

OSHTEMO CHARTER TOWNSHIP
PLANNING COMMISSION

MINUTES OF A MEETING HELD FEBRUARY 24, 2011

Agenda

PUBLIC HEARING – ZONING ORDINANCE TEXT AMENDMENTS

A meeting of the Oshtemo Charter Township Planning Commission was held on Thursday, February 24, 2011, commencing at approximately 7:00 p.m. at the Oshtemo Charter Township Hall.

MEMBERS PRESENT: Bob Anderson, Chairman
 Carl Benson
 Dave Bushouse
 Kitty Gelling
 Fred Gould
 Millard Loy
 Richard Skalski

MEMBERS ABSENT: None

Also present were Jodi Stefforia, Planning Director; Chris West, Associate Planner; Attorney Porter and about four other 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

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

No public comment.

Minutes

The Chairman stated the next item was the review and approval of the February 10, 2011 minutes. Ms. Gelling made a motion to approve the minutes. Mr. Skalski seconded the motion. The Chairman called for a vote on the motion, and the motion passed unanimously.

PUBLIC HEARING – ZONING ORDINANCE TEXT AMENDMENTS

The Chairman opened the public hearing on the proposed Zoning Ordinance text amendments and asked for a report from the Township Planning Department. Mr. West presented his report to the Planning Commission dated February 24, 2011, and the same is incorporated herein by reference. Mr. West said since they last met, there were only two significant changes to the proposed Zoning Ordinance text amendments which were the addition of a 1,000 gallon propane tank as a permitted use for a filling station. He also noted that electronic billboards were not to be prohibited since the State of Michigan allowed them, but that any changeable copy would still be limited to 25% of the sign as provided for all other signs within the Township.

When Mr. West concluded his report, he asked the Planning Commission members if they had any questions.

Mr. Benson asked about the proposed change to Section 76.130 and asked if the change would expose the Township to possibly grotesque or garish frames which would not be aesthetically pleasing. Mr. West said he did not think it would because the proposed change required those portions of the framing to be part of the façade of the building.

Mr. Gould said he was curious as to why the changeable copy portion of the sign was limited to 25%. Ms. Stefforia said that was what the existing Ordinance allows, and allows for a more static display along the streets. Mr. West said that it also would prevent large signs from being entirely changeable copy. Mr. Gould suggested that the Planning Commission consider the new technology, and while he understood some signs might be bright or distracting, he did not want to see changeable signs prohibited because they were the newest form of technology available for businesses. He said Township businesses needed to remain competitive.

Mr. West said, to date, the Planning Department had not received any complaints regarding the amount of the sign area which could have changeable copy, but on how often the sign copy could be changed.

Mr. Gould then pointed to pages 7 and 12 of the proposed text and asked about changeable signs and the limitations on fading, flashing or scrolling. Ms. Stefforia said that was to prevent the sudden visual changes which Mr. Gould had referred to earlier.

The Chairman then called for public comment.

Mr. Tim Timmons introduced himself on behalf of Meyer C. Weiner and Golf Ridge, LLC. He said he applauded the Commission's efforts to work on the Sign Ordinance, and he said he thought the changes would help stabilize the west end of the Golf Ridge development. He thanked Mr. Gould for his comments regarding electronic signage.

Ms. Martha ~~Bedkee~~ **Betke** of First National Bank introduced herself to the Planning Commission. She said that they would appreciate it if the changeable copy could change every four to six seconds rather than 60 seconds. She said with the current limitations on area, it was hard to put a complete message up for the public to read as they are passing by the business. She suggested that the Commission change the Ordinance to be more in conformance with other surrounding communities with respect to frequency.

Mr. Jim Vandenberg introduced himself to the Planning Commission. He said he thought that the proposed revisions were long overdue, and he thought they were moving in the right direction, but only took a half step to get there. He said that he hoped that they would take a complete step and reduce the 60-second time limitations down to six or seven seconds in order to allow him to get messages out to the traveling public. He said he needed to be competitive with his neighbors and his competitors in surrounding communities.

The Chairman called for Commission deliberations.

The Chairman asked if the Commission had not discussed a six-second limitation previously. Ms. Stefforia said the Commission had originally considered a six-second limitation, but then changed the time to 60 seconds.

Mr. Loy said he thought changing it from 24 hours to six seconds seemed a bit extreme initially, but after hearing from the business community, he understood the need for reducing the time and thought it should be reduced.

Mr. Skalski said he did not have a problem with a reduction in the time in which changeable copy could be altered and said he would support a shorter time period.

Mr. Bushouse said he supported electronic signs even for the Township, but felt with the 60-second limitation, the Township could not put out messages that the motoring public could read. He said he would support a six-second copy change limitation.

