

MINUTES OF THE GAINES CHARTER TOWNSHIP PLANNING COMMISSION
FOR THE REGULAR MEETING HELD ON
APRIL 28, 2016
AT THE GAINES CHARTER TOWNSHIP OFFICES
8555 KALAMAZOO AVENUE SE • CALEDONIA, MICHIGAN 49316

I. CALL TO ORDER AND ROLL CALL

The meeting was called to order at 7:05 p.m. by Chairman DeWard. A quorum was present.

MEMBERS PRESENT: Brad Burns, Robert DeWard, Connie Giarmo,
Lani Thomas, Louis Waayenberg

MEMBERS ABSENT: Tim Haagsma , Ronnie Rober, *(with notice)*

OTHERS PRESENT: Mark Sisson, Township Planner / Zoning Administrator,
Matt McKernan, Assistant Planner

II. CONSIDERATION OF MEETING AGENDA

No changes

III. CONSIDERATION OF MEETING MINUTES

March 24, 2016 – Regular Meeting Minutes

Member Giarmo noted that the Draft Minutes for March needed to be updated to reflect May 7, 2016 as the accurate date of the Garlic Mustard Pull

Motion: By Member Thomas supported by Member Giarmo to approve the minutes for the March 24, 2016 Regular Meeting with the recommended changes.

Discussion: None

Ayes: Brad Burns, Robert DeWard, Connie Giarmo, Lani Thomas, Louis Waayenberg

Nays: None

Abstain: None

Motion: Passed

IV. INQUIRY OF CONFLICT OF INTEREST

None

V. PUBLIC COMMENT ON NON-AGENDA ITEMS

None

VI. GENERAL DISCUSSION ITEMS:

1. Planning Commission Bylaws

Resignation Process

Planner Sisson stated there have been a few minor corrections of the Commission Bylaws. The corrections represent clarification about the resignation process for Planning Commission members. Planning Commission members must submit their resignations with 30 days' notice to Township Supervisor and the Planning Commission chair. Obvious conflicts of interest are directly stated in the document, with instructions for Planning Commission members to inform other members when a question of a potential conflict arises.

Conflicts of Interest

Member Giarmo asked if clear conflicts of interest required a roll call vote to remove the member in conflict. Sisson responded in the affirmative. The Planning Commission should decide whether a member should leave the room or sit in the audience for the duration of the discussion. A uniform rule about conflicts of interest ensures fair hearings and allows all members to feel comfortable dealing with potential conflicts. Member Burns asked for further clarification as to whether or not members would be asked to leave the room for conflicts of interest. Planner Sisson responded that it would be up to the Chair Person to make that decision at the time.

Voting Twice

Chair DeWard asked for clarification in regards to members not voting twice on the same issue. Sisson stated this was in reference to members of the Planning Commission who also serve on the Zoning Board of Appeals. The Planning Commission serves an administrative function and it would not be appropriate for an administrator to vote on an appeal of their own decision. The rule of not voting twice on an item does not apply to Planning Commission members who serve on the Township Board of Trustees. Elected officials are granted more leeway in regards to their decision making. Additionally, a conflict in this case would be unavoidable as it is mandated that at least one Township Board member serve on the Planning Commission.

Gifts

Chair DeWard requested discussion on the bylaw stating only the Township Board may receive gifts on behalf of the Township. Planner Sisson responded that this was to remove the perception of impropriety from the Planning Commission's approval process. DeWard further questioned whether or not Chick-fil-A's proposal to pay for extra police patrols during their grand opening would be considered a gift. Planner Sisson explained Chic-Fil-A had offered this not as a gift but as a voluntary way of addressing public safety concerns and it was not a requirement of the Township.

Voting Procedures

Member Giarmo questioned why members would have the option to abstain from voting if they have not previously removed themselves from the dais for a conflict of interest. Planner Sisson agreed to remove the option of abstaining from the voting section of the bylaws.

Discussion turned to the concept of voice votes versus roll call votes. Planner Sisson stated that with the exception of monetary issues, voice votes are sufficient. If a voice vote is unclear, any member of the Planning Commission can ask for a roll call vote. Chair DeWard stated it has always been the practice of the Planning Commission to use roll call votes for all decisions. Planner Sisson stated that he had no problem with the chair asking roll call voting as a matter of course and agreed to amend the current bylaw to simply require that if a roll call is taken, that it be recorded.

Misconduct

Planner Sisson stated the Township Boards must hold a public hearing to remove a member of the Planning Commission. Member Giarmo asked if Planning Commission members were able to request removal of other members by the Township Board. Planner Sisson suggested that the Commission could formally or informally make a request but that it was the ultimately the Township Board's decision.

Motion: By Member Giarmo supported by Member Thomas to approve adoption of the Bylaws, "Rules of Procedure", with the recommended changes.

