

## **ELK RAPIDS TOWNSHIP PLANNING COMMISSION**

Meeting Minutes – Tuesday July 21, 2009

Chairwoman Mischel called the meeting to order at 6:30 PM at the Government Center, 315 Bridge Street.

Present: Jean Derenzy, William Larson, Jim Lundy, Emile Sabty, Shen Smith and Renee Mischel.

Absent: Dorance Amos.

Also Present: Leonard Harrett, Zoning Administrator, Larry Nix, Planning Consultant and audience of 2.

**Adoption of Agenda:** Agenda for 7-21-2009 meeting was adopted by consensus.

**Approval of Minutes:**

M/S – Smith/Lundy. Minutes for 6-16-2009 meeting, as corrected, were approved unanimously.

**Public Forum:** None

**Old Business**

**Sewer & Water Joint Planning Update**

Ms. Barbra Mullaly from the Village PC spoke of a joint TWP/Vlg cooperative work effort on sewer & septic systems. A forum on the subject is potentially scheduled for September 22, 2009 during the Village Planning Commission meeting. Speakers on the subject are scheduled for the forum. Once firming, notices will go out.

The Chair apprised the Commission that as requested, she spoke with the TWP and advised them of informative talks about sewers and our roll in that, and it will not be an applied sewer discussion at all. The TWP was hesitant about the Planning Commission getting involved in 'sewers' as it is really a Township Government function.

**Elk Rapids Township Community Character – Visioning**

Upon the Chair request, Mr. Larry Nix, Planning Consultant, reviewed a Summary of 4-27-2009 Visioning Meeting and past result summaries of different surveys 1994-2007. The Visioning Meeting summary review included participants profiles and the most pertinent elements of the survey:

- Controlled Growth, 63.3%.
- Encourage Commercial & Industrial Growth, *along US-31.*
- Preferred Development US-31 outside Village, *more agriculture 43.5%, mixed use 30.4%.*
- Expand Water & Sewer to accommodate growth outside Village, 73.3%.
- Keep agricultural land the same, 65.2%.
- More Local agricultural products in local stores, 44.4%

In as much as the Township never advocated industrial use along US-31, it was felt that the answer to that part of the survey on encouraging commercial and industrial growth along US-31 was misleading. The survey did not differentiate between commercial and industrial use which leads us to believe that this answer may have resulted from past Village related surveys in which emphasis was put on additional industrial space in the Village. This emphasis may have carried and influenced the thinking of the same Village participants in the current visioning survey. With minimal differentiation between commercial and industrial growth those same participants may have carried forward the thought that the only available land for industrial development is on US-31.

Mr. Nix continued with the summary review of the five past studies conducted 1994-2007 that would influence the community character:

- Elk Rapids Community Attitude Survey – 1994.
- US-31 Corridor Study – 1995.
- Antrim County Visioning Session - 2003.
- Elk Rapids Township Master Plan – 2006.
- Elk Rapids Area Community Character Council Report – 2007.

There is a commonality between the different studies that can be utilized, such as:

- People and the residential use is a major asset.
- The natural beauty is another primary asset.
- Mixed uses south of the Village are a common theme that can be looked at from different approaches.
- Maintaining the current character and how to do that, maintaining a fine balance of encouraging growth development, commercial, manufacturing, job opportunities but maintain our world character.

We would look at the Zoning Ordinance rules and regulations and find if they reflect those kinds of ideas. If it does not capture those ideas that are part of our community character which we find important to us, we do not have to respond immediately to rectify them. If the discussed summary makes sense, then we move to identify areas in the Zoning Ordinance that we need to gradually start working on so that our rules are ready to respond to different developments that come our way.

Ms. Smith stated that with the current economy and the near future outlook, mixed use would be important to identify and address. People wanting to earn to maintain their living and pay their expenses can utilize it in a hurry and not have to go through a slow process. By clarifying it, people will be encouraged to venture within that use. Whatever we do, mixed use should maintain the character of our area heritage.

