

**Highland Township Planning Commission
Record of the 1414th Meeting
Highland Township Auditorium
June 6, 2024**

Roll Call:

PLANNING COMMISSION

Grant Charlick, Chairman

Kevin Curtis

Chris Heyn (absent)

Mike O'Leary (absent)

Roscoe Smith

Scott Temple (absent)

Russ Tierney

Guy York

Also Present:

Elizabeth J. Corwin, Planning Director

Visitors: 3

Chairman Grant Charlick called the meeting to order at 7:35 p.m.

Agenda Item #1: Call to the Public: Opportunity for anyone to bring forward issues of interest or concern for Planning Commission consideration. Each participant limited to 3 minutes.

Ms. Wendy Hiebert, 893 N Hickory Ridge Rd asked the Planning Commission to reconsider the ordinance regarding temporary use permits. She thought there was a misunderstanding or miscommunication about the Planning Commission's intent to allow extension of her 90 day permit for a food truck. The Zoning Administrator had advised her that the permit was only in effect for 90 consecutive calendar days, whereas her understanding was that the Planning Commission intended to allow her any 90 days, whether consecutive or not. Her current permit will expire in June, and staff told her she could not renew more than once without a full site plan. Since she is not the property owner, it would not make sense for her to invest in a site plan when the landlord could pull her use at any time. She also noted that Fenton Township does not impose a time limit on a temporary use permit. Her plan is to open four days a week, weather permitting. and she removes the truck each night.

Mr. Tierney noted that the site plan and site developments would logically come from the property owner, if he was interested enough to prepare the site to receive a tenant. He noted that there is no dedicated access to the site Ms. Hiebert was using, and that all of Ms. Hiebert's customers travel through the neighbors commercial parking lot. That neighboring property owner has expressed his displeasure at the situation.

Mr. Charlick agreed that the Planning Commission would look at this differently if it were a developed lot, but that he is also concerned about allowing such use of an undeveloped lot, as it would discourage investment in the community. He noted that agricultural uses such as Powers Flowers have a different status and are covered by a different part of the ordinance.

Mr. Charlick directed staff to bring this question back for another discussion on a future agenda, and to waive Ms. Hiebert's renewal permit fee while they determined whether the ordinance should be modified.

Mr. York would like to include a discussion about how agricultural land use proposals are reviewed and approved.

Work Session:

Agenda Item #2: Master Plan—Discussion of draft plan including future land use plan

Mr. Charlick reviewed the map changes that had been proposed at the last meeting for the stretch of North Milford Road between E. Wardlow and the LaFontaine classic car site. The supervisor has suggested that this could be an area that could be transitioned, as the areas to the south have been, from residential to commercial use. This would provide opportunities for homeowners to move away from the railroad track and for local businesses to find a small property to start up. This is also a logical area to extend watermain service to the north.

Mr. Charlick explained that he could see the property better used as multiple family along the line of duplexes and townhouses. He noted that there are not enough moderately priced or lower income accessible housing options in the Township. The lots are almost too small for many industrial uses other than the model of pole barns popping up behind the houses such as farther to the south.

Mr. Smith was concerned that none of the property owners involved had approached the township to request the change. He believed that the single family housing in this area was well-maintained. He thought a map change might push them out and does not honor their investments. He thought the Planning Commission had a responsibility to protect this small neighborhood from creep of commercial activity for the foreseeable future.

Mr. York noted that the map change might provide an economic opportunity for those homeowners that they might welcome, and that the extension of commercial north seems logical.

Mr. Curtis thought it would be less objectionable for a homeowner if a neighboring property converted to a duplex or small quadplex rather than into a business. Mr. Smith was concerned about the potential for a large apartment building, not just duplexes.

Ms. Corwin suggested that since there was no consensus tonight, the map could be left as is for now, with a commitment to come back to the issue of a housing study in the future. Ms. Mason-Minnock noted that the state has recently announced housing readiness grants, and that there are many diverse opinions that should be explored.

Mr. York noted that if the Planning Commission were to study housing, the impacts of the consent judgment for the American Aggregates property must be considered. He believed that not many of the Planning Commissioners had a strong grasp of the opportunities and obligations that this property presents in terms of our housing mix.

