

December 8, 1997

## Planning Commission Special Meeting - Comprehensive Plan Interviews #2

A special meeting of the Vergennes Township Planning Commission and Board was held on December 8, 1997, at 7:30. All but Cook were present. The purpose of the meeting was to determine a finalist in the RFP process for the updated Comprehensive Plan.

The firm of Williams and Works was represented by Bill Fisher and Jay Kilpatrick. The joint committee asked a series of questions as follows:

An Advisory Committee is listed in the proposal as doing a major portion of the work. If the Planning Commission wanted to have additional meetings in order to keep a more hands-on process, what would the additional charges be? Fisher answered that each meeting would be \$150. Kilpatrick stated that it was standard for them to have a study team do a lot of the work and to update the Planning Commission periodically. They said that their firm would handle most of the communications and mailings, there would be no minutes to record, and the data gathering would be done by them with the assistance of a designated representative from the township.

How would the study meetings be conducted? Each meeting would have a small agenda developed by them, with 3-4 items and an objective stated up front. They would run the meetings.

What is your definition of "Rural Character"? Fisher mentioned the look from the road as being primarily significant. The beautiful countryside, fields, and trees. He said that when a series of houses start to appear in this scenario, that's when most people start to fear the loss of rural character.

How would the payment schedule be set up? Monthly payments are preferable, with a list of services from the past month sent with the invoice.

Question about their experience in writing ordinances and Capitol Improvements Programs. Have written several, currently with Nelson Township.

Question about Monday night conflicts. A schedule was passed out graphing the principal players and their current availability weeknights. This was to assist in scheduling alternate meeting nights if necessary.

Mapping questions....various topics. Basically, W&W is utilizing the Water Resources Institute for the digitized maps. Their firm does not seem to place a lot of emphasis on GIS, feeling that the county and Grand Valley/Metro Council are both working on projects that will benefit the township down the road. W&W plan to digitize the tax maps, and the software program Arcview will be used to create overlays of soils, land use, etc.

The firm of Fishbeck, Thompson, Carr and Huber was represented by Bob Toland. Although the questions were not asked in the exact same order, Toland was asked the same questions:

Special meetings - Said that although they don't reflect the meetings with the Planning Commission in their proposal, he assumed that we would want a monthly special meeting over the 9-10 month work session period.

Rural character - Answered that, from a planning standpoint, it is just low density development with lots of open space. An attempt to maintain the "farm country" look. He spoke about directing development to where we want it to occur, and preserving large open space. Toland was asked if he had experience in maintaining rural character. Stated that he is a proponent of strong land division regulations and utility requirements in the past, and that he has developed lot size and land division regulations in several townships.

How would his proposed Steering Committee work? Said that the Steering Committee acts as the leading edge, and becomes a sounding board for the Planning Commission.

Comment that we have a small staff, and questioned the amount of additional work that would be generated by this proposal. Toland said that we would be required to do a lot of the communications for the various meetings.

Asked to explain how he envisioned the first Town Meeting. Said that it would set the tone for the whole project. Suggested that we may want to set the meeting back a little so we can structure the meeting a little better because we would know where we would like to go.

Availability - Toland has a flexible schedule as long as he is given adequate notice.

Payment schedule - Anything that works best for us is fine.

#### Planning Commission Comments -

Some members felt Toland would be more flexible, and that he would have primary contact with the PC. Others were still concerned about Toland's apparent lack of experience in Rural planning, as well as what some saw as a lack of creativity.

It was apparent from the first round of interviews that Nix has been directly involved in rural-type planning in other communities. He has the experience using planning tools to

12/8/97 PC sp. mt.

retain open space and rural character, and spoke about keeping himself updated on current methods.

Many also thought that the fact that W&W would be doing most of the communications during the project was a big plus.

In the end, it was felt that Williams and Works had the most creative responses to our concerns. The group came to a consensus on Williams and Works based on the condition that Larry Nix be highly involved and visible on the project. It was decided that Stone would call Nix and negotiate this point, telling him that we would choose an alternate meeting night in order to accommodate him. It was felt that Nix is an excellent communicator, and could handle the Town Meetings very smoothly. Stone would also ask for the cost for extra meetings, as it was anticipated that we would want him in attendance for an additional 5 to 6 meetings.

In other business, the 12-8-97 draft of the proposed Home-Based Business Ordinance was discussed. There was concern about hours of operation. Some changes were added to this section, as well as another pertaining to storage. The "legal non-conforming use" issue was also discussed. It was suggested that a proviso be added about all businesses existing before the adoption of the ordinance being permitted to continue. The township attorney will be consulted concerning this.

The meeting was adjourned at 10:30.

Mari Stone, Recorder