

Springfield Township
Planning Commission – Business Meeting
Minutes June 20, 2011

Call to Order: Chairman Commissioner Steckling called the June 20, 2011 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
Bill Leddy
John Steckling
Ruth Ann Hines
Beverly Shaver
Neil Willson

Commissioners Absent

Roger Lamont

Staff Present

Mike Trout, Supervisor
Chris Benedict, Assistant-Supervisor's Office

Consultants Present

Brian Oppmann, Planner

Approval of Agenda: Approved as presented.

Public Comment: None.

Consent Agenda: Minutes of the May 16, 2011 meeting.

Commissioner Baker moved to approve the minutes of the April 18, 2011 with the following change, page #9, change "Commission" to "Commissioner." Support by Commissioner Willson. Voted yes: Leddy, Steckling, Baker, Shaver, Willson, Hines. Voted no: None. Absent: Lamont. Motion Carried.

Public Hearing: None.

New Business: None.

Old Business:

1. Sign ordinance-proposal and overview.

Chairperson Steckling stated that the Commissioners have received a copy of the revised sign ordinance and they have also received a copy of the consent judgment for Dixie/Davisburg Market. He stated that they had asked the business people to give the dimensions of their signs and the distance from the center line since this is the criteria that they are considering. He stated that he received this information from Calvin Bordine and he has it available for the commissioners to look at. A few definitions have been

changed since the last meeting and some items changed in the criteria section so that there were allowances based on the property having over a certain amount of frontage.

Supervisor Trout stated that all of the changes up to this date have been incorporated and the changes to the schedule were to allow the additional signage for set back and lot frontage.

Chairperson Steckling stated the first change was in the definition section under change of use; what would it take to bring a sign into conformance. He stated the next change was on ground signs and they had talked about one ground sign permitted per zoning lot. He thinks that this section needs more clarity. This was in reference to Lowrie's site where they have 3 businesses on one lot and one curb cut and he stated that they want to minimize curb cuts. He questioned the definition of a shopping center. Is Lowrie's called a shopping center? He wanted to insure consistency on who gains ownership of the signs and is it per lot, or what is the criteria. The next change was on page 8 where the commission added the 15% allowable side of the sign area that would be increased if you were over 300 linear foot. He would add approximately another 15% for building frontage over 100 feet and he would also add a height increase for something over a certain number of feet. He looked at Bordine's sign in comparison to the length of his lot and he thinks that it is small and it could be bigger and it would not be out of proportion. He stated to the top of the pole it is 17 feet and the highest allowed in this ordinance is 10 feet. When you have such a large frontage area, it is possible to have such a large sign and have it still be in proportion. He stated that they had talked about having a certain total allowance to be broken up into different types of signage depending on need; he didn't see this in the ordinance.

Chris Benedict stated that under building signs, they have the same provisions as under ground signs. He stated that this section has not changed. The Commission talked last month about adding banners, however this was changed.

Chairperson Steckling stated that when he looks at the consent judgment for the Dixie Davisburg Market, they have everything, roof signs, and ground signs and approved pennant signs on the poles. He specifically asked the car dealers about the flagpole banners and the periodically changing oil change specials. On page 15, if a property is vacant, you must bring the sign up to conformance if the building is reoccupied after a vacancy of 180 days or more. Some of these changes are incorporated in the new format.

Supervisor Trout stated that the Commission needs to come to an agreement on the size, height and allowable percentages so it is possible to keep going. They need to get more specific on size.

Commissioner Willson asked if they were to go back to the allowable table of size height, what number makes sense.

Chairperson Steckling stated that according to the table, the maximum height is 10 feet with 4 travel lanes with median or center turn lane. He stated that the Bordines sign is 17

feet high. The maximum area per side on the chart is 70 square feet. He stated you could modify the 70 and go up to 225 feet. He stated that it says, "total signage area" and in the first part says per side. He isn't sure if the totals on the chart include both sides. He stated then that the total is 112 square feet. He stated that he asked Calvin Bordine if there were no rules, what numbers he would propose. His reply was much like the maximum allowance on this ordinance. If you could add the electronic messaging sign in there too, this would cover a lot of ground. He stated that Mr. Bordine felt that the eye level was important; it has to be a certain height to catch a motorist's attention.

