

OSHTEMO CHARTER TOWNSHIP  
PLANNING COMMISSION

MINUTES OF A MEETING HELD JANUARY 12, 2012

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**Agenda**

**ELECTION OF OFFICERS AND ZBA LIAISON**

**CERTIFICATE OF APPRECIATION – FRED GOULD**

**DISCUSSION ITEM – TREE PRESERVATION**

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A meeting of the Oshtemo Charter Township Planning Commission was held on Thursday, January 12, 2012, commencing at approximately 7:00 p.m. at the Oshtemo Charter Township Hall.

MEMBERS PRESENT: Kitty Gelling, (Acting) Chairperson  
Bob Anderson  
Carl Benson  
Dave Bushouse  
Richard Skalski  
Millard Loy  
Wiley Boulding, Sr.

MEMBERS ABSENT: None

Also present were Jodi Stefforia, Planning Director; Karen High, Zoning Administrator, Attorney James Porter, and approximately three other interested persons.

**Call to Order and Pledge of Allegiance**

The meeting was called to order at approximately 7:00 p.m., and the “Pledge of Allegiance” was recited.

## **Agenda**

The Acting Chairperson asked if there were any additions or deletions to the Agenda. Ms. Stefforia asked that the Commission add to “Any Other Business” consideration of the Almena Township Master Plan. The Acting Chairperson then asked that the Commission add to the Agenda as Item 8a “Old Business” to the Agenda as an action item, both for this meeting and for future meetings. The Acting Chairperson asked if there were any either additions or deletions, and hearing none, called for a motion to approve the Agenda, as amended. Mr. Skalski made a motion to accept the Agenda as amended, and the motion was seconded by Mr. Anderson. The Acting Chairperson called for a vote on the motion, and the motion passed unanimously.

## **ELECTION OF OFFICERS AND ZBA LIAISON**

The Acting Chairperson said that the next action item was the election of officers and a ZBA liaison. After a brief discussion, it was suggested that the secretarial position for the Planning Commission be deleted, since it was only an honorary position and Staff prepared the minutes. The Acting Chairperson asked the Commission members whether they wished to choose a slate of officers or move each position individually. Mr. Loy made a motion to keep the existing slate of officers as is, consisting of Bob Anderson as Chairman, Kitty Gelling as Vice Chairperson and Bob Anderson as the ZBA liaison. Mr. Skalski seconded the motion. Mr. Anderson then asked for a friendly amendment to the motion and said he would agree to serve as Vice Chairman and ZBA liaison, but given some pending medical treatments, he did not feel he should serve as the Chairman, and he asked that the positions of Ms. Gelling and himself be reversed. Mr. Loy and Mr. Skalski agreed to the friendly amendment. The then Acting Chairperson called on the Planning Commission to approve the final slate of officers as follows:

Chairperson	Kitty Gelling
Vice Chairman	Bob Anderson
ZBA Liaison	Bob Anderson

The Acting Chairperson called for a vote on the amended motion, and the amended motion passed unanimously.

## **Public Comment on Non-Agenda Items**

The Chairperson asked if there was any public comment on non-agenda items. Hearing none, she asked that the Planning Commission move to the next matter.

## **Minutes**

The Chairperson asked that the Commission consider Item 6, approval of the December 8, 2011 minutes. The Chairperson asked that the following corrections be made to the minutes:

1. On page 1, second paragraph, that Karen High's title of Zoning Administrator be added.
2. On page 6, the top line of the first paragraph under "Other Business," that the word "as" be changed to "was."
3. On page 7, second full paragraph, second sentence be changed to read as follows: "The resolution was read aloud by the Acting Chairperson to those persons in attendance and to the Commission."
4. On page 8, the third paragraph under "Planning Commissioner Comments" be amended to read as follows: "The Acting Chairperson also noted with appreciation Prein & Newhof's 2012 pocket partner, the OHS appreciation dinner, and Toys for Tots' dinner at the Texas Corral which occurred on December 13, 2011."

There being no further changes to the minutes, Mr. Skalski made a motion to approve the minutes, as amended. The motion was seconded by Mr. Anderson. The Chairperson called for a vote on the motion, and the motion passed unanimously.

