

MINUTES OF THE COOPER CHARTER TOWNSHIP
PLANNING COMMISSION HELD ON TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 9, 2016

A meeting of the Planning Commission of Cooper Charter Township was held on Tuesday, February 9, 2016, at the Cooper Charter Township Hall, 1590 West D. Avenue, Kalamazoo, Michigan.

Members Present: Asselmeier, Boekhoven, Corke, Frederick, Janssen, Reynolds, Stehouwer.

Members Absent:

Also Present: Michael Homier of Foster, Swift, Collins & Smith, attorneys for Cooper Charter Township; Russ Wicklund, Township Planning Consultant; Applicant, Tom Earley of Earley & Associates.

Chairman Asselmeier called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

Agenda Item

A motion to accept the Agenda as printed was made by Comm. Janssen and supported by Comm. Corke. Motion carried 7-0.

Review and Approval of Minutes

Mr. Wicklund pointed out two corrections to the January 12, 2016 Minutes: (1) at the bottom of page 1, the last sentence should read "This property does not abut a residential zone and is within the CBD." and (2) on page 4, the last word of the opening paragraph should be "survey", not "card". A motion to approve the Minutes of the January 12, 2016, meeting, as corrected, was made by Comm. Janssen, supported by Comm. Corke. Motion carried 7-0.

Citizen Comment

Marjorie DeRuyter Smith, 1421 West E Avenue, Kalamazoo, Michigan, stated she was the person who handed out extra survey cards to her neighbors who claimed they hadn't received one and she put survey cards into two of those neighbors' mailboxes. She told those neighbors that Mark Reynolds' name was on the card and to contact him if they had any questions. Chairman Asselmeier thanked Ms. DeRuyter-Smith for coming forward and explaining how the survey cards ended up in mailboxes. He also thanked her for her efforts in getting the survey out to her neighbors.

Request for a Site Plan Review by Tom Earley for Parcel Number 3902-21-101-017, 7700 Douglas Avenue.

The Applicant, Tom Earley, stated Earley & Associates is a concrete construction company on Ravine Road, who is planning to construct a new building with an outdoor storage yard. Applicant presented a construction plan which contained the changes to which they agreed at the last meeting: (1) a sixteen foot height restriction; and (2) natural screening from the building going east. Mr. Earley stated that they want to modify the plans again to adjust the building to the north so the retention pond would be at the southeast corner. Mr. Earley stated time is of the essence. Mr. Wicklund stated that the Planning Commission has two options: (1) table it; or (2) recommend administrative review and approval by the township engineer. It appears that the major issue is stormwater.

A motion to approve the site plan on the condition that the Township engineer reviews and approves final drainage and site grading and the Township planner reviews and approves other layout issues was made by Comm. Corke and supported by Comm. Boekhoven. A roll call vote was taken. Motion carried 7-0.

Discussion of Survey Questions and Distribution of Survey Cards

It was interesting to note that 80% of all participants were 45 and older and the vast majority of them completed the survey on-line. There didn't appear to be any "hot" issues brought up in the responses. There were more comments about things the citizens liked about the Township, rather than disliked. The citizens like the location of the Township because of its rural setting.

The subject of a farmer's market was brought up and possibly partnering with the Nature Center. Ms. DeRuyter-Smith brought up that in order to shop the farmer's market at the Nature Center, you must be a member to get in. Whereas, a farmer's market through the Township would be community-wide participation. She has also spoken to the new communications director for the Nature Center and hopes to develop a good rapport for the betterment of the neighborhood.

Chairman Asselmeier asked, given the results of the survey, should the Township leave the Master Plan the way it is? Mr. Wicklund stated that every five years, the Planning Commission is supposed to review the current Master Plan and make a determination whether or not, as part of that review, they want to do an update or are they satisfied that after reviewing the Plan, the Plan still works for the Township without formal updates. Cooper Township is at the five-year mark. Considering the survey results, does the Planning Commission want to go into greater depth to do an update to the Plan (which includes mapping) or is the Planning Commission satisfied enough with the survey results to say the community is comfortable with what exists now and no update is needed at this time.

Comm. Corke stated that he feels the survey says that the citizens are satisfied with what the Township has already and we should leave it the way it is.

Comm. Janssen asked if a Master Plan update can focus on just one or two areas, rather than doing a full-blown update, to which Mr. Wicklund said yes. She would prefer to focus on smaller projects the citizens have already expressed interest in, instead of doing a full-blown update.

Comm. Reynolds would like to see the demographics and informational text in the Master Plan updated and use the Master Plan as a marketing tool to highlight the amenities found in Cooper Township.

Chairman Asselmeier asked Mr. Wicklund if he could pull together information to include in the demographics of the Master Plan.

Comm. Stehouwer stated he thinks the Township should have an informational meeting or public hearing to share the survey results with the community. Mr. Wicklund stated that you would not have a public hearing unless you were going to adopt something. Comm. Stehouwer would be in favor of taking on one project per year.

Comm. Frederick relayed one citizen's concern about improvements made by the Township. The citizen pointed out that the cost for the improvements made by the Township are ultimately

borne by the residents through increased taxes, even though the citizen doesn't have much say in what improvements are made. Comm. Frederick stated the Planning Commission should keep that in mind when considering improvements to be made. He also stated that he is happy with the way the Township is developing.

Chairman Asselmeier stated he believes the general consensus is as follows: (1) the Planning Commission does not believe that a major rewrite of the Master Plan is necessary; (2) the Planning Commission will ask Mr. Wicklund to provide some information to decide if there should be a public informational meeting; and (3) decide if the Planning Commission wants to make a work schedule.

Old Business

Comm. Reynolds stated that as he was handing out the survey cards, people were very interested and engaging but largely unaware of what was going on with the survey. He hoped that getting the word out to the citizens would make a measureable impact on the number of people who completed the survey.

Comm. Frederick stated he felt it was inappropriate for Comm. Reynolds to put his name on the survey card, which was Township property. He felt it was necessary to inform everyone of what happened so that this will never happen again.

Attorney Homier told the Commissioners that, during an election year, when they put their name and phone number on a piece of Township literature, they run the risk of people thinking it is an election issue, and that their personal opinion is the opinion of the Planning Commission.

Chairman Asselmeier reminded the Commissioners that the next meeting is Tuesday, March 8, 2016.

Comm. Boekhoven brought to the Commission's attention work being done on Riverview and that he doesn't believe the work complies with what was agreed to at the August 11, 2015 Planning Commission meeting. Mr. Wicklund said he could pull the site plan and see if they are in compliance.

Comm. Corke also stated the transmission shop has cars parked in front of the building, despite the fact they told the Planning Commission there might be only one or two cars parked overnight. That is not the case. There have been 18 or more vehicles parked in front for over a month. Mr. Wicklund said he is aware they are in violation and will determine what needs to be done.

Adjournment

A motion to adjourn the meeting was made by Comm. Boekhoven, supported by Comm. Janssen. Motion carried 7-0.