

OSHTEMO CHARTER TOWNSHIP
PLANNING COMMISSION

MINUTES OF A MEETING HELD NOVEMBER 18, 2010

Agenda

REVIEW OF DRAFT TWO OF THE GENESEE PRAIRIE SUB-AREA PLAN

A meeting of the Oshtemo Charter Township Planning Commission was held on Thursday, November 18, 2010, commencing at approximately 7:00 p.m. at the Oshtemo Charter Township Hall.

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

MEMBERS ABSENT: Carl Benson
Deborah Everett

Also present were Jim Porter, Township Attorney; Jodi Stefforia, Planning Director; Chris West, Associate Planner, and three members of the public.

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. Being none, Ms. Gelling made a motion to accept the Agenda. Mr. Skalski seconded the motion. Upon vote, the motion carried unanimously.

Public Comment on Non-Agenda Items

There was no public comment offered.

Minutes

The Chairman said the next item was the review and approval of the October 14, 2010 minutes. Ms. Gelling made note of a few typographical and content errors. Ms. Gelling made a motion to approve the minutes as amended. Mr. Skalski seconded the motion. The Chairman called for a vote on the motion, and the motion passed unanimously.

REVIEW OF DRAFT TWO OF THE GENESEE PRAIRIE SUB-AREA PLAN

The Chairman said the next item on the Agenda was a review of draft two of the Genesee Prairie Sub-Area Plan.

Associate Planner Chris West presented the second draft of the Genesee Prairie Sub-Area Plan to the Planning Commission. He presented his memo outlining the changes that have been made to the first draft of the Plan. He mentioned that staff had taken the comments presented by the Planning Commission at the previous meeting and incorporated them into the document. Planning Director Jodi Stefforia added that the sub-area sits within two separate wellhead capture areas of the City of Kalamazoo's public water system and this draft includes the mention of these areas.

The Chairman asked the Planning Commissioners to first give their overall opinion of the document. Mr. Skalski said he was satisfied with the changes that were made to the Enterprise Park land use designation. He also liked that the Colony Farm Orchard area has been given a different land use designation than the other areas of the Genesee Prairie Sub-Area.

Ms. Gelling indicated some changes that she would like to see made to the text of the sub-area plan that would help clarify specific portions of the document.

Mr. Gould and Mr. Anderson indicated they were satisfied with the draft.

The Chairman then transitioned the discussion. He stated that Bob Miller from Western Michigan University (WMU) was present to give the Planning Commission a better understanding of WMU's intentions for the Colony Farm Orchard (CFO) property. He then gave Mr. Miller the floor.

Mr. Miller indicated that WMU would like to partner with Oshtemo Township throughout all stages of the development of the CFO property. He stated that the CFO property would be developed to embrace environmental stewardship and sustainability much like the existing Business, Technology, and Research (BTR) Park has been developed. He said that WMU plans to improve stormwater management at the CFO property and to potentially have a positive impact on Asylum Lake.

He went on to say that since the CFO property is not immediately adjacent to residential neighborhoods it provides a unique opportunity for WMU to develop a site that does not have the restrictions the existing BTR Park has. He added that the CFO property gives WMU the opportunity to allow companies to implement manufacturing beyond assembly and prototyping; which are the only manufacturing activities allowed at the existing BTR Park. WMU is not sure which types of manufacturing they foresee in the CFO property

and would like the Township to be flexible when zoning language is established to give WMU more options for potential users.

He said that potential uses for the CFO property would likely be high-tech industries that would have a partnership with WMU to further its goal of research and instruction. WMU would likely turn away potential users that do not want a relationship with the University and users that would compromise WMU's goals of environmental stewardship and sustainability. He added that WMU wants to increase the economic viability of the Township by increasing the tax base and provide jobs.

He concluded that WMU would work with Oshtemo as they did with the City of Kalamazoo and nearby residents when the existing BTR Park was designed. He said that WMU would consider going through the site plan review process in Oshtemo and hold neighborhood meetings to assure residents that WMU will be responsible during development. Mr. Miller asked the Planning Commissioners if they had any questions of him.

Mr. Anderson asked for clarification regarding WMU's intention to allow a wider variety of businesses on the CFO property than are allowed in the existing BTR Park. Mr. Miller answered saying that since there is not any nearby residential property that the CFO property could have a wider variety of uses without negatively impacting neighbors.

