

MINUTES

BIG RAPIDS CHARTER TOWNSHIP

PLANNING COMMISSION

Tuesday, August 13, 2019 --- 7:30 p.m.

Big Rapids Township Hall, 14212 Northland Drive, Big Rapids, MI 49307

I. CALL TO ORDER: 7:30 P.M.

Chairman Amanda Wethington called the regular meeting of the Big Rapids Charter Township Planning Commission to order at the township hall on Tuesday, August 13, 2019 at 7:30 p.m.

II. ROLL CALL:

Present: Carman Bean, Zach Cook, Mary Davis, Gordon Oliver, Mark Sweppenheiser and Amanda Wethington. Bob Hampson has resigned from the Planning Commission. The record shows there is a quorum. Also present: Zoning Administrator and Recording Secretary, Brent Mason. Mr. Mason advised the members that the Township Board has appointed Mike Bigford to replace Bob Hampson. Mr. Bigford was not able to make the meeting tonight, but will be in attendance for the September meeting.

III. CONFLICTS OF INTEREST:

Mrs. Wethington asked if any of the Commission members had known conflicts of interest with any of the items on the agenda for this meeting. No one indicated that a conflict of interest existed.

IV. MINUTES:

Mrs. Wethington asked the Commission members to review the minutes of the June 11, 2019 regular meeting since there was no meeting in July. Mr. Cook made a motion to approve the June 11, 2019 minutes as submitted. Mrs. Davis supported the motion. There was no further discussion. The motion passed unanimously with six ayes.

V. PUBLIC COMMENT:

There was no public comment.

VI. OTHER BUSINESS:

Mr. Mason presented the members with a copy of the 2020 Draft Master Plan and the notice of intent to review the plan. He introduced Dave Bee from the West Michigan Regional Planning Commission. Mr. Bee is attending tonight to help answer any questions the PC members might have regarding the 2020 Master Plan. Mr. Stanek shared that Mr. Bee was involved in the original plan back in 2005, which is the basis for the plan we currently have.

Mr. Bee informed the Planning Commission about the WMRPC and its purpose and background. They cover an eight-county area. Funding comes from the US Dept. of Commerce Economic Development Administration, MDOT and dues paid by the member counties. The City of Big Rapids has also chosen to be a member of the WMRPC on their own, so they have a seat at the table.

WMRPC Focus Areas:

1. Getting grants for economic development projects.
Unfortunately, Big Rapids Township's Industrial Park is the only project that wasn't a success.
2. Work with the State Dept. of Transportation (MDOT) Rural Task Force to help distribute monies in rural areas for transportation projects.
3. Assist in evaluating the condition of all the federally funded roads in the region.
4. Assist with Master Plans for communities that would not do it otherwise on an as needed basis.

He knows how to do a Master Plan, notify required parties, have a public hearing at the end of the project, run public participation meetings and develop community surveys. It usually takes a little longer when you work with the WMRPC because they are a small organization with many other priorities. Currently, their mapping capabilities are lacking. All the other aspects of a Master Plan Project can be accomplished with their assistance.

Things to consider:

1. How comfortable is the Township with the current plan?
 - a. Do you just need to just update it, or does it need a complete rewrite?
The Master Plan is supposed to look out beyond the five-year period.
2. Is the WMRPC and Mr. Bee the right entity to help with the project?

Mr. Bean stated that the current plan is solid and that we just need to look in depth at the vision and future land use areas, especially expanding the Highway Interchange district.

Mr. Sweppenheiser asked what year the latest demographic data for the area is available. Mr. Bee wasn't sure, but the American Community Survey (ACS) has many statistics that are more current than the latest Census, which was in 2010. The ACS numbers may not always be real numbers, but more like estimates based on the latest trends for an area. Mr. Mason mentioned that some of the ACS information currently available is dated 2017 and the projections for the area are showing growth of approximately 1,000 people since 2010. Discussion continued regarding how real time changes in the community can be taken into account even though they weren't foreseen at the time the plan may have been developed.

Mr. Bean asked about the future uses for the industrial park and whether there could be other uses considered, since grant funding was obtained for the development. Mr. Bee said he would informally inquire about options for the use from the MEDA. Mr. Stanek mentioned that he would like to see a solar farm use the industrial park.

Mr. Sweppenheiser asked about conflicting uses between residential and commercial development. Mr. Bee answered that he tended to favor listening to the direction the current residents want, since they are the ones that live here. He doesn't want to say

don't grow any because of the wishes of your residents, but there must be some balance that is acceptable to both sides. The discussion about the balance and the allowed uses in districts continued and will be valuable information for changes in the future land use mapping.

Discussion continued about the next version of the Master Plan, including what potential language changes, additions and deletions will need to be considered. There are some regional issues that will need to be considered for the new plan.

Mr. Bee suggested that we could start with the public participation portion of the planning, and that might be able to knock the timeframe down because that would be taken care of before the details were started. Mr. Mason mentioned that we may be able to do some of the mapping components ourselves since our assessor is a BS&A Software Trainer and has access to the mapping capabilities of that software. Mrs. Davis asked about the future use maps and how that might impact zoning. Mr. Mason said that the changes in the future use map could lead to zoning changes as the uses change down the road.

Mr. Stanek thought that Mr. Bee could be very beneficial in running the public participation meetings, and the members of the PC agreed. Mr. Sweppenheiser asked about a timeline for this type of project and Mr. Bee said he would develop that information. Mr. Stanek asked about the cost, and Mr. Bee said he did Maple Valley Township for \$15,000.00, which was low.

Mr. Bee said he liked the approach where we work together and he does the public participation meetings. Mr. Stanek likes the idea that we can do some of the plan ourselves.

Mr. Stanek agreed that the PC would like Mr. Bee to put a proposal together to assist in the development of the 2020 Master Plan. Mr. Bean asked for recommendations on how to get people involved in the process. Mr. Bee will try to have some examples of survey questions for our particular needs. Everyone thanked Mr. Bee for his attendance and the beneficial information he shared with the PC tonight.

Mr. Mason briefly mentioned that the MTA is offering more Hot Topics in Planning and Zoning meetings with the same topics that were presented in June at The Shack if anyone was interested. Mr. Sweppenheiser mentioned that Mr. Bee is great to work with.

VIII. ADJOURNMENT:

Hearing no further business for the Planning Commission, Mrs. Wethington adjourned the meeting at 8:27 p.m.

Motion to approve the Planning Commission minutes of August 13, 2019 by: Mr. Cook. Seconded by: Mr. Bean. Roll call vote carried with six ayes.

Brent R. Mason, Recording Secretary
BIG RAPIDS CHARTER TOWNSHIP
PLANNING COMMISSION

September 10, 2019

Date Approved