting wind energy facilities.

Dr. Nordman stated that the DEQ is concerned that meeting the high level of demand for renewable energy could result in conflict between businesses, environmental groups, residents, and land owners. The DEQ has requested that an integrated assessment technique be used in the proposal. Dr. Nordman stated that the integrated assessment technique is a formal approach to synthesizing and delivering scientific information to policy makers. This technique includes identifying trends; looking at different aspects of environment, society, and economy; looking at forecasts; providing technical guidance; and giving a qualification of uncertainty. Policy and management options will also be determined to avoid or minimize potential conflict.

Additionally, Dr. Nordman stated that stakeholder involvement is an essential part of the assessment process. One focus group workshop would be held in each county involved, and would include local government, interested stakeholders, Chambers of Commerce, local businesses, recreationists, and boaters. The Michigan Sea Grant Office, MSU Extension Offices, Muskegon Area Sustainability Coalition, and West Michigan Strategic Alliance will also be involved to help identify stakeholder groups.

Dr. Nordman requested a letter of support from the Planning Commission for this study, stating that it would help to strengthen the proposal.

Mark Knudsen stated that he was concerned that no local units of government had been included in developing the proposal. Because the County has no authority over zoning, Mark would like the project to be supported by the local units of government. He discussed the possibility that a letter of support from the Planning Commission could be viewed very negatively by local units of government. He asked Dr. Nordman how this concern about input from local units of government would be addressed.

Dr. Nordman explained that he would include representatives from the local governments early in the study as part of the stakeholder group, so that they could help in determining appropriate areas to place turbines. Mark asked how he would proceed if he did not have the support of communities. Dr. Nordman stated that he was unsure, and that without support, it would be difficult to proceed.

Jeff Wincel asked what criteria would be used to determine where turbines were not appropriate. Dr. Nordman stated that physical requirements were easy to determine, such as where wind was/was not available and how far away from the lakeshore turbines could be located. He further stated that social impacts would be determined from the stakeholder focus group workshops.

Jeff felt that it was important for the Planning Commission to issue a letter in support of the Study, but also wanted to include a contingency in the letter, stating that support would only be given by the Planning Commission if the local units of government expressed their support, as well.

Action Items II:

A. Michigan Sea Grant Proposal – *Locating Wind Energy Facilities in Michigan’s Coastal Counties: An Integrated Assessment for Muskegon and West Michigan*

08-44 Motion: To approve the request for a letter of support from the Ottawa County Planning Commission for the Michigan Sea Grant Proposal by Dr. Erik Nordman, contingent upon support received from the local units of government that are included in the study area.

Moved by: Wincel

Supported by: Holtvluwer

UNANIMOUS

B. PA 116 Application for Termination of Farmland Development Rights Agreement for Parcel #70-01-22-100-019 (Merlin & Beth Graftema) in Chester Township

Mark stated that meeting one of five requirements would allow a landowner to be released from a PA 116 Agreement. This request did not meet any of the statutory requirements, but it was determined that the intent of the Farmland Preservation Program was still being met. Very little tillable land was being removed from the preservation program. The Conservation District had already approved the request.

08-45 Motion: To support the PA 116 Application for Termination of Farmland Development Rights Agreement for Parcel #70-01-22-100-019 in Chester Township

Moved by: Holtvluwer

Supported by: Miller

UNANIMOUS

Announcements:

Mark Knudsen stated that the Planning and Grants Department has moved into their new office in the west wing of the building. He also announced that this was Doug Kamphuis' last meeting, and Mark thanked Doug for his service on the Planning Commission. The position had not yet been filled.

A. Reports of Meetings Attended

Jeff Wincel attended a number of Master Plan Committee meetings at Park Township. He stated that they would be sending an RFP shortly, and he was hopeful that standardized colors would be adopted.

Jim Miedema attended a Citizen Planner seminar in Lansing. The seminars he attended were regarding the economy in Michigan and architectural design standards, similar to the standards adopted in Hudsonville as part of the Urban Smart Growth program.

Bill Miller attended the Wind Energy Symposium. He felt that the presentation was excellent and contained a lot of helpful information.

Petitions and Communications:

A. FYI Folder

B. Letter of correspondence, dated 5/13/2008, to Chester Township regarding approval of the 2008 Chester Township Master Plan Addendum

C. Letter of correspondence, dated 5/13/2008, to Port Sheldon Township, supporting their rezoning request

D. Letter of correspondence, dated 5/14/2008, from Chester Township, regarding a PA 116 Farmland Preservation Program Agreement

