

Springfield Township  
Planning Commission Meeting  
Minutes September 16, 2013

Call to Order: Chairman Baker called the September 16, 2013 Business Meeting of the Springfield Township Planning Commission to order at 7:31 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  
Kevin Sclesky  
Linda Whiting  
Neil Willson

Commissioners Absent

Consultants Present

Doug Lewan, Planner

Approval of Agenda:

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

Public Comment:     None

Consent Agenda:

**1. Minutes of the August 19, 2013 Planning Commission meeting**

**Commissioner Hopper moved to approve the minutes of the August 19, 2013 meeting as presented. Seconded by Commissioner Leddy. Voted yes: Baker, Hines, Hopper, Leddy, Sclesky, Whiting, Willson. Voted no: None. Absent: None. Motion Carried.**

**2. Minutes of the August 19, 2013 Joint Planning Commission and Township Board meeting**

**Commissioner Willson moved to approve the minutes of the August 19, 2013 meeting as presented. Seconded by Commissioner Whiting. Voted yes: Baker, Hines, Hopper, Leddy, Sclesky, Whiting, Willson. Voted no: None. Absent: None. Motion Carried.**

Public Hearing: None

New Business:

**1. Sign Survey – Analysis**

Mr. Lewan provided a summary of the sign survey analysis document that was distributed to the Commissioners. The Planning Commission participated in a sign survey at the July 15, 2013 meeting. This summary analysis is a compilation of that survey result.

Commissioner Sclesky stated that he assumed that they were speaking about the Dixie Corridor and asked if there was ordinance language that they should use specific to this area.

Mr. Lewan answered yes; they were speaking mostly about the Dixie Corridor and there are a number of ways that this could be addressed, possibly through an overlay district. Typically, they would mention specific zoning districts.

Supervisor Walls mentioned that there were commercial districts at East Holly and I-75.

Chairperson Baker asked Mr. Lewan if he has enough information to begin with draft language.

Mr. Lewan answered yes. There aren't a lot of changes but he may need more input regarding electronic message signs. He stated that generally the sign ordinance is pretty good and they are not looking at huge changes.

Chairperson Baker asked about other communities and electronic signs and asked if there was ordinance language regarding these.

Mr. Lewan answered that the big issues are light intensity on adjacent properties, the number of times the message changes and at what rate it changes. There are a wide variety of differences on the electronic message signs and the ordinance regulations about them. The technology is getting better and better and it is getting cheaper to run these signs.

Chairperson Baker asked if there was any data that links the presence of an electronic message sign and the intensity of their changes or brightness to the incidences of traffic accidents.

Mr. Lewan stated that he is not aware of any traffic safety data.

Commissioner Hines recalled that they already talked about this in prior conversations.

Chairperson Baker stated that they did talk about these signs when they were considering changing the sign ordinance before.

Supervisor Walls stated that they are currently not allowed; there is one that was approved by consent judgment.

Mr. Lewan stated that they do not have to allow them. The State has standards for digital billboards, but they do not have to allow them.

Commissioner Hines stated that in today's technology, people want to be able to sit at their desk and change their sign. It would be advantageous for a business.

Mr. Lewan stated that many of the schools use these electronic message signs, but they are exempt from local zoning.

Commissioner Hines asked if churches were exempt.

Supervisor Walls answered no.

Commissioner Hopper stated that the Township Board approved an electronic sign by consent judgment.

Supervisor Walls stated that the standards for the sign did not make it into the consent agreement. One of the issues is the brightness or glare.

Commissioner Hopper stated that the perception of the past is that the Township Board is negative toward business and that is not necessarily the case.

Commissioner Hines stated that she wants to be able to find businesses.

Commissioner Sclesky stated that they should be consistent. Each developed area should have consistent signage throughout.

Commissioner Whiting agreed with the consistency of the signs. She is not opposed to enlarging signs for readability because if you can't read them, this can cause traffic problems.

Commissioner Willson stated that when you drive into an area that has electronic signs that are not regulated, it is horrifying. Since they are dealing with an area that has conformity, this should follow with the signs. They should be able to regulate the electronic signs for intensity.

Commissioner Sclesky stated that the Walgreens sign at Dixie Highway and White Lake fits with the brick and existing sign.

Commissioner Willson stated that the more common they become, the less effective they become.

Commissioner Leddy stated that if a business has an approved sign, they can change the consistency without regulation.

Mr. Lewan stated that he will also bring some changes to temporary signs to the Commission.

