

ROBINSON TOWNSHIP PLANNING COMMISSION
December 12, 2023

The special joint meeting of the Robinson Township Planning Commission and the Robinson Township Board was called to order at 7:00 PM at the Robinson Township Hall.

Planning Commission

Present

Shawn Martinie
Bill Maschewske
Travis Vugteveen
Steve Young
Michelle Gillespie

Absent

Lydia Brown
One Position Vacant

Township Board

Present

Frank Johnson
Bonnie Hayward
Chris Saddler
Travis Vugteveen (Salary from Planning Commission)

Absent

Travis Bergman

Also present were Township Attorney Ron Bultje, contracted Township Planner Gregory Ransford, and Doug Marshall. The attendance sheet is not attached as it included no signatures.

Approval of Agenda

A motion was made by Travis Vugteveen and seconded by Michelle Gillespie to approve the Planning Commission meeting agenda as written.

The motion carried unanimously with one member absent and one position vacant.

Adopting of Previous Minutes

A motion was made by Travis Vugteveen and seconded by Michelle Gillespie to approve as written the minutes of the November 28, 2023 Planning Commission meeting.

The motion carried unanimously with one member absent and one position vacant.

Non-Commission Member Inquiries and Questions -- None

Announcements -- None

Old Business – None

New Business

The purpose of this joint meeting between the Planning Commission and the Township Board was to discuss the completed draft of the updated Master Land Use Plan that was forwarded to the Township Board for review by the Planning Commission at their October 10, 2023 meeting.

Chairperson Martinie requested comments and questions from the Township Board.

Bonnie Hayward – Stated she liked the new format of using Goals, Recommendations, and Strategies in each Chapter. She noted the results of the Citizen Survey were very similar to the results of the 1998 Survey and showed a strong desire to keep the Township rural. However, she is not sure the Township can achieve that goal.

Chairperson Martinie – The Planning Commission could propose a Growth or Development Boundary. It was considered during preparation of the draft Master Land Use Plan but was not used.

Travis Vugteveen – Stated he believes the Township has controlled growth in the right places. The Township has grown at a controlled rate as opposed to uncontrolled development.

Bonnie Hayward – Where will people go when all the Rural Residential land is developed?

Travis Vugteveen – Discussed the development of the Commercial/Industrial Overlay District at M-45 and M-231, the amount of development since created in 2016, and the amount of Planned Commercial property.

A discussion followed regarding the rezoning of the property for the Catholic Church at the Northwest corner of 120th Ave. and Filmore St. Numerous other rezonings were discussed regarding if the rezonings should have been approved.

Supervisor Johnson – There needs to be a mechanism to transition from Agricultural to Residential use. What do you do with a blueberry farm that is losing money? Agriculture is economically driven.

Chairperson Martinie – Explained that rezoning is the mechanism to repurpose Agricultural land. Growth Boundaries could be used.

Gregory Ransford – The concept of a Growth Boundary could be just in the Master Land Use Plan or it could be in the Master Land Use Plan and the Zoning Ordinance.

Bonnie Hayward – Noted that the Agricultural land along Filmore St. is the only place in the Township with public sewer.

A discussion followed regarding the location of existing public utilities to date having been driven by outside communities and not from Robinson Township planning for their location. This has resulted in at least some utilities in locations not desired by the Township.

Bill Maschewske – Noted that most of the planned Agricultural Land has remained Agricultural since the first Master Land Use Plan was adopted in 1978.

Travis Vugteveen – Should the Township start our own water and sewer systems?

Bill Maschewske – Noted Ott Lane needs public water, however, the residents on Ott Lane do not want public water even though it is very close already. The Water Board investigated this several years ago. Many residents prefer to drink well water.

Bonnie Hayward – She is concerned about large withdrawals of water from the ground.

Supervisor Johnson – Requested all the Ottawa County Groundwater Sustainability references to be removed from the Master Land Use Plan. He noted that Bil-Mar killed Bass River with their discharges and runoff. Agriculture is the main source of water pollution.

Bonnie Hayward – Noted the Planning Commission needs to address migrant housing in residential areas.

Chairperson Martinie – Stated the Zoning Ordinance will enforce the Master Land Use Plan.

