

Springfield Township  
Planning Commission – Business Meeting  
Minutes April 15, 2013

Call to Order: Chairman Baker called the April 15, 2013 Business Meeting of the Springfield Township Planning Commission to order at 7:30 p.m. at the Springfield Township Civic Center, 12000 Davisburg Road, Davisburg, MI 48350.

Attendance:

Commissioners Present:

Dean Baker  
Ruth Ann Hines  
Dave Hopper  
Bill Leddy  
Linda Whiting  
Neil Willson

Commissioners Absent

Kevin Sclesky

Staff Present

Laura Moreau, Clerk

Consultants Present

Brian Oppmann, Planner

Approval of Agenda:

**Commissioner Hines moved to approve the agenda as presented. Supported by Commissioner Willson. Voted yes: Baker, Hines, Hopper, Leddy, Whiting, Willson. Voted no: None. Absent: Sclesky. Motion Carried.**

Public Comment:     None

Consent Agenda:

**1. Minutes of the March 18, 2013 meeting**

**Commissioner Hopper moved to approve the minutes of the March 18, 2013 meeting as presented. Seconded by Commissioner Whiting. Voted yes: Baker, Hines, Hopper, Leddy, Whiting, Willson. Voted no: None. Absent: Sclesky. Motion Carried.**

Public Hearing:     None

New Business:

**1. Discussion – Sign Ordinance, Temporary Signs, Seasonal and Temporary Display of Products and Materials**

Supervisor Walls stated that this was prompted by a year of submission of applications for Special Events or Temporary Sales. He found that many of the provisions and language around the ordinance was illogical. In the process of working with the ordinance, there are some things that are inconsistent. Real estate signs of 6 square feet are allowed, but a temporary sign is only allowed to be 4 square feet. These inconsistencies need to be eliminated and better direction needs to be given for a Special Event and Temporary Sign. He listed some of these inconsistencies in a document given to the Commission. There are two churches in residential areas that have come in to obtain permits for upcoming special events. These groups only get a 4 square foot special event sign according to the ordinance; he allowed them to have larger because he did not think that this was the Commission's intent because it is not logical. He will continue to do this interpretation according to the intent of the ordinance, but this is not how it should be. It should be in the ordinance so it is clear. There are also still issues with the sign ordinance that the business community deserves to be addressed. One of the biggest areas of concern is the signage for multiple businesses on a single piece of property.

Mr. Oppmann stated that he and Collin have talked about these issues. Many of these details will be brought out when reviewing the site plan that they were introduced to last month. The proposed signage for the new fuel center will not meet the ordinance and will have to go before the Board of Appeals. He is not suggesting that they change the ordinance due to this one development but they need to make sure that they understand what the sign section will allow them. They expect to go to the Zoning Board and get approvals for what they proposed. They allow a business center sign but they need to decide if that is adequate; when they are split on their own piece of property they are allowed to have their own ground sign.

Commissioner Hines asked if the Kroger Fuel Center would go to the Zoning Board of Appeals.

Supervisor Walls stated that he would recommend that they go to the Planning Commission first so that the Planning Commission can look at the signage plan and make sure that there is consistency of style and character. The Zoning Board will just look at size and height; this is where the variances would be required. They might look at speed as a justification for size. It makes sense to first provide review from the Planning Commission, contingent on approval from the Zoning Board of Appeals.

Commissioner Hines asked if they would be predetermining the Board of Appeals action.

Supervisor Walls and Mr. Oppmann replied no.

Mr. Oppmann replied that they would first come to the Planning Commission for their approval and it can be contingent on Board of Appeals approval.

Commissioner Hines stated that it seems like a waste of 14 hours of talking about it if they are going to deny it any way.

Mr. Oppmann answered that they are not going to be looking at where the signs are located on the site.

Supervisor Walls stated that they had three different illumination plans and his fear is that they submit four different signage styles in the plan. There should be some consistency in the style and theme of the signage and this is looked at and approved by the Planning Commission.

Mr. Oppmann stated that the Zoning Board will only turn down dimensions and number.

Chairperson Baker stated that they should not proceed as if the Zoning Board should or might do something. The ordinance that they focus on will be relevant to not only this project but others to come. They need to deal with the inconsistencies in the sign ordinance.

Commissioner Hines concurred.

Commissioner Willson stated that it is extremely complicated. The Planning Commission spent a lot of time going through the entire ordinance before as best they could correcting inconsistencies. Last time, the items that the businesses wanted to use for sales were not allowed by ordinance and they tried to fix it, apparently they did not get it right. There were some specific issues including the Divine Mercy temporary sign. He agreed with the suggestion of forming one, if not more, committees to look at this in a committee forum.

Supervisor Walls stated that before they faced trying to design a sign ordinance after the horse was out of the barn in many instances. The magnitude and trying to deal with it all at one time is very difficult. This makes it an insurmountable problem.

Mr. Oppmann stated that they should tackle different sections like building signs and then ground signs. They need to divide it up and have him and Collin review it in terms of inconsistencies.

Commissioner Willson verified that they had not actually seen the new fuel center sign plan. He asked if the ordinance was insufficient now to deal with the entire plan if it came in tonight.

