

OSHTEMO CHARTER TOWNSHIP
PLANNING COMMISSION

MINUTES OF A MEETING HELD DECEMBER 16, 2010

Agenda

REVIEW OF DRAFT ONE OF THE WEST MAIN STREET SUB-AREA PLAN

A meeting of the Oshtemo Charter Township Planning Commission was held on Thursday, December 16, 2010, commencing at approximately 7:00 p.m. at the Oshtemo Charter Township Hall.

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

MEMBERS ABSENT: None

Also present were Jodi Stefforia, Planning Director; Chris West, Associate Planner, and about 20 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 November 18, 2010 minutes. The Chairman indicated that there was a change needed to a statement attributed to him. Mr. Benson made a motion to approve the minutes as amended. Ms. Gelling seconded the motion. The Chairman called for a vote on the motion, and the motion passed unanimously.

REVIEW OF DRAFT ONE OF THE WEST MAIN STREET SUB-AREA PLAN

The Chairman said the next item on the Agenda was a review of draft one of the West Main Street Sub-Area Plan.

Greg Milliken, McKenna & Associates, introduced himself as the consultant that has been assisting the Township in the preparation of the Master Land Use Plan. He then described the process the Township has gone through so far in studying the West Main Street Sub-Area. He summarized the workshop that had been completed in November giving the positives, constraints, and development potential that the groups involved in the workshop noted about the sub-area.

He then took the Planning Commission through the goals and objectives that had been created based upon the study of the sub-area. He said that the three goals and their objectives relate to character, access management, and sense of community of the sub-area.

He then went over the future land use map for the sub-area explaining the land use designations and type/form of development that could occur in each designation. He noted that future development on the north and south sides of West Main Street will likely differ due to their respective topography, natural features, and existing development. Throughout the sub-area and in all designations he stated that the Planned Unit Development tool can be used to create cohesive and complimentary development.

The Chairman reiterated that this is the first draft of the Sub-Area Plan and that the Plan will likely be altered to some extent before adoption. He then asked the Planning Commission if they had any questions for Mr. Milliken or staff.

The Chairman asked what the reasoning was for deeper commercial depths on the south side of West Main Street as compared to the north side. Mr. Milliken said that this was in part due to the existing parcel depths on each side as the parcels on the south side tend to be deeper than those on the north. The parcels on the south also contain greater topography change and more natural features than those on the north; as such it would likely require more area to develop the south side and the deeper commercial depths allow for more creativity and flexibility for developers.

Noting that there were no more questions for staff or Mr. Milliken, the Chairman opened the floor to public comment.

Kadir Mohmand, 6147 Old Log Trail, stated that in the previous Master Plan that 9th Street between West Main Street and KL Avenue was part of the 9th Street Focus Area. He felt that the exclusion of 9th Street from the West Main Street Sub-Area reflects the Township actively neglecting land owners on 9th Street. He then detailed issues that he has had with the Township in the past. He asked for the Planning Commission to not neglect 9th Street and to include it in the West Main Street Sub-Area as it was in the previous plan. He submitted a letter to the Planning Commission, incorporated herein.

Sheri Mohmand, 6147 Old Log Trail, said she was opposed to the Master Land Use Plan currently under review as it eliminates 9th Street between West Main Street and KL Avenue from the sub-area. She said that the reasons that make West Main Street in need of special attention also apply to 9th Street as it is a critical commercial corridor with public water and sanitary sewer already installed along it. She said it doesn't make sense to isolate 9th Street from West Main Street. She submitted a letter to the Planning Commission, incorporated herein.

Dan Thompson, 105 Echo Hills Drive, said the he was first confused as to what the Sub-Area included and thought it included all property that was in the 9th Street Focus Area in the previous Master Plan. He asked for clarification as to what light commercial and transitional residential entails and what uses are envisioned in the Sub-Area. He noted the plan calls for overuse of Country Club Village outlots that would dump traffic onto Lodge Lane. He asked for clarification as to how the Future Land Use Map would be used and whether all outlots and stub streets would be used.

Ken Bertolissi, 6075, 6101, and 6146 West Main Street, asked what the two arrows on the north side of West Main Street represented. If these were representing streets then they would take away a lot of parking for his building at 6146 West Main. He also asked who would be responsible for putting in the roads noted on the Future Land Use Map.

Barbara Hughey, 587 Lodge Lane, said she was overwhelmed with the roads that would connect with Lodge Lane. She asked whether the road noted on the Future Land Use Map would connect with Club View Drive.

Margaret Masuzawa presented a letter from Suzanne Mellinger, 351 West Ridge Circle. She said that commercial development along West Main Street will occur at some point and asked for access streets to be developed along the front of the development rather than the rear. She asked for buffers to be in place between new commercial or residential development and existing residential neighborhoods. She also said that she has maintained Outlot E and the dedication of it to a local street would be greatly detrimental to the Country Club Village neighborhood.

