

Gregory R. Baroni, Supervisor
Terry Lilley, Clerk
Forrest Jay Brendel, Treasurer



Trustees
Carol J. Burkard
Michael Powell
Todd T. Birkle
David Lewsley

WHITE LAKE TOWNSHIP

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WHITE LAKE TOWNSHIP JOINT MEETING BETWEEN THE TOWNSHIP BOARD AND PLANNING COMMISSION

7525 Highland Road
White Lake, MI 48383
June 16, 2011 @ 7:00 p.m.

Supervisor Baroni called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. and led the Pledge of Allegiance. Roll was called: Ms. Burkard was absent from the Township Board.

ROLL CALL: Steve Anderson, Chairperson
Todd Birkle, Board Liaison
Steve Martinko, Vice Chairperson
Pefer Meagher, Secretary
William Pierson
Gail Novak-Phelps
Beverly Spoor
Stan Woodhouse

TOWNSHIP BOARD
Greg Baroni, Supervisor
Terry Lilley, Clerk
Jay Brendel, Treasurer
Mike Powell, Trustee
Todd Birkle, Trustee
Carol Burkard, Trustee – **Absent**
David Lewsley, Trustee - **Absent**

Also Present: Sean O'Neil, AICP, Planning Director
Jason Iacoangeli, Staff Planner
David Birchler, Township Consultant
Jill Bahm, Birchler Arroyo
Kristin Goetze, Township Engineer
Lynn Lindon, Recording Secretary

Visitors: 4

Approval of Agenda

Ms. Phelps moved to approve the agenda as presented. Ms. Spoor supported and the MOTION CARRIED with a voice vote. (12 yes votes)

Approval of Minutes

- May 19, 2011

Mr. Birkle moved to approve the minutes of May 19, 2011 as submitted. Mr. Martinko supported and the MOTION CARRIED with a voice vote. (8 yes votes)

Call to the Public (for items not on the agenda)

Supervisor Baroni opened the discussion for public comment on items not listed on the agenda, but none was offered.

Continuing Business:

- a. Review Draft of the White Lake Township Master Plan

Mr. Birchler provided an overview of the planning process on how they got to this point with the Master Plan updates. They are looking for Township Board approval in order to send this document to the neighboring communities.

He gave a Powerpoint presentation on the vision of White Lake Township becoming a leader in the area of sustainability and wanting to be a community that encourages development to follow the path. With the economic downturn over the last few years, the focus broadened at that point. The concept is to sustain the township as a community in the foreseeable future with growth, economic development, etc.

Mr. Birchler indicated that residents were able to follow the plan on the website (helpwhitelakeplan.info) and offer input through surveys and public forums. Community visioning started with a large public input process and each update to the Master Plan has a significant element from the residents.

The plan has been cognizant of two planning concepts: Sustainability and Michigan's Economy. We are striving for a balance between various elements of economy; environment, and community which are all inter-related with each other as they affect each other.

Mr. Birchler reviewed the "old" economy versus the "new" economy in Michigan. This has driven our economy for a number of years causing the downturn. Being rich in talent and ideas and attracting talented, educated people is key at this point.

Mr. Powell questioned whether the old ideas are now passé and no longer valid. Mr. Birchler felt what is passé is that we will only be racing to the bottom if we follow the old approach by giving tax breaks, free utility hookups, etc. and this wouldn't help support local property values. The township needs to find a way to bring our children and grandchildren back to Michigan.

Mr. Powell noted that the current administration in Michigan recognizes that you have to make it economically feasible for developers and we have to realize there are realities that have to be entertained. Mr. Birchler indicated that the Governor believes in bringing the tax structures down since those programs did not result in the job growth they were supposed to result in.

White Lake Township has to think regionally. Not every place within a region must be attractive to knowledge workers, but every place must be a quality place to attract and retain people and jobs in the future.

White Lake Township can adapt through placemaking activities; improving food and entertainment options downtown; and increasing intensity of use and density in small towns.