Discussion: None

Ayes: Brad Burns, Robert DeWard, Connie Giarmo, Lani Thomas, Louis Waayenberg

Nays: None

Abstain: None

Motion: Passed

2. 84th Street & Kalamazoo Avenue Sub-Area Plan – Zoning Implementation Steps

Planner Sisson presented implementation options for the areas planned for "Mixed-Use" in the 84th Street and Kalamazoo Avenue Subarea Plan. Planner Sisson explained the concept referred to as "neo-traditional development pattern" characterized by the concept of an urban transect model. Developments would transition from areas of dense development with little-to-no separation of commercial and residential uses to primarily residential areas with duplexes and townhomes and eventually single-family homes. Planner Sisson stated there were two primary options for creating mixed-use areas in the township.

Planner Sisson presented the PUD approach as the first option for creating mixed-use areas in the Township. This would be similar to current PUD approaches. The regulations for Mixed-Use areas would be placed in the same chapter as regulations for General, Large Scale-Phased, Open Space, and Mineral Removal PUDs. The Township would have two options for implementing this strategy. The Township can choose to rezone desired areas as Mixed-Use PUD (MU-PUD) or wait for a developer to request the option. Placing the decision on the developer would allow the areas to be developed under their current zoning designations.

Member Giarmo stated that she envisioned the separate areas planned for mixed use as developing independently of one another. 84th Street and Kalamazoo Avenue are busier arterial roads, which inhibits natural connections that occur in less busy areas. Planner Sisson stated that while it is not impractical to think that the corner of 84th Street and Kalamazoo could be developed at one time, it is reasonable to think that the various areas planned for mixed use could be developed independently of one another. The PUD approach allows for this type of flexibility. These areas could be developed at different times and by different developers if the PC is satisfied that each separate PUD satisfies the intent of the Subarea Plan. It will be important to regulate Phasing in a potential MU-PUD.

Planner Sisson outlined example elements of what a successful MU-PUD must contain. It will be important to control density and floor area ratios. Landscaping and open space requirements would be important components of a MU-PUD, but there will be a lot of room to negotiate with developers. It will be important to include requirements for pedestrian and other non-motorized forms of transportation. Additionally, vehicular access and circulation will be an important component that needs to be addressed. It may be preferable to work with the Kent County Road Commission to establish mandatory access points before a development is proposed. Regulating the internal circulation of vehicles will be important as well. A well designed internal circulation system is tied to other goals such as having pedestrian scale blocks. Buildings should be placed on lots to accommodate the pedestrian as well, with minimal setbacks from the road. Regulating utilities would be another major component of MU-PUD regulations.

Member Thomas stated these proposals reminded her of Gaslight Village in East Grand Rapids. Member Giarmo stated that it might be wise to visit nearby places with desirable development patterns and write the MU-PUD with rules designed to emulate them. Planner Sisson agreed and stated the sample MU-PUD regulations were based on codes for the Village of Ada.

Planner Sisson introduced the transect/form-based code model as a secondary option for regulating areas outlined for mixed use in the 84th Street/Kalamazoo Avenue Subarea Plan. The transect model of development views development on gradient from rural to urban and develops general regulations for different development types. He introduced an example of how this system would work at the corner of 84th Street and Kalamazoo, with denser urban development planned for the intersection and transitioning into areas of less intense development. This type of regulation differs from the PUD approach in that it is more proscriptive and would require more planning on the Township's part. Development in this model would be regulated by lot type. Each transect would have a list of acceptable lot types associated with it.

Planner Sisson restated that the PUD approach is reactive and will require a developer to approach the Township with a plan. The transect/form-based code approach is proactive and requires more upfront planning on the part of the Township. Planner Sisson stated he anticipates using a hybrid of the two approaches. The Planning Commission concurred and re-emphasized the need to study other real-life examples.

3. Non- Motorized Transportation Plan

The Planning Department Staff is working on updating the Township’s Non-motorized Transportation Plan and Parks & Recreation Plan. A survey has been prepared for the Parks & Recreation Plan. Sisson recommends sending it out with summer tax bills.

Planner Sisson informed the Planning Commission he would be absent from the May 26, 2016 Planning Commission meeting. The Swan Orthodontics site plan will be the only major development item on the agenda. Assistant Planner McKernan will attend and possibly Township Engineer Gritter.

VII. ADJOURNMENT

Motion: By Member DeWard supported by Member Giarmo to adjourn the meeting.

Discussion: None

Ayes: Brad Burns, Robert DeWard, Connie Giarmo, Lani Thomas, Louis Waayenberg

Nays: None

Abstain: None

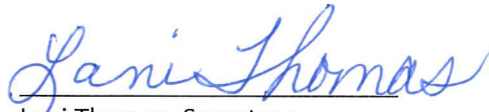
Motion: Passed

Meeting adjourned a 9 P.M.

CERTIFICATION

I hereby certify that the above is a true copy of the minutes from the March 25, 2016 Regular Meeting of the Gaines Charter Township Planning Commission held at the time and place mentioned above pursuant to the required statutory procedures.

Respectfully submitted,



Lani Thomas, Secretary
Gaines Charter Township
Planning Commission

Dated: May 26, 2016