Supervisor Walls stated that if you go to the Business Center and make an assumption that they are making an addition to the Springfield Town Square complex then it is not deficient. If you look at each property separate, then you get things that do not mesh well.

Commissioner Willson asked about the Fuel Center developer timeline.

Supervisor Walls stated that they will be dealing with the present ordinance for the Kroger plan.

Commissioner Hopper stated that they already are aware that there are variances that will be needed. They need to make the direction clear in the motions during Final Site Plan approval. They are now adding McDonalds and they have to take into account the future development of the site in the back. Our Ordinance states that in sites that are more than five acres, they can exceed the size but it doesn't say anything about the height. He took it literally that the intent of the ordinance was to keep the signs low.

Supervisor Walls stated that their request should properly address all of the businesses and the Planning Commission will be able to look at this. The spaces that were proposed on the ground sign were too small to be able to discern going 50 miles per hour.

Commissioner Leddy asked if the McDonalds property would have a separate identification number.

Supervisor Walls replied yes and so would the fuel center. There will be 4 new tax descriptions created. There are four tax descriptions on the existing Kroger site and two are noncontiguous. McDonalds might want to be separate but he hopes that the Planning Commission recognizes that they are part of Springfield Town Square and they would still need to conform. Before it is completed the Township Attorney must make sure that all easements and reciprocal easements are modified to properly accommodate the new facilities.

Chairperson Baker stated that the sign review began with the Divine Mercy sign review many years ago. This evolved into all forms of sign review that expanded into looking at all aspects. It seemed like they had not even closed a section and a new topic was brought up relative to the sign ordinance. It was culminated with specific issues relevant to Dixie Highway businesses. If the sign ordinance was going to be revisited, they should start with a specific game plan and plan of attack. The notes from the Supervisor are a great start and they need to take this information, divide them up and prioritize them to develop a specific game plan.

Supervisor Walls concurred.

Chairperson Baker stated that it will not be quick, but having a game plan will allow them to progress through with more success.

Supervisor Walls stated that they can break out four to six signage issues to work on.

Chairperson Baker agreed that Supervisor Walls and Mr. Oppmann develop a prioritized list. They should use the input from local business owners when it is appropriate.

Commissioner Leddy concurred.

Commissioner Willson stated that there are some inconsistencies that need to be fixed, for example the four and six foot sign size. He asked if they needed to work on the definitions.

Supervisor Walls stated that he has not fully examined everything that was reviewed. He has primarily looked at the temporary sign issue. Defining Sale doesn't seem to be all that critical. The other areas of the ordinance need to be reviewed related to current concepts and current advertising and signage industry. The signage provisions in place have been around awhile.

Commissioner Willson stated that he doesn't not want our community to look like some other communities that have objectionable signage, including electronic signs.

Supervisor Walls stated that Buscemi's was approved for an electronic sign.

Commissioner Whiting asked when a good point was to bring business people into the process to be the most effective.

Supervisor Walls answered that it depends on which business people were involved. This can be done on a committee basis, but you want to make sure that the business people involved are helpful. The signage community has a lot of information available out there to read; it would be good to be able to provide choices of option A or option B.

Commissioner Whiting stated that driving down Van Dyke gave her a good perspective on what they don't want; however, the signs need to be able to be seen while driving down Dixie Highway.

Commissioner Willson stated that it is also easy to tell when you drive through a community that has conformity; it looks as if it is done right.

Supervisor Walls urged the Commissioners to take pictures while driving of either positive aspects or negative aspects of signage.

Commissioner Hopper stated that business owners want visibility but residents want to maintain a rural character. This leads to things like the height restriction and this is the reasoning behind the ordinance restrictions. The intent was to keep everything uniform and low to the ground.

Commissioner Hines stated that if she cannot see the sign or if it is difficult to find a business, she is not going to shop there. There should be balance.

Chairperson Baker concurred; there needs to be balance between business owner's needs and residents' needs too.

Commissioner Leddy stated that with Google mapping there is less of a need for prominent signs. The younger generation relies on this technology.

Supervisor Walls stated that he and Mr. Oppmann can sit down and break the sign ordinance down into pieces that are easy to work with.

Commissioners and Mr. Oppmann agreed with this approach.

## **2. Discussion – Set up meeting for planning priorities**

Supervisor Walls summarized that the Board thought that having a joint meeting was a great idea to establish planning priorities. However, the Board has a few budgetary concerns to take care of first, and then they can move forward to set up a joint meeting. They are looking to set up an informal meeting separate from the regularly scheduled monthly meeting.

Commissioners concurred.

### Other Business:

#### **1. Priority Task List**

Commissioners reviewed and made updates and revisions to the current Priority List.

Public Comment: None

### Adjournment:

**Commissioner Hines moved to adjourn the meeting at 8:52 PM. Supported by Commissioner Hopper. Voted yes: Baker, Hines, Hopper, Leddy, Whiting, Willson. Voted no: None. Absent: Sclesky. Motion Carried.**

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Erin A. Mattice, Recording Secretary