

VERGENNES TOWNSHIP PLANNING COMMISSION MEETING
December 1, 1997

The meeting began as a special meeting at 6:00. Present were Weber, Wilcox, Pfaller, Pedley, Howard and Gillett. Also present were board members Stone, Cook and Geiger-Hessler. The purpose of the special meeting was to interview the final three firms proposing work for the revision of the Master/Comprehensive Plan. The interviews were conducted in a format as follows: 20 minute presentation, 20 minute Q & A session, and a 20 minute discussion after the candidate was excused.

Daneman Presentation:

Introduced himself as Lead Planner.

Fred Timmer, Superior Engineering - Associate Planner

Would do the infrastructure/utility work. Have worked together at Cascade Township and Williams & Works.

Water Resources Institute would do the mapping portion .

Explained the basics of his proposal:

- Develop three taskforce/committees in the areas of agricultural preservation, community facilities & intergovernmental cooperation.
- Two town meetings
- A two-part futuring session
- They will do a two workshop training session for the Board/PC, to teach how to use the plan.
- Also plans to give a resource guide for the document, a reference.

Daneman is familiar with the planning tools available.

Have not included property line mapping in this proposal, would be an extra.

What makes them different is that they have attorney, planner, engineer and mapping specialist on staff. Also a hands on plan that is easy to use.

Questions:

Is 200 hours typical?

He felt that they could get the work done in that amount of time.

How much time from Township people? - Was vague.

If we do decide to do a survey, who develops & what kind of?

- A team effort, combination of boilerplate and township input. He is hesitant of community surveys. He says you find out what you want to find out. Survey could be distributed at one of the visioning/futuring meetings. Cost savings on mailings.

Question on where the data will come from. Also about how we will match up with municipalities on our borders.

- They will look at that and watch for good transitional boundaries. They will set up a taskforce to meet with other municipalities at their meetings.

Questions - Mapping

- Property line mapping - shows where the property lines are
- Stated that Rockford map is a crude version. He said several organizations in the county are doing that.

Ag property preservation - explained how several townships have worked it in the past. Mentioned sliding scale development rights.

Question - how will the visioning meeting work?

- 1st meeting they will present updated figures so people will know where we are right now.
- Second meeting - assimilate. Visionary process gets people active in the process.

Daneman discussion: Felt he was filling in the time & costs well. Felt they understood the planning process.

His complete cost with all items included was \$37,000.00. Felt it was a plus to have an attorney as a member of the team...also Timmer was a real asset to the proposal.

Fishbeck:

Bob Toland, Jim Smallegan, and Michelle Lazar were present. Toland gave a summary of the firm.

- Advantages - close
- Multi-discipline firm - asset to clients
- Have identified strong need for public involvement and they plan to use the residents opinions.
- Form a steering committee - use the Leaders survey respondents
- Involve surrounding townships, student population, door to door, telephone surveys.
- They plan to show people how the GIS technology works.

Gave a computerized visual presentation of GIS mapping.

Jim Smallegan - He is the principal in charge of Civil Engineering which planning falls under. Brings engineering issues specialty to the project. FTC&H are working with Kent County on storm sewer planning. Serves on environmental committee with GR Home Builders Association. Is looking for an ongoing relationship with Vergennes. Can help with financing of utilities projects.

Question - with GIS - would we need sophisticated equipment to utilize? We can do it in-house or they can provide the information/support.

Would we get continual updates? On a regular basis we could supply updated information and they update maps.

Question - time (# of hours) - 300 from them - communication is important to them and they built in enough time.

Question - Surveys - they think they're helpful and feel that a 100% survey is best. At the very least they give people the idea that they weren't left out. Surveys that are computer tabulated and referenced geographically are best. Recommend in combination with other things.

Question - Ag land preservation - Bowne has had good experience with quarter/quarter zoning. Suggested developing policies to adopt concerning ag. Land use.

Question - Any conflict with City of Lowell sewer/water? They see it as a positive and felt that benefits would outweigh the negatives.

Question - Fees stated - they cover everything

Smallegan - offered offices for meeting rooms.

Question - steering committee level of involvement. Sees it as being very important. Its strength is to deflect issues before a broader group. Strategy would be to educate the steering committee to the issues first. In Town meeting, these people would disseminate strong feelings by demonstrating personal belief in the issues.

Question - how do they plan to use our Plan for Planning document - All the info would be computerized.

Fishbeck discussion: Surveys, again, are not highly valued. Our population is quite diverse, and the feeling is that survey results would be all over the board.

Comments on the computer “razzle dazzle”. Several felt that it was not very beneficial.

Conflict of interest issue with Lowell City was discussed. No consensus as to benefit.

Equipment needed for GIS - felt it would be more cost effective to use a firm to do the updates instead of purchasing equipment and training staff.

Question - what level of sophistication do we want?

William & Works :

Larry Nix - one of five principals at Williams & Works

Sees main objective as putting us in a posture of being proactive as opposed to reactive to developments. Sees their role as needing to figure out what people want in this community.

Intends to perform surveys and community input sessions. Need to figure out what is rural character, what it means to us.

First of month Nix attends Talmage Township Planning Commission meetings.

Develop study team including 15-20 of us and other residents - use cross section of residents representing various groups. Finds taking a thorough current assessment of present time to be extremely valuable.

Futuring session - finds a personal invite to be most effective. At the session, a history is presented and attendees are then given examples of what could happen in the future. Where do we need to be going? A report of this meeting is developed and surveyed. Questions are developed from this.

Then goals and objectives are crafted which form the foundation of the complete plan. Goals and objectives are adopted by the PC. The land use is then developed from the goals and objectives. This is the basis that the Comprehensive plan is formed on.

Nix said the maps are the most important aspect of the Plan. Where we draw a line on the map needs to be embraced (with rationale & reasoning) by the PC and Board. Nix told the committee that the maps will give the rationale & reasoning for land use decisions.

Action strategies most important role of Comp. Plan. How can we use land use tools to accomplish our goals?

Williams & Works offers a good familiarity. Balance & realistic approach. Strong commitment to making consensus. He suggests at least one citizen attitude survey.

Question: Define rural character - in some townships it is seeing apple trees. In others, it's what you see from the road, not what's behind the trees by the road.

Question: GIS Mapping - what would it cost us? In the proposal.

Question: Study team - how many formal meetings? Study team would include PC & Board. The PC may ask for additional meetings.

Williams & Works Comments:

Nix is smooth and creative - but it was felt that he will not be doing most of the work. Bill Fisher will be. Felt that Monday night conflict would be a real problem.

A vote eliminated Daneman. Williams & Works and Fishbeck came out on top. The counts were tallied using 1 for first choice, 2 for second and 3 for third. Daneman received a 23, Fishbeck 18, and W&W 13. There were many on the committee who felt that they could still not come to a final decision.

Decided to meet with William & Works and Fishbeck again. Most of the group had never met Bill Fisher. Since it was felt that he would be doing a large portion of the work, he would be asked to attend the second meeting. Since the team from FTC&H was all present, the group felt that whoever they would like to send would be fine.

- Set meeting dates for '98.
- Election of officers - Chair - Rick Gillett
- Discussion of whether or not a 7th member is wanted. Would like one but feels demographics should be considered. Suggestions:

Kathy Longcore
Terry Conley
Kate Dernocouer
Ted Bouwkamp

Meeting adjourned 10:00

Mari Stone, Recorder