

WHITEWATER TOWNSHIP PLANNING COMMISSION
MINUTES OF SPECIAL MEETING
March 11, 2022

Call to Order at 7:00 p.m.

Roll Call: In person: Darrow, Jacobson, Keaton, Mangus, Wroubel

Absent: Dean

Unfilled seat: Township Board Representative

Also in attendance: Zoning Administrator Hall, Chris Grobbel-Consultant and Recording Secretary MacLean

Set / Adjust Agenda: Set

Declaration of Conflict of Interest: None.

Public Comment:

Randy and Sue Mielnik, Wheeler Oaks, here for the Master Plan discussion

Vicki Beam, opposed to the proposed Baggs Road development noting the rural character, noise, lights, etc.

Eileen Cianciolo, 11670 Baggs Road, opposed to the proposed development, noting barriers to put up a horse barn

Denise Peltonen, setbacks, roads/intersections and green zones around developments for rural character

Connie Hymore, 6761 Baggs Road, opposed to the proposed Baggs Road development noting the Master Plan and the zoning ordinance

Mangus notes that the proposed development is very early in the process. Will help people understand that some things are a use by right per state law.

Reports:

Zoning Administrator Report, Hall: None

Chair's Report, Mangus: Dean has formally tendered his resignation from the Planning Commission. He will be missed.

Township Board Representative, vacant: NA

ZBA Representative, Wroubel: None.

Committee Reports: None.

Additional Items: None.

Special Meeting Business:

1. Article 25, Special Use Permit Amendment, draft update: Got the edited copy back from Mr. Grobbel. This item has previously been set for a public hearing in April.

Presented the updated Site Plan Review so the two items in Article 25 can be handled in one public hearing.

MOTION by Darrow second by Jacobson to set the Article 25, Site Plan Review / Special Use Permit Amendment, for public hearing at the April 6, 2022, meeting.

Roll Call: Mangus-yes; Wroubel-yes; Keaton-yes; Darrow-yes; Jacobson-yes

2. Master Plan Review consultation, Grobbel, demographics and transportation comments have been addressed in the new handout. A Master Plan (MP) is a vision of how you would like your community to look. It is a 20+ year plan with reviews every five years. Five areas that are required that are missing in your current MP. These are being addressed first, the four that have been presented, economic development plan, blight, demographics, transportation plus the zoning plan – how the MP relates to zoning will be coming. There will be a questionnaire for appointed and elected officials and there will be surveys and public outreach planned with the community. Looking to get an on-line survey on the website next month. We will update the land use map.

Transportation: The biggest concern he has heard is the Complete Streets concept. All forms of transportation must be considered, per the state requirements. Grobbel has updated the verbiage to meet the recommended comments. These are going to be recommended rather than required, use the word “may” rather than “shall”.

Mangus would like a chart / map list of roads and road types.

Jacobson has a list of road corrections. These can be presented separately, after the meeting.

(Grobbel indicates this is off topic: The state statute says PUDs and Condominium developments have to be allowed. The township gets to put good rules together. Grobbel notes that he has a presentation he can do regarding this very issue.)

Community Demographics: A couple noted items have been corrected in the handout at this meeting. We have had a significant increase in population. Growth has occurred even since the 2020 census.

Read through and discussion. Census data presented. Mangus notes that it can be difficult to read – do we have to have all of this? Grobbel notes that these are census data definitions for clarity. Do these need to be in here? Yes, if you want people to understand it.

Jacobson notes that some of the information seems intrusive and being available for everyone out on the web. It is noted that all of this is public information on-line and is required to be assembled in a comprehensive way in the MP. That is the question: do we have to have it? Yes – it is in the statute.

Hall notes this is important information for planning, planning for growth, planning for young families, planning for a more senior demographic, etc.

Grobbel notes that you have to do planning if you are going to do zoning and if you are doing planning you have to include demographics.

Jacobson notes that he opposes breaking it down into color/ethnicity. You are a citizen or you are not. Grobbel indicates that this is just census data. Mangus: it covers race but not citizenship. Jacobson notes it should not be about race. Grobbel notes this is just census data from the Federal government. Jacobson: can we word it differently than they word it? Grobbel-no. Mangus: do we have to have an interpretive paragraph or can we simply have the table that provides the data?

Grobbel indicates he has been taken aback by this. Reading through the paragraph – I did not invent the categories; these are census categories.

Jacobson: at the local level of government, we are the strongest at the federal level we are the weakest. Would like to make the changes at the local level and would prefer a statement that we have a diverse community.

Grobbel notes that we do not, at 94.7% white it is not diverse.

Mangus: is it possible to have the intro paragraph state the composition is similar to Grand Traverse County?

Grobbel: that is not a MP I am going to provide and it makes no sense. If you are going to be this strange on race, we are not going to be able to work together on the project. He notes that Italians were not considered white until the 1940's, LatinX people are being considered white – one by one. These are social constructs imposed by the world on us, self-reported to us in the census. This is not the place for discussion of concerns of race and color.