Supervisor Johnson – This document directs zoning. Will the Zoning Ordinance be easier and better to understand.

Bill Maschewske – The intent in addressing the Zoning Ordinance next will be to simplify it through the use of tables and charts to consolidate information and make it more user friendly.

Bill Maschewske -- Inquired of Bonnie Hayward if she has a problem with the current Master Land Use Plan.

Bonnie Hayward – No.

Bill Maschewske – Noted that the current Master Land Use Plan is very similar in content and intent compared to the draft updated Master Land Use Plan only in a different format.

Bill Maschewske – Noted a resolution from the Water Board regarding the draft Master Land Use Plan. The following resolution was approved at the August 23, 2023 Water Board meeting: “Recommend to the Planning Commission and Township Board that it be considered for a Planned Unit Development (PUD) that surface water from an existing and/or constructed lake or pond (if present) be utilized for irrigation. Furthermore, the PUD must consider and evaluate alternate means of reducing groundwater use and present this information in its application.”

Township Attorney Bultje – Noted that we are preserving Agricultural land in general. The current Zoning Ordinance originally proposed to do this more aggressively, however, the Township Board would not approve it.

Supervisor Johnson – How are we going to preserve woodlots?

Bill Maschewske – Grand Haven Charter Township requires permits in some areas of the Township for removing trees. The Planning Commission was not thinking of being that aggressive with preservation. Site Plan Review would be the mechanism.

Chairperson Martinie – The Master Land Use Plan's purpose is to describe where the Township is and where it is headed. The Master Land Use Plan is the 5000 ft. high view of the Township. The Zoning Ordinance is a much lower elevation view and much more detailed.

Bonnie Hayward – What are the pros and cons of large vs. small lot sizes?

Chairperson Martinie – Stated lot sizes are largely determined by availability of utilities.

Bill Maschewske – It really becomes a matter of what your vision is for what the Township should look like in 20 years. The development pressure is not just from within the Township but includes surrounding communities and the entire State. Whether lots are small or large, they will all become developed.

Bonnie Hayward – Is the Township water infrastructure fund working against the Master Land Use Plan.

A discussion followed regarding including the Water Board and Planning Commission in discussions regarding extending utilities.

Supervisor Johnson – Is the Master Land Use Plan feasible in the Zoning Ordinance?

Chairperson Martinie and Bill Maschewske – Yes.

Supervisor Johnson – Will the new Master Land Use Plan make life for the residents more difficult? He worries about the little guy and government costing them too much.

Bonnie Hayward – Every meeting costs money.

Bill Maschewske – Noted he was surprised to find how much the last Zoning Board of Appeals meeting cost the applicant after looking at the figures listed on the application.

Bonnie Hayward – Gave a breakdown of how meeting costs add up for applicants.

Chairperson Martinie questioned what is the next step.

Planner Gregory Ransford – The Township Board must first either approve or disapprove the draft updated Master Land Use Plan for distribution by the Planning Commission. If they do not approve, the Planning Commission re-evaluates the Plan. If approved, the draft Master Land Use Plan is distributed and there is a 63-day waiting period for adjacent communities and utilities to comment. The Planning Commission then schedules and holds a public hearing on the draft Master Land Use Plan. Following the public hearing, the draft Master Land Use Plan then goes to the Township Board for adoption. The Township Board is not required to hold a public hearing.

There were no more comments regarding the draft Master Land Use Plan from the Planning Commission, the Township Board, or the public.

Pay Bills

A motion was made by Michelle Gillespie and seconded by Travis Vugteveen to pay salaries for the December 12, 2023 Planning Commission meeting (5 members present, one member absent, and one position vacant).

The motion carried unanimously with one member absent and one position vacant.

Any and All Other Business That May Come Before the Board -- None

Adjournment

A motion was made by Travis Vugteveen and seconded by Steve Young to adjourn the Planning Commission meeting at 8:37 PM.

The motion carried unanimously with one member absent and one position vacant.

A motion was made by Bonnie Hayward and seconded by Travis Vugteveen to adjourn the Township Board meeting at 8:39 PM. The motion carried unanimously with one member absent.

Respectfully submitted,

Bill Maschewske, Secretary
Robinson Township Planning Commission

Attachments: None