

**CHARTER TOWNSHIP OF MERIDIAN
PLANNING COMMISSION
WORK SESSION MINUTES**

DRAFT

October 6, 2014

**5151 Marsh Road, Okemos, MI 48864-1198
Town Hall Rom, 517-853-4560**

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

1. Call meeting to order

Chair Jackson called the work session meeting to order at approximately 7:10 P.M.

2. Approval of agenda

Commissioner Hildebrandt moved to approve the agenda. Seconded by Commissioner Cordill.

VOICE VOTE: Motion carried unanimously.

3. Electronic Public Participation Techniques

Deb Guthrie, Communications-HOM-TV Director

Ms. Guthrie provided information about the Communications Department's responsibilities including such items as emergency communications, press releases, website content, Meridian Township website, social media sites, publications, public service announcements, HOM-TV and CAM-TV the Government Access Channel programming, and the HOM-TV internship training program and multi-media journalism.

Using the Township as an example, Ms. Guthrie reviewed the variety of tools used "to get content in front of the eyes" of as many different people as possible. Each tool has its own unique format. Tools mentioned included: websites and social media (Facebook, Twitter LinkedIn, Youtube, Pinterest, Wordpress, Instagram, and Flickr). Examples include creating Facebook fan pages (Farmer's Market), a community page on the professionally based LinkedIn (Harris Nature Center Foundation), infographics for the visually centered Pinterest, blogging as a human voice using Wordpress rather than a news story, Instagram for behind the scenes photos, and professional photos using Flickr. Informal Twitter examples of on-line surveys included those initiated by Arnold Schwarzenegger and River Park Talk.

Ms. Guthrie stressed the importance of background research to collect contact information for the people the Planning Commission wants to reach via social media.

Ms. Guthrie reviewed the steps used to mount a multi-media public relations campaign for Township sponsored events beginning with the date being selected for the event, then the Communications Department's creation of a promotional spot/public service announcement and the timed release of

information by HOM-TV in the Meridian Monitor and through press releases and other publicity up to the day before the event. Social media outlets to cross-promote for the purpose of driving people to the information they need to participate about a specific topic.

Ms. Guthrie then moved on to the process of engaging the public and made the following comments:

- Have a well-defined purpose by stating the goal. What is it that you want people to engage in and why? Engagement examples on the back page of the handout were discussed (Arnold Schwarzenegger on Twitter, River Park Talk on Twitter, U. S. Environmental Protection Agency flow chart to establish goals and questions)
- The Planning Commission must evaluate its level of commitment. What will be the Planning Commission's level of commitment? Will it involve the Communications Department? How involved will the Planning C the Planning Commission and/or Communications Department will make? Identify expectations.
- Everyone on the Planning Commission must have the same goal and points, nothing unspoken, no hidden agendas regarding the message being transmitted. For example, the top three HOM-TV points are: What can we do to be viable, visible and memorable.”
- Once the Commission are on the same page it can begin developing for the public. The page in her handout titled “Public Participation Commitment Level – Questions to ask yourself” created by the U. S. Environmental Protection Agency was recommended as a guide to creating fewer clear and concise questions.
- Put yourself in the shoes of the people you to participate. What will entice them to care?
- Use of multiple branches of communication capture many diverse groups.
- Varying forms of survey and on-line websites to utilize such as Survey Monday. Also Granicus SpeakUp, Localocracy, Our Say. Use of citizen engagement tools must have a commitment to watch and keep track of responses. The public appreciates knowing someone reads their comments and responds. More citizen investment and team effort for public and government to work together.
- How much information wanted, how long to gather, how much time commitment will the public want to make.
- Share across multiple platforms.
- Target key content buzz words to your audience. Typical government buzz words will not optimize visibility online. How to get to the top of the Google page.
- Launch outreach and engagement through media outlets. Press release informing of engagement with public. How can you get the media to cover your project.
- Posting teasers with thoughts on Twitter like Schwarzenegger and River Walk
- Different rules for social media engagement are different for each platform.
- If planning to include the Communications Department or consultant it's good to have them in place at the beginning of the process.

Discussion:

Should the Planning Commission be a group on LinkedIn?

The Township has a “business page” and the Harris Nature Center has a “community page.” Sharing postings from the Township like Manager Walsh's blog on the business page.

What is meant by Public Participation Maximize Results regarding “test first?”

Test internally amongst each other first to insure no broken links and getting the desired answers.

Must listen and respond if using social media tools. No sense to set up if not monitoring,

Attempting to encourage participation in decision-making.

Who decides what is appropriate to go out on social media?

Ms. Guthrie sees all content and decides which goes where.

How does the Planning Commission get the desired participation?

More people are engaged on social media than attending meetings. Put the survey out using Survey Monkey. Advise the public of a through the press and social media—the simplest forms are Facebook and Twitter to drive people to participate in the Survey Monkey survey.

Is it possible to have a message at bottom of the HOM-TV site driving them to the survey?

Yes. It should be clear, concise and short.

How many interns can we have. This semester, next semester?

Involve interns later in the process. Typically have a staff person on board until the direction is clear.

Once the Planning Commission decides what it wants to achieve and establishes a time line, constraints and conditions, then the Communications Department will held in designing a campaign?

Yes.