**2. Joint meeting with Township Board – follow up discussion**

**a.) Master Plan Update – Approval and schedule**

**b.) Dixie Overlay Streamlining**

**c.) Economic Development Incentives**

**d.) Site Plan Process Improvement – Developer Packets & Checklists**

Mr. Lewan referred to the September 10<sup>th</sup>, 2013 memo to the Commission provided by Carlisle Wortman. There seemed to be a lot of discussion about having measurable goals in the Master Plan. He stated that he spoke to Dick Carlisle and after their discussion; they thought that a Strategic Plan would be beneficial. A strategic plan would follow a lot of the same steps as a Master Plan including public input and would result in a much more focused document. He stated that many communities do these as a matter of course as a part of their Master Plan, but most don't. He suggested a Phase I approach which would be rolled into the Master Plan. There would be a two phase approach including Dixie Highway implementation. He stated that he is anticipating four to six months for the first process and about the same for the second process. A typical Master Plan takes about a year and a half.

Commissioner Sclesky stated that he read the Master Plan. The residents of Springfield Township enjoy the rural aspect but they also have to focus on the Dixie Corridor. He asked if they wanted a Master Plan for the entire Township; how they separate a particular business area that they want to focus on, yet not detract from the rural aspect.

Mr. Lewan stated that it is done through a future land use map. An effective way to designate it is call it a Special Planning Area which has specific ideas and goals. They could allow a certain amount of development in particular area which helps to preserve the rural aspect in areas that they do not want development. If they have a growth plan for an area, they can direct developers toward this area.

Commissioner Hopper stated that because of the Master Plan that they have, they were able to preserve rural areas due to preserving open space areas, etc. The current Master Plan recognizes the rural aspect and he does not see any issues with it and considering new developments. They should keep the residential and rural area as it is. Development is moving here and they should be ready for it. He stated that he likes the Strategic Plan idea that emphasizes the goals and policies. The next step would be coordinated signs which can be done through an overlay district.

Commissioner Whiting asked what would be a measurable goal and how is it defined.

Mr. Lewan stated that one of the biggest tools in planning is zoning. If they have specific strategic policies and plans, they can develop a checklist instead of broad goals that are difficult to quantify. Years ago, they had an economic development plan which led to hiring a planner.

Chairperson Baker stated that they are looking for the Master Plan to serve two goals. It tells them what is their status, what is the status of the population as well as land use. The Master Plan states what they would like to happen. But now, they need to lay out a game plan to achieve specific goals. He also agreed with the two phased focus. He asked if the 6 month time frame takes into account both monthly meetings and sessions outside of those meetings.

Mr. Lewan stated that he thinks it can be done within the confines of the monthly meeting schedule.

Chairperson Baker reiterated that it seems as if the Commission agrees with the two phase approach. He asked if Mr. Lewan needed consent from the Commission.

Mr. Lewan answered that at this point he would work with Mr. Carlisle to develop a more detailed work plan.

Supervisor Walls suggested that they should develop a budget and a work plan and then the Township Board will look at that.

Mr. Lewan stated that he does not have a lot of material for the Dixie Overlay Streamlining, just some suggestions. It was suggested at the meeting that they make the application process easier and this is common in many communities. The goal is to look at the developer as more of a partner in the process. The goal is to provide very clear direction. He provided several documents describing the checklists and processes for Northfield Township. He also provided the Northfield Township Site plan manual which is a step by step manual for the site plan process. He also provided handouts describing Rezoning and Conditional Land Use processes for Northfield Township. These could be provided at the counter very easily and then the developer would have the information at hand. These process checklists can be modified for Springfield Township without much difficulty. This is one way that streamlining can take place. The other way that streamlining can take place is to take a look at the ordinance to see what isn't working and fix it.

Mr. Lewan provided model motions to the Commissioners. These could be simply modified for Springfield. These give you a broad outline of a motion and then numbers can add whatever they need to. This form helps the Planning Commission to not forget critical items in the motion. He stated that these can either be provided as a template and then the Commissioners can fill in the blanks or he can provide the full motion. The motion should be easily understandable and should not take an interpretation.

Commissioner Sclesky agreed with Mr. Lewan. He stated that he heard the same information at a planning conference. The packet should be easily available for any new developer and they come prepared for the meetings.

Commissioners agreed that the Northfield Township example is a valuable approach and important set of documents.

Commissioner Baker commented that the documents were user friendly and if they didn't answer a question, it gives enough information to find the answer. He asked if there was a timeline restriction of only having seven days to look at documents before a meeting. He stated that he feels he doesn't have enough time to review documents before a meeting.