Earl Dalzell, 6377 West Main Street, noted that all of the stakeholders in the Sub-Area have their own interests at heart and these interests are often at odds with each other. He wanted the Planning Commission to understand that there is a traffic problem in the Sub-Area and more development, other than frontage commercial, would add to this problem. He also stated he understands the issues the Planning Commission faces.

Mark Orbe, 527 Lodge Lane, said that after reading the Sub-Area Plan he noticed that survey respondents stated that growth along West Main Street is an issue. He also said that the goals stated in the plan do not make sense to him. He felt the plan was not in keeping with the character of the area, shared access between commercial properties and its extension to neighborhoods would create a safety issue, and that quality of life would not be enhanced by the plan.

Judy Weddington, 6139 and 6169 West Main Street, indicated that she owns two parcels along West Main Street and they have been in her family since the 1930s. She explained how the area has changed greatly over this time and that it is no longer rural in nature.

Hearing no more public comment, the Chairman closed the public comment section of the meeting and moved into Planning Commission discussion.

The Chairman noted that the Planning Commission has heard the comments and questions from the public and will try to address all of them in the meeting tonight. He also reiterated that this is a first draft of the plan and is not absolute at this time. The Chairman then asked Mr. Milliken for clarification regarding the placement of streets on the future land use map. Mr. Milliken indicated that the streets as laid out are general suggestions and are by no means meant to indicate actual locations where the streets would be located when or if they are built. Design studies would be conducted before streets are built to assure cut-through streets are not created.

The Chairman asked if connectivity, in some general sense, is needed. Mr. Milliken answered that the public has generally asked for more connectivity and he said that he would encourage the Planning Commission to keep the roads shown as connecting to stub-streets and outlots if it is their intention to utilize them in the future.

The Chairman asked about the arrows shown on the north side of the street. Mr. Milliken said these represented a service-drive system that would connect existing parking lots of adjacent developed parcels and do not represent new service drives. These would facilitate shared parking and cross access. He noted that it would be appropriate to initiate the subdrive system when redevelopment occurs.

The Chairman noted that the term 'light commercial' is generic but that the document as a whole gives an idea as to what is intended in this area. He felt light commercial represents what is currently developed within the area. He also said that if the Planning

Commission does not envision deeper commercial development than the depth of commercial should be changed on the plan. Mr. Milliken commented that the document is vague on purpose to allow flexibility for future development and for the Planning Commission to add their input into the document.

The Chairman said he did not feel big box retail would be a good fit in the area and would like it explicitly stated in the document. Ms. Stefforia added that big box retail was specifically mentioned as not envisioned in the area in a previous draft and this provision could be added back in a future draft. The Chairman replied that the ultimate goal of this plan is to create character in the area and that a use with a large footprint such as a big box store would come with big height, large parking requirements, and other detrimental characteristics to the area. Dick Skalski said that Woodbridge on Centre Avenue in Portage would be a good example to mimic in this area. He said that site planning in that area includes berms and preservation of landscape to create character.

Mr. Skalski commented that he felt the road connections, similar to what is shown on the future land use map, would not create cut-through traffic if designed correctly and would create new connections for the existing neighborhoods. He felt that this would create two-way traffic and would not overwhelm existing streets or create safety issues. The Chairman indicated that the residents in Country Club Village have consistently challenged any connections to their neighborhood while the Board and Planning Commission have consistently supported more connectivity. He said that he is concerned for the safety of the neighborhood but admitted that this plan would not create racetracks through Country Club Village. He said that the plan cannot move forward without addressing connectivity. Mr. Skalski added that neighborhoods with only one access could potentially be safety hazards if that access point is blocked.

Kitty Gelling stated that there needs to be connectivity and it would be productive if designed correctly.

Carl Benson stated his concern that the extension of Seeco Drive into an access street behind new commercial development would dump excess traffic onto Lodge Lane. He added that he was in favor of connectivity to other parts of the neighborhoods in the sub-area. The Chairman asked if the map should not include a connection between Seeco and Lodge Lane. Mr. Benson said that a cul-de-sac termination would be more appropriate. Fred Gould said he had experienced living on a high traffic count street and knew what the residents were afraid of. He added, however, that if designed correctly that the connections would be beneficial to the neighborhood and would provide needed emergency access to the neighborhood. He added his concern that the commercial lots be developed in a manner compatible with existing neighborhoods.

The Chairman said that the Planning Commission cannot neglect safety of the neighborhood. He added that the community has generally wanted connectivity. Bob Anderson said that growth will occur in this area and if done correctly it will meet the

needs of the adjacent neighborhoods. The Chairman stated that a next draft should address connectivity to Country Club Village with attention given to preventing through traffic from any new commercial development.

