

**CHARTER TOWNSHIP OF MERIDIAN
PLANNING COMMISSION
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES
December 8, 2014**

APPROVED

**5151 Marsh Road, Okemos, MI 48864-1198
853-4000, Town Hall Room, 7:00 P.M.**

PRESENT: Commissioners Cordill, Honicky, Ianni, Jackson, Scott-Craig, Van Coevering
ABSENT: Commissioners Deits, Hildebrandt
STAFF: Principal Planner Oranchak

1. Call meeting to order

Chair Jackson called the regular meeting to order at 7:00 P.M.

2. Approval of agenda

Commissioner Cordill moved to approve the agenda. Seconded by Commissioner Scott-Craig.

VOICE VOTE: Motion carried 6-0.

3. Approval of Minutes

Commissioner Scott-Craig moved to approve the Regular Meeting Minutes of November 24, 2014. Seconded by Commissioner Ianni.

VOICE VOTE: Motion carried 6-0.

4. Public Remarks

Chair Jackson opened the floor for public remarks.

Neil Bowlby, 6020 Beechwood, Haslett, suggested Commissioners drop the groundwater vulnerability map in the Master Plan as it does not give out any information relative to groundwater vulnerability in Meridian Township. He addressed a May 19th Planning Commission discussion regarding changes to its bylaws, pointing out a difference between the Planning Commission bylaws relative to appeals v. the Township ordinance relative to appeals made by the Planning Commission. Mr. Bowlby spoke to the issue of whether a failure to approve is the same as a denial. He stated language in the Open Meetings Act allows the rules of the public body to determine what information is required for individuals to address that body (i.e., name and address), suggesting the Planning Commission may wish to include such a rule in its bylaws.

Chair Jackson closed public remarks.

5. Communications

A. Eckhart Dersch, Liaison for Inter-Neighborhood Cooperation (LINC), PO Box 40, Okemos;
RE: Concept of Mini-Dogs Park in Meridian Township

6. Public hearings (None)

7. Unfinished Business

A. Commission Review #14083 (Planning Commission), amendments to the Goals and Objectives section of the 2005 Master Plan
Principal Planner Oranchak highlighted amendments to the Goals and Objectives section of the update to the 2005 Master Plan, including recommendations by the Economic Development Corporation.

Planning Commission and staff discussion:

- Possible update of the greenspace plan placed in Goal 2, Objective C
- Update of the Natural Features chapter will aid in the update of the greenspace plan
- Goal 2, Objectives E and F as distributed by the Township Board contain no strategies
- Township Board language in Goal 2, Objectives E and F combined the objective and the strategy together
- Consultant to be hired will compile what Commissioners decide should be included in the Master Plan update
- Delineate strategies and tools to be used which will be organized into the document by the consultant
- Planning Commission working on the Goals and Objectives as an interim update to the Master Plan
- Planning Commission on track for adoption of the updated Goals and Objectives
- Update on the rest of the Master Plan is the next step in this process
- Planning Commission has a limited budget of \$50,000 to hire a consultant
- Discussion on hiring a consultant to perform a survey
- Discussion on hiring a consultant to prepare an update to the economic analysis chapter
- High cost of hiring a consultant to perform an update of the entire Master Plan
- \$50,000 budgeted for a consultant in 2015
- Board member belief that Planning Commission Goal 2, Objective C is, in essence, the same as Township Board Goal 2, Objective E
- Planning Commissioner belief whatever land is left should be viewed in the context of preservation during development
- Suggestion to change the last part of the Township Board version of Goal 2, Objective F to read "...to preserve and maximize the character of a current natural state."
- Planning Commission version addressed this issue in Goal, 2, Objective A
- Comments on Goal 7 from the Environmental Commission: use of the term "alternative energy sources" is more appropriate for long term planning than identifying specific types of renewable energy
- Planning Commissioner preference to identify each type of renewable energy
- Suggestion to change language in Goal 7, Objective A from "sustainable energy" to "alternative energy" and one of the strategies could include "solar" to address an Environmental Commission comment
- Renewable v. alternative energy
- Future option of modular nuclear power plants
- Strategies under Goal 7, Objective A are Township initiated
- Suggestion to add Strategy #11 under Goal 7, Objective A which reads: Work with developers to consider alternative energy in the site plan and construction of new development
- Use of the MUPUD ordinance to provide waivers if the applicant uses alternative energy and materials on the site
- Consensus to amend Planning Commission version of Goal 7, Objective A, Strategy 8 (Board version of Goal 7, Objective A, Strategy 5) to read: Establish ordinances providing incentives for development/redevelopment that emphasize infill, alternative energy, building and/or building material reuse and/or deconstruction
- Combine Environmental Commission suggestion regarding Goal 7, strategies 10, 12 and 13 as one: Demonstrate leadership, update regulations and encourage community projects
- Planning Commissioner belief Goal 7, Objective A, Strategy 10 is included in Strategy 1, 2 and 3
- Policy v. ordinances to deal with the greenspace plan

