

PROPOSED MINUTES
LAKETOWN TOWNSHIP
PLANNING COMMISSION
4338 BEELINE ROAD
ALLEGAN COUNTY
HOLLAND, MI 49423
(616) 335-3050

January 3, 2018

ARTICLE I. CALL TO ORDER

Chairman Bob Slikkers called the Planning Commission meeting to order at 6:04 p.m.

MEMBERS PRESENT: Bob Slikkers, Randy Becksvoort, Jim Lorence,
Marcia Perry, Linda Howell
MEMBERS ABSENT: None
STAFF PRESENT: Al Meshkin – Township Manager
Ron Bultje – Township Attorney
Diane Ybarra – Recording Secretary

ARTICLE II. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

The Commission reviewed the minutes of the December 6, 2017 meeting. **A motion was made by Becksvoort and seconded by Lorence to approve the correction on page 6 minutes as written. Chairman Slikkers called for a vote on the motion. UNANIMOUS DECISION – MOTION APPROVED**

ARTICLE III. OLD BUSINESS

A. DARBY PLANNED UNIT DEVELOPMENT REQUEST

Mr. Dick Darby, owner or agent of property located section 35 of Laketown Township, that being tax parcels #0311-035-018-20, #0311-035-018-30, #0311-035-021-00 and #0311-035-029-00, requests approval to develop a commercial planned unit development on these parcels.

There is no update on this item.

ARTICLE IV. NEW BUSINESS

A. 6:00pm PRESENTATION OF PLANNING SERVICES BY McKENNA & ASSOCIATES

John Jackson of McKenna & Associates reviewed their proposal and provided an overview to the commissioners. Jackson advised that a Zoning Plan is now required for a Master Plan. Jackson explained that the firm has expertise in engaging public comment in a variety of methods.

Slikkers stated that he would like to see history, current and future dialogue in the document. He asked if the firm has experience with similar sized clients and Jackson stated they have had many projects of similar size. Slikkers asked for a proposed timeframe and Jackson stated it can be done approximately 9 months and would include the required 3-month review period. He recommends taking appropriate time to engage residents if there are not pending projects.

Meshkin said a lot of the research of the township's past and how to assimilate it with the project could be done prior to engaging the public. Public engagement opportunities are the 4th of July Breakfast at Graafschap Fire Department and the Felt Mansion Concert Series.

Howell commented on the fee structure and how to engage by social media if email addresses are not known. She questioned if the \$1100.00 line item would cover all of the public engagement opportunities. Jackson said you must inform residents of the many opportunities including putting signs out at busy intersections which are low tech ways to engage. Howell asked if that is outside the fee structure and Jackson said it would have to be reviewed. Howell said there is limited township staff to execute the communication strategy. Jackson said it would help to know what staff resources are available. He suggested a meeting in a box where a subdivision group can collaborate and report. Howell asked if there are means to provide tracks and trends and Jackson said absolutely.

Lorence said there will be residents that want to provide input but not attend the meetings. Slikkers said it will require a lot of engagement to ensure we get adequate public opinion.

Becksvoort commented on the additional zoning that had been discussed (R-1.5), the DDA and Blue Star Highway Corridor will be addressed. Jackson asked if those parcels had been rezoned and Meshkin responded that it has been a gradual process. Becksvoort added that Internet access; home-based businesses in residential districts and short-term rentals have been other hot topics.

Howell asked about utility and public transportation planning. Jackson said both are important parts of the Master Plan that would be included. Howell asked how Hannon would be involved in the project. Jackson said he is the Assistant Planner and would lead the project being present at many of the public engagement sessions. Hannon said he would explore how the township sees itself and its role in the broader region and compared to peer communities. A review would be done of the township history, what needs to stay the same and what should change taking into consideration public comment and from that create goals and objectives for the plan.

Perry said many of her concerns have been mentioned, however she wondered how the current

Master Plan is evaluated for its strengths and weaknesses. She is particularly concerned how the Mixed-Use districts are handled in regards to current residential. Perry is also concerned with preserving the natural resources and rural characteristics of the township. Jackson responded that this would be discussed during public engagement. As required by the State, the Master Plan is reviewed every five years and much has occurred since the last review; the recession, new trends; non-motorized transportation, all of these things will shape the land use.

Meshkin asked the commissioners to think about mother-in-law apartments and how to deal with that. Jackson said there are many options for living quarters including some he has seen included in barns as people want more room for storage and less for actual living. He has also seen many requests for barn wedding venues.

Bultje asked Hannon what townships in comparable size he has worked on and Hannon responded Algonse Township (?) and Branch which has a population of about 1500. Jackson mentioned a community, Long Beach, Indiana wherein several workshops were held based on the types of community such as primary and secondary home owners. A long survey and Survey Monkey were tools used in that project. Bultje asked for clarification of roles in the project for Hannon and Jackson. Jackson responded that Hannon would be the lead for the day to day and Jackson would oversee for ultimate client satisfaction outcomes.

B. 6:30pm PRESENTATION OF PLANNING SERVICES BY FRESH COAST PLANNING

Slikkers mentioned the need to have a township vision statement and a full Master Plan that matches the vision created by the Township Board. Bultje noted that it is the Planning Commission's Master Plan for the overall township.

Greg Ransford of Fresh Coast Planning introduced himself and was accompanied by Andrea (?). Ransford stated that Fresh Coast represents nine communities, six in Ottawa County where they have done the full planning and also a collection of projects in other areas. Andrea has experience with form based codes and there is a third associate that could be involved in the project. Ransford said he understood the RFP was for something between an overview and a full review of the Master Plan. He estimated approximately five months for the project but with full public engagement it would likely require additional time. Slikkers confirmed that some updates have been done in the past but the RFP is for a full review of the Master Plan to include public engagement. Slikkers asked how Ransford would engage the public. In general, the Planning Commission has operated consistently with the Master Plan with the exception of a couple of challenges. Slikkers would like to see history, current reality, land use trends and strategy for the future. Meshkin commented that public transportation is something that comes up from time to time as there is a need in the northern part of the township. Ransford said they would do a full review of the current plan, make recommendations and then get feedback from the Planning Commission.