## **CERTIFICATE OF APPRECIATION – FRED GOULD**

The Chairperson said the next item on the Agenda was consideration and presentation of a Certificate of Appreciation to Fred Gould. The Chairperson called Mr. Gould before the Planning Commission and thanked him for his service to the community. She presented him with a Certificate of Appreciation. This presentation was followed by a round of applause. Numerous Planning Commission members thanked Mr. Gould for his service and encouraged him to stay involved in the community.

## **DISCUSSION ITEM – TREE PRESERVATION**

The Chairperson indicated that the next item on the Agenda was a discussion of tree preservation in the Township. The Chairperson asked for input from the Planning Department.

Ms. High, Zoning Administrator, asked the Commission members if they had any thoughts since the last discussion they had on tree preservation. The Chairperson asked if Ms. High had done any surveying of what communities surrounding Oshtemo

Township were doing concerning tree preservation. Ms. High indicated that the Planning Department was looking into that issue. She noted that the City of Kalamazoo does have a staff review and criteria to govern tree-cutting if it is one-half acre or more. She also noted that Van Buren County had a Model Tree Preservation Ordinance, but none of the local units had implemented it to date.

Mr. Skalski said he thought the biggest problem with the Tree Preservation Ordinance was the ability to oversee and monitor such a program. Mr. Boulding said he thought enforcement would also be quite difficult depending upon the scope and the nature of the local regulation.

Ms. High proceeded to direct the Commission's attention to a pamphlet which she had printed as a guideline for their discussions entitled, "Goals for Community Forest Programs." She suggested that the Commission members go through the "Possible Tree Program Goals" as set forth on page 1 of that document as a foundation for their discussion.

*Goal 1. "Establish and maintain maximum tree cover."*

Ms. High asked if that was a goal which the Township was looking to achieve.

Mr. Skalski said he thought that the goal should be to try to preserve trees during development. Ms. Stefforia said perhaps there were certain trees, either by size or species, which the Township might want to preserve.

Mr. Boulding said that many developers see trees as a hindrance, but he thought the Township could provide some guidance and incentives to create a balanced approach and preserve more of the trees during development.

Mr. Skalski said perhaps the Township should encourage smaller developers and residential developers to work with the terrain as it existed, and in so doing, preserve more of the natural tree cover.

*Goal 2. "Maintain trees in a healthy condition through good cultural practices."*

Ms. High said that she thought education would be the primary component of achieving this goal.

The Chairperson asked if there was any way to obtain a grant to help disseminate educational information through the Arbor Day Foundation? Ms. High said she was not sure about the Arbor Day Foundation, but that she had spoken to the D.N.R. She said one of the possibilities would be for the Township to work with the D.N.R. to acquire seedlings for plantings throughout the Township and to make them available for Township residents. Mr. Skalski suggested consulting with the Kalamazoo Conservation District, which often provides seedlings for \$1.00. Ms. High said she was currently

working with the Kalamazoo Conservation District and Oshtemo Friends of the Parks to promote that type of program in the community.

There was a consensus of the Planning Commission members to promote tree planting programs throughout the community and put an article about it in the Township's *Newsletter*.

*Goal 3. "Establish and maintain an optimal level of age and species diversity."*

Ms. High then asked the Commission to consider the third possible tree program goal. Ms. High pointed out that in Kansas City, its landscape ordinances limit tree planting to 50% of any particular species in order to promote diversity among the types of trees growing in the community.

Attorney Porter asked what Oshtemo would plant if it wanted to return the community to more of an oak savannah. Ms. High pointed out there were both black oaks and white oaks, but the black oak was the primary vegetation cover in a study of the Oshtemo area in the 1800's. A map of Oshtemo Township's tree cover from the 1800's was passed around for comparison, from then until now, showing the changes.

*Goal 4. "Promote conservation of tree resources."*

Ms. High asked if the goal was to preserve old trees or simply restrict indiscriminate removal of trees. There was a brief discussion regarding what that might entail.

*Goal 5. "Select, situate, and maintain street trees appropriately to maximize benefits and minimize hazard, nuisance, hardscape damage, and maintenance costs."*

The Planning Commission members were supportive of the idea of street tree scopes and encouraged pursuing this idea.

*Goal 6. "Centralize tree management under a person with the necessary expertise."*

Most of the Planning Commission members felt this was an area where the Township would fall short because it did not have the necessary expertise in-house.

