

**ACME TOWNSHIP PLANNING COMMISSION MEETING
ACME TOWNSHIP HALL
6042 Acme Road, Williamsburg MI 49690
7:00 – 10:00 p.m. Tuesday, June 15, 2004**

Meeting called to Order at 7:04 p.m.

Members present: H. Smith (Chair), B. Carstens, D. Hoxsie, D. Krause, P. Salathiel, O. Sherberneau, M. Vermetten

Members excused: None

Staff present: S. Corpe, Recording Secretary

Public Present: Paul Brink, Dan Hanna, Bill Kurtz, Mark Lewis

1. Consent Calendar

Motion by Hoxsie, support by Sherberneau to approve the Consent Calendar as printed, including:

Action:

- a) **Review and approve agenda, inquiry as to conflicts of interest.**

Motion carried unanimously.

Motion by Vermetten, support by Sherberneau to recess the regular meeting and convene a committee of the whole at 7:06 p.m. The Chair cast an unanimous ballot, there being no objection.

2. Study Session Items:

a) **Master Plan Review**

- 1) **High Density Areas: Commercial, Residential, Shorelines:** Dan Hanna joined the committee. Pam Reno was also slated to assist but had a conflict in her schedule, and although others were contacted as substitutes, nobody responded.

Krause noted the third line of the third paragraph and asked that the clause “typical of small town central areas” be struck from the sentence. He noted that the plan currently before the Commission doesn’t necessarily reflect this. Carstens countered that he feels the clause still represents the desire of a sizeable portion of the township citizenry, so striking it at this time would be unwise. Sherberneau agreed with Krause, asking how we know that the population who would desire it is “sizeable.” Carstens replied that the survey performed prior to adoption of the original Master Plan is the evidence. Smith asked what the definition of “small town central areas” would be; Salathiel observed that it can mean different things to different people. Carstens feels that the currently –proposed development reflects an emphasis on commercial development within the core area. Krause fears that by the time the revised plan goes to press, it will already be outdated because the proposed development may be well on its way. Carstens stated that the Master Plan is supposed to be a visionary document, and he thinks the vision embodied in the words is desirable to be upheld. Krause suggested striking only the word “small” instead. Smith observed that not everyone thinks our core area should be like Suttons Bay or Elk Rapids; Carstens stated that this is one reason he would support having a new survey performed to evaluate

where everyone stands at this point. Hanna feels that the only chance for having something different came when John Norquist visited the area. Kelly Thayer, Michigan Land Use Institute observed that Mr. Norquist said that the only chance for developing a downtown area without anchor stores would depend on attaining a very particular mix of circumstances that seem improbable in our area. Krause observed that perhaps public vision has changed a bit since 1999.

Smith noted that there was an article in the Sunday *Record Eagle* about the current prevalence of lifestyle center development. He believes that anchor stores are needed to make a new development survive here, where we lack rooftops and affluence. Vermetten feels that we should avoid the whole “town center” concept in the narrative at this point. He also noted that the first sentence in the third paragraph should be eliminated, as it refers directly to Acme Village as a town center which doesn’t currently seem likely. Krause noted that the survey may have specified a downtown in Acme Village, so the context may be important. Hoxsie agreed that the context in which the discussion was held about a town center was Acme Village, and as part of the process he recalls that the public and officials discovered that perhaps Acme Village wasn’t going to work as a town center after all. Smith stated that it certainly hasn’t developed that way. Vermetten recommends choosing a consistent wording: “downtown” or “town center.” Salathiel recalls discussing the concept, and agrees this might be a good course to take. Carstens feels that there is a difference between a “downtown” feel and a “small town” feel. It’s important to pick the word that really represents what the majority wants. Any changes should be made not because the Commission wants them but because the people want them, and this is why a new survey would be important. Vermetten discussed the option “hometown feel.”

Krause noted that this is step 3 in an ongoing process. The first step was to prepare the Master Plan, the second to prepare the Town Center Report, and now we are engaged in a revision of the overall plan. Carstens stated a concern that individual points of view on the Commission are overriding the public’s wishes. Krause and Hanna expressed a concern that Carstens is relying too much on the point of view of Concerned Citizens for Acme Township (CCAT) as being the view of the township majority. Hanna asserted that CCAT doesn’t represent the majority of its own membership very well right now. Hoxsie stated that trying to perform a survey right now could be difficult – we might not even be able to agree on question language. Smith agreed, noting that not long ago CCAT membership complained about the survey being biased and unworthy, but are now holding the same survey up as proof for their point of view. Hoxsie and Smith both strongly felt that performing a survey right now would be impractical, but Carstens strongly felt that it’s still an undertaking worth doing.

