

OSHTEMO CHARTER TOWNSHIP
PLANNING COMMISSION

MINUTES OF A MEETING HELD JULY 22, 2010

Agenda

MASTER PLAN – REVIEW FIRST DRAFTS OF THE COMMUNITY VISIONING AND EXPECTATIONS CHAPTER AND FUTURE LAND USE AND PLAN CHAPTER

A meeting of the Oshtemo Charter Township Planning Commission was held on Thursday, July 22, 2010, commencing at approximately 7:00 p.m. at the Oshtemo Charter Township Hall.

MEMBERS PRESENT: Terry Schley, Chairman
Kitty Gelling
Carl Benson
Fred Gould
Richard Skalski
Bob Anderson

MEMBERS ABSENT: Deborah Everett

Also present were Jodi Stefforia, Planning Director; Chris West, Associate Planner, Consultant Greg Milliken and four interested persons.

Call to Order and Pledge of Allegiance

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

Agenda

The Chairman asked if there were any changes to the Agenda. Hearing none, Ms. Gelling made a motion to accept the Agenda as submitted. Mr. Skalski seconded the motion. Upon vote, the motion carried unanimously.

Public Comment on Non-Agenda Items

No public comment was offered.

Minutes

The Chairman said the next item was the review and approval of the June 24, 2010 minutes. There were no comments. Ms. Gelling made a motion to approve the minutes as submitted. Mr. Benson seconded the motion. The Chairman called for a vote on the motion, and the motion passed unanimously.

MASTER LAND USE PLAN – REVIEW FIRST DRAFTS OF THE COMMUNITY VISIONING AND EXPECTATIONS CHAPTER AND FUTURE LAND USE AND PLAN CHAPTER

The Chairman said the next item on the Agenda was review of the first drafts of the Community Visioning and Expectations Chapter and the Future Land Use and Plan Chapter of the Master Plan. The Chairman then opened the agenda item to public comment.

Dan Thompson introduced himself and redistributed a letter he had first written in December and which the Planning Commission had received at a meeting earlier this year. Mr. Thompson questioned density asking what does it mean. He indicated that his neighborhood, Country Club Village, wants to remain zoned R-1, Residential. He applauded the draft master plan's emphasis on the rural and natural character of the township. He then indicated that he had a concern over connectivity and while he supports what the literature says about connectivity, there are times when it is not appropriate and he urged the Planning Commission to keep that in mind with respect to Country Club Village. He noted that people who live in the neighborhood already speed down the streets and he was concerned that if the streets were extended to connect to future neighborhoods, that additional vehicles would be speeding through each day. He suggested that sidewalks were not the answer because the homeowners cannot afford them, residents walk along the streets. He also noted that the Copper Beech development to the south was a much better neighbor now thanks to the efforts of the Township Board in stepping up enforcement.

Margaret Masuzawa spoke next. She noted that her neighborhood, Country Club Village, is unique. It has older, narrow streets and no sidewalks. She believes it warrants special protection in the master plan.

The Chairman then closed the public comment noting he would open the meeting to public comment again later in the discussion of this agenda item.

The Chairman asked planning consultant, Greg Milliken, to give an overview of the information that had been included in the packet and how it would come together in the final master plan document.

Mr. Milliken began with a general overview of the Community Visioning and Expectations Chapter which he described as hitting the key points of public input and relevant conclusions used to shape the goals & objectives. The full report on the public

input will be in the appendix. At the end of this chapter, however, eight themes were identified for the Preferred Future.

Moving on to the Future Land Use Chapter, Mr. Milliken noted that the map is near the beginning because most readers are just interested in the Future Land Use Map. The matrix is a condensed version of the text that follows the map describing each land use category. He noted that images will be added to the chapter later. Mr. Milliken pointed out that the current Future Land Use Map and the proposed Future Land Use Map are very similar; he pointed out some of the differences. He noted the similarities are the result of the public saying that they like the current vision, however, they want the Township to exercise more control over certain issues related to development and they want the plan to better define how development will look and how the vision of the future land use plan will be achieved. Ms. Stefforia added that the language of the plan that the Planning Commission has been reviewing in all the earlier chapters lays the groundwork to implement more restrictive or guiding zoning tools in the future.

The Chairman then directed the Planning Commission's attention to the Community Visioning and Expectations Chapter. Ms. Gelling noted that she found it to be representative of the comment that had been received throughout the process. Mr. Benson concurred.

The Planning Commission then moved on to discussion of the Future Land Use Chapter. The Chairman stated that this chapter is the single-most important chapter of the master plan document. It is the community's commitment of how land should be used. He noted that ~~they~~ **the Planning Commissioners** needed to do their best to ensure that the map and chapter reflect what they heard from the community. He noted that public hearings on the full master plan are forthcoming and that eventually the plan must be adopted by the Township Board. He noted the Planning Commission's burden is to keep the big picture in mind and not focus too much on individual, personal views; we have to keep all the residents and best interest of the entire Township in mind.

Mr. Skalski questioned the Future Land Use Map noting that his area had public water available so should it be identified as a growth area. He stated the area he lives in is west of Fourth Street. Ms. Stefforia noted that identifying an area that far west for growth would be contrary to the goals of the current and this draft master plan in directing development to the east and also against many decisions made by both the Planning Commission and Township Board in the past that the mere presence of water was not going to allow greater density, particularly water main extensions related to the landfill. The Chairman added that in his mind, there is no mandatory link dictating that land use should be denser because public water is available.

Mr. Anderson added that the water main extensions that have occurred west of Fourth Street over the years were not part of a planning process, they were the result of groundwater contamination.