E. Letter of correspondence, dated 5/15/2008, to wind energy facility vendors regarding the Wind Energy Symposium

- F. Letter of correspondence, dated 5/15/2008, to environmental engineers regarding the Ottawa County Comprehensive Water Resource Assessment Request for Proposals (RFP)
- G. Letter of correspondence, dated 5/22/2008, to environmental engineers regarding a pre-bid meeting for the Ottawa County Comprehensive Water Resource Assessment
- H. Letter of correspondence, dated 5/23/2008, to wind energy facility vendors regarding the Wind Energy Symposium
- I. Letter of correspondence, dated 5/28/2008, to township supervisors and city/village managers regarding the Ottawa County Brownfield Redevelopment Authority
- J. Email of correspondence, dated 6/3/2008, from Bill Filber, Spring Lake Village President, regarding the Wind Energy Symposium
- K. Letter of correspondence, dated 6/3/2008, to Chester Township, regarding an Application for Termination of Farmland Rights Agreement (PA 116) for Parcel #70-01-22-100-019
- L. Wind Energy Symposium Evaluation Results
- M. Letter of correspondence, dated 6/6/2008, from Port Sheldon Township, regarding a proposed rezoning request
- N. Letter of correspondence, dated 6/10/2008, regarding the Comprehensive Water Resource Assessment RFP
- O. Letter of correspondence, dated 6/11/2008, to Port Sheldon Township, waiving review of a proposed amendment to the Township Zoning Map
- P. Letter of correspondence, dated 6/10/2008, from the Department of Agriculture, regarding Farmland Development Rights (PA 116) Agreements

08-46 Motion: To receive for information Items A-P

Moved by: Miller

Supported by: Wilson

UNANIMOUS

Public Comments:

Rep. Arlan Meekhof stated that he was interested in the ethanol production facilities model ordinance. He expressed appreciation of the County's efforts and was glad that production would be allowed by right in the model ordinance. He stated that the County should also take into consideration that fact that other materials than corn could be used to produce ethanol. He thought that the County should make the ordinance flexible enough to include those other materials.

Mike Rasch asked how close ethanol plants would be allowed to be from a residence or a property line. Mark Knudsen responded that the requirement for plants allowed under right would be the same standards as the district in which they are located. For those plants under a special use permit, the setback would be 100 feet, unless the standards in the ordinance are greater.

Mike also asked what type of structures could be used for ethanol facilities. Mark stated that all local building codes would need to be followed.

Russell Rasch stated that his farm's ethanol production facilities had been inspected by the Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) and had passed their stringent requirements. He also stated that his facility's air quality was acceptable to the DEQ. Further, he stated that township requirements were vague, and he would like to have a ruling made as to whether his facility would be allowed to operate.

Jim Miedema replied that the local unit of government would still be responsible for approving the facility. The model ordinance that the Planning Commission had created was a guide for the local units to use, should they decide to create their own ordinances.

Nicki Arendshorst of Park Township thanked the Planning Commission for authorizing a letter of support for the Sea Grant Proposal. She stated that alternative energy will continue to be in demand and this should be treated as an opportunity.

Discussion Items

A. Wind Energy Model Ordinance

Mark stated that Kim Scherschligt continues to work on the model ordinance and is hopeful that it will be ready by the end of July.

B. Comprehensive Water Resource Assessment

Mark stated that a pre-bid meeting was held with all of the consultants that had received the RFP. Despite the level of detail in the RFP, there was some confusion about the specific deliverables being requested by the County. The consultants felt that an RFQ should be issued to determine that all of the bidders are qualified. Also, it was suggested that the Study be broken into different components to potentially save money. One concern was that the potential existed for a large amount of money to be spent, only to find out that the assessment would not be possible to complete.

Mark stated that Kim has contacted a consultant in Colorado that might serve as a potential resource to help in the selection process. They are going to speak with the consultant regarding this possibility.

Mark was hopeful that the RFP would be re-issued before the next meeting, or if drastic changes were necessary, the RFP would be brought back to the Planning Commission for review.

C. Transit Study

Mark distributed a map showing the proposed linkages between existing transit providers. He also distributed an updated copy of the study proposal, with changes made based on discussions that had occurred with stakeholders. On page 12, it was proposed that the technical committee and Planning Department would review the proposals and make recommendations to the Planning Commission. The Planning Commission would ultimately make the selection, based on those recommendations. Jeff Wincel asked to be added to the technical committee.

Mark stated that one other change had been made to require three formal presentations of the final results of the Study. Rather than receiving a presentation after receiving the final results of the Study, Jeff asked if a presentation could instead be made at the time the results were received. Mark agreed with that suggestion, and stated that the RFP would be issued within the week.

D. PDR Program

Mark stated that the positions for the Agricultural Board will be posted online soon.

E. Brownfield Redevelopment Authority

Mark stated that Kim has been working on the Brownfield Redevelopment Authority. Also, the Economic Development Corporation Board has been appointed to serve as the Brownfield Redevelopment Authority.

F. NACO 2008 Achievement Award for Road Salt Management Program

Mark stated that the Planning Commission received an award from the National Association of Counties for the Road Salt Management Program. One of the County Commissioners would be attending the NACO conference to accept the award on behalf of the Planning Commission.

Input and Strategy Session**A. Performance-Based Budgeting**

This item was postponed to the next meeting.

08-47 Motion: To adjourn the meeting.

Moved by: Holtvluwer

Support: Miller

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The meeting adjourned at 8:10 PM.