Howell said in the northern portion of the township there is water, sewer and Internet but the Internet is not available throughout the entire township, in fact there are areas where there is no cable access at all. There are many long established residents who prefer that no changes are made

and then there are requests for P.U.D.'s with higher density, particularly in the northern portion where the infrastructure supports such change. The southern portion of the township is somewhat self-regulated because the infrastructure is not in place to support more density. Ransford asked if property owners are being pressured to sell and Meshkin responded not necessarily but the price of land has been encouraging.

Slikkers asked how Ransford would make the transition between farmland and P.U.D.'s. Ransford said there are different tools to buffer the P.U.D.'s and preserve the rural character. Ransford explained that he prefers to use a S.W.O.T. (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats) method with smaller groups to engage the public and often common themes are derived between the groups.

Howell asked how public engagement was handled in Talmadge Township and Ransford replied that it was done in target meetings, direct mailing and coffee shop talk. Perry commented that there are not common areas of gathering in the township and Meshkin added that Laketown is almost two townships in one so that approach would probably not work here. The majority of the township does not have Internet so that is not an option and to date, no progress has been made with legislators to change that.

Lorence said this project is more complicated and will probably take a year to complete. Communication methods will be very important and educating the public on the process of zoning ordinance and its function in the Master Plan is also needed. Howell asked if Ransford has templates that could be used in the newsletter or Facebook to lay the foundation for what a Master Plan is. Andrea suggested also using graphics as a more effective method of communication.

Becksvort noted there is a need to address home based businesses that involve construction, tile work, and short-term rentals, air BNB, etc. Ransford asked if there is a lot of road traffic and Meshkin responded a lot along the coastline for short-term rentals and some construction of larger homes specifically built for short-term rentals. Meshkin said he has not addressed it and prefers to wait to see what happens in Lansing before moving forward on that topic. Ransford said there are a lot of short-term rentals in Park Township and they do not seem to have any problems. Bultje said in Allegan County, short-term rental is not allowed in an R-1 District because it is considered a commercial use.

Perry said the Mixed Use area along the Blue Star Highway Corridor is experiencing some challenges and for some time the disappearance of AG has come up from time to time. Will we look at how to keep a balance? Basically, the overall natural features of the township are why people want to live here but with density it devalues the surrounding areas. Slikkers added the tools of the zoning ordinance are used to dictate use and landowners cannot be stopped from developing if it is zoned as such.

Ransford said the zoning ordinances may be flexible but it must be consistent with the Master Plan goals and objectives. The document should be as concise and understandable as possible and streamlined for ease of use.

Slikkers reminded commissioners of the presentation by Main Street Planning from earlier this year and in his opinion they would not be a contender. Slikkers asked if a recommendation for vendor must be made to the Township Board and Bultje responded yes, as the Board would be the contract holder.

Lorence agreed that Main Street Planning would not be an option, expressed concern about the proximity of McKenna & Associates if Hannon, from Detroit would be the lead and he also felt there would be additional costs involved. Fresh Coast was very reasonable and he feels it would end up costing approximately \$10,000 for the project. Meshkin said he estimated the project to cost \$10,000 but cautions the commissioners not to focus on the cost as much as the importance of the project and its long-term impact on the township as it is a critical document.

Slikkers expressed his concern with McKenna & Associates based on the lack of participation by Hannon in the presentation. Hannon does not seem to be nearly as polished or experienced as Jackson which is a concern if he would be conducting the public engagement meetings. Howell agreed that he may be too inexperienced to lead a group of residents. Lorence, Becksvoort and Bultje all agreed.

Howell said she thinks McKenna does good work but we may end up with not something that is meant for us. Meshkin agreed it may be boiler plate.

Perry had issues with both McKenna and Fresh Coast, noting that McKenna may have a lot of resources but agrees it may not end up in tune with our character and Fresh Coast has less experience and may not be as creative.

Meshkin said the RFP was sent out to 8-9 consultants and only 3 responded. They all received the same RFP with the same information communicated. He suggested asking McKenna and Fresh Coast to revamp their proposals based on what was learned at the meeting. Slikkers commented that he could work with either vendor. Meshkin said if it is McKenna, Jackson would have to be the face to the public. Howell said McKenna can bring a level of experience and polish and they would lead us in the process, her take on Ransford is that we would lead him. It is a matter of having someone come to the table with more ideas or spending more time creating them with a less experienced vendor.

Slikkers asked for Bultje's perspective and he said Howell is accurate with her comments. He knows McKenna by reputation but has worked with Ransford on zoning but not planning. Ransford does not have the level of experience of McKenna. Perry supported Meshkin's suggestion to ask that they refine their proposals.

Slikkers asked how the commissioners would like to move forward and it was agreed that Meshkin will ask both vendors to provide a more comprehensive proposal.

C. ELECTION OF OFFICERS

A motion was made by Howell and seconded by Perry to nominate the current slate of officers, Slikkers, Chair; Becksvoort, Vice Chair; Howell, Secretary. Slikkers called for a vote on the motion. UNANIMOUS DECISION – MOTION APPROVED

ARTICLE V. CITIZEN COMMENTS – No comments.

ARTICLE VI. ADJOURNMENT

A motion was made by Lorence seconded by Perry to adjourn the meeting at 8:10 p.m. Chairman Slikkers called for a vote on the motion. UNANIMOUS DECISION – MOTION APPROVED