Ms. Gelling asked if the Local Commercial description fit the only area designated as Local Commercial on the Future Land Use Map. Mr. Milliken responded that is was

not designed just for the area presently identified, it sets it up for use in the future in other areas and that the Transitional Mixed Use also references the Local Commercial in identifying the type of commercial uses that may be appropriate in that area. Ms. Gelling suggested that reference to 'not auto oriented' be removed from the description of Local Commercial.

Mr. Benson stated he felt the chapter was remarkably well done and thinks it is a great chapter for readers who do not have the time to read the full master plan document. Mr. Skalski concurred. The Chairman added that it was important that the full document be well done because in land use challenges and rezoning considerations, opponents read the full document and look for inconsistencies and support for their proposal.

Mr. Anderson stated he felt the entire process has gone well and that the big picture the Planning Commission had in the beginning were confirmed by the public input received from the community.

Mr. Gould concurred with the other comments and added that the Planning Commission must make sure that while we protect existing residents, the master plan must be a document of integrity for the entire township, not just special interests.

The Chairman asked Staff and Mr. Milliken if they had looked at including Protected Residential as it is a category on the current map.

Ms. Stefforia responded that when they looked at the existing areas designated as Protected Residential, the vacant land around most of these areas had already developed consistent with the plan and that the protection was considered in reviewing the various proposals. She added that in her opinion, a category of Protected Residential specifically calling out a few neighborhoods was no longer necessary. Mr. Milliken added he felt that all neighborhoods deserved protection – existing and new - and that the description of Low Density Residential attempted to describe this and identify that protections, buffers, etc. should be provided. To this, Ms. Stefforia added that in reviewing that description with some residents, she realized it should be spelled out a little more as to what type of protections and/or buffers would be considered when development is proposed near an existing neighborhood. The Chairman added that sensitive language about connectivity should be added, too. Mr. Milliken offered to insert specific examples about what connectivity means to different, existing neighborhoods, specifically Country Club Village and one or two others, to provide that guidance for future decision makers.

Ms. Gelling stated that all neighborhoods think they are special; she feels her neighborhood is special, too. She added, however, that while change happens, there is a right way to grow.

The Chairman stated that this master plan will lead to zoning ordinance language that gives the Planning Commission and Township Board the ability to ask more of a developer or to deny a project in order to protect an existing neighborhood.

Dan Thompson then spoke and stated that he really feels that he has been heard tonight and is grateful for anything that can be included in the master plan to protect his neighborhood.

The Chairman noted the Neighborhood Commercial nodes on the Future Land Use Map. Ms. Stefforia stated that they are a carryover from the existing map and that there is very specific language in both the master plan and zoning ordinance to address what neighborhood commercial may entail and that she does not foresee it opening the subject areas to typical commercial development.

The Chairman noted that the existing regional businesses on West Main Street are not recognized on the Future Land Use Map noting that those areas are planned for Rural Residential. Mr. Milliken responded the Rural Residential description recognizes the existence of the commercial businesses but does not encourage establishment of new ones in that area or throughout the Rural Residential classification.

The Chairman stated that the Enterprise Industrial classification does not call for ~~indoor-recreational uses~~ and he believes that ~~it~~ **they** should ~~as it is~~ **be** recognized as ~~they are~~ a use in the I-R, Industrial District presently and although there may not be a present need for them, the community may have a proposal similar to Soccer Zone in the future and there should be direction provided in this plan as to where this type of use is allowed. ~~industrial areas in the current master plan, especially the large facilities.~~

The Chairman stated ~~we acknowledge that commercial and industrial growth has to be directed somewhere. In looking at the opinion survey, there was a lower response to directing industrial growth to 9th Street/N Avenue than the response to directing commercial growth to 9th Street, south of West Main Street. We need to keep that in mind with big picture planning. He believed the community expressed interest in commercial on 9th Street, south of West Main Street in the opinion survey but sees Enterprise Industrial on South 9th Street, south of the village area, on the Future Land Use Map. He expressed that this Map should express the will of the people. Ms. Stefforia responded that she interprets that question regarding commercial on "9th Street south of West Main Street" to be geographically referring to that area immediately south of West Main Street and not the entirety of 9th Street south of West Main Street to N Avenue. She added that was the intent when the question was written. She suggested the Planning Commission discuss this important item. The Chairman added that although the two questions in the opinion survey do not ask the same question, the assumption that 9th Street south of West Main Street means only that part of 9th Street near West Main Street doesn't make sense when you consider the responses to the commercial and industrial questions as there was a strong community response, 67% of respondents, to directing industrial growth near the BTR Park but much less support for industrial growth at 9th Street/N Avenue.~~

~~The Chairman stated that the south end of the Township, once you hit the village area and south is a more cosmopolitan area than just industrial for the future land use~~

designation. More land use choices should be available to serve as a transition to the village area.

The Chairman stated that there is presently no transition into the village area along 9th Street coming from the south. Mr. Milliken responded that he had proposed the Enterprise Industrial classification to reflect the current mix of uses presently in the area and that they are not all true industrial. Mr. Milliken added that in preparing the Future Land Use Map, he suggested Enterprise Industrial in this area to serve as a gateway into the Township and that is why he did not simply suggest Industrial as the future land use category.

The Chairman stated he appreciates the Enterprise zone and what it is trying to accomplish and restated his comment about including indoor recreation as a use allowed in the zone.

A revised draft of the chapter and map will be presented at the next meeting.

Any Other Business

There was no other business.

Planning Commissioner Comments

No comments were offered.

Adjournment

The Chairman asked if there were any further comments, and hearing none, he called for adjournment. Ms. Gelling moved to adjourn the meeting, and Mr. Skalski seconded the motion. The meeting was adjourned at approximately 8:37 p.m.

Minutes Prepared:
July 28, 2010

Minutes Approved:
_____ 2010