

VEVAY TOWNSHIP PLANNING COMMISSION
Special Joint Meeting with the Board of Trustees
Monday, November 10, 2014
Vevay Township Hall – 5:00 p.m.

MINUTES

Members present: Jack Cady, Roger Cargill, John Lazet, Pattie McNeilly, Ilene Thayer, and Bruce Walker. Bruce Walker sat as a member of the Board of Trustees.

Member absent: None.

Other Persons present: Board of Trustees, Planning Consultant Mark Eidelson, and legal counsel David Revore.

I. Call to Order: The meeting was called to order at 5:00 p.m. by Chair Thayer.

II. Pledge of Allegiance

The Commission and the Board joined in reciting the Pledge of Allegiance.

III. Approval of Agenda

The agenda was accepted as presented.

IV. Public Comment

There was no public comment.

V. Correspondence from Community Planner Mark Eidelson re: Development of New Master Plan Alternatives

Mr. Eidelson had previously distributed a letter to the Township Board of Trustees and the Planning Commission, dated November 5, 2014, that proposed three alternative approaches to preparing a new Master Plan. Law requires the Plan to be reviewed every 5 years, and the Commission must determine if any changes are needed. The Commission performed that review over their past few meetings, and has asked the Board for permission to proceed in drafting a new Plan. His letter addresses possible approaches, and costs associated with each approach.

Mr. Eidelson – Alternative A would first entail an orientation meeting to discuss tasks and go over the process for addressing those tasks. As the law has changed since the current Plan was adopted, a new Plan is recommended. The motion from the Commission to the Board lists many of the items they recommend being reviewed. The second step would be working through how each issue should be addressed, likely involving several meetings. A blueprint or guide of Commission thinking would then be available for Mr. Eidelson to use in drafting a new Master Plan. Step three would be the Commission going through the new draft Plan to ensure it does indeed address each issue as proposed. Step four would be preparation of a final draft, or modified drafts until the Commission is comfortable in requesting a public hearing.

Project fees for the fundamental review and updating is estimated to cost between \$13,250 and \$15,250. What is not included in his November 5, 2014 letter is a time schedule. It can take 12-14 months until a public hearing can be scheduled. Input from any public hearing may lengthen the final time frame.

Mr. Eidelson - Alternative B would include Alternative A plus directed public input on the Plan, using a regulated format to ensure that time is used wisely and the best input is received. These would not be formal meetings, and so no decisions would be made. He recommended Board and Commission members sit at each table of a public input meeting to take notes. He would then prepare a tabulation of the input received. Estimated costs would be \$2,300 - \$2,800 above and beyond the costs of Alternative A. Mr. Revore - advised if a quorum of either the Board or the Commission is present, it would be best to post the meeting under the Open Meetings Act.

Mr. Eidelson - Alternative C would entail a Township-wide survey in order to assess resident's thoughts. He could develop and reproduce the survey in a form that would reduce handling, mailing, and postage costs. Total estimated costs are \$3,300 - \$3,800 above and beyond the costs of Alternative A.

Mr. Eidelson – Regardless of which approach is used by the Township in developing a draft Plan, the Board, would need to approve the distribution required by law to neighboring governmental jurisdictions. Law then allows a public hearing on a revised Plan 42 days after mailing out copies to neighboring communities, while a proposed new Plan requires a 63 day waiting period. Use of the word “new” does not necessarily mean significant changes. He has advised the Commission to adopt a new Plan as the current Plan was adopted under a previous law, and the Plan should be in conformity with current law.

Mr. Eidelson - input from the neighboring jurisdictions or the public might lead to revisions; if they are substantive, a new draft would need to again be distributed to neighboring governmental entities. Board Clerk Kean – stated that the Township has been keeping track of which governmental units have been mailing the Township to meet these same requirements, and would appreciate Mr. Eidelson providing an accurate list of who should be notified of proposed changes in the Plan. Mr. Eidelson – agreed to provide the law detailing who is required to be notified.

