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WHITE LAKE TOWNSHIP

7525 Highland Road • White Lake, Michigan 48383-2900 • (248) 698-3300 • www.whitelaketwp.com

WHITE LAKE TOWNSHIP PLANNING COMMISSION

Regular Meeting
7525 Highland Road
White Lake, MI 48386
April 21, 2011 @ 7:00 p.m.

Mr. Anderson called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. and led the Pledge of Allegiance. Roll was called: Ms. Spoor was excused.

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

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

Visitors: 3

Approval of Agenda

Mr. O'Neil requested to add under Other Business, Item 2 - Discussion on Rezoning Township Property.

Mr. Anderson indicated that "Liaison Report" was permanently added to the agenda format to allow better communication between with the other township committees.

Ms. Novak-Phelps moved to approve the agenda as amended. Mr. Birkle supported and the MOTION CARRIED with a voice vote. (8 yes votes)

Approval of Minutes

- March 17, 2011

Mr. Woodhouse moved to approve the minutes of March 17, 2011 as amended. Mr. Martinko supported and the MOTION CARRIED with a voice vote. (8 yes votes)

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

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

Old Business:

a. **White Lake Township Master Plan, Review of Area Plans**

Mr. Birchler gave a brief slide presentation to review the focus areas within the township that they have been working on.

Topics for discussion will cover the Town Center Area, the Pontiac Lake Gateway, and the Elizabeth Lake/Union Lake Road intersection.

Ms. Bahm stated they have looked at 3 different areas of the township. They recognize the big picture and there are certain parts of the community that need more attention and other areas where there are opportunities to move forward.

With regard to the Town Center area, or town within a township, people are looking for a core of the community where they can go for mixed uses, and a place that would provide an identity for the township. This may develop into multi-story, mixed-use buildings, with a streetscape, etc. In addition, the town square could be used for art fairs, festivals, etc. There is room to do other things like rain gardens to maintain storm water run-off. She referenced Michigan Avenue in Ypsilanti.

Over time, there would be opportunity to have a parking lot and expansion area, and there was previous discussion on promoting this area as an institution of higher learning or something related to things that are happening right now.

Mr. Birchler offered that they have focused this area of the Master Plan on the topic of sustainability. The challenges of the economy require that the township look at sustainability differently. Michigan is the only state in the union that lost population and the state can't have economic growth if it is losing population. Many other states are still benefiting from economic growth because their population is growing.

The goal is to make White Lake Township a place where people want to come back to Michigan. The township needs to make sure that what people want is available to them in White Lake. The Town Center will create a "happening" place with mixed uses. Times are changing and White Lake Township needs to adapt to those changing needs.

Mr. Meagher questioned what the traits were that are drawing people to other areas. Mr. Birchler responded that people are looking for a place where they can live, work and play. This could involve transit, proximity to sporting venues, and denser housing to name a few. More work will be done to identify those characteristics. Mr. Birchler is currently working on a survey for HR Directors in the area to provide additional input.

Ms. Bahm added that they are not talking about turning White Lake Township into something it's not. People want options and certain amenities nearby. This area is aging and as people are getting older, they may want to downsize and eliminate the need for driving. They can be in a place where they can walk around more, stay with friends, and continue with the same church, store, etc. The bounty of lakes and state parks could be very attractive to all age groups.

Mr. Martinko feels this is good information and identity is a key issue. Activities, nightlife, restaurants, and recreation are all needed to enhance the area. He also referenced equestrian schooling and pathways. If the township is going to promote this, it needs to show its plan. He referenced Hill Road as being a good spot for this type of development and suggested a workshop to discuss ways to communicate the hopes and dreams.

Mr. Birchler indicated the next phase of the process is to talk about implementation, which can be done in an informal workgroup situation. Ms. Bahm added they have identified a few options on what to put into an action plan. There are many things to do to jumpstart this within a development community. Mr. Birchler recommended talking with the Township Board through a joint meeting to present some of these ideas.

Mr. O'Neil noted that the Township Board is receptive. An idea for discussion is to brainstorm on how to come up with a "super committee" comprised of a few commissioners and a few Board members.

Mr. Birkle feels enhancements across the road from the Town Center might stimulate more development to the Center area. He stated he also likes the property at Hill Road.

Mr. Birchler indicated they are trying to avoid spreading things out, but the property on Hill Road would be good for an institution of some sort. The Town Center area is centrally located and equally accessible to the residents. From Mr. Birchler's perspective, the village square area is the best spot for a Town Center, plus it is within the sewer district.