After several individual proposed ways to rework the paragraph, Vermetten proposed wording that is reflected in the working copy of this document.

Hanna redirected attention to the first paragraph, second sentence. He recognized that as Carstens says, he has a vested interest in Acme Township, as does everyone who participates in the process. The Master Plan is a broad vision statement, and it is looked to as justification for decision-making. He

wondered if the word “appropriate” referring to areas to which development should be directed should be more precisely defined. Smith noted that the township does not yet have a future land use map. Such a map is different from a current zoning map. He recalls that Don Hamilton, the consulting planner at that time, suggested a future land use map based on three levels of land use density. At the time the township was not ready to proceed, but we must come up with a future land use map as part of the review process. Krause feels that “appropriate” will become better-defined by the end of discussion regarding this section.

Smith called for a roll call vote regarding the final wording of paragraph 3 to be as discussed. The group approved by vote of 6 in favor (Hoxsie, Krause, Salathiel, Sherberneau, Smith, Vermetten) and 1 opposed (Carstens).

Discussion turned to wording for the second goal. Smith suggested the word “viable” instead of “vital.” Carstens stated that “viable” is only necessary if you are in a hurry. If you allow the development time to evolve slowly, it can become both viable and vital. He characterized Elk Rapids on a Saturday night as a vital place – lively and full of community. He does not want to see Acme Township develop as the west side of town has done, feeling that we need to preserve the unique vision for which we have been lauded in the past. Krause feels that the proposed mixed use development will be unique in this area. He is concerned because he believes that some people are only focusing on the commercial presence in the plan and ignoring the unique layout that will prevent an appearance like US 31 South and Airport Road. Hoxsie feels that a sense of urgency is somewhat necessary. Unless we act quickly we may well see strip development along M-72. Carstens noted that we haven’t yet matched our zoning ordinance to our master plan, which we need to do. Until we do so, we are “putting out fires.” The lack of an updated zoning ordinance is really the problem – we don’t have the tools to achieve the goals set forth. Smith stated that he doesn’t view Elk Rapids between Christmas and summer as viable – most of the stores are closed for the winter. He is looking for development that is serving the community all year-round. Vermetten stated that the 10th edition of Websters defines “viable” as being capable to grow, develop, function well, succeed, and being financially stable. “Vital” is defined in part as “tending to renew or refresh; invigorating; and thriving.” Both “vital” and “viable” were included in the text.

Turning to the policies and actions, there was some discussion about the meaning of the first policy. Hoxsie recommended looking at the statements between the dashes as being a definition of high-density uses. Corpe observed that this implies that even our R-1 zoning (one house per acre) would be deemed high-density, and it implies that revisions to the zoning ordinance will increase the minimum lot size in the agricultural district to 10 acres from the current 5 acres. Hanna asked about the concept that there is a significant amount of agriculturally-zoned land within our current sewer district. Corpe displayed the sewer district outlines on the zoning map on the wall. This indicated that there is some agriculturally-zoned land that is within the sewer district on the north side of Dock Road east of US 31, but most of the sewer district contains higher-density uses. Vermetten noted that “high-density” is not defined in the Zoning Ordinance, so we shouldn’t try to define it in the Master Plan. The Zoning Ordinance seems like a more

appropriate place to do this. He feels that the broad vision can remain intact but with more clarity by removing the text between the dashes.

There was discussion about point 3 and the current and potential future sewer districts. The Commissioners generally recalled that there was discussion about redefining the sewer district but this was another point on which not everyone could agree, so some broad-stroke dashed lines were drawn as “future study areas.” The goal is ultimately to limit the extent of infrastructure to a high-density, urban area. The recent sewer relief line was sized to encompass the existing sewer district plus the study areas at their current zoning.

In relation to point 5, Smith observed that Acme Township is working with the Rotary Club of Elk Rapids and other municipalities and organizations to connect the existing TART to Elk Rapids and trail to the north. The Village at Grand Traverse and the Resort have both indicated a desire to foster trail connectivity, and the proposed M-72 Corridor Overlay District Ordinance requires trails within a landscaping buffer area.