Feedback from an on-line request at the bottom of a HOM-TV page could be distributed as a communication in the Planning Commission packet.

What percent of Meridian Township people engage with the Township through social media?

It depends on the “reach” or “like.” Reach equal thousands. Depends on how well-crafted, exciting. Children and animals and images get the most reach. What’s making people stop or look counts as a reach. If engage, there’s a much lower number. How many people like you on Facebook Fan Page. Can easily be boosted.

Why not use e-mail?

E-mail sign-up list on the HOM-TV website recently activated. The newsletter goes to 700 people. A program guide is sent every Monday but more people are unsubscribing than subscribing.

Possible to have real time/interactive comments during meetings?

It is possible to do. The Township does not have social media software to convert what is tweeted onto the screen and it is not in the budget.

Are some platforms better than others for recording comments?

Some platforms can track the location of comments.

Planning Commission Comments:

- Someone associated with the Planning Commission must respond to comments made to social media site(s).
- A lot of the Township not social-media savvy.
- Interested in several method to broaden reach by crafting a clear plan and work at executing the plan.
- Use different sources to get the greatest amount of input.
- Choosing the medium is secondary to participation in the decision-making.
- Decided don't just want to tell people what doing but interested in input.
- Must be specific about goals.
- East Lansing conducted a survey using a local survey company. Some results in the paper. 400 citizens responded.
- Doing the survey by going door-to-door.
- Perry did a number of surveys by handing out surveys themselves but they have a population of 2,000.
- Platforms as simple as a town meeting are still on the table to include in the plan.
- Come with proposals about how to put together a plan at a future work session.

4. Discussion

A. 2005 Master Plan Chapters

- Possible review of chapter findings, what needs updated, how might get it updated, what can be left out in the chapters?
- The Economic Analysis Chapter needs to be thrown out. Assertions based on out-of-date assumptions. Partners in the group should review together.
- Frustrated by the format. Need a vision of what a new Master Plan will look like will help with evaluating chapters.
- Economic Analysis Chapter needs up-to-date information regarding tax information, budget, audit
- Most chapters except for Future Land Use and Implementation are merely about gathering updated information to create the Future Land Use Map and Implementation chapter. Old and outdated information. Chapter reviews should decide what needs to be updated.
- Talking about office, retail and industry in isolation does not seem to fit this Township in any real way if want to expand economically. Research is growth area not professional office. What needs to be done with Master Plan to encourage research. New data must be brought in.
- Don't throw out the old data to show the trends. Look how different the Township is between now and 2005. Economic analysis by use of goals is another approach. Example, light industrial for garage start-ups to manufacture in PO or C-1 that never thought of before.
- What is the data needed to support that suggestion for the new Economic Analysis Chapter
- Discouraged by the Housing Chapter. Best if have one sheet listing a number of points to make and an appendix sheet. Continue adding to the appendix sheet. Look at one-page summaries and then fill in appendix with information. Each summary page has its own references and supporting documents.
- Appropriate information in the Housing Chapter but needs to be updated. Possibly add an executive summary, bullet points

- Logistics of meeting over three different topics.
- Discussions at regularly schedule meetings.
- Reduce burden by having on the agenda every week between 9-10 p.m. devote to Master Plan discussion.
- Never again have meeting on the first Monday of the month
- Aside from the format, the Michigan Planning Enabling Act requires specific studies of what is to be in the Master Plan
- Don't make something that gets put on the shelf. The one now is intimidating. Short, interesting and concise.
- Writing it for the Planning Commission and Board to make decisions grounded in information, not arbitrary and capricious. Convey the message of the Master Plan with data supporting it.
- Consensus to design with all technical information becomes an appendix.
- Make links to the appendix in the document
- Anything more recent than demographics from the 2010 census
- Request for demographic estimates since the 2010 census
- Availability of maps. Some lack detail (drain map)
- What kinds of housing has been built in the last 10 years and where
- Can this be added to the Geographic Information Systems (GIS) data sets
- What data sets are available in GIS
- Number of housing starts per year and where is information could use for planning
- Identify the data needed as part of Chapter reviews
- View Master Plan as primarily an online document
- Find really good quality documents to include in the Plan
- What is the GIS?
- A data base coordinated with maps
- Coordination of Assessing information with GIS
- Data is available but must be put in a form consistent with the GIS
- An idea of the buildable land in the Township
- Log in required when connecting with the Township assessing data
- Availability of Assessor sales studies
- Information about vacant non-residential sites
- Tying Redevelopment Ready process to the Master Plan
- Look at developable and redevelopment areas
- Liverpool built 3-D model of all city buildings to scale

5. Public remarks

Doris Schwarz, 2209 Kent, Okemos commented on the structure of meetings contributing to limited public comment, e-mail regarding upcoming Planning Commission meetings, and inconsistency of on-line packets, better use of post-scripts, only contacting Presidents of neighborhood associations excludes portions of the community, preference of e-mail versus social media, opposition to dividing community by neighborhood and meetings for chapter reviews.

All Alchin, 5972 Cypress, Haslett commented the Township should not spend all its money on electronic communication when there are many residents that do not use it.

6. Adjournment

Chair Jackson adjourned the meeting at approximately 9:30 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Gail Oranchak, AICP
Principal Planner