Commissioner Baker asked if the increase that Chairperson Steckling was talking about was going up vertically.

Chairperson Steckling stated yes.

Commissioner Shaver stated that some of the businesses on Dixie cannot be seen from I-75. She stated that a taller sign might help them. She stated that she liked the comment, we should have bigger signs, but less signs from last month. She stated that it would help to have taller signs for better recognition.

Chairperson Steckling stated that they could do this; they just have to figure out a formula. They need to determine the numbers for height, square footage and what to do with multiple businesses on a property.

Commissioner Hines asked why a business who has a liquor license gets more window signage. She stated that grocery store or an office is not allowed window signage.

Supervisor Trout stated that the liquor stores tend to have more advertising. He stated that they tried to provide more window signage for a situation that already exists. He stated that they recognized the fact that every place that sells liquor has windows that are plastered with signage. There is a need to control it. He stated that this was a proposition, but was open for change. He stated that the specials on beer and wine are continually changing.

Chairperson Steckling stated that the entire ordinance was on the table for discussion. He stated that as Supervisor Trout said, they were trying to accommodate their perceived needs.

Commissioner Hines stated that the old Curves business wanted window signage and it was not allowed; why is their business not as important as the liquor store. She stated that she is not in favor of the increase of window signage.

Commissioner Leddy concurred. He stated that he does not think anyone looks at the price of the liquor as they drive by. Patrons can see the sale prices in the store.

Commissioners concurred that all business should have the same window signage allowance. Liquor stores should not have an increased amount.

Commissioner Baker stated that the consent judgment stands apart.

Commissioner Leddy stated that in some of the changes the “square feet” was left off. It was just stated as a number. He stated that if it was reasonable where Bordines sign was, maybe they do not need to increase it to 75 feet from the center.

Commissioner Hines stated that on page 7, it says that the support structure for a ground sign shall not exceed 25% of the maximum permissible area of the sign measured by and including the elevation. She asked for further explanation.

Commissioner Leddy stated that if you have a sign with a stone support structure, it is part of the decorative part of the sign, but it is not including the signage.

Commissioners concurred that this rule keeps the signs in proportion.

Commissioner Leddy stated that they have not considered the pathways in the set back amounts and whether or not there should be a set back from the pathway designated. He stated that there should be a standard. Signs should not be in the way of a person coming down the pathway on a bike, it should not limit vision.

Commissioner Willson stated that the pathways were going in the road right of way.

Supervisor Trout stated that this doesn't require property acquisition.

Chairperson Steckling asked the commissioners for some firm numbers and percentages. He looked at page 8, maximum sign height and size and also page 9, speed limit. Added to this was the 15% increase for each 300 linear feet of frontage with a maximum. He stated that he does not know what the linear frontage of Bordines is, but it seems as though he would be at the maximum for sign frontage. If the maximum is 225 square feet, Bordines would be over. The height is definitely over.

Commissioner Leddy stated that he is in favor of including some increases in height based on road frontage.

Chairperson Steckling asked Mr. Oppmann for suggestions.

Mr. Oppmann would have to review it and think about how it would work proportionately. He would look at some basic sample sizes of signs.

Chairperson Steckling asked the Commissioners if they liked the amounts for the height as stated in the ordinance, or if they needed to be amended.

Commissioners concurred that they would like Mr. Oppmann to give sample increased allowances for height.

Mr. Oppmann stated that you should make height allowances to make the signs proportional.

Chairperson Steckling stated that there were two criteria to be considered, road frontage or building frontage. He stated that the first revision was affected by road frontage.

Commissioner Shaver stated that building frontage would be dependent on planning. She stated that the road frontage would be more consistent.

Commissioner Hines questioned the meaning of additional ground signage at a secondary entrance. She asked if this was a secondary curb cut or a secondary road.

Chairperson Steckling stated that this was a problem. Lowries has one with 3 businesses and Kroger has 2 for multiple buildings. This is an issue.

Commissioner Leddy stated that he would want to go with an increase in road frontage, if it was on a corner. For example, if you had an entrance from 2 different roads then you would be allowed 2 signs. He is in favor of one sign accommodating numerous businesses at the main entrance.

Commissioner Baker stated that if there was a free-standing out building, like the Citizens bank at Kroger, separate units would be allowed a separate sign.

