

Vergennes Township

PLANNING COMMISSION SPECIAL MEETING MINUTES

Comprehensive Plan Public Hearing

November 22, 1999

A special meeting of the Vergennes Township Planning Commission was held on November 22, 1999 in the High School Band Room. At 7:00 PM the meeting was called to order by Chairman Gillett. Also present were Commissioners Culross, Nauta, Pfaller, and Weber. Absent were Alger, Dalga, Howard, and Jernberg,

PUBLIC HEARING: Chairman Gillett opened the public hearing on the Comprehensive Plan and provided a brief introduction of the planning process. Points made included that the team of citizens and township officials have been working on the Master Plan for over two years. A study team was formed consisting of the Planning Commission, the Township Board, and interested citizens. Monthly meetings occurred during which the study team worked with planning consultant Larry Nix, of Williams & Works. Gillett then introduced Mr. Nix for a summary presentation of the Plan.

Summary of the Comprehensive Plan: Mr. Nix provided a summary of the planning process and a summary handout of the Comprehensive Plan, which is attached as part of these minutes. He then provided background information of the Township, including growth trends, population projections, housing projections, traffic generation for the new growth, goals and objectives developed by the study team based on citizen input, and the highlights of the Plan's recommendations.

Public Comments: Chairman Gillett then asked for public comments on the Comprehensive Plan. Following is a summary of the comments received at the hearing.

Jean Hoffman: As a participant of the study team she remembered that most of Section 27 was to have been changed to the "Open Space" category. This should be discussed.

Colleen Lenihan: Does the Comprehensive Plan designate a place for a mobile home park?

Priscilla Lussmeyer: Is the Township proposing to develop wetland regulations? High density housing takes up only a small space of land to house many people. She thinks this is much wiser land use planning than rural residential and large lots. Three acre lots promote urban sprawl.

Mike Lenihan: In Section 2 and 3 commercial use is proposed. What type of commercial uses are proposed and is the Township promoting this area? He

was concerned with a liquor outlet and the sale of beer and wine and the potential of a kid hangout.

Mari Stone pointed out the Thompson Drive area on the map. Since the area of Thompson Drive was court ordered and the other adjacent area to the Flat River was on a steep slope, did it make sense to encourage smaller lots in this sensitive environmental area?

Al Baird indicated that in his research with other Townships, there are some which do not encourage or permit Planned Unit Developments (PUD) in agricultural areas. He does not desire the Township to continue this practice and would prefer to stick with the three acre lot size in the agricultural areas of the Township.

Kate Dernocoeur raised the point that we had not ever really defined what "rural character" actually means. To her, maintaining gravel roads with neighbors spread apart so their homes weren't in view might go a long way in maintaining that "rural" feel. If we promote clustering of homes, we'll draw in people with suburban mentality, which is not what we'd like the Township to become. The Township should work to preserve rural features, particularly not the paving of roads.

Susan Geiger-Hessler expressed her concern of the use of PUD's in the rural areas of the Township. In her opinion, this type of development did not preserve the rural character and questioned the use of the open space in the future for more housing.

Gary Knottenerus inquired if the open spaces created by PUD developments would be held open in perpetuity, and whether 3-acre lots developed in RA districts would also be held to 3 acres in perpetuity. Several answers were offered, stating that PUD agreements are held by Master Deeds, and are a part of a properties legal description that is registered with the County.

Additional comments then revolved around items already raised, for clarification purposes.

Planning Commission Discussion: Chairman Gillett closed the public hearing and addressed questions raised by the participants. The Planning Commissioners concluded that the designation in Section 27 was correct but that at one time the entire Section was planned for Low Density Residential. A mobile home park is not specifically planned but is part of the High Density Residential area of the Comprehensive Plan. The Township relies on the State for wetland regulations but works with applicants to protect small wetland areas when the project is part of a PUD. There are no defined plans for the Commercial in Section 2 and 3. After discussion, the Planning Commission decided to place a star at the intersection of Lincoln Lake and 4 Mile Road to indicate future commercial use with no defined acreage other than use for neighborhood

commercial uses. Regarding Thompson Drive, it was decided to change the area from Lincoln Lake north of Burroughs Drive to the Flat River from Low Density Residential to Open Space due to the court order and the steep slopes in the area.

There were no other concerns or changes discussed by the Planning Commission. Motion by Greg Culross (second by Vern Nauta) to accept the Comprehensive Plan as written with the following changes:

- Alter the Thompson Drive/Beckwith Road area discussed to “Open Space.”
- Place a star at the intersection of Lincoln Lake and 4 Mile Road to indicate future commercial use with exact acreage left undefined.

Chairman Gillett called for a roll call vote, which occurred as follows: Mark Weber - yes Bob Pfaller - yes, Greg Culross - yes, Vern Nauta – yes, and Rick Gillett – yes.

Chairman Gillett expressed thanks on behalf of the Planning Commission for those participants at the public hearing and the study team members for their participation over the past 24 months.

Meeting adjourned at 8:30 PM.
Respectfully submitted,

Kate Dernocoeur, Recorder