Mr. Skalski asked how many WMU students are involved in co-ops with BTR Park businesses. Mr. Miller said, since its inception, over 100 students have been involved in internships and co-ops with businesses in the BTR Park.

Ms. Gelling asked if WMU would consider leaving the CFO property as permanent open space. Mr. Miller indicated the WMU intends to develop this property. He added that development and preservation are not mutually exclusive as the existing BTR Park was developed with preservation and restoration in mind. He said that since the development of the BTR Park, more people have been able to enjoy the natural environment on-site.

The Chairman asked if potential users would have a continuous relationship with WMU. Mr. Miller responded that WMU would want businesses that are open and willing to collaborate with the University.

The Chairman indicated that there are other industrial properties in Oshtemo Township and that the designation of the CFO property as Enterprise Park would essentially create new industrial property that had not existed before. Mr. Miller responded that the CFO property is different from other industrial properties as it is adjacent to WMU's Parkview Campus and that WMU already owns the land. He added that sales agreements will say that businesses must collaborate with WMU and that WMU will have first right of refusal to buy back properties in the CFO area.

The Chairman asked if WMU would allow uses in the CFO property that are not currently allowed in the existing BTR Park. Mr. Miller said that WMU would explore expanded uses as the CFO property is isolated from residential neighborhoods. He said that WMU

has not excluded the use of the property directly for University purposes but is not planning for any at this time. He said that WMU would not want restrictive zoning language to stop a mutually beneficial opportunity for development.

Ms. Gelling added that traffic along Drake Road is problematic and asked what WMU would do to mitigate traffic issues. Mr. Miller said that access management would be important during development. A single ingress and egress point will likely be implemented similar to the entrance of the existing BTR Park. He also envisions the CFO property to be low density and not have great impact on traffic on Drake Road.

The Chairman added that he wants a win-win situation but stated that the Planning Commission must respond to the needs and desires of the community. Mr. Miller stated that the BTR Park is successful because of collaboration with the City of Kalamazoo and that WMU will collaborate with Oshtemo throughout development.

Mr. Miller thanked the Planning Commission for inviting him to this meeting and said that WMU looks forward to working with Oshtemo Township during the development of the Master Plan, zoning language regarding this area, and development of the property.

The Chairman said that he is not ready to comment on the information he had just received from Mr. Miller and would like to have time to think about the situation. He added that if WMU was not involved in this area, he would have a hard time approving the designation of the CFO area as Enterprise Park.

Mr. Gould said that any decision the Planning Commission makes will likely bring public opposition and that the Planning Commission must be ready to respond to such opposition and listen to all sides of the debate.

Mr. Anderson asked if the Kalamazoo Nature Center has been involved with the Sub-Area Plan since the workshop. Ms. Stefforia said that they have not been directly involved but that the information they gave the Township in their natural features inventory planning report has been included in the document in multiple places.

The Chairman acknowledged two members of the public who were present and gave them the floor. Dave Short introduced himself and his wife, Jane, to the Planning Commission. He stated that they live at 5954 West N Avenue. He said that they are trying to educate themselves about what is going on in their neighborhood. He added that they live near the power lines that bisect the Genesee Prairie sub-area and asked about a potential north-south connection between N Avenue and Parkview Avenue. The Chairman responded that a new connection between the two roads is envisioned but that any details for the road are not part of this planning process. He also invited them to meet with staff to discuss specific portions of the sub-area plan and to attend the public hearings for the Master Plan as a whole to make further comments.

Any Other Business

Ms. Stefforia presented a timeline for the completion of the Master Land Use Plan to the Planning Commission.

Ms. Stefforia reminded the Planning Commission that the West Main Street Sub-Area workshop will occur on November 30th.

Planning Commissioner Comments

The Chairman commented that he believes something like a commercial hotel or conference center could be developed at the WMU Foundation property at Drake Road and Stadium Drive intersection, possibly in conjunction with the CFO property.

Mr. Skalski indicated he was glad Mr. Miller attended the meeting and likes that WMU is concerned with the issues the Township has regarding the development of the CFO property.

Mr. Gould said that he recently attended a Kalamazoo Christian School meeting and said the School is still interested in further development of its property on South 11th Street into a campus sometime in the future but does not have plans at this time.

Ms. Gelling said that since the next Planning Commission meeting would be the Chairman's last meeting it would be appropriate to have refreshments.

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 8:50 p.m.

Minutes Prepared:
November 22, 2010

Minutes Approved:
December 16, 2010