Commissioner Shaver stated that each strip would have their own sign. For example, the bank would have their own and the other part of the plaza would have their own.

Commissioner Baker clarified that it was not per tenant, it was per building.

Supervisor Trout stated that Lowries really needs extra signage. He also stated that there are two signs.

Commissioner Hines stated if that needed further clarification on the secondary entrance. This is on page 6, A.1.

Commissioner Willson asked how they wanted it to read.

Chairperson Steckling stated one ground sign per free standing building.

Commissioner Hines stated that this needs clarification that it is a secondary entrance on another street.

Commissioner Leddy concurred. He doesn't know that you need a separate ground sign for each building, maybe each building that has frontage on the street.

Chairperson Steckling stated that that is what they were talking about for example Kroger, one sign for the Kroger building and one for the out building closest to Dixie

Highway. He wondered if they wanted to say that the second sign is only permitted on a secondary entrance if it on another road.

Commissioner Shaver asked if you were on a corner lot, would you automatically get two signs.

Commissioner Leddy stated that it says this in the next paragraph, only this deals with residence.

Commissioners have a discussion about Dixie Davisburg market signage.

Commissioner Hines stated that on page 6, it makes reference to paragraph nine, but paragraph nine is window signs. She believes that this should be ten, temporary signs. She stated on page 13, political signs, we require that in non-residential districts signage has to be removed in 15 days. She questioned why this did not apply to all districts. This implies that they can stay on a residential piece of property forever.

Chris Benedict stated that we based this section on information from Greg Need. Any time there are restrictions on residential signs, it is looked at as a first amendment issue. He stated that this could be forwarded to Greg Need for his further review.

Commissioner Leddy asked if they were in violation in prior years after elections when the old signs were picked up.

Mr. Oppmann stated that there is a lot of case law on political signage and it is reviewed every couple of years. He stated that it was good to check with the attorney because there are changes that he will be aware of.

Commissioner Hines stated that she thinks that it should say that political signs should be removed within 15 days of the election.

Supervisor Trout stated that this part of the ordinance was written with Greg's consent.

Commissioners concur that Greg Need should draft this section.

Commissioner Hines stated that on page 15, design and construction maintenance, a., it states that signs described in subsection 9 and window signs. She stated that she is confused because subsection 9 is window signs. She wondered if this was referring to a different subsection.

Chairperson Steckling stated that it would make sense if it was subsection #10, temporary signs.

Chris Benedict stated that it refers to projecting signs.

Commissioner Hines asked if it should say, except for window signs. She stated that they should strike that section. She is in favor of increasing the height of the signs.

Commissioner Shaver stated that she would like to see a width to depth ratio description.

Chairperson Steckling stated that have not reviewed the proportions.

Commissioners agreed that it did appear in the ordinance; 3:1 was the ratio.

Chairperson Steckling asked for help adjusting the height, much like the square footage adjustment. He stated that one point that is not addressed is the unused allocation of signage.

Commissioner Leddy stated that he liked it the way it is, and he feels banners are temporary signs.

Chairperson Steckling stated that the car dealerships use the banners.

Commissioner Baker stated that he wondered how much square footage someone could bank based on the fact that they first get the maximum ground sign.

Chairperson Steckling stated that since the Dixie Davisburg Market has light pole signs, maybe we should put these in a separate category. He stated that these are in the community, so either we approve it and regulate it, or it will be a temporary sign and you would need to get a permit. He stated that it is in the consent judgment. He stated that it is 2 foot by 6.5 foot on each of the banners, per side.

Commissioner Baker stated that he recognizes that we have a consent judgment but he is not willing to use this as the standard to incorporate all of these provisions around the rest of the Township.

Chairperson Steckling stated that if you were a business down the street and you are told no, you can't put up the banners, they could sue the Township and get what they want. He suggested that it might be a better solution to control it and write it in from the beginning.

Commissioner Baker stated that the Township could be sued regardless of what they write.

Chairperson Steckling agreed.

Commissioner Baker stated that he is open to the concept of reallocation of square footage. Different businesses would have different needs based on where they were located and what kind of business they are running.

Commissioner Shaver stated that if Dixie Baptist were ever to move and a large development comes in, they are going to want signs that you can see from I-75. This is something that we will see again.