Ms. Bahm continued her presentation by addressing the eastern gateway on Pontiac Lake that has a shared border with Waterford Township. There are several contributing things that could make this an attractive area, such as a conference center or restaurant, with a pathway in front of the road.

With regard to Elizabeth Lake/Union Lake area, there are various uses in the area that don't seem to serve the immediate area. Eliminating driveways and servicing from the back are ideas for enhancement. The development pattern would be single to 2 story buildings. The area is not as dense, but the spaces in between buildings would define what is going on.

Mr. Birkle expressed concern that there is a hinderance of doing business in White Lake. Shared water/sewer with Commerce Township has been a burden on business owners. Commerce Township's tap fees are more that White Lake Township's and there is a huge overhead to overcome.

Mr. O'Neil noted that Charlie Dunn is the new township attorney handling the sewer. Commerce Township needs to be made aware that when White Lake Township's economic development is stunted, so is theirs. This has been a constant issue with fees.

Mr. Birchler offered two options: (1) open dialogue with Commerce to address ways to jumpstart development; and (2) is there any other potential service? Ms. Goetze stated a potential service would have to go through Pontiac to Detroit, but there is an alternative. It would make sense to look at other options.

Ms. Goetze added that a rate study would have to be done for there to be an opportunity for a larger balance in the sewer fund. The Board has been reluctant to do this in part because of Commerce Township's tap fees, but a rate study wouldn't have any effect, it would only provide a rate to charge customers in order to build a fund to service them.

Other Business:

1. a. **One-year Extension Request**
The Ravines Site Condominium/File No. 05-001
Preliminary Site Plan and Special Land Use

Ms. Phelps moved to grant a one-year extension for The Ravines Site Condominium/File No. 05-001. Mr. Woodhouse supported and the MOTION CARRIED with a unanimous voice vote. (8 yes votes)

- b. **One-year Extension Request**
Marie Meadows Site Condominium/File No. 06-010
Final Site Plan Approval

Mr. Woodhouse moved to grant a one-year extension for Marie Meadows Site Condo/File No. 06-010. Ms. Phelps supported and the MOTION CARRIED with a unanimous voice vote. (8 yes votes)

2. Discussion on Rezoning Township Property

Mr. O'Neil reported that the Board discussed rezoning the property behind the township hall including the township-owned residential property to the west. The total area of 13.5 acres is currently zoned R-1B residential and if the property is expanded or altered, the township would have to pursue a special land use or rezone it. There is an application to rezone to (GB) General Business and this will go through the appropriate process.

Planning Consultant's Report

Mr. Birchler had nothing further to add.

Director's Report

Mr. O'Neil asked for volunteers to be on the sign ordinance committee. Mr. Long, Mr. Woodhouse, and Ms. Phelps volunteered.

White Lake Technical Suites was granted final approval 5 years ago, but did not pursue an extension. The project has now expired.

Mr. O'Neil announced that The Root Restaurant will open in 2 weeks.

The planning and building departments have been combined and the building department will physically be moved to the space occupied by the Assessing department. Both staffs will be combined, but the budgets will not. Mr. O'Neil will be in charge of the operation.

Mr. Martinko asked for a status update on the Farmer Jack's site. Mr. O'Neil indicated that he and Supervisor Baroni met with large property owners mainly to introduce the new supervisor. There are two national tenants that are interested in the site and may share the space. They are optimistic that they will have a tenant named by the summer.

Liaison Report

Mr. Birkle's concerns with the water/sewer were discussed earlier.

He reported that the Board approved a Mutual Aid Agreement for the Fire Department.

An arrangement has been made with Waterford Township for contractual work on the township computer system, which would enable Clear Zoning.

Mr. Anderson provided an update on Parks & Rec Committee. He stated they are moving forward with the Movie in the Park activity schedule for July 9 and August 20. Sponsors have paid for this event in the past and there has been no additional cost to their budget. He encouraged the commissioner's to start spreading the word. This will also be published in the Spinal Column.

Bloomer Park is moving forward and the committee is in the process of getting a steering committee together to support movement and establish a timeline for development.

The soccer fields at Hawley Park will be ready soon.

The Parks & Rec are instituting irrigation at Vetter Park and combining the ball fields.

Communications:

- a. **Next meeting dates:**
 - Regular Meeting – May 5, 2011 – possible cancellation
 - Regular Meeting – May 19, 2011

Adjournment

Ms. Phelps moved to adjourn at 8:34 p.m. Mr. Birkle supported and the MOTION CARRIED with a unanimous voice vote. (8 yes votes)