Mr. Smith expressed his conviction that this area under consideration is inappropriate for large apartment buildings. Mr. York and Mr. Charlick agreed that the Planning Commission should consider better

definition of multiple family options. Mr. Tierney thought there were many examples of townhomes and detached multiple family units in nearby Milford Township and the village of Milford that would be a good fit for our community.

It was agreed to leave the map as currently drafted and take on a housing study in the future.

Mr. Tierney asked for an explanation of why agricultural and large lot residential land uses were separated. Mr. Charlick explained that there were some agricultural activities that were almost industrial in nature as opposed to more truly residential but conservation-minded land uses. Ms. Masson-Minnock directed the Planning Commission to the definitions. She explained that the intent was to provide tools for better encouragement and preservation of farmland. It does not prevent a homeowner on a large lot rural residential parcel from having horses or engaging in farming activities.

Ms. Masson-Minnock explained some ways the Planning Commission could approach describing implementation measures for the Master Plan. She offered examples ranging from intense detailed matrixes from the City of Berkley or Ypsilanti Township and a simpler approach from Green Oak Township that identifies resources. Examples showed projects to be considered, the funding sources, identification of who would be responsible. She explained that the implementation sections would be a "roadmap" that would be helpful to direct the Planning Commission in programming their work each year.

Mr. York observed that the examples provided were for communities that were hoping to effect a change. He could see the merit if we had set a concrete goal such as connecting all the parks with trails. This could be broken into projects with timelines. But for a community whose primary goals are to preserve the community character, it seemed less appropriate. Mr. Smith noted that at the visioning sessions, most participants expressed satisfaction in the way the Township has developed and were focused on maintaining the rural lifestyle.

Mr. Charlick asked if an implementation chapter was even required. Ms. Masson-Minnock replied that this is not an element of the Master Plan required by law; but is often helpful. She said another option would be bulleted lists throughout the document that pull out the actionable items discussed therein. Ms. Corwin suggested we could have a chapter that identifies resources that the community has already embraced to assist the Township and property owners in improving their properties, such as Community Development Block Grants, Brownfield Authority, the Industrial Development District, and the Highland Downtown Development Authority.,

Mr. York asked if the Township had considered editing the 2020 plan instead of re-writing the entire plan. Ms. Corwin explained that the narrative style of the old plan was a little too subtle and more interested in story telling than clearly expressing goals/objectives. The draft we have been working on is a more modern and accessible document, more in keeping with formats of other communities. Mr. York asked if the Planning Commission has the entire draft in one document. Ms. Masson-Minnock explained that the packet for this evening is the working document. She explained there is still time to rearrange or edit the working draft and encouraged each planning commission member to review the document before the next meeting.

Mr. Tierney asked about the projected cost of the Master Planning effort. Ms. Masson-Minnock noted that the original budget was \$30,000, but only \$15,000 had been expended to date. Ms. Corwin noted that this was actually quite amazing, since the plan had been one big push to get the plan done in a year, but that the timeline had been dragged out due to COVID and had been picked up and set aside more times than would ever be expected.

Ms. Masson-Minnock will complete a draft for discussion for further review and recommendation to the Board of Trustees.

Agenda Item #3 Committee Updates

- Zoning Board of Appeals:
- Township Board:
- Highland Downtown Development Authority:
- Planning Director's Update

Reports were offered and discussed. Ms. Corwin announced that there would be a training session at the next Planning Commission meeting to be held jointly with the Board of Trustees on June 20, 2024, at 6:30 p.m. Ms. Masson-Minnock and Ms. Hamameh, the Township Attorney, will lead the training.

Agenda Item #4: Minutes: May 16, 2024.

Mr. Charlick moved to approve the minutes of the May 16, 2024 Planning Commission meeting as presented. Mr. Tierney supported the motion, which was unanimously approved by voice vote.

Adjournment:

Mr. Tierney moved to adjourn the meeting at 9:05 p.m. Mr. York supported the motion, which was unanimously approved by voice vote.

Respectfully submitted,

A. Roscoe Smith, Secretary
ARS/ejc