Trustee Walker – asked if experience in the past 10 years indicate anything that needs to be coordinated with neighboring jurisdictions? Mr. Eidelson –recommended always knowing what neighboring jurisdictions are planning, including perhaps looking at their Master Plans, whether they are older or in the process of being changed. Google maps can give an idea of land uses in surrounding areas, and he is happy to look at surrounding jurisdictions on behalf of the Commission. Supervisor Howe – responded that the City of Mason is happy to work with the Township as we go through our review process. Chair Thayer – indicated she wants to see how the Mason City Master Plan Maps coincide with Township maps

Mr. Eidelson – commented that law establishes the Planning Commission as the default approver of the Plan, but the law also allows the Board to formally vote to designate itself as the final approving authority. If the Board does not authorize itself as the final approving authority, it cannot amend the Plan but would have to forward its concerns to the Commission, which would then have to work through those concerns. If the concerns are substantive, the timetable would be longer and the cost would be higher, potentially involving another public hearing. All correspondence from him would be addressed to both the Commission and the Board.

Mr. Eidelson – advised the Board to make the decision at the beginning of the process, and then informing the Commission of the decision. Some Boards do become approving authorities, some don't. No public hearing can be held until the Plan has been distributed, which requires the approval of the Board, effectively giving the Board veto power until points of difference are addressed. Ultimately the Board has to sanction the Plan, even if not officially approving the draft. The Commission, after a public hearing, might make minor changes that would not rise to the level of needing Board review. In his experience, some Boards trust the competence of the Commission, some do not. Perhaps two thirds of Boards, in his experience, have opted to be the final approving authority. Mr. Revore advised that if the Board wants to be the final approving authority, that vote should be taken soon, as the Board must approve the distribution of the Plan.

Mr. Eidelson - would not recommend legal counsel reviewing documents until at least the first draft has been prepared. Mr. Revore – agreed that he does not envision legal review until the final draft, or just before.

Mr. Eidelson - During the last development of the Plan a decade ago, both surveys and community meetings were utilized. The Commission at that time developed several possible land use scenarios that were then taped to the walls of the Township hall, and residents could come in, review, and comment on the proposals. He does not see a need to do so again. A future visioning Township Meeting would be during one evening.

Comm. Cady – the Township went through a comprehensive overhaul 10 years ago, and he sees the current review as being more of a technical nature and updating. Would the current review need the same approach as a decade ago? What level of public input does he see being needed? Mr. Eidelson – The issues identified by the Commission go beyond “housekeeping”, and he’s already seeing that what may initially seem simple is not. The number of estimated meetings per task is based on the nature of the possible changes. Updates can involve a surprising level of involvement. Public input may be very similar to 10 years ago, but a new meeting is good for promoting transparency and recording the process and input. Chair Thayer – commented that as 10 years have passed, some community input would be appreciated.

Mr. Revore – asked if input is better from meetings or from surveys? Mr. Eidelson – commented that he believes a survey is more valuable for specific input as the questions are directed, and so the input would be directed. A meeting is more focused on talking about what residents like and don't like, or desire or don't desire. Accurately ascertaining overall response from a community is always an issue, and a survey will likely have far more response than a meeting. He would recommend at least one hearing so that residents would know that public input was indeed requested and received. Trustee Walker – commented that he is uncomfortable with just doing Alternative A without having public input fairly early in the process. Board Clerk Kean – noted the cost of a Township mailing is about \$500; if a return stamp is included the costs would be doubled. Supervisor Howe – commented that he is supportive of using pre-stamped return envelopes. Comm. Cady – noted that the last survey did not have significant response, so it was re-sent with a \$100 drawing as an incentive. Comms. Lazet and Cargill – concurred in utilizing a survey. Mr. Revore – recommended any survey have space for comments, or allow for a return email to provide additional input.

Mr. Revore – asked if the goal tonight is to have an actual vote by the Board on direction? Supervisor Howe – stated that he sees the benefits of both the Board and the Commission talking

and listening to each other tonight, and would like a consensus tonight on how both want to proceed. He does not anticipate a Board vote tonight, but if there is a consensus there might be.

