

OSHTEMO CHARTER TOWNSHIP

PLANNING COMMISSION

MINUTES OF A MEETING HELD MARCH 14, 2013

Agenda

DISCUSSION OF POTENTIAL ZONING ORDINANCE AMENDMENTS REGARDING FENCE HEIGHT

UPDATE ON UPCOMING MDOT PROJECTS AND OTHER TRANSPORTATION PROJECTS

A meeting of the Oshtemo Charter Township Planning Commission was held on Thursday, March 14, 2013, commencing at approximately 7:00 p.m. at the Oshtemo Charter Township Hall.

MEMBERS PRESENT: Kitty Gelling, Chairperson
Frederick J. Antosz
Wiley Boulding, Sr.
Dusty Farmer
Millard Loy
Terry Schley

MEMBERS ABSENT: Richard Skalski

Also present were Greg Milliken, Planning Director, and Attorney James Porter.

Call to Order and Pledge of Allegiance

The meeting was called to order by Chairperson Gelling at approximately 7:00 p.m., and the "Pledge of Allegiance" was recited.

Agenda

Chairperson Gelling asked if there were any additions, deletions or corrections to the Agenda. Hearing none, she called for a motion to accept the Agenda. Mr. Boulding, Sr. made a motion to accept the Agenda as presented. Mr. Loy seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Public Comment on Non-Agenda Items

Chairperson Gelling called for public comment on non-agenda items. Hearing none, she proceeded to the next item on the agenda.

Approval of Minutes of February 28, 2013 Regular Meeting

Chairperson Gelling asked if there were any additions, deletions or corrections to the minutes of February 28, 2013. No changes were noted. Mr. Schley made a motion to approve the minutes as presented. Mr. Antosz seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Discussion of Potential Zoning Ordinance Amendments Regarding Fence Height

The Chairperson opened this agenda item and turned it over to the Planning Director to review the staff report provided to the Commissioners.

Mr. Milliken indicated that at the last meeting, Staff presented an analysis of the existing fence regulations in the Township as well as the results of their review of regulations in surrounding communities and requirements throughout the region. Following the review at that meeting, the Commission discussed the fencing requirements in residential areas including multi-family districts. They provided feedback on desired changes.

Mr. Milliken stated that Staff took that feedback and developed the draft language that was provided with the Commissioners' packets. He reviewed the draft language and the changes proposed from the current requirements.

Within new paragraph B, a statement has been added indicating that within the front building setback area, a fence must be black, brown, or a similar earthen color. Chairperson Gelling asked Mr. Milliken if white would be an acceptable color as well. The Commission then began a discussion of the color requirement.

Chairperson Gelling thought that Township residents should be able to choose their fence color based upon the above presented choices, thus being enabled to have some personal say in their ultimate choice.

Mr. Schley indicated that he did not think there should be any requirements about color as that can unreasonably restrict design choice.

Mr. Boulding, Sr. stated that he thought the color requirement should be included and was not unreasonable as it helps to maintain the character of the community.

Mr. Antosz asked if it should be specified in paragraph B that the fence height indicated applies to all yard areas. He also inquired if a permit was required and who would be doing the review.

Mr. Milliken indicated that for new development, the applicant will provide details regarding the fencing with their site plan and the fence will be reviewed as a part of the site plan review. For existing development, the fence would likely be reviewed administratively as an amendment to the existing site plan.

The Chairperson polled the Commission regarding the statement about color. Mr. Boulding Sr. indicated that he felt the requirement should stay. The other members all felt it should be removed.

Mr. Milliken presented the rest of the proposed amendments. There were minor wording changes discussed.

The Planning Commission determined that the draft, with the discussed changes, should be ready for a public hearing at the April 11th meeting. Staff would schedule the review and publish notices accordingly.

Update on Upcoming MDOT Projects and Other Transportation Proposals

The Chair opened this agenda item, and asked that Mr. Milliken please provide his report to the Commissioners. Mr. Milliken indicated that there are several significant transportation projects coming up within two years and he thought this would be a good opportunity to bring the Planning Commission up to speed on the projects so they were aware of the details.

He stated that this summer, starting in June, the M-43 & US-131 freeway interchange will be renovated. The ramp design will remain the same but structural improvements will be made to improve the integrity and safety of the structure and lengthen its service life. In addition, MDOT is adding a sidewalk to the south side of the bridge. At the same time, the Township is extending existing sidewalk facilities from the east and west along West Main Street to connect to the new sidewalk and provide a complete pedestrian connection across the freeway.

Mr. Milliken indicated that it is anticipated construction will last from June through November. It should be expected that the inner ramps of the interchange will be closed for the majority of that period. Drivers using those ramps will be detoured to the Stadium / 131 interchange via 9th Street.