Supervisor Walls stated that if Commissioner Baker isn't receiving the documents until 4 days before the meeting, something is wrong and needs to be corrected.

Commissioner Baker stated that he is speaking of the site plan documents that are delivered by mail.

Commissioner Hopper stated that he doesn't consider it a hardship to hold to deadlines and timelines.

Supervisor Walls stated that they do not have any ordinance language regarding timeline for receiving packets. If the Commissioners want them earlier, we will look at changing the timeline of the process.

Commissioners decided it was not practical to move up deadlines in order to mail packets earlier and instead considered an alternate method of distribution.

Commissioner Hopper stated that his recommendation is that they keep the motions very generic. It is infuriating for a developer to go into a meeting and having a commissioner read a motion that has already been done because it shows the developer that the Planning Commission relies too heavily on the Planner.

Commissioner Hines stated that she approved of the required posted signage for new developments that was suggested in the documents received.

Mr. Lewan stated that he would need to become more confident with the language and with the current Dixie Overlay District before he makes recommendations for streamlining the process.

Mr. Lewan stated that he also presented a memo from Dick Carlisle on the Economic Development Incentives to the Commissioners.

Supervisor Walls stated that he hoped that it would have better success rate than the former Industrial Development District. This was meant to be an incentive for businesses to move to Springfield but instead became an incentive for communities to compete with

each other and the businesses just moved around. He stated that with this new incentive, the community could more closely adjust it to meet the community's needs. For example, they could offer tax incentives to current businesses that want to expand or improve. They would have the ability to capture property taxes and this captured money can be used to make public improvements or it can be a straight property tax reduction. This is a short term plan and is only effective through December 2015. Some of these require approval through the County and they may only be able to capture the Township's taxes.

Mr. Lewan stated that his understanding is that it is supposed to help with older structures and blended and functionally obsolete buildings.

Commissioner Baker asked if it was site specific.

Mr. Lewan answered that it is a 3 acre minimum. If the Commercial Rehabilitation District is enacted prior to December 31, 2015, it is good for 10 years but nothing can be enacted after that date.

Commissioner Sclesky asked if they can get preapproval from the County.

Mr. Lewan answered that he did not know.

Commissioner Hines asked if this would require Township Board approval and asked how much the Planning Commission is involved.

Supervisor Walls stated that they would work together and Township Board would take action.

Commissioner Hines confirmed that it was just the taxes on the building.

Mr. Lewan responded yes.

Commissioner Whiting asked how this would affect, for example, the old Saturn dealership.

Mr. Lewan answered that they would first get a break on their taxes for ten years. The larger the property, the larger the break they would receive. There are some things that the business would have to prove in the paperwork to receive the benefit.

Commissioner Sclesky asked what the next step was for the Commission if this is something that they want to pursue.

Supervisor Walls stated that they would make a recommendation to the Township Board.

Commissioners discussed possible properties that would benefit from this incentive.

**Chairperson Baker moved to recommend to the Township Board that the Economic Development Incentive be given consideration by the Township Board to evaluate suitable sites and the Planning Commission will offer partnership to assist in identifying those locations and will work with the Planner to create a plan on how they would partner with Oakland County to ascertain whether or not this can go forward in part or in total. Seconded by Commissioner Leddy. Voted yes: Baker, Hines, Hopper, Leddy, Sclesky, Whiting Willson. Voted no: None. Absent: None. Motion Carried.**

Public Comment:

Supervisor Walls reviewed the work plan done by Carlisle Wortman for the combined parcels involving the Mills property. This document was provided to all Commissioners. It will be a conceptual plan but some ideas for the Dixie Overlay Streamlining may be a result of that plan. The 425 Plan will be placed on the Independence Township Board agenda so that they can schedule a Public Hearing. The 425 Plan will appear on the Springfield Township Board's October meeting agenda to schedule a Public Hearing. Following the Public Hearing, after 30 days if there is not a petition submitted by over 50% of the property owners, then the agreement can be signed. The Township is currently working on constructing a sidewalk connecting the sidewalk at Dixie and Davisburg Road signal with the already constructed sidewalk between King Road and Buscemi's. This will run across Buscemi's property and will be about 160 feet.

Other Business:

**1. Priority Task List**

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

Adjournment:

**Commissioner Hines moved to adjourn the meeting at 9:14 PM. Supported by Commissioner Whiting. Voted yes: Baker, Hines, Hopper, Leddy, Sclesky, Whiting Willson. Voted no: None. Absent: None. Motion Carried.**

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Erin A. Mattice, Recording Secretary