Trustee Walker – asked if the costs come from the Commission budget? Supervisor Howe – responded that there is no allocated funding this fiscal year, but next year the Board will need to budget for costs. Mr. Eidelson – in response to questions responded that excluding maps, and assuming the new Plan is roughly close to the first draft, reproduction costs should be small – perhaps \$50 per draft, though there would be a cost for his time. Presentation size and colored maps, such as the current zoning map, could be \$300 per map per presentation. Chair Thayer – noted that there is a cost for additional meetings. ~~Comm. Cady – a future visioning meeting could cost over \$2000, and not include any costs for a survey.~~ He believes a survey would provide more substantive input. (Above sentence deleted at time of approval 12-3-14)

Supervisor Howe – noted that costs are reflective of Township direction for the next 5 to 10 years. An extra \$5,000-7,000 may be well worth the cost given the time period the Plan is meant to cover. Board Clerk Kean agrees. Supervisor Howe – envisions using a variety of methods of seeking input. The Township would need to budget something more than \$20,000, though that may not all be spent. Quality of input is important, and it sounds like a paper survey would be the cornerstone of receiving the best input.

Trustee Shaw – asked if social media would provide a quicker or cheaper response? Mr. Eidelson – perhaps a survey could be set up on the website. Having a survey in the mailbox can be more persuasive for many people. His concern would be with people providing input more than once. The Township email newsletter could encourage attendance at Commission meetings, or be used in providing input to the Commission via an established format, with timelines. Board Clerk Kean – commented that the Township is developing a Facebook page that could be utilized. Trustee Walker – outreach could start with an email list, and paper mail to those without an email address on record. The email list could be leveraged to reduce mailing costs.

Chair Thayer – noted that under current law, a zoning plan is required. Mr. Eidelson – responded that law requires a Master Plan to have a zoning plan if the Township administers its own Zoning Ordinance; the current Township Plan does not include a zoning plan. He advised adding a short section on how the Zoning Ordinance will implement future land uses. This would not be a complicated provision, but it is important to be included, and is currently lacking.

Board Treasurer Sherwood – sounds like a consensus on using a survey, and she supports a deadline for returning responses. What would be the timeframe for developing and mailing a survey? Mr. Eidelson – the Board needs to first decide which Alternative(s) it wants to pursue. If that is decided in December, he would prepare and submit a draft survey after a January meeting with the Commission to talk through issues. It would likely be March or April before it would be ready for distribution. He would recommend a two week time for residents to respond. Board Clerk Kean – recommended a survey being finished before school is closed for the year, and after “snow birds” have returned. Trustee Walker – commented that the Township could still work on the Plan before survey results are received.

Supervisor Howe, after conducting an informal poll of all present - summarized tonight’s joint meeting as having heard everyone on both the Board and the Commission express a consensus on the Township being compliant with the law, following Alternative B plus adding a mailed survey and electronic means of requesting input, researching the plans in surrounding

communities, and addressing the issues raised by the Commission in their motion to the Board. He does not hear support at this time for a future visioning meeting.

Chair Thayer - a decade ago there were focus group meetings, such as with the farming community. Comm. Cady – at that time there was concern with changing the size of residential parcels, and the Commission wanted to discern farming interests. The goal was to avoid last minute input that might be harder to incorporate in the draft Plan. Trustee Walker – commented that he remembered there being a public meeting on the third draft, with large public turnout. Chair Thayer – believes the meetings were not as helpful as the surveys due to significantly fewer residents being involved, but they could be useful for input. Comm. Cady – meetings allowed for answering a lot of unanswered questions that needed to be addressed in person. Mr. Eidelson – noted that input might be unanimous for maintaining rural character, but if that is implemented through local zoning, farmers are most affected. He and Comm. Cady had some individual meetings with farming families at that time. Chair Thayer – commented that the input of farmers last time changed the direction on preservation of farmland.

Mr. Eidelson – noted that the survey last time asked folks to identify the size of their largest parcel, in order to consider the opinions of large land owners separately from residential or small parcel owners. If no significant changes are intended, meetings may not be needed.

VI. Any Other Business that may lawfully come before the Commission

No other business was discussed.

VII. Additional Public Comment

There was no public comment.

VIII. Adjournment

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 6:46 p.m.

John Lazet, Secretary