- Greenspace Plan is addressed in Goal 2, Objective C, Strategy 1
- Georgetown Payback District will come before the Township for development review
- Georgetown subdivision has already been platted
- Goal 6, Objective C: Rationale for the current complete streets policy v. adoption of a complete streets ordinance
- Elements of complete streets (pathways, sidewalks etc.) have been adopted and are well-established in Meridian Township
- Planning Commission version of Goal 7, Objective B has had all strategies removed
- Preference to keep data elements active and current to aid in making better decisions relative to the Master Plan Update (use of the Township’s GIS system)
- Board member belief that the Planning Commission version of Goal 7, Objective B, Strategies 1 and 2 of the Planning Commission version have already been addressed in other strategies
- Creation of a database, compatible with the Township’s GIS system, which provides ongoing current information on the infrastructure of the Township to be used in the development of the Master Plan
- Consensus on the creation of Goal 7, Objective B, Strategy 1 to read: Integrate information technology, including GIS, to better facilitate continuous improvement of the Master Plan
- Consensus on the creation of Goal 7, Objective B, Strategy 2 to read: Use the self-assessment of sustainability toolkit as a guide to evaluate growth in the Township
- Examples of self-assessment sustainability tool use include public/private partnerships in the redevelopment of the Township’s downtown areas
- Township Board version of Goal 4, Objective B Strategy 6: Layout should be reformatted for “A” and “B” to be consistent with the format of other strategies
- Township Board version of Goal 4, Objective A, Strategy 4: Concern with use of the word “characteristics”
- Township Board version of Goal 4, Objective A, Strategy 4: Available vs. accessible
- Consensus to amend Township Board version of Goal 4, Objective A, Strategy 4 to read: Provide accessible facilities and leisure opportunities for persons of various physical and socio-economic capabilities
- Compilation from tonight’s meeting will be brought back to Commissioners and then can be rearranged for order
- Amend Township Board version of Goal 3, Objective B, Strategy 2 to read: Explore the viability of upper floor(s) residences in the commercial core.

[Chair Jackson recessed the meeting at 9:27 P.M.]

[Chair Jackson reconvened the meeting at 9:33 P.M.]

8. Other Business

A. Master Plan Update

1. Master Plan Format – Discussion of recommended elements from reviewed plans

Planning Commission discussion:

- Kalamazoo Master Plan is concise, reasonably short and readable
- Kalamazoo Master Plan has an action plan at the end of each section
- Master Plan is for Township Board and Planning Commission use
- Kalamazoo Master Plan has a major appendix
- Kalamazoo Master Plan has color and graphics
- Suggestion for a one-page executive summary aimed at the public
- Comparison with other governmental entities similarly sized to Meridian Township

- Commissioner rewrite of the demographic chapter resulted in a significant reduction
- Appreciation for Williamstown Township's format, although that township is much smaller
- Need for well selected graphics included in the body of Meridian's Master Plan
- Williamstown Township included measurements of success for meeting its goals
- Portage is similar to Meridian's Master Plan
- Need to make Meridian Township's Master Plan more streamlined and action oriented
- Possibility of having two versions of the Master Plan: one for the public and one as a tool to be used by local government bodies
- Possible use of a summary plan which can be appended to the entire Master Plan
- Data points should not be included in the verbiage of the Master Plan
- Executive summary/overview should include key findings
- In the Kalamazoo Master Plan, each chapter had three components: Introduction, Opportunities, Action Plan
- Introduction defines the current state, opportunities (i.e. goals) equate to where the Township wants to "go," and the action plan (i.e., strategies) equates to how to get where the Township wants to "go"

2. Chapter Reviews: Demographic, Housing and Natural Features

Planning Commission discussion:

- Demographics:
 - History does not need to be repeated in the 2005 Master Plan update
 - For comparative purposes, data points should not go any further back than 2000, with the exception of the age of houses in the Housing Chapter
- Housing:
 - Housing needs should address the "bubble" created by Baby Boomers
 - Number of people in the Baby Boomer "bubble" diminishes when projecting further into the future
 - Several dynamics of the Baby Bust "bubble" must be taken into consideration when planning
 - Housing accommodations will be needed for workers who will serve Baby Boomers at extended care facilities
 - How the Township can gain access to big data collection to extrapolate relevant statistics
 - Available data must be usable for Meridian Township
 - Ease of use of available data is a concern
 - Use of big data precludes the need for statistical analysis (random sampling)
 - Suggestion for Commissioners to provide a list of the type of data elements desired
 - Request for a Michigan State Housing Development Authority (MSHDA) representative to speak to the Planning Commission on how to use big data, how to apply big data to project future housing trends
 - Possibility of obtaining information from the State of Michigan Demographer
 - Comparisons to country trends, other state trends, etc. would be a component of the projections
 - Consideration of Facility for Rate Isotope Beams (FRIB), Jackson National Life, and Delta Dental future employees will generate families looking for homes in Meridian Township

Due to the lateness of the hour, it was the consensus of the Planning Commission to discuss the Natural Features Chapter at the December 15, 2014 Planning Commission Meeting.

9. Township Board, Planning Commission officer, committee chair, and staff comment or reports

Chair Jackson announced the Transportation Bonanza will be held this Thursday at the Lansing Center.

10. New applications (None)

11. Site plans received (None)

12. Site plans approved (None)

13. Public remarks

Chair Jackson opened and closed public remarks.

14. Adjournment

Chair Jackson adjourned the regular meeting at 10:38 P.M.

Respectfully Submitted,

Sandra K. Otto
Recording Secretary