*Goal 7. "Promote efficient and cost-effective management of the urban forest."*

Again, without a forester on staff, the Commissioners believed the Township's ability to promote this goal was quite limited.

*Goal 8. "Foster community support for the local urban forestry program and encourage good tree management on privately-owned properties."*

Ms. High said this goal ties into the educational aspects of tree management and thought perhaps something could be done community-wide for educational support.

*Goal 9. "Facilitate the resolution of tree-related conflicts between citizens.*

A brief discussion ensued with the general consensus that the Township might not want to get involved in that type of oversight.

At the conclusion of the tree preservation discussion, Ms. Stefforia suggested that perhaps changes could be made to the Landscape Ordinance or the Plat/Site Condominium Ordinance. Ms. Stefforia also mentioned working with existing neighborhoods to promote tree planting as part of the Township's goals.

The Chairperson asked if there were any questions of Staff. Hearing none, she opened up the matter for public comment. Hearing no public comment, she asked that the Planning Commission move to the next item.

### **Old Business**

The next item on the Agenda was "Old Business." The Chairperson asked the Planning Director how the census information that had been requested in July of 2011 was coming. Ms. High indicated that Ms. Stefforia had asked her to work on this matter. She explained to the Planning Commission that the 2000 census had a long form and a short form, but the 2010 census had no long form, so it was harder to sort the data. She said that the Planning Department had the data and was working on updating the tables in the Master Land Use Plan. She said some of the information was just recently obtained and was not available until December, 2011.

The Chairperson asked when the data might be available, and Ms. High indicated that possibly by the February 9 Planning Commission meeting. The Chairperson noted that the sooner they could provide the data the better, given that the Police Committee had an upcoming meeting, and the members were seeking population growth trends in the area as they worked on the law enforcement needs of the community.

### **Other Business**

The Chairperson asked if there was any other business. Ms. Stefforia noted that Almena Township had submitted its new Master Land Use Plan. However, she said the Oshtemo Township usually did not make any comments, and they wanted to send a letter to that effect. She said there were no significant amendments to the Master Land Use Plan which she felt needed comment.

The Chairperson asked that the Commission make a commitment to meet all of its scheduled meetings. She said she felt it was very important that the meetings dates scheduled should be kept particularly to allow input from the public. She said she had asked that the meeting schedule be updated to include time, as well as the 2012 dates and asked that it be published in the *Oshtemo Newsletter*. This commitment showed not only that the Planning Commission was available to the public, but also it showed it was a productive entity of Oshtemo Township.

Ms. Stefforia said she did not want to meet if the Commission did not have something of substance to discuss, and she did not want to have to pay the Planning Commissioners nor the Public Media person sitting over there recording the meeting.

Mr. Skalski said that quite often, there are very few people in attendance.

Mr. Bushouse suggested that each Planning Commission member submit six or seven items of concerns or items for discussion and that if there were not enough Agenda items for future meetings, that the submitted items be used as a basis for future discussions.

Mr. Loy said his concern was that, unless something affected the residents individually, they often did not show up for the meetings. He said he did not mind coming to work, but he did not want to show up and spend the Township's money or his time if the meeting was not going to be productive.

Mr. Bushouse again noted that there were many items which could be discussed if the time was allocated. He suggested reuse of the KL landfill in conjunction with the new land acquired by the local land conservatory.

Moving to the newest Commission member, the Chairperson took the opportunity to introduce Mr. Wiley Boulding, Sr. to the Planning Commission. Mr. Boulding said that he was happy to be on the Planning Commission and looked forward to working with the Commission and hoped that he could contribute.

### **Planning Commissioner Comments**

Mr. Boulding again thanked the Planning Commission and the Township for an opportunity to give back to the community.

Mr. Skalski welcomed Mr. Boulding.

The Chairperson thanked the Planning Commission members for placing their faith in her to be the Chairperson of the Planning Commission for the coming year.

Mr. Anderson welcomed Mr. Boulding, and said he looked forward to working with him.

Mr. Bushouse also welcomed Mr. Boulding and congratulated Ms. Gelling on her chairpersonship. Mr. Bushouse also asked that the Planning Commission members think about the issue of a bread and breakfast and where this should be located within the Township.

### **Adjournment**

There being no further business to come before the Commission, the meeting was adjourned at approximately 8:15 p.m.

Minutes Prepared:  
January 20, 2012

Minutes Approved:  
January 26, 2012