Commissioner Hines asked what Szott Ford used. They have a unique situation and it would be interesting to see what they have. She isn't opposed to having a sign allocation and the businesses use it how they want to.

Chairperson Steckling stated that the square footages that they have allocated will cover the pole signs and banners.

Commissioner Hines asked Mr. Oppmann what would be a good size sign that would be allowable for the Dixie Baptist property.

Mr. Oppmann stated that if a company came in, they would want something approximately 50 feet tall.

Commissioner Hines asked about the Kroger property, what size would be appropriate.

Mr. Oppmann stated that no higher than 12 or 16 feet.

Commissioner Hines asked how big of a sign he would suggest.

Mr. Oppmann stated that probably 150 to 200 square feet. He stated that the Commission should determine if they were comfortable with 10 feet high signs.

Commissioner Leddy stated that the banners do not meet the design standards for signs. What is to be done about a banner that gets ragged?

Chairperson Steckling asked what they do about a building sign that gets ragged. They have no control over it. He asked the Commissioners what they wanted to do about banners on light poles. He stated that electronic signs are expensive, but their signage foot print will be reduced because of it. It will get the message across and keep the square footage down to a minimum.

Mr. Oppmann stated that these types of signs have to be regulated.

Chairperson Steckling asked Mr. Oppmann if he was comfortable with the language that was in the draft regarding electronic signage.

Mr. Oppmann stated that the only one that he had a concern with was the distance between 2 businesses with electronic signs. He stated that this has been taken out. He stated that there are many studies exploring the display time and the speed of the message. He stated that you have to pick a number of seconds and stick with it. He stated that 25 seconds seems to be too much time, he would choose something closer to 30 seconds to a minute.

Chairperson Shaver asked about brightness.

Mr. Oppmann stated that he had given Chris Benedict some language regarding this. You need to pick a unit of measurement that you can read with a light meter. He stated that this has been changed.

Chairperson Steckling asked the Commissioners about their viewpoints about banners. He felt that Commissioner Baker thinks that it should be allocated from the total square footage. He felt that Commissioner Leddy does not care for them at all.

Commissioner Willson stated that he does not care for them.

Commissioner Hines stated that she is not opposed to them.

Commissioner Shaver agreed with Commissioner Baker.

Supervisor Trout stated that the Dixie Davisburg Market site would have supported two ground signs. The way that the Township Board looked at it was that they could have had 2 ground signs, and they allocated the flag pole banners because it was a part of the total signage allocation allowed. He stated that there was language added to let signage be affixed to light poles specifically, not rocks and trees. He stated that Deeby Dodge has taken all of theirs down.

Commissioner Leddy stated that there should be language to force them to keep their banners in decent condition.

Commissioner Hines stated that this would be under design, construction and maintenance.

Chairperson Steckling stated that this language could be added.

Commissioner Leddy stated that it stated that the electronic signs had to be 500 feet from the nearest residence. He didn't know if this was reasonable or not.

Chairperson Steckling stated that this came up when they considered 500 feet in what direction. He stated that Lavon by the Nissan dealership is behind the business.

Mr. Oppmann stated that he would draw a straight line on a site plan to the nearest lot line. He stated 500 feet may be too much. Also, the sign would only allowed to be turned on during hours of operation, especially if they are adjacent to a residential property.

Chairperson Steckling asked how they should address proximity.

Commissioner Leddy stated that it could be directional.

Commissioner Hines asked if they should change the word permitted to “no sign shall be visible.”

Mr. Oppmann stated that this is probably a way to fix it even though 500 feet is a large distance.

Commissioner Leddy stated that this is too far.

Mr. Oppmann stated that anything over 100 feet is not going to impact a residence at all, especially if you mandate that it be turned off at night.

Commissioner Leddy stated that Kroger could be open all night.

Mr. Oppmann stated that he could provide language to fix the 24 hour situation.

Commissioner Baker stated that the business owner goes to a great expense to purchase a sign. He asked if there were some limitations placed on the lux value to allow it to be really visible at night. He stated that the large signs on I-275 do not seem as if they are hurtful to the eyes. He stated that turning it off when the business closes may be too excessive, and hopefully with the limitations on lux value this would allow the business owner to maintain it until a later hour.