Mr. Loy asked about the responsibility of clearing snow from the sidewalk. If this was going to be the Township's responsibility, he wondered how that would be accomplished. Mr. Milliken indicated that the Township was beginning to explore that issue with MDOT.

Mr. Milliken stated that the following summer, in 2014, the Stadium & US-131 freeway interchange will undergo a major reconstruction project. He explained there are several elements of this project that span from 11th Street to east of Seneca in the City.

First, he stated that the freeway interchange and Stadium Drive bridge were scheduled to be completely removed and replaced by a Single Point Urban Interchange (SPUI) design, which is the same design used at the Westnedge / I-94 interchange. This will allow for safer flow of traffic and improve capacity of the interchange and nearby intersections. It will also occupy less land allowing for greater opportunities for stormwater treatment. As a result, the project is incorporating improved stormwater treatment of the public drainage from Stadium Drive, the Stadium / Drake intersection, and the freeway interchange prior to flowing into Asylum Lake.

Another significant component of the project is improvement to the Stadium and Drake intersection. This includes signal upgrades along with the addition of double-left turn lanes in each direction and right turn lanes in three of the four directions.

Mr. Milliken indicated that the Century Drive / Drake Road intersection is currently very dangerous and needed to be relocated and / or closed due to expansion of the Drake Road right of way. A variety of agencies worked together to ensure a realignment of Century Drive across from the driveway to the commercial center across the street.

Finally, in conjunction with this project, MDOT is providing a five foot sidewalk on the north side of Stadium Drive from Drake Road to 11th Street and a ten foot pathway on the south side of Stadium Drive from Drake Road to 11th Street. These facilities provide an important non-motorized connection across the facility.

Mr. Milliken indicated that Township Staff is trying to further leverage of this project to expand the non-motorized facilities that are being provided and implement the recently completed Drake Road Sidewalk Study. He indicated that they are working with various agencies and possible funding sources to figure out what opportunities exist to expand the network of non-motorized facilities in the community.

Mr. Loy asked why it would be necessary to have a sidewalk on the west side of Drake Road if there is already a sidewalk on the east side of Drake Road.

Mr. Milliken stated that it was important to have the sidewalk on the west side of Drake Road from Stadium to KL Avenue due to the fact that a complete sidewalk does not exist along this part of the corridor on the east side of the road. Further, it is desired to extend a non-motorized facility of some form to the west along KL Avenue at least to the apartment complexes to provide these many residents with access to this expanding pedestrian network.

The Chairperson thanked Mr. Milliken for his presentation and his work on these projects.

Old Business

With there being no old business to discuss, Chairperson Gelling directed the Commissioners to proceed to the next agenda item.

Any Other Business

Chairperson Gelling indicated that she had spoken with Mr. Suwarsky, Oshtemo Township's Code Enforcement Officer, and he indicated that Crystal Car Wash's sign was now in compliance with the Township ordinance. The sign previously was changing too frequently and with inappropriate transitions.

Mr. Loy indicated that he has heard different stories about the proposed fence around Copper Beach apartments and whether it is to surround the property or not. Also, he indicated that he believes residents of Country Club Village will be at the ZBA hearing to discuss people parking in their neighborhood in order to run into the apartment complex.

Mr. Boulding, Sr. stated that he had reviewed the information provided by the Michigan Association of Planning from the training session and had a question about the land division act. It references a Chair of the County Plat Board, and he wondered who that was. Mr. Milliken indicated that he was not sure, but he thought it probably was not applicable in Kalamazoo County. Mr. Porter said he would have to check into it, but he did not think it was an active board.

Mr. Milliken described an on-site training opportunity that was briefly mentioned at a previous meeting.

Planning Commissioner Comments

Ms. Farmer indicated that it was nice to see so many of the Planning Commissioners and Township residents in attendance at the MDOT open house.

Mr. Antosz suggested putting a link to the MDOT website with information about their projects on the Township website and provided accurate link information to Mr. Milliken.

Chairperson Gelling said she was happy that the Township Boards' meeting dates had been (finally) published in the Township Newsletter, and she, too, was thrilled

by the attendance at the MDOT open house. She additionally extended her sympathies to Mr. Schley on the passing of his father.

Mr. Boulding Sr. wondered why there was not a trail proposed on the west side of Drake Road south of Stadium Drive as a part of their project. Mr. Milliken explained the extent of the project and MDOT's explanation to previous inquiries on this issue.

Mr. Loy indicated that he would not be in attendance at the next meeting.

Adjournment

Having exhausted the Planning Commission agenda, and with there being no further business to discuss, Chairperson Gelling adjourned the meeting at approximately 8:18 p.m.

Minutes prepared:
March 18, 2013

Minutes approved:
March 28, 2013