

**OSHTEMO CHARTER TOWNSHIP
TOWNSHIP BOARD OF TRUSTEES AND PLANNING COMMISSION**

MINUTES OF A MEETING HELD JANUARY 25, 2018

Agenda

**JOINT WORK SESSION OF THE TOWNSHIP BOARD OF TRUSTEES AND THE
PLANNING COMMISSION**

DISCUSSION OF DRAFT MASTER PLAN UPDATE

A meeting of the Oshtemo Charter Township Board of Trustees and the Planning Commission was held on Thursday, January 25, 2018, commencing at approximately 7:00 p.m. at the Oshtemo Charter Township Hall.

TOWNSHIP BOARD

MEMBERS PRESENT: Libby Heiny-Cogswell, Supervisor
Nancy Culp, Treasurer
Dave Bushouse
Deb Everett
Zak Ford
Ken Hudok
MEMBER ABSENT: Dusty Farmer, Clerk

PLANNING COMMISSION

MEMBERS PRESENT: Cheri Bell, Chairperson
Fred Antosz
Ollie Chambers
Micki Maxwell
Mary Smith
Bruce VanderWeele, Vice Chairperson
Dusty Farmer, Secretary

Also present were Julie Johnston, Planning Director, James Porter, Attorney, Marc Elliott, Public Works Director, Martha Coash, Meeting Transcriptionist, and six interested persons.

Call to Order

The meeting was called to order by Supervisor Heiny-Cogswell at approximately 7:00 p.m.

Public Comment on Non-Agenda Items

There were no public comments on non-agenda items.

Discussion of Draft Master Plan Update

Supervisor Heiny-Cogswell asked Ms. Johnston to review the Master Plan process and updates for the group.

Ms. Johnston explained Public Act 33 of 2008, Michigan Planning Enabling Act, requires local jurisdictions to review their master plans every five years to determine if updates are required. After an assessment of the 2011 Oshtemo Township Master Plan, the Planning Commission concluded that although the Plan is in good shape, some updates were needed. She said the draft Master Plan Update includes four main chapters:

- Introduction and Planning Drivers: Outlines the demographic changes occurring in the Township that influence planning decisions.
- Rural Character Preservation Strategy: Details the goals and strategies for preserving rural properties and character within the western 2/3rds of the Township. This section includes the detailed environmental mapping conducted by Western Michigan University and the public outreach steps taken to develop the proposed strategies.
- Maple Hill Drive South Sub-Area Plan: This Plan was based on a recommendation in the 2011 Master Plan, which indicated this particular area of the Township was prime for redevelopment and a more detailed sub-area plan was needed. The recommendations in the Sub-Area Plan are based on community outreach and careful consideration of the Planning Commission with regard to the uniqueness of this area and its location in that portion of the Township slated for more intense development. It is the last real undeveloped contiguous green area in this part of the Township. Public feedback reflected a desire that less density be maintained near residential neighborhoods.
- Future Land Use Plan: This section of the Update replaces the 2011 Future Land Use Chapter. Incremental alterations to the Future Land Use Map have been proposed to address changing conditions and support the planning drivers that are affecting the Township. These changes mainly include the development of two new Districts, Transitional Office and Public/Government.

In addition, the Neighborhood Commercial “Nodes” were eliminated and instead specific boundaries for the Neighborhood Commercial District were more clearly defined. The Village Commercial area was redefined as the Village Core District and the boundaries were established around 9th Street and Stadium Drive. The remaining

areas of the old Village Commercial District were designated as Local Commercial and Transitional Office.

Next, Ms. Johnston outlined the variety of public input garnered since the start of the public process. In addition to these specific outreach meetings, the Planning Commission held eight public work sessions throughout the development of the Master Plan. Some of these work sessions were aimed at a specific focus area of the update and participants interested in that section of the Plan were invited to attend.

She said the Planning Commission held the required public hearing on the draft Master Plan Update on December 14, 2017. An email invitation was sent to the email list of attendees accumulated throughout the development of the Plan and notice was placed in the Kalamazoo Gazette and on Mlive. Approximately 20 interested persons were in attendance and seven persons provided verbal comment on the plan. After the public hearing, the Planning Commission forwarded a recommendation of approval of the draft Master Plan Update to the Township Board.

Ms. Johnston concluded by saying household population and growth are leading to an increased need for housing. Currently there is a 7% vacancy rate; the tight housing market will continue to increase values. Diversified housing stock providing greater choice is indicated. Condos, townhouses and other housing stock that require low maintenance are desired by increasing numbers of empty nesters as well as those in their 20s.

Trustee Ford wondered about statistics regarding how many residents younger than 30 live with their parents.

Ms. Johnston said that statistic may be available from census data; usually if residents live with their parents they are counted as part of that household.

In response to a question from the Supervisor, Ms. Johnston indicated the 2011 Master Plan and the 2018 update being considered are two different documents; both would be in effect at the same time. The only new section in the Master Plan is the Future Land Use chapter. The two documents could be combined into one if that would be clearer.

Trustee Ford thanked Ms. Johnston and the Planning Commission for all their work on this project.