Commissioner Leddy stated that there are limitations on parking lot lights so they shine downward. He suggested having limitations on electronic signs so you could only see them from the roadway.

Commissioner Baker stated that this might take some light meter measurements at the edge of the property and determine what those numbers should be.

Mr. Oppmann stated that during the day, the electronic sign is extremely bright since it has to compete with daylight and at night, it actually dims. He stated that they are built to be read at anything up to a 90 degree angle.

Chairperson Steckling asked Mr. Oppmann to suggested language to deal with the electronic signs.

Chris Benedict stated that Greg Kazmierski wanted to know what data the Commission is looking for regarding the signs.

Commissioner Baker asked for sign height and for a listing of additional signage that they weren't aware of. Also, how far from the center line was information they needed.

Commissioner Leddy stated that the Nissan sign was very large sitting next to the expressway.

Commissioner Shaver asked about the elevation of the ground sign.

Commissioners concurred that this was fixed on page 10, b.

Chairperson Steckling stated that they would look at this again next month with Chris and Brian's changes.

2. Article XI-O-S-Office Service-discussion regarding adding churches as an allowable use.

Supervisor Trout stated that if the Commission liked where it was placed, he could draft amendment language for next month. It was added as a special condition so they could be looked at on a case by case basis.

Commissioners agreed that they would look at language next month.

3. Zoning Ordinance revision – Definition of family.

Chairperson Steckling stated that last month the Commission changed the number from six to four. He stated that this has been reviewed by counsel and approved by the Township Board.

Supervisor Trout stated that this was brought up through the codification process.

Mr. Oppmann stated that this came from Greg Need. He stated that this is based on the Ann Arbor model. He spoke to the Clerk about this and this is the direction that the Township wants to go with this. As the codification goes forward, there will be other things that need to be cleaned up.

Chairperson Steckling stated normally this would be set for public hearing, but due to publication cost, he wondered if they should hold off until they could consider something else with it.

Mr. Oppmann stated that they could do both #2 and #3 in the same notice. He stated that he wasn't aware that there was a sense of urgency.

Supervisor Trout stated that if they were comfortable with it as is, the Township Board would go with their comments when they approve the whole Ordinance and hold the public hearings then.

Mr. Oppmann stated that they still had to hold the public hearings at the Planning Commission level.

Supervisor Trout stated that there will be a lot of changes when the ordinance is codified.

Chairperson Steckling stated that it would still go through the Planning Commission by law.

Mr. Oppmann stated that all of the cross references will change. He stated he didn't know why they couldn't just have a public hearing and adopt it into the current ordinance. Mr. Oppmann stated that he would talk to the Clerk about this.

Chairperson Steckling stated that they should hold off until the sign ordinance is ready for public hearing to do all at once.

Commissioners concurred.

Other Business:

1. Priority Task List

Commissioners went through the priority task list updated it as needed.

Public Comment:

Scott Hakim, 9749 Dixie Highway, Suite B, Clarkston, Manager of the Verizon store stated that he doesn't feel like he has enough signage for his building. It has very limited visibility to Dixie Highway. He stated that he loves the city and wanted to stay a part of it and grow and he needs insight as to what is going to happen to existing signage.

Chairperson Steckling stated that the items that are being talked about tonight are amendments to the existing ordinance. He stated that he noticed that the Verizon store has banners and they are against ordinance. The goal is to be more business friendly, but they also want to keep it tasteful and respectful. He stated that Mr. Hakim should look at the current ordinance to see what is allowed. He stated that he welcomes Mr. Hakim's input.

Chairperson Steckling stated that on behalf of himself and the Planning Commission, they hate to see Supervisor Trout go but they wish him all the best on his next endeavor.

Supervisor Trout stated that they have all served the Township very well. He thanked the Commission for all of the support that he has been given. He can tell that the Commissioners are prepared as well as Mr. Oppmann. He stated that these things that they are working on are important things that will continue to move forward.

Adjournment:

Commissioner Hines made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 8:57 pm. Supported by Commissioner Shaver. Voted yes: Leddy, Steckling, Baker, Hines, Shaver, Willson. Voted no: None. Absent: Lamont. Motion Carried.

Erin Mattice, Recording Secretary