Ms. Gelling said, after listening to the members of the business community, she would concur with a reduction in the time change for electronic signs from 60 seconds to six seconds.

Mr. Benson said, while he was concerned about distractions, he did not have a problem reducing the proposed time for changeable copy.

The Chairman asked if there were any other discussions on the text changes, and hearing none, he said he would entertain a motion. Ms. Gelling made a motion to recommend the proposed Zoning Ordinance text changes to the Oshtemo Charter Township Board with the change in Section 76.410 so that changeable copy signs could change no more than once every six seconds. Mr. Gould seconded the motion. The Chairman called for further discussion. Hearing none, he called for a vote on the motion, and the motion passed unanimously.

Connectivity Presentation

The Chairman said the next item on the agenda was review of the Connectivity Presentation from Ms. Stefforia. Ms. Stefforia then took the Commission through a Power Point presentation outlining the benefits and the perceived negative aspects of connectivity, pointing out provision for it needs to remain as part of the Land Use Plan, provided that it is used when appropriate and provided that it is designed properly to prevent cut thru traffic or speeding. The Planning Commission thanked Ms. Stefforia for her presentation.

Mr. Skalski said he had driven Country Club Village, and he said because the way the roads are laid out, i.e., not in a grid pattern, even if connected to other residential roads, he did not think there would necessarily be any increase of cut-through traffic because of the serpentine nature of the roads.

Mr. Gould said he thought perhaps bike paths were needed, and he was concerned about the narrow roads in Country Club. He thought that the Commission should be extremely cautious in opening up a long-closed neighborhood.

The Chairman said he was also concerned about traffic, but that the traffic is going to be there whether the neighborhood is opened up or not. He said there will be garbage trucks, school buses and existing neighborhood traffic. It is not necessarily going to be all new traffic.

Mr. Gould said, while he was not against connectivity per se, he was concerned about the Country Club neighborhood.

Mr. Loy said many of those roads could be widened to their original design, and part of the reason they are so narrow is because people came in and grassed in the shoulders of the road.

Mr. Bushouse said when Country Club was originally developed, they had six-foot shoulders which were eliminated by the people fronting on the streets within Country Club. He said he did not think the emergency access issue was all that crucial, but he had seen other roads opened up in plats such as Fairlane, and there were not the big problems which everyone is anticipating for this neighborhood. He said he did not think that children should play in streets, and he agreed that bike paths are a good thing, but the Township also needed to have connectivity. He said there would be a big economic impact to the community if there was no connectivity. He pointed out the extra trips on existing roads within the plats which would occur because there is no through access to Country Club. He also noted that garbage trucks, school buses, snowplows and utility people had to make additional trips in and out of Country Club because there was no way through that neighborhood to others.

Ms. Gelling said she believed in connectivity and that it can be done correctly and be beneficial. She also noted that out of the 500 people who lived in Country Club, there is a relatively small number of people who are actually showing up at the meetings. She thanked the Planning Department for its very informative presentation.

Mr. Benson said he had come full circle on this issue and was now more in support of connectivity than he may have previously been. He said he was in agreement with Ms. Gelling, and he cautioned the Planning Commission against letting the “tail wag the dog.” He said the Planning Commission and the Township Board had to do what was in the best interest of everyone in the community, not just a limited number of people in a single neighborhood.

Role and Responsibilities of Planning Commission Members

The Chairman then asked for a report from Attorney Porter regarding the roles and responsibilities of the Planning Commission members. Mr. Porter presented his report to the Planning Commission and explained that his overall goal in drafting the memo and providing it to the Planning Commission was to try to avoid potential problems in the future. He explained that the six principles which he had laid out in his memo were done with the intent of providing full, fair hearings at the Planning Commission level by an unbiased Commission. He said his recommendation to limit contact with third parties was to try to make sure that all the information provided to any of the members of the Planning Commission be brought forward and shared with all the parties, not to stifle communication. The Board thanked Mr. Porter for his report.

2010 Annual Report

The Chairman said the next item for consideration was the 2010 Annual Report. Ms. Stefforia presented the 2010 Annual Report for the Planning Commission entitled, “Summary of Applications and Projects.” After a brief review, Ms. Gelling made a motion to accept the Report as submitted, which was seconded by Mr. Skalski. The Chairman called for a vote on the motion, and the motion passed unanimously.

Other Business

Mr. West announced to the Planning Commission that he would be leaving the Township on March 4, 2011. Various members of the Planning Commission thanked him for his good work and told him he would be missed.

Planning Commissioner Comments

None.

Adjournment

The Chairman asked if there were any further comments, and hearing none, he called for adjournment at approximately 8:25 p.m.

Minutes Prepared:
March 1, 2011

Minutes Approved:
April 14, 2011