



SAUGATUCK TOWNSHIP

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Saugatuck Township Board and Planning Commission Special Joint Meeting 1/19/21

The Saugatuck Township Board and Planning Commission met January 19, 2021 via video Zoom conferencing. Graham checked in members and guests via ZOOM.

1) Call to Order at 7:00 p.m. by Supervisor Osman.

2) Roll Call

Present: S. Aldrich, A. Bigford, D. DeFranco, J. Helmrich, D. Ihle, R. Israels, B. Marcy, C. Osman, B. Rowe, D. Shipley, E. Welk

Absent: None

Also Present: G. Graham, Township Manager, and L. Wells, Planning and Zoning Administrator

3) Zoom Instructions

Manager Graham gave Zoom instructions for public participation. All votes should be taken via roll call. Please say your name before speaking. Mute yourself when you are not speaking. This meeting is being recorded. Please do not interrupt. If any public member is disruptive in a way that interferes with the board conducting their business, they will be blocked. Also highlighted that if there are any individuals that would like to participate, but need special accommodations, we will do our best to make those adjustments. Please do not click on any links on Zoom.

4) Public Comment

1. Laurie Goshorn, resident of the TWP and member of the Parks Commission, appreciated the TWP taking the time to meet and discuss the Tri-Community Master Plan. Goshorn has spoken with numerous residents about the Master Plan, TWP Parks, and other issues facing the TWP; feedback has been that the Master Plan should be considered whenever the PC is reviewing a project. Goshorn stated that the red line winding through the Master Plan is protection of our river fronts, lake front, dunes, beaches, wetlands, historic sites, and natural areas. Goshorn pointed out that the community has greatly invested in conserving numerous natural areas. Goshorn referenced the recent determination by the Keeper of National Historic Places that the Kalamazoo River mouth meets the criteria as a tribal cultural landscape. Goshorn encouraged the TWP to heed the comments of the people in support of creating a Historic District Committee to review the river mouth and other areas for possible historic district status. Goshorn looked forward to the meeting.

2. Richard Kirk explained that he is a resident of Muskegon, but has been visiting the Tri-Community area since the 1970's and greatly enjoys the community. Kirk explained that he has read through the Master Plan, and has found it to be a good plan and believes it needs to be taken



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to heart and followed. Kirk expressed that the TWP appears to have gone astray from the Master Plan on a few issues, such as with developers violating zoning ordinances without any follow up enforcement by the TWP. Kirk specifically referenced the construction of a home on the Kalamazoo River channel in the N. Shore of Saugatuck development that he believed to be in violation of river set back requirements. Kirk cited zoning ordinance 40.910 subsection h, “In no event shall a canal or channel be excavated for the purpose of increasing the Water Frontage required by this section.” Kirk asked the TWP to review the language of the ordinance and clarify what it is regulating. Kirk expressed appreciation to the TWP for listening to his comments.

Public Comment Closed

5) Approval of Agenda

A **Motion** was made by Rowe to approve the agenda as amended. Seconded by Welk. The Motion passed by unanimous roll call vote.

6) Opening Remarks (from the Supervisor and Planning Commission Chair)

Osman gave opening remarks citing that the purpose of the meeting is to review goals and objectives of the Master Plan. Osman emphasized that the discussion of the Master Plan should be kept at a high level as opposed to focused on specific items or issues.

Israels thanked Manager Graham and Zoning Administrator Wells for organizing a Master Plan and Township Zoning Ordinance packet for Planning commissioners.

7) Introductions and Ice Breaker

Wells lead Board and Planning Commissioners through the ice breaker exercise “chit chat.” Graham took a moment to introduce interim manager Frey, allowing Frey to say a few words about himself.

8) Master Plan Review & Discussion

- a) 2020/2021 Township Board Goals: Helmrich noted that the Michigan Association of Planning required an annual joint Board and Planning Commission meeting to review the Master Plan, although he was unaware of the last time such a meeting occurred in the TWP. Helmrich displayed a presentation of the TWP’s Strategic Goals for 2020, compiled by Graham, and reviewed the TWP’s progress on accomplishing those goals. Presentation on file with the TWP. Helmrich also noted Board progress in developing a Strategic Action Plan for 2021. At the previous Board Meeting, the Board voted to hold a second Strategic Goals meeting February 20th at which time the Board will vote to set



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the strategic goals for 2021.

- b) Master Plan Memorandum: Wells briefly reviewed Master Plan memorandum, on file with the TWP. Wells explained that she reviewed the Master Plan through the lens of zoning as a tool for the implementation of the goals set out in the Master Plan. Wells explained that zoning ordinances give the Master Plan teeth, and that ordinances should be updated to memorialize and operationalize the Master Plan. In the memorandum, Wells identified areas where the TWP could do more to implement the Master Plan via zoning ordinances. Wells stressed that the TWP ought to put tools in the zoning ordinance that educate the PC and Board and that set up the next generation for success.
- c) The Formation of Master Plan Subcommittees: Israels explained that planning commissioners reviewed the Master Plan and identified specific areas of interest that they would like to address. Having reviewed self-identified interests, Israels narrowed those down to four possible sub-committees to develop: (1) Waste Management and Recycle committee, which is already operational, (2) The Blue Star Corridor, (3) The Rural Character of the Township, and (4) Housing and residential availability/options. Israels explained that each committee is asked to set priority(ies) and/or goal(s), set a strategy to accomplish those goals, and be accountable to team members for responsibilities and progress. Subcommittees will be chaired by Planning commissioners but may include members of the general-public. In addition to subcommittees, Israels wanted to pursue a book discussion of *Strong Towns* among commissioners and operationalize a tri-community quarterly planning meeting.
- d) Enforcement Challenges: Wells stated that part of the role of the Zoning Administrator and TWP manager is enforcement, which is prescribed in the zoning ordinance and general law ordinance of the TWP. Wells described enforcement issues as falling in two general buckets: (1) Property Maintenance and (2) Development Management. Wells reviewed the process the TWP takes to resolve issues related to property maintenance, and explained that the TWP is unlikely to recoup staff costs in this area. Development Management concerns managing approved development; the overseeing of approved projects in addition to the enforcement of conditions is coordinated by Zoning Administrator Wells. Wells explained that after a building is completed there is a process of certification of occupancy, which includes counting of trees, checking of light fixtures, etc. to ensure that the development meets standards of zoning ordinance and any additional conditions set forth. Wells explained that there are also Special Approval Uses that may not involve any certification of occupancy, such as uses of the land alone. These uses required review, coordination, and a significant amount of oversight from the Zoning Department. Wells reminded Board and PC that the zoning department is in person only half a day per week and is also responsible for overseeing the PC, ZBA, and special programming such as the present Joint Meeting. Wells impressed upon the Board



