

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

APPROVED

September 24, 2012

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

PRESENT: Vice-Chair Jackson, Commissioners Cordill, Goodale, Hildebrandt, Honicky, Norkin,
Scales and Scott-Craig
ABSENT: Chair Deits,, Commissioners Honicky and Norkin
STAFF: Principal Planner Gail Oranchak
PUBLIC: None

1. Call meeting to order

Vice-Chair Jackson called the work session meeting to order at approximately 7:47 P.M.

2. Approval of agenda

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

VOICE VOTE: Motion carried 6-0.

3. Public Remarks

None

4. Discussion

A. Possible Zoning Amendment – Collision shop in C-2

- Staff provided background information regarding a possible zoning amendment to allow body shops in the C-2 district
- Use permitted in Industrial
- Discussion of process for developing a zoning amendment
- Business owner is expected to explain operations at a future meeting
- No action until a request is made by the business owner

B. Master Plan: Revised Goals and Objectives for Energy Conservation

- Staff introduction of chair Deits' draft Energy Efficiency Objectives and Strategies
- Set specific standard for Strategy #1, 'at regular intervals' could mean every 50 years
- Replace 'at regular intervals' with 'every five years'
- Cost-benefit analysis for auditing and improving systems
- Process to determine appropriate interval
- Post audit grant used to improve five buildings identified in the report

- Planet Footprint receives the Township's energy use data analyzes it and prepares reports
- Pick number such as 'at least every five years . . . '
- Is the Township already doing assessment at specific intervals
- Replace 'at least' with 'minimum'
- Lack sufficient information about the audit and how it worked to establish a specific time period like five years
- If investing, need an audit on regular or short term basis
- Audit vs. assessment
- Revise Strategy #1 to read, 'Assess energy efficiency a minimum of once every five years'
- Township monitoring building energy efficiency through Planet Footprint
- Planet Footprint promotes setting specific goals
- Consensus replace 'audit' with 'assessment' in Strategy #2
- Question the meaning of Objective A statement 'to implement sustainable energy and material'
- Request Chair Deits explain why 'environmental' was taken out
- Assessment and corrective actions should be ongoing not static
- Broader rather than specific statement provides flexibility to change when assessment and cost-benefit analyses show action must be taken to be more sustainable
- Broader in terms of long range objective rather than mandate who and how management decision is made
- Township actions used symbolically to lead the rest of Township
- Issue of incurring higher cost to lead
- Send a message to staff to monitor best practices for energy sustainability and lead by example
- Expect push-back if costs are more than public wants to spend
- Changes in technology will initiate opportunities
- Goal to codify Township energy efficiency improvements based on cost-benefit analysis of audit recommendations vs. other types of information whenever possible
- Revise Objective A to read, 'Implement sustainable energy and environmental practices throughout the Township utilizing the most current best practices.'
- Expense reduction referred to in Township Board minutes
- Township naturally out in front of many things compared to other communities but still must work within economic stewardship limitations
- Symbolic energy conservation such as windmills at Detroit Metro when among the biggest polluter, energy consumer and waster of energy in the State
- Township projects such as transitioning some of the fleet to an alternative energy source should not be simply symbolic
- Revise Strategy #2 to read, 'Improve energy efficiency of Township facilities with cost effective improvements.'
- Broad, not adding unnecessary limitations
- P. 11 of Township Board minutes refer to energy conservation through street layouts, site plans and solar energy
- Impact built environment by supporting an urban service management area to reduce the number of vehicle trips by focusing growth near services
- Impact street layout by promoting and petitioning for roundabouts wherever practical eliminating traffic lights and idling to improve future energy conservation
- Negative impact on energy consumption as a result of new traffic signal cycles in Meridian Township—more idling and elimination of pedestrian and bike friendly access
- Complete Streets is a Township goal
- Characteristics of roundabouts vs. traffic circles

- Blinking lights versus running the inefficient cycles 24-hours a day
- Township has little if any authority over road design and traffic lights
- Use petition process and public involvement exemplified by the speed limit reduction on Jolly Road
- Encourage more and larger shade trees in developments to reduce energy consumption
- Strategies largely represent business ends but not many planning ends
- Douglas J was an opportunity to encourage a roundabout at Okemos and Hamilton Roads
- Review will delay Douglas J project
- Include a strategy to read, 'Facilitate ideal traffic flow to mitigate for waste of energy'
- Encourage the development community to implement energy conservation strategies
- What is efficient for the automobile can be a hazard for pedestrians
- Boilerplate approach will not work for street design
- Neighborhood opinion instrumental in having no left turns onto Hamilton Road from Okemos Road and the installation of stop signs on Hamilton Road west of Okemos
- Convert comments from Township Board minutes into strategies
- Support efficient street design for conservation
- Advocate for efficient flow of traffic
- Add a strategy that speaks to street layouts, safety, energy but is in conformance with Complete Streets
- Impact of State law on local Complete Streets ordinances
- Safety of roundabouts for emergency vehicles and pedestrians and bicyclists
- New strategy to read: 'Encourage street design to support efficient flow of traffic for all users (in conformance with Complete Streets) in a safe environment.'
- Existing Complete Street strategies in Transportation section of revised goals and objectives
- Strategy #3 to remain as: 'Give preference to higher efficiency vehicles when purchasing Township fleet vehicles.'
- Strategy #4 should be revised to read, 'For Meridian Township procurement purposes, when equivalent products or services are available, preference should be given to the service or product that is more sustainable'
- The sustainability threshold should be defined by the buyer for each separate purchase
- Strategy #5, 'Evaluate and implement, if feasible, the purchase of renewable electrical energy for Township facilities.'
- Discussion of Strategy #5 and benefits or lack of from switching to costly renewable energy
- Potential negative impact on Township budget if energy costs rise due to switch to renewable sources
- Similar to Strategy #3 and energy efficient vehicle, based on feasibility, bids, reasonableness at a certain point in time
- Delete Strategies #5 and #6, Township has no incentive to explore and take advantage of new technologies
- Revise Strategy #5 to read, 'Evaluate and consider, if economically and technologically feasible, the purchase of renewable energy for Township facilities.'
- Something feasible does not mean it makes sense
- 'Renewable' is not the Holy Grail
- Alternate technologies are being suppressed by the artificial price of natural gas; raise the price and others will come to the forefront
- Raise prices across the board: remove subsidies for nuclear, coal, foreign oil, and natural gas for the sake of conservation
- Board comments mentioned site plan. Find a place for site plans so that it's addressed
- Strategy #6 requires consideration of LEED certification for all projects including Township projects

- Some communities offer incentives for LEED certification
- Strategy #6 to should require the Township seek LEED certification as an example to others
- Revise strategy #6 to read, 'Establish a minimum level of LEED certification or equivalent for all new Township projects subject to compliance with applicable law.'
- Information provided about an MDOT public meeting on September 25 to discuss MDOT improvements to M-43 (Grand River) from Coolidge to and Park Lake Road and Michigan Avenue between Harrison and M-43 (Grand River)

5. Public remarks

None

6. Adjournment

Vice-Chair Jackson adjourned the meeting at approximately 9:00 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Gail Oranchak, AICP
Principal Planner