Residents were asked what is working and not working in the township. The residents felt what was working is the natural features, recreation, open space, utility systems, streets and roads and shopping choices. What they felt needed work is arts and culture, quality food establishments, mixed-use housing, utility connection fees, transportation options, complete streets, and good jobs for young adults.

Ms. Bahm presented on the 4 Area Plans that some of the primary emphasis should be on in the coming years. They looked at the goals and objectives from 5 years ago and a lot of things are still important to the community.

The Four Towns Area consists of Commerce, Waterford, West Bloomfield and White Lake. This is a big space without iconic spaces to identify with. They talked about revitalizing a commercial strip with a strong pedestrian orientation, a mix of uses, in-town style residential condos, access management to relieve congestion, landscaping to soften the streetscape, sidewalk connectivity, and a structure of public art to define the corners. It was noted that this type of development is happening in many places around the country.

The board members reviewed a video of the existing area and what it could be.

Mr. Powell indicated that Commerce Township has an overlay and Union Lake zoning category and he questioned whether White Lake Township has this ability in our ordinance and whether the Planning Commission should work with other Planning Commission's to set up subgroups to enhance the entire

area. Ms. Bahm responded that White Lake's Planning Commission has discussed this and it seems like a good opportunity.

The Lakes Town Center Area was reviewed and defined as "a town within a town" with a Civic Center (township offices, public safety, library), places to live, work and shop, with community gathering places. The new development that has taken place there is starting to fill that role as an opportunity to generate other activities. A town square could be an informal place to hang out, but flexible enough for an art fair or farmer's market.

They envision entrepreneurial jobs as an interesting change to focus on helping people by giving them an opportunity to succeed.

Mr. O'Neil referenced the Penney's development as one of the more prime sites for development on M-59. He noted this could easily grow across Elizabeth Lake as well and connect everything.

The Pontiac Lake Gateway Area would allow an opportunity to showcase White Lake Township as a 4-seasons playground. Ideas are to enhance the entry into the township by creating spaces for people and adding art and signage.

This could also create an identity opportunity with the potential for a hotel/conference center, and landmark art or signage. This is not unlike some development on M-59, but bringing this closer to the road would give a different feel and impress upon people the amenities of White Lake.

Mr. Powell feels we have to do a better job at promoting this. At this point, White Lake Township hasn't been ready in the eyes of the developer yet. Ms. Bahm agreed that this is important for the residents and the future of the township. This won't happen on its own and we have to promote it by possibly bringing the development community out here and take them on a tour. She referenced the City of Ferndale, who has done a good job promoting its amenities.

The Elizabeth/Union Lake Neighborhood Area Plan is designed to be smaller in scale with a lower density. They envision an access road or back street and the spaces between the buildings fit more with the character of the area.

The question is how to move these concepts to reality. Mr. Birchler indicated they are proposing a strategy for sustainable development that includes at least 6 elements: (1) Master Plan Implementation Matrix; (2) a Framework for the Lakes Town Center; (3) New Zoning Districts to Accommodate New Development; (4) an Economic Development Strategy; (5) Sustainable Development Incentives; and (6) Benchmarks and Annual Assessment of Progress.

Mr. Birchler reviewed the action strategies for each of the 4 focus areas.

Mr. Powell stated that he likes the plans of action, however, in the past we have demanded the best of the developers, but we have a different problem today. We have to be very wise as to how we entice these people in. The township may have to allow some amenities to lag behind on the initial development by allowing for phasing.

Mr. Birchler responded that some of the public realm amenities might be something the township could contribute as a community, i.e., benches, lighting, etc. and we should invest in our own infrastructure rather than giving tax breaks to come in.

An expedited/streamlined review process, committee/administrative approval, density bonus, building height/story bonus, a reduction or waiver of fees, and reduction of utility connection charges are examples of sustainable development.

Mr. O'Neil noted that over the last few years, the township has done something by bringing users on line and this is a continuation of that. There have been zoning amendments and the review process has been streamlined. This is a compliment to the community that there is cohesiveness between the Township Board and the Planning commission. This initiative would be taking the next step by being more aggressive.