Trustee Everett asked how a timeline might be developed to address the priorities in the Master Plan update in order to stay on task.

Ms. Johnston agreed it will be important to put the priorities established into effect; that it was very clear that those who attended public sessions expect implementation. She will work with the Planning Commission to develop a plan.

In response to a question from Trustee Everett regarding storm water regulations, Ms. Johnston said she expects to address those as part of a reorganization of the Zoning Ordinance.

Trustee Ford wondered about the term “environmental sustainability” on page 37.

Ms. Johnston said ordinance language will need to be updated for solar and wind. Also needing updating is language related to RR – large parcels are currently limited to only residential uses. Property owners would like to have other opportunities to develop their land besides subdivision. The Planning Commission will study options.

Supervisor Heiny-Cogswell commented the Rural Preservation Plan, developed in concert with WMU to detail a natural features inventory, is phenomenal. She also wondered if property open to the public might be included in the Public/Government District.

Ms. Johnston said that might be a possibility; Ms. Bell said if that is considered, WMU and Kalamazoo College property should also be included.

Trustee Hudok asked if any consideration was given to allowing more density west of the existing future land use plan. Ms. Johnston said community input and past master plans did not support higher density moving west, a consistent view since the 1990s. This may need to be examined again in the future.

Trustee Hudok noted public water and sewage and better transportation have to be considered for upgrades before the Township experiences big city problems.

In response to a question from Trustt Ford, Ms. Johnston explained green infrastructure includes connectivity to parks and arboretums, etc. She indicated the Township is in good shape to start the planning process for non-motorized connections and greenways because of the work completed by WMU. Non-motorized, greenway and park planning will help to begin implementing some of the strategies from the Rural Character chapter of the Update.

There was some discussion regarding the village area. Ms. Johnston indicated no zoning changes are expected. She said the Form Based Code may be repackaged as an overlay district with design guidelines to remove negative feelings that are keeping the area from being developed, but we are not there yet.

Ms. Johnston responded to the Supervisor’s comment that she was surprised there is more local commercial to the west of the village area than the existing mixed-use village district, saying the Planning Commission looked at what exists in this location and what might develop in the future and thought local commercial was a better fit. They were trying to mirror the development plan of the Village Theme Development Plan.

Supervisor Heiny-Cogswell also wondered whether private vs. public streets should be looked at in some areas.

Mr. Elliott noted some design standards of the Road Commission are less green than we would like. Allowing reduced paved widths is a departure from the Road Commission standards to allow developments to be more “green.”

Ms. Johnston noted private streets can be only in open space and PUD developments and they bring up issues of responsibility for upkeep and maintenance.

Supervisor Heiny-Cogswell noted the future of retail will need to be considered in light of increased online shopping.

Trustee Hudok commended Ms. Johnston for trying to provide smart planning in targeted areas.

Trustee Ford wondered about electric car recharging stations.

Ms. Johnston indicated Ordinance language should allow the Planning Commission to have some flexibility and might include vehicle charging as well as bicycle parking. The vision is already laid out in the Master Plan goals, what is needed is implementation.

Ms. Johnston said the Master Plan needs to be supported by ordinance. That was not entirely done in 2011 after the Master Plan was put in place, which caused some problems. Very specific language is needed to bring ordinance in line with the Master Plan.

There was discussion about whether greenway and non-motorized plans should be stand-alone or integrated into the Master Plan.

Attorney Porter stated that whether they are part of the master plan or stand-alone plans, neither are regulatory. They are the vision of the Township. To require development, the Township needs the regulatory teeth; they have to be in zoning for implementation. Public noticing would be required to include these documents in the Master Plan.

Ms. Bell felt it might provide continuity to have them all in one place.

Supervisor Heiny-Cogswell asked whether Planning Commission members would like to comment.

Mr. Antosz said it all comes down to developing good ordinance to support the Master Plan and it is important that as much feedback as possible from the public be included.

Ms. Smith requested that priority be given to developing sidewalks, especially on Croyden and Maple Hill. She noted people already walk in the street, and with new development, safety is even more of a consideration.

Trustee Hudok shared Ms. Smith's concern. Priority in heavier commercial and high density areas need contiguous walkways as a focus of building and construction.

Chairperson Bell thanked Ms. Johnston for her work and patience during the process to get the Master Plan update to the Township Board.

Members of the public in attendance were offered a chance for comment.

Mr. Simon Ashbrook said he owns property in a section of the Township that may be changed to local commercial. He has wanted for some time to be able to open a small family-owned meat market and is excited at the possibility of being able to do so.

Mr. Kurt Aardema, AVB, expressed his appreciation for the time Ms. Johnston and the Planning Commission have worked to develop and overall vision. They are excited to work with the Township on the next steps of development.

A representative of CTS Telecom said he was in attendance to gather information about Township development as it may pertain to an extended network and appreciated hearing the plans.

ADJOURNMENT

Having exhausted the agenda, and with there being no further business to discuss, Supervisor Heiny-Cogswell adjourned the meeting at approximately 8:30 p.m.

Minutes prepared:
January 27, 2017

Minutes approved:
February 8, 2017