

ROBINSON TOWNSHIP PLANNING COMMISSION
February 13, 2025

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

Present	Absent
Shawn Martinie	Steve Ambrose
Bill Maschewske	Phil Crum
Lydia Brown	One Position Vacant
Michelle Gillespie	

Also present were contracted Township Planner Gregory Ransford of Fresh Coast Planning and Doug Marshall, a member of the public. A copy of the Sign-In Sheet is attached.

Approval of Agenda

A motion was made by Michelle Gillespie and seconded by Lydia Brown to approve the agenda of the February 13, 2025 meeting as written.

The motion carried unanimously with two members absent and one position vacant.

Adopting of Previous Minutes

A motion was made by Lydia Brown and seconded by Michelle Gillespie to approve as written the minutes of the January 28, 2025 Planning Commission meeting.

The motion carried unanimously with two members absent and one position vacant.

New Business

The specific purpose of this special meeting was to review changes to the Zoning Ordinance proposed by Greg Ransford, the Township contracted Planner and Principal from Fresh Coast Planning, following the recent adoption by Robinson Township of a new Master Land Use Plan. The proposed changes are in response to Chapter 3, Residential Strategies, that were identified and approved in the new Master Land Use Plan and now need to be included in the Zoning Ordinance for implementation. Also re-reviewed were changes reviewed at the January 9, 2025 Planning Commission meeting. The complete memorandum from Gregory Ransford regarding Residential Strategies, dated February 1, 2025, is attached.

Comments Regarding Re-review of Agricultural Strategies

Bill Maschewske – Noted that replacement pages were not provided regarding items where the proposed changes were not approved. Without this it is difficult to verify that the change was removed.

A discussion followed about how best to verify that changes were implemented per Planning Commission agreement. Greg Ransford will review and propose an option.

Next to be discussed was the Residential Strategy to require both public water and public sewer for residential developments.

The recently adopted Master Land Use Plan, in Medium Density Residential, requires “public water and sewer connection for all Planned Unit Developments, Site Condominium developments, and plat developments where the underlying zoning district is the R-1 Zoning District.” Bill Maschewske presented Planning Commission minutes from September 12, 2023 which tended to indicate the Planning Commission had decided to only require public water and not sanitary sewer for the above developments. This issue will be further researched by Planner Ransford, Shawn Martinie, and Bill Maschewske and will be discussed at a later date.

Bill Maschewske also noted that, as requested by the Planning Commission, the Water Board has updated the Master Water Plan by including a priority schedule for future extensions of public water. Since the updated Master Land Use Plan includes a copy of the Water Supply System Master Plan dated December 2014, does the Master Land Use Plan need to be updated to include the newly revised Master Water Plan?

Planner Ransford responded that documents are typically included in the Master Land Use Plan that are updated at later dates and it is always the most recent approved version that is valid.

The need for a definition of Agritourism was discussed. An unknown factor is if new buildings should be allowed for this purpose. After reviewing the pros and cons, it was agreed to include in the definition that existing buildings are to be used.

Another open issue from the Agricultural Chapter was the review process of applications for Sod Farms. Per the Zoning Ordinance, applications for Sod Farms are currently reviewed by the Zoning Board of Appeals. This requirement was originally in the 1949 Zoning Ordinance prior to the creation of a Planning Commission, therefore making either the Zoning Board of Appeals or the Township Board the options for review. The Robinson Township Planning Commission was created in 1974. The 1995 Zoning Ordinance retained the Zoning Board of Appeals as the reviewing and deciding body.

After reviewing the proposed text in Section 4.42 Sod Farms in the Zoning Ordinance, Bill Maschewske noted that as written, the Planning Commission was the reviewing and deciding body. To be consistent with previous Township Board direction that elected officials should make all final decisions, it was suggested that the Planning Commission review and make recommendation to the Township Board on Sod Farm Special Use applications, with the Township Board making the final decision. This change was accepted and Planner Ransford is to revise the wording accordingly.

Section 3.63 Lot was the next section discussed. It was noted that the current definition states that each lot shall have one principal building and its accessories. It is known that the Township has approved several site plans for multiple principal buildings on one lot for certain commercial uses. It was agreed that the B-1, B-2, I-1, and I-2 Zoning Districts should permit more than one principal building per lot. Planner Ransford is to revise the text accordingly for Planning Commission and Township Attorney review.

Review of Chapter 3 – Residential Uses

Low Density Residential (Rural Residential District) Strategies

1. Strategy: Adopt or enhance appropriate ordinances to preserve natural features

Section 8.4(A)(1) – Accept revision but change “not” to “or”.

Chapter 3, page 5-- Definition of “Buffer” – It was agreed to add the use of a berm.