The Chairman then addressed the issue of not including 9th Street in the West Main Street Sub-Area Plan and the Sub-Area being too limited in scope. Mr. Gould commented that the plan should be written in a descriptive manner that would be more readable and understandable. He added that he would not be opposed to expansion of commercial land use down 9th Street, between West Main Street and KL Avenue but that this meeting was meant to deal with the West Main Street Sub-Area.

The Chairman added, for clarification, that the West Main Street Sub-Area has been the focus of much dialog and development interest and has been deemed by the public as important. He also added that the Planning Commission has looked at all areas of the Township when revising the Master Land Use Plan, including 9th Street between West Main Street and KL Avenue. He also said that not all parts of the Township require a sub-area plan. He concluded by saying that the Planning Commission has three choices at this time; extend the West Main Sub-Area west, keep it as is, or create a new sub-area that contains 9th Street.

Mr. Gould said the Planning Commission should at least look at 9th Street. Mr. Benson said 9th Street from West Main Street to KL Avenue should be put on a future agenda. Mr. Skalski said that it is difficult to properly plan West Main Street without considering 9th Street. The Chairman said he believes the public input would only support a 9th Street Sub-Area plan with commercial extended just west of 9th Street and not all the way to 8th Street. He believed that the public has wanted residential for the most part in this area. Ms. Everett said commercial should only be extended to 9th Street.

Ms. Stefforia said that 9th Street could be a separate sub-area as it has different characteristics from West Main; those being slower speeds, less traffic, a narrower right-of-way and it's primarily residential nature with the neighborhoods that have been built on the east side. She said that the residents and land owners have not been contacted regarding a 9th Street Sub-Area and a separate planning process would be needed. She added that a new 9th Street Sub-Area could be added to the Future Land Use Map. There was consensus that 9th Street should be added to the Future Land Use Plan as a new sub-area for future study.

The Chairman then addressed the public comment related to the clarity of certain parts of the Sub-Area Plan document. He stated that the public wanted clarification on what the transitional residential use designation entailed and how greenspace was to be preserved given that no land use designation of greenspace was provided on the map. He said, in his opinion, that the document as a whole called for greenspace to be included in developments and preservation of existing natural features. Ms. Gelling

agreed adding that the mention of preserving existing topography would add greenspace in developments.

Mr. Milliken added that the Sub-Area future land use map was drawn without 'green-lines' that would show greenspace on purpose because it is impossible to tell how the sub-area will develop. By calling out the preservation of existing natural features in the text, it would allow developers more flexibility when preparing their site layouts. He said he would be uncomfortable adding specific greenspace land-use to the map. The Chairman agreed and said that future zoning language would be adopted through thorough study that would give more details regarding natural feature preservation.

The Chairman said he would like the transitional residential and light commercial described in the document to be further fleshed out to give more detail to the uses allowed and form of development in these land use designations.

Ms. Gelling pointed out some changes to the text she thought would add to the clarity of the document.

The Chairman concluded that staff and the consultants should mull over the public input and discussion that has occurred and bring a second draft to the next Planning Commission meeting. He urged the public to send any correspondence regarding the West Main Street Sub-Area to Township Staff.

Adopt 2011 Meeting Dates

Ms. Gelling asked a question regarding the December meeting date. It was clarified that this meeting had to be changed due to a room scheduling conflict. She added that the time for Joint Meeting is 6:00 P.M.

Mr. Benson asked if the first meeting would be strictly a work session. The Chairman said that it shouldn't be specifically stated to be a work session. Ms. Stefforia said that the function of each meeting could be removed to allow more flexibility.

Ms. Gelling made a motion to accept the meeting dates with the changes noted. Mr. Gould seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Planning Commissioner Comments

Mr. Anderson said he has enjoyed working with the Chairman and has great respect for him. He added that the Township is better off due to his service.

Mr. Skalski said he appreciates the work that the Chairman has done for the Township.

Mr. Gould stated his respect for the Chairman and that he will miss his sense of decorum.

Mr. Benson thanked the Chairman for his service.

The Chairman thanked the public for their contributions to the discussion tonight.

Ms. Gelling thanked the Chairman for his leadership.

Ms. Everett echoed the comments of the other Planning Commissioners. She added that this is her last Planning Commission meeting as well and that Dave Bushouse will be replacing her as the Township Board liaison and Millard Loy will fill the Chairman's vacated Planning Commission seat.

The Chairman thanked everyone for their comments and added that it has been a pleasure to serve on the Planning Commission.

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 9:00 p.m.

Minutes Prepared:
December 20, 2010

Minutes Approved:
_____ 2010