

**ACME TOWNSHIP PLANNING COMMISSION MEETING
ACME TOWNSHIP HALL
6042 Acme Road, Williamsburg MI 49690
7:00 – 10:00 p.m. Monday, July 12, 2004**

Meeting called to Order at 7:00 p.m.

Members present: H. Smith (Chair), B. Carstens, D. Hoxsie, D. Krause, O. Sherberneau, M. Vermetten
Members excused: P. Salathiel
Staff present: S. Corpe, Recording Secretary
J. Hull, Zoning Administrator

1. Consent Calendar

Motion by Vermetten, support by Carstens to approve the Consent Calendar as presented, including:

Action:

- a) **Review and approve agenda, inquiry as to conflicts of interest:** approved with none noted.

Motion carried unanimously.

Smith introduced Margaret Brief, who holds an Urban Planning Degree from Michigan State University. She is seeking some practical experience before attending graduate school, and was introduced to the township by Hull. It is hoped that she may be able to work with Corpe and Hull

Motion by Sherberneau, support by Carstens to recess the regular meeting and convene a committee of the whole. The Chair cast an unanimous ballot, there being no objection.

2. Study Session Items:

a) **Master Plan Review**

- 1) **Culture, Community & Conviviality, The Point of It All AND Regional Relations:** Jo Collins joined the committee for discussion. Smith noted that while Salathiel could not be present, she provided some written comments which have been distributed. Most of her comments were adopted, although Hoxsie did not wish “the steering committee” removed from paragraph 4 of the culture section. The committee left this in, with the addition of “original Master Plan” to better describe the group mentioned. Vermetten felt that the final sentence in paragraph 4 was somewhat of a run-on sentence that is hard to follow to its conclusion. The sentence was clarified by the removal of a comma after “uses.”

Under policies and actions, and regarding item 3, Smith asked where one would look to discover the “standards and values of the township.” Carstens expressed a similar concern; he joined the Planning Commission because he felt that the general population of the township held a particular value system. Lately he is less certain, which is one reason why he believes a new public survey would be important – to determine the current viewpoint of the citizenship. He moved here in 1969 because of rural, small-town character, and has noted significant change towards the type of lifestyle he left the downstate area to avoid. Carstens wonders if repetition of downstate patterns of development is unavoidable. He recalls a lake he used to swim in at the

end of the road where he lived as a boy that eventually became so polluted that a pool was built next to it to provide a safe swimming option. He recalls noticing the decrease in birdsong. He recalls places that were built while he was overseas that became obsolete and no longer exist.

Smith believes that creation of a future land use map and implementation of a farmland and open space preservation program will assist in answering these questions. He believes that development will come, and that the key is managing and directing the growth so as to keep certain areas of the township more natural. Carstens understands this point of view, but drew a parallel to pressures to develop the Commons in Traverse City. He helped perform a wildlife study that uncovered a rich biodiversity on the site. It is important to him to have a vision and to define development in ways that will avoid mistakes made in other areas of the state. People in Charlevoix have been successful in retaining an unique character so far; will we be too? Can we provide for development that complements the natural beauty of our area? Smith cited various elements in place, such as the Parks & Recreation plan, that can be of assistance. Carstens hopes that help will also be sought from visionaries such as Governor Milliken and those like him who envision a Traverse City different than Flint or Lansing. To him, item 3 is a potent statement and he would not like to see any of it deleted or amended.

Vermetten feels that the entire Master Plan sets forth the township's understanding of community values. He feels it's important to leave vision statements somewhat ambiguous because values change over time. Whatever the existing values may be, and he believes that most residents value a pastoral setting, they are being addressed through a variety of initiatives right now.

Carstens directed attention to the idea of community. He feels that the plan does not adequately address a diversity of points of view and economic circumstance at this time. He would like the township to provide a niche for people who work at the Resort, where they can live and can get to work without using their automobiles. Vermetten stated that nobody on the Commission would disagree. Carstens stated that Hilton set forth 10 rules for a good community; he feels we meet all of them except the one requiring affordable housing for all economic segments. A struggling college student wouldn't be able to afford to live here if he wanted to. He wants to ensure that community values are not completely abandoned for the sake of economic forces.

Carstens held Traverse City up as working to provide for lower-income housing. Vermetten disagreed, stating that average rents right now are about \$740.00. Hoxsie noted that the township has an area designated for mobile housing, but the owner has not chosen to develop it yet. Smith does not believe that the township can legislate and require that affordable housing be built. Carstens believes that upstairs apartments in a downtown area might provide an answer to this question.

Smith feels that it is important that the statement be left as broad as possible. His values may not be shared by others in the community, and it is important to include as many diverse values held by community members as possible. It was left that everyone agrees that current public values be more clearly

defined. Collins noted that some of these values, such as farmland preservation, have been set forth in earlier sections of the ordinance. Beth Collins, Jo's daughter, noted that there is an overall vision statement at the beginning of most master plans.

Turning to item #4, Smith feels that we are doing a good job of networking with other communities, agencies and groups to learn, share ideas and work together for common goals. Therefore, he suggested the addition of the word "continue" to this item.