Ms. Phelps questioned why the Bogie Lake/M-59 wasn't considered for enhancement. Mr. O'Neil responded that there is really only one corner that's prime for development. The areas studied were more distressed.

Mr. Birchler noted that we're not trying to push anything out or turn something into something its not. Ms. Phelps stated that the Planning Commission went through this process 4-5 years ago. She knows the idea of a Master Plan, but she questioned where we go from here. Ms. Spoor responded that we have to have development incentives.

Mr. Birchler added that the first steps would be to revamp zoning and have an economic development strategy in place. When a developer understands mixed use, he knows he will be selling office space, residential, etc. This is the wave of the future right now in the industry. We have to do an honest annual assessment and a substantive review of policy effectiveness every 5 years.

Mr. Anderson referenced the new generation, "the millennials", or young people that will out number the baby boomers in the next 10 years. He mentioned IBM as not being able to have the work environment to support their activities. We can look at this relating to White Lake Township and what will happen with the next generation.

Mr. Birchler agreed and feels the township has to be open and friendly to that development as it would be driven by amenities. The younger generation is looking for places to live, work and play.

Ms. Phelps feels we are going in the wrong direction with some of this. She understands going for the new generation, but a mass transit system would only be about little pinpoint spots within the township.

Mr. Martinko feels this is more about quality and not quantity. Mr. Birchler added that the existing little Midwestern cities like Northville and Plymouth are not as dense as what we are talking about. This is why it will work. You'll get density on a scale that will support it. We have to begin to reach out and make those connections. We want to make it clear that White Lake Township is attractive and will do everything in its power to make that happen here.

Mr. Birkle agrees with all the comments, however, the idea is to stimulate the owner of the property to want to do something different. He questioned what could do this would be to show something creative in the Master Plan as something that can be marketed.

Both Mr. Birkle and Mr. Brendel feel we should push the vacant corner at M-59 and Elizabeth Lake Roads. Mr. Powell agreed that we have to do something with our ordinance to make it easier to be redeveloped if something happens.

Mr. Powell offered the suggestion of having a subcommittee. Mr. Birchler agreed that a working committee should be put together to determine high and low priorities after the plan has been through a public hearing.

Ms. Spoor noted that great ideas seem to die. We had this same discussion a year ago. We have what we need, but we now need a path on how to get from Point A to Point B.

Mr. Lilley indicated that this is not much different from what was talked about in the 90's. When we went through the process, the major goal was to create the ordinance and make it a reality. There was established criteria and the vision was shared with the developer. He doesn't want to see a bunch of concepts created. He'd like to concentrate on the Town Center Area, without devaluing the property in the area. The reality of the possibility of a township hall, etc. is ideal for that site particularly on the south side of the property.

Mr. Birchler noted that he would show the Clear Zoning concept again at the next board meeting and an ordinance he did for Lathrup Village that creates the form zone that allows the mixed use to happen.

Mr. Martinko stated that by setting the tone with clear vision to all developers would allow them to see the trend get stronger. Setting out materials on line with the Master Plan visible to developers would improve

communication. We are fully committed to making this a reality and he personally wouldn't want to focus all the effort on one specific area of the township.

Mr. O'Neil suggested laying out a plan that forecasts what the township wants to see. Saying no would stunt economic growth. The Master Plan now has to mean something and has to have real strategies that can be implemented.

Planning Consultant's Report

Mr. Birchler had nothing further to add.

Director's Report

Mr. O'Neil will add this item to the next board meeting agenda for a formal motion by the board to allow sending this document to the adjacent communities.

Communications:

Next meeting dates:

- Regular Meeting – July 7, 2011
- Regular Meeting – July 21, 2011

Adjournment

Mr. Brendel moved to adjourn the meeting at 9:06 p.m. Mr. Birkle supported and the MOTION CARRIED with a unanimous voice vote. (12 yes votes)