Ms. Derenzy reiterated the need for the inclusion of mixed use in the Zoning Ordinance to be utilized as needed, which is lacking now. Another area lacking, and need inclusion in the Zoning Ordinance is the "Saving Agricultural Land"; this was a high positive response item in the Visioning meeting summary.

Mr. Harrett stated that the Zoning Ordinance includes an extensive chapter on Site Plan Review; but is short on 'architectural specifications and standards' which reflects our community character, that a developer can use.

Chairwoman Mischel stated that some parts of the Zoning Ordinance are done right, others can be improved on. She looks for a more detailed list of what we are doing correctly vs. those we are not, or need improvement. So far three items were identified, but there might be others to be identified and worked on.

Briefly stated, Mr. Nix said that the acceptance of the parameters that make a community character, and the various elements involved, and wanting to see the rules updated to include those ideas and visions is a primary requirement before a Zoning Ordinance and Master Plan list of pros and cons and what is needed to be done is developed. Without that, there would be no need to embark on such an extensive process.

Chairwoman Mischel spoke of what Mr. Nix could prepare for the next meeting. The summary statement reviewed earlier covered different surveys and studies. Considering our discussion, were the important thoughts that should be included resolved, and are we firm about those thoughts? We can start from there.

Mr. Nix stated that his next step would be to take what has been discussed and put together a one page summary showing what the primary elements are of a would be character vision of Elk Rapids Township. After that, he would look at the Zoning Ordinance and the Master Plan to create a review list for making changes that would hopefully update the documents to a desired order.

Mr. Harrett spoke about the visioning study saying that, in general he doesn't think Elk Rapids is ever going to see a huge size retail store. We are a bedroom community, and we are an agriculturally law abiding community. We don't have a huge factory type business; we are not on any cross roads or any major highways intersection. If we are to do anything, we should focus more on the small single owner type of development. I don't fear that we are going to be faced with the huge type retail store in this community; we

are too small to support that. Local support would be practically nonexistent for at least 6 months of the year. Let us not waste our effort writing developmental type language and creating major restrictions on such developments, I don't see it happening in this community. It is small businesses and industries that should be encouraged. Our time and effort should be focused and concentrated in that direction because they are the ones that seek communities like ours to locate at.

#### SOB Ordinance Planning Consultant Review

Mr. Nix stated that the Village had adopted an SOB Ordinance with a Licensing Ordinance. The intent is to coordinate our Ordinance with theirs on this subject. Other studies will be considered for best results and affirmative findings. Mr. Francis of the Village who is well versed on this process has volunteered to speak to us, hopefully at the next meeting. I'll also have items for review at that time.

#### Wireless Telecommunications Towers and Antennas

Mr. Nix stated that upon review of the Ordinance Chapter 15, basically it is good, with a few things to look at. The ordinance improperly uses special use permits, which as a rule we do not use, we call them special exceptions. A few modifications have to be made to make it work, which would not take long, but would bring it up to date.

M/S – Smith/Mischel. I make a motion to authorize the Planning Consultant to put together for review the required changes and corrections to update the Ordinance Chapter 15 for the next meeting. **Yes 6-0-0.**

**New Business**           None.

#### **Correspondence**

Chairwoman Mischel informed the Commission of two meetings taking place in surrounding areas and invited any one interested to attend.

Mr. Sabty read a letter received from Ms. Lesley Lee of Pine Hollow thanking the Planning Commission for the time they spent working on the Pine Hollow project.

**Public Comment**       None.

#### **Members Comments**

Mr. Sabty apprised the Commission of the Sign Lighting Standards Ordinance Amendment which was approved by the County on 7-7-2009. The Township Board will review it for approval on 8-11-2009.

As there was no further business Chairwoman Mischel adjourned the meeting at 8:10 PM.

The next scheduled meeting will be on Tuesday August 18, 2009 at 6:30 PM in the Government Center, 315 Bridge Street.

E. S. Sabty, Secretary  
7-21-2009

**Minutes Approved 8-18-2009**

Minutes are subject to approval at the next regular Planning Commission Meeting.