Chapter 3, page 8 – Definition of “Development” – Greg Ransford is to check with the Township Attorney if this definition is acceptable.

2. Strategy: Require the layout of new residential developments to be extensions of existing neighborhoods, where possible, applying at least to lot layout, road extensions, and open space plans

All proposed changes and updates were accepted.

3. Strategy: Limit development within the Aquifer Recharge Area identified by Ottawa County’s Groundwater Sustainability Initiative, which development would negatively impact the Recharge Area

Section 4.58 and 8.4(C) – The Planning Commission accepted Section 4.58 previously when reviewing the Agricultural Chapter and approves its reference in Section 8.4(C).

4. Strategy: Review and strengthen density standards that are consistent with the natural capacity of soils to handle on-site septic systems and private water wells and which promote the preservation of the rural character of the Township

The Planning Commission recommends referencing the Soil Limitations for Residential Development without Public Sewer Map and the Ottawa County Groundwater Sustainability Initiative map.

Medium Duty Residential (Residential One-Family District) Strategies

1. Strategy: Adopt or enhance appropriate ordinances to preserve natural features

Section 10.4 – Leave definition of “Subdivision” here.

Section 10.4(B)(1)(a) –Change “not” to “or” and accept revisions.

Section 10.4(B)(1)(d) – Delete “A minimum” and accept revisions.

Section 10.5 – Requires research regarding the requirement for public sewer.

2. Strategy: Require the layout of new residential developments to be extensions of existing neighborhoods, where possible, applying at least to lot layout, road extensions, and open space plans

Section 10.4(B)(1)(d) – Delete “A minimum” and accept changes.

3. Strategy: Limit development within the Aquifer Recharge Area identified by Ottawa County’s Groundwater Sustainability Initiative, which development would negatively impact the Recharge Area

All proposed changes and updates were accepted.

4. Strategy: Require development to utilize open space preservation techniques, clustered housing techniques, and other amenities and features to preserve rural character, protect agricultural property from negative impacts, and protect the environment

All proposed changes and updates were accepted.

5. Strategy: Rezoning to the R-1 Zoning District should not occur without public water and public sanitary sewer present at the property. Exceptions shall be considered for rezoning to address the residential end use of a mining operation , and to address residential development already approved at the time of this Master Plan

Additional research needs to be conducted on the requirement for sanitary sewer.

6. Strategy: Require public water and public sanitary sewer connection for all Planned Unit Developments, Site Condominium developments, and plat developments where the underlying zoning district is the R-1 Zoning District

Further research is required regarding public sanitary sewer.

High Density Residential (Residential Multiple-Family District) Strategies

1. Strategy: Adopt or enhance appropriate ordinances to preserve natural features

Section 11.4(B)(1)(a) -- Replace “not” with “or” and accept changes.

2. Strategy: Require the layout of new residential developments to be extensions of existing neighborhoods, where possible, applying at least to lot layout, road extensions, and open space plans

Section 11.4(B)(1)(d) – Delete “A minimum” and accept changes.

3. Strategy: Limit development within the Aquifer Recharge Area identified by Ottawa County’s Groundwater Sustainability Initiative, which development would negatively impact the Recharge Area

No changes.

4. Require development to utilize open space preservation techniques, clustered housing techniques, and other amenities and features to preserve rural character, protect agricultural property from negative impacts, and protect the environment

Section 11.4(B)(1)(a) – Replace “not” with “or” and accept changes.

5. Strategy: Require public water and public sanitary sewer connection for all Planned Unit Developments, Site Condominium developments, and plat developments where the underlying zoning district is the R-2 Zoning District

Section 11.4(B)(1)(d) – Delete “A minimum” and accept changes.

Additional Provisions and Considerations Not Included in the Strategy List

Section 8.2(G) – Historic Sites – It was agreed not to include a definition of Historic Sites.

Old Business – None

Pay Bills

A motion was made by Lydia Brown and seconded by Michelle Gillespie to pay salaries for the February 13, 2025 Planning Commission meeting (four members present, two absent, one position vacant).

The motion carried unanimously with two members absent and one position vacant.

Adjournment

A motion was made by Lydia Brown and seconded by Michelle Gillespie to adjourn the Planning Commission meeting at 9:07 PM.

The motion carried unanimously with two members absent and one position vacant.

Respectfully submitted,

Bill Maschewske, Secretary
Robinson Township Planning Commission

Attachments:

February 13, 2025 Planning Commission Sign-In Sheet

Memorandum from Gregory Ransford, MPA, of Fresh Coast Planning dated February 1, 2025 regarding Zoning Ordinance Rewrite – Residential Strategies