Discussion turned to Regional Relations. Everyone was confused by the first sentence; Corpe offered the suggestion that the third "of" was probably supposed to be an "or." The concept behind the sentence may be that it would be difficult to define our region in terms of the lines on the map, whether they be Acme's boundaries, or the boundaries of Grand Traverse County.

Vermetten is uncertain about the last sentence in paragraph 1. He isn't sure he wants to act in unison with areas of the region that have developed in ways we don't prefer. Perhaps we should be trendsetters. Smith noted, however, that we are not an island unto ourselves. Carstens noted that there were some visions shared by many of the people attending a recent visioning session conducted by McDonough. Vermetten noted that the Grand Traverse Mall looks at a "region" differently than he might. There are economic regions that differ from political regions, which differ from watersheds and natural regions.

Looking at regional goals, the wording of the second goal was confusing to many, particularly "trans-jurisdictional commutative." Smith noted that the current bi-county farmland preservation initiative would seem to be "trans-jurisdictional." Through discussion, the committee came to an understanding of the word "commutative" to convey the fact that what happens in Acme Township may have an impact, whether for good or ill, on what happens in East Bay Township. The wording was left intact.

The first item under policies and actions prompted questions. Sherberneau asked why the word "reconstituted" is included. Corpe noted that there is a County Planning Commission in place and that it does serve in an advisory capacity to the local townships. For instance, when new ordinances are proposed it reviews them and provides non-binding feedback. Smith noted that NWMICOG fulfills a similar function to provide a regional scope in which local governments can participate. There have also been initiatives through the Chamber of Commerce via New Designs for Growth. However, everyone has traditionally been leery of any initiative that might remove any local planning decision-making from the hands of individual communities. In general, the committee sees no harm in supporting regional cooperation and initiatives.

Smith asked if there is a group called the "3,000 Friends of the Conservation Resource Alliance." Carstens is familiar with the "Conservation Resource Alliance," noting that Laura Grantham, a member of the Steering Committee, is with their organization. Vermetten was concerned with the question of whether to list organizations by name or whether to leave the statement

general. Organizations come and go over time, and is it right to include some but not others? Ken Engle noted that some groups are governmental or quasi-governmental. The Conservation District is created by state statute, but some groups are privately chartered. Some are government-funded, but other are supported through donations or grants. Some work with other governmental entities to accomplish goals without a “special interest” overtone. Mr. Engle was drawing a distinction between gaining assistance in achieving township goals versus providing political support to a particular point of view. Vermetten felt it would be important to leave the door open to accessing any resources that can provide needed information, without necessarily joining their membership.

- 2) **Revisit “buildout neutrality” concept:** Smith noted that someone on the committee requested reconsideration of the language inserted into the Watersheds, Natural Resources, Open Space and the Landscape section of the ordinance during previous discussions. Erick Takayama suggested the insertion. Krause interprets this to mean that no matter what changes to zoning and land use may be made, we would not exceed the existing possible total population of approximately 14,700 individuals. He personally is unsure he wants to commit to a perpetual limitation of this nature. Carstens stated that perhaps changes in zoning and future land use could even reduce this figure. Smith asked MacMcClelland if MLUI has a definition of sprawl, but he has not received one yet. Ken Engle asked if this implies that rezoning could not occur, such as from agricultural to residential. Corpe mentioned that it more closely means that upzoning one area might lead to downzoning another. Hull did a “Google search” on the phrase “buildout neutral” and the only hit returned was for Acme Township’s website. It may not be a defined term or concept that should be in a master plan. Carstens believes this term came from Joel Russell and deserves further exploration. Ms. Brief read from the Town Center Report, where we provided our own definition as meaning that housing in the desired town center should not be in addition to existing housing density elsewhere in the township but should constitute rearranging the distribution of housing density within the township.

Krause would like the current 5-acre minimum lot size in the agricultural district eliminated in favor of a clustering requirement. Smith noted that to some people, 5-acre single-family parcels are sprawl, while to others it’s open space. The committee would like to ask Russ Clark to provide a definition for this term prior to further discussion. Carstens feels that the definition is well-stated in the Town Center Report. Mr. Engle suggested that the concept might be used in a part of the township, but applied to the entire township, such as through the use of development rights sending and receiving zones.

Committee of the whole adjourned and regular session reconvened at 8:47 p.m.

3. **Any other business that may come before the Commission:**
Carstens wished to correct a misstatement he made at the June 7 meeting. He attributed a flawed environmental impact study related to the Hartman-Hammond Bridge project to Traverse City when he should have attributed it to Grand Traverse County. Bill Kurtz stated that it should be most appropriately attributed to the Road Commission.

Carstens also provided a statement that he feels is a positive vision statement provided by

McDonough that he found to be profound. He offered copies to any interested individuals.

Corpe mentioned that the June 26 meeting will be held at New Hope Church. Display ads will run in the newspaper next Monday, Wednesday and Friday.

Meeting adjourned at 8:50 p.m.