Mangus: it is not that we have a problem with persons of color; it is that we have no problem with persons of color and discussion of racial and ethnic composition. Why are we doing a breakdown and analysis by race?

Grobbel says “wow” and that he will tender his resignation. These statements are things that cause me great concern. This is totally inappropriate. I have a right to stand here and say that, too. He notes that this conversation is problematic, hopes it is recorded.

Jacobson notes that we don't call people French/Americans or Italian/Americans, we don't label them by the color, they are just Americans.

Grobbel: why did you bring this up in the first place? I don't know what this is about. This is just self-reported census data.

Mangus: why do we have to have an interpretation? Why can't we just have the data? The paragraph compares to surrounding areas.

Grobbel: they are words interpreting/describing the table.

Wroubel: I don't understand the point of any of this.

Grobbel left the building at 8:06.

Wroubel notes that this is just data from the census that is required for the MP. I don't understand the argument. It is there. It is data. Leave it alone. This is census data of the US government, period.

Mangus notes the paragraph is interpretation.

Keaton: We have to be able to have a discussion, everyone has an opinion.

Wroubel: It has nothing to do with it. We have a homogenous community.

Jacobson notes that we can encourage them to see that.

Wroubel: we cannot do that in this document. This is what it is, it is the data.

Keaton reiterated needing to be able to ask questions.

Mangus: We have to be able to ask questions. If we cannot ask questions on that one, there is a lot of other stuff that will be a problem.

Mangus asked Hall if there is a problem using the documents that have been received.

Hall indicates that these sections have been paid for.

Mangus notes that we will need to look for someone else to assist with the MP.

Mangus notes that this has to be a Whitewater Township (WT) document. The proposed economic development plan has nothing to do with WT, doesn't mention a single thing that fits WT.

Consensus to continue discussion using this information.

Make it more simple and readable, easy to understand.

Run through and discussion of the charts and verbiage in Community Demographics making changes to the interpretive paragraphs.

Wroubel notes there is no need to change any of this. This is just background and data and it is nothing to do with actual planning. It is background information to be used for planning for the future of the township in making it a more homogenous community. Taking all this time for nothing. No reason for any of this. Don't agree with all of it but it is what the government provided for categories. We can't change it.

Response: we were just asking questions and it is changing the interpretive paragraphs not the actual data.

Wroubel doesn't want anything to do with this. Wroubel quit and indicates he will turn in his computer next week. There was no need for this. We hired an expert and we have lost a very good consultant.

Mangus responds: This is not Chris Grobbel's Master Plan, this is Whitewater Township's Master Plan. He (Grobbel) did a great job addressing the transportation section.

Wroubel says he enjoyed working with the PC but cannot be part of this.

Mangus: I don't think Grobbel understood what we were saying. No one proposed removing data. We have to ask questions.

Discussion continued back and forth.

Wroubel notes that Grobbel indicated that the information has to be in the plan and we should have just left it there, moved on and look at the future.

Mangus asked Wroubel to stay to be able to take public comment and close the meeting with a quorum. Wroubel agrees to stay. [The four remaining would have constituted a quorum]

Hall reiterates what was stated previously, we will have a packed agenda in April. We will have the Classic Equine Veterinary Site Plan on the agenda for a public hearing.

Public Comment:

Randy Mielnik is a professional planner. Don't know how to take the meeting. Data and census are needed to develop the township's planning. Engage the community. Engage the MDOT and the road commission. Big changes to the zoning have to be addressed in the Master Plan.

Vicki Beam: Carl, you are valued, please reconsider resigning. Surprised and shocked by the comments tonight.

Township seems to not have a MP and things need to be put on pause. Opposed to the Baggs Road proposed project.

Connie Hymore: opposed to the proposed Baggs Road development. Beside myself by this meeting. This was insane.

This is an embarrassment for our community. The gentleman who left was paid for with taxpayer money. You continued with his work and he had no input to answer questions. Makes me question being a part of this community.

Eileen Cianciolo: regardless of the development on Baggs Rd, the way this was handled by people who are supposed to represent the community is absolutely unacceptable. This will be communicated to the rest of the community.

Mr. Haskell: wanted to learn about the process and best way to engage with it. As a committee I don't think you will be able to engage with the community. Think about how you can do better.

Commission Discussion/Comments: Mangus: none of us anticipated the meeting going like this. We have to be able to discuss and question the interpretation of the data. I ask for leniency from the public. The PC is made up of many new

members / citizen planners. Everyone is learning.

Jacobson: have to be able to ask questions.

Keaton: the professionals know what has to be in there, we ask questions because we don't know the answers.

Vicki Beam: the comment that the PC is learning reiterates that there needs to be a pause.

Next Regular Meeting is scheduled for April 6, 2022.

Agenda: Public hearings on Article 25 and Classic Equine Veterinary Site Plan; add setbacks and if time allows the zoning map and marihuana zoning ordinance.

Adjournment: 9:05 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted
Lois MacLean,
Recording Secretary