Coming to item 10, Carstens feels that the natural resource corridors should largely follow streams. He doesn't feel that the Natural Resources & Corridors Map is accurate enough, particularly in terms of the various branches of Acme Creek. Smith asked Corpe for an update regarding new maps. Corpe reported that she has spoken with Megan Olds at NWMICOG and with Equalization at the County, and the maps we have are the most updated currently available. Carstens is concerned that we can't adequately protect natural areas if we don't have them accurately inventoried. Corpe briefly discussed the current GIS framework project underway at County Equalization. Other than this, mapping more branches of the creek would require obtaining GPS data and inserting it into the databases.

Salathiel suggested an amendment to item 12 that would address not only water quality but aesthetic integrity as well. Through discussion, it developed that her aesthetic concerns relate not to residential development along the shoreline, but particularly commercial development in the B-1S area. Vermetten agrees with the concept, but is concerned about the word “aesthetic” because different people have different definitions of beauty. Salathiel ultimately feels that the land along the shore should not become more developed than it is, and perhaps become less developed if possible. Krause stated that this sounds like an additional point rather than a modification of point 12. Corpe added that perhaps the statement needs to be geared towards encouraging public acquisition of shoreland, as prohibiting development of private shoreland might constitute a taking. A new item 14 was created.

- 2) **Transportation, Public Facilities and Services:** Hanna left the committee and Mark Lewis and Bill Kurtz joined. Smith asked if the statistic in the first paragraph regarding 50,000 cars a day was accurate; Lewis recommended leaving it in place. There was brief discussion about the current need to do something to upgrade the US 31/M-72 intersection, which is overwhelmed by current traffic patterns, and how long it might take to achieve this.

Salathiel spoke regarding paragraph 4 and the mention of a desire not to have

a bypass within the township. This issue died away some years ago but is still an important part of the township's philosophical history and remained intact. Krause suggested some updating for paragraph 3, now that the casino has been in place for some time.

Carstens asked if this section would be the appropriate place to include a discussion of the VASA trail, which is a valuable and unique public resource. Smith noted that the township doesn't have jurisdiction over this resource. A new statement was added to policy 6 in support of the VASA.

Relating to item 8, Carstens feels that the Bates area would be a good place to which to transfer development rights. Item 9 was reworded, and the group discussed adding information about the relief sewer installation to the history narrative at the beginning of the Master Plan.

Regarding the Transportation Corridor Map, Smith noted that there was discussion during the adoption process about the designation "farm to market" for certain roads as being inaccurate and outdated. Hoxsie concurred that perhaps a different designation can be used. Lewis said that the terminology is currently used in an historical sense. Current designations include "county local" or "county seasonal." Smith is wondering if the plan should call for upgrades to certain roads where we know traffic will be a particular issue. Vermetten asked if the township has much control over road projects; Lewis stated that the Road Commission controls rights-of-way but the township controls zoning. He also mentioned that TC-TALUS classified the roads in the local system in the early 1990s. Corpe will talk to Matt Skeels to get a copy of the map. The Road Commission looks at road classifications when they evaluate development plans; sometimes they require additional right-of-way from developers.

Lewis suggested that the township consider a vision statement encouraging interconnection of developments that are adjacent to one another. Carstens observed that multiple ways in and out of neighborhoods enhances public safety as there are more ways for fire trucks or ambulances to get where they need to be. Vermetten disagreed, noting that people cut through his neighborhood on their way to somewhere else with little regard for the safety of playing children, and that they tend to drive faster and less cautiously than neighborhood residents. He would favor automobile linkages between major commercial developments, but not between residential neighborhoods. Smith asked Corpe what standards are used for private roads; she replied that we defer to the County standards at this time. Lewis stated that the private road standards are currently under review; Salathiel said that she hopes they will include narrower roads. Lewis hopes so as well, stating that he doesn't like the current standards but he still has to enforce them. The group would like to foster interconnectivity of non-motorized pathways as well.

Committee of the Whole adjourned and regular meeting reconvened at 9:55 p.m.

3. Any other business that may come before the Commission:

Krause stated that a few sessions ago we discussed inclusion of the concept of buildout neutrality in the Master Plan. He is not sure that we currently know enough about the subject to include it at this time and would like to revisit it. Salathiel had thought that the concept is already in the plan, and noted that the current potential buildout of the township as currently zoned is considerable (approximately 14,000 people according to the table in the front of the

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plan.) The Commission would like this topic covered as part of the next Master Plan study meeting. The group will cover the Community and Regional Relations Sections and buildout neutrality in July, and the Town Center Report in August.

Meeting adjourned at 10:00 p.m.