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and PC that staff is improving at systems and team coordination, and that with new internal processes staff is getting better from a development management standpoint. Wells believed that the Board and PC has learned a lot with respect to uses on the land, and encouraged new PC subcommittees to consider how to strengthen TWP ordinances with some of the lessons learned and memorialize in zoning ordinances for future generations. Wells stated that time and money continue to be challenges, but staff is doing what they can with limited resources available. Graham added that staff is appreciative of the opportunity to discuss challenges of enforcement and to give a friendly reminder that capacity ought to be considered when decisions are being made. Graham stressed that enforcement is the most difficult and time consuming task for staff, and that when ordinances are written consideration ought to be given to whether they are enforceable.

- e) Open Board Discussion: Osman invited Board and PC members to begin an open board discussion. Welk inquired as to why the TWP does not have the number of staff necessary to do all the work that is needed to be done in the Township. Board and PC discuss. Bigford asked for advice from staff on a conservative approach to increasing staff resources. Graham recommended that the Board give staff direction as to what kinds of services they are most interested in having. Conversation was left with Graham recommending that this issue receive more conversation and explicit direction from the Board.

Helmrich shared his top priorities upon reviewing the Master Plan, which included (1) reestablishing the Tri-Community Joint Planning Committee, (2) developing plans for Special Environments and Open Lands, especially moving aggressively on the acquisition on the Padnos property, (3) Blue Star Highway development, and (4) developing a process to handle land development violations, including the creation of an “as-built” condition.

Ihle explained that he would be chairing the committee for Blue Star Highway, and that he has put together an agenda. Ihle asked if there was any interest from Board and PC members in participating in the BSH committee or if members had recommendations of people in the community who would be good fits for serving on the BSH committee. Shipley expressed interest. Marcy thanked Ihle for interest in BSH.

Shipley emphasized the need to revisit the Master Plan every time the Board or PC discusses issues in the TWP or makes planning decisions.

Marcy thanked all the many volunteers who have been involved in moving the interests and goals of the TWP forward. Marcy remarked that the TWP has seen an increase in interest among residents to get involved in community initiatives.



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DeFranco noted some of his top priorities regarding topics raised in the Master Plan including (1) communicate with Laketown Township on the prospect of adopting a Wellhead Protection Ordinance given that large areas of Laketown fall within the Tri-community wellhead delineated area, (2) preserve or seek easements of the heavily wooded buffer zones along the I-96 highway as a permanent solution for highway noise reduction, and (3) explore single-hauler possibilities as a solution for equitable access to recycling in the TWP.

Israels noted that she has communicated with Wells and Graham many times outside of their work hours, and expressed appreciation for all the extra hours they put into the job. Israels stated that it may be helpful to have a volunteer coordinator, and that having a volunteer coordinator brings certain advantageous and could ease workload of staff.

Rowe explained that enforcement has been an issue for some time in the TWP, and stated that there is not much point in putting forth requirements if the TWP lacks the personnel to follow through and enforce those requirements. Rowe noted that these are clearly budgetary issues, and that the TWP needs to look at this further on the Board level.

Supervisor Osman opened the public hearing.

1. Laurie Goshorn said how heartened she was to hear the myriad of topics of concern outlined in the Master Plan that the Board and PC expressed interest in pursuing. Goshorn stated that the TWP had a top-notch group of people and was excited to see how the discussion would be carried forward. Goshorn reiterated her availability to assist Ihle with the BSH commission; Goshorn had a personal interest in the topic and believed she had information and experience to share from working on the Parks Commission.
2. Betsy York was impressed with the TWP's planning. York knows several of the Board and PC members and wanted to watch and learn about the planning process. York explained that she is working with Helmrich and that she appreciated DeFranco's comments.
3. Ed Karasek appreciated all the commentary and perspectives offered, and wanted to get a better sense of how things are done in the TWP.
4. Joe Milauckas was happy to see that the TWP is back to having joint Board and PC meetings, and thought that these kinds of meetings were productive. Milauckas appreciated the meeting and wished the Board and PC luck on doing the work of the TWP.



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Public Comment Closed

10) Adjourn

A **Motion** was made to adjourn the meeting at 7:00 pm by Welk. Seconded by Rowe. Motion passed by unanimous roll call vote.



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Motions:

1. A **Motion** was made by Rowe to approve the agenda as presented. Seconded by Welk. The Motion passed by unanimous roll call vote.

2. A **Motion** was made to adjourn the meeting at 7:00 pm by Welk. Seconded by Rowe. Motion passed by unanimous roll call vote.

Respectfully,

D. DeFranco, P.C. Sec.