

CHARTER TOWNSHIP OF KALAMAZOO PLANNING COMMISSION *ANNUAL REPORT – 2014*

In compliance with Section 308 of the Michigan Zoning Enabling Act (Public Act 110 of 2006, as amended), the Planning Commission has prepared the following report documenting the Commission’s activities for 2014 with recommendations for further action in 2015 and beyond. It is submitted to the Township Board for review and consideration for development of its own work plans and budgets for the coming years.

PLANNING & ZONING APPLICATIONS

REZONING REQUESTS

Total 2014		3	
Address	Owner	Districts	Date
3635 East Main Street	Beeler Motorsports	C Local Business to C-1 Local Business	May 1
2815 Gull Road	Taylor	A Residential to B-2 Residential	May 1
8 Parcels on Gull Road	Various	A Residential to RB-2	June 5

In May, Beeler Motorsports requested rezoning of a property with an existing building on East Main Street from C to C-1. The impetus for the request was to expand the uses available for the site, particularly auto repair. This use would still require special exception use review, which would provide an opportunity to address concerns raised by neighbors during the rezoning hearing about particular uses on the site. To date, the applicant has not requested any C-1 uses although the rezoning was approved.

Also at the May meeting, a rezoning request was heard for 2815 Gull Road to rezone the property from A to B-2. The property and all surrounding properties were in the A district. A single family rental, the owner was facing challenges finding renters or purchasers for the home located on busy Gull Road. Concerns were raised about spot zoning and impacts of the proposed rezoning on other A-zone properties. The hearing in May was tabled so other properties along Gull Road could be included in the rezoning request as they are similar in use and situation. At the June meeting, a total of eight parcels were considered for rezoning and were recommended for RB-2 zoning by a 4-2 vote.

ORDINANCE AMENDMENTS

Total 2014		0
Subject	Decision	Date
<i>None</i>		

There were no Zoning Ordinance amendments proposed in 2014. As will be discussed later, the Planning Commission spent 2014 reviewing the entire Zoning Ordinance in preparation for a comprehensive update project in 2015. Therefore, the Commission was reluctant to initiate any amendment efforts in anticipation of the upcoming project.

SPECIAL EXCEPTIONS

Total Reviews 2014			4	
Address	Applicant	Use	PC Decision	Date
3738 East Main Street	Dando's Rental Hall	Banquet Hall	Approved	Oct. 2
1527 Orchard Avenue	Hinkley	Accessory Structure Size	Approved	Oct. 2
1801 West G Avenue	Hazelhoff	Accessory Structure Size	Approved	Nov. 6
238 West Mosel Avenue	Flying Dog Garage	Auto Repair Facility	Approved	Dec. 4

2014 continued the trend shown in 2013 of reduced activity in terms of special exception uses having further reduced from five to four applications. This certainly does not mean the Commission was not busy, just that their meetings were not filled with special exception use reviews.

Although each of the requests were approved, all were approved with a healthy list of conditions most of which required subsequent follow up with Township Staff to ensure compliance with Planning Commission requirements. The Flying Dog Garage has completed its improvements and is open for business; the other three are still in the permitting or construction phase at this time.

Total Renewed Permits 2014		6
Applicant	PC Decision	Date
Superior Gravel	Approved	Feb. 6
Consumers Concrete (1800 Ravine & 1100 Nazareth)	Approved	June 5
Vlietstra / Hillside	Approved	June 5
Stoneco of Michigan	Approved	Aug. 7
Aggregate Resources	Approved	Dec. 4

Existing gravel mining permits are required to be reviewed annually. The six mining operations appeared before the Commission for their annual reviews, and each was approved for continued operation for 12 months. For most, there were no significant issues that came from these discussions.

The Vlietstra facility was again an exception with hopes that 2014 represented the end of a transition for that site. In January, the property owners appeared before the Commission requesting permission to maintain the permit for mining at that property under their operation. The previous operator was no longer operating at the site. In June, they returned with a new lessee, Balkema Sitework and Development, with a strategy for this entity to take over the special exception use permit. Inspection of the site revealed initial work had already resulted in improvements to the site, and the Commission was pleased to see a strategy in place.

Peter's Construction does not operate a gravel mine but did receive permission to store broken concrete and fill land at the corner of North Westnedge and Mosel. As part of that approval, one of the conditions was that the site would be inspected and the permit reviewed by the Planning Commission as necessary. The Commission conducted a review of the facility in 2013 but determined a review was not necessary in 2014 due to compliance with ordinance requirements and conditions of approval.

ADDITIONAL ACCOMPLISHMENTS

MASTER PLAN UPDATE

Having done the bulk of the hard work and effort developing the language for the update to the Master Plan in 2013, early 2014 was spent going through the regimented process of review and approval. A joint meeting was held between the Township Board and Planning Commission in February to ensure consensus on the Plan's goals and vision presented in the update. Following a public hearing in March, the Plan was adopted by the Township Board in August.

ZONING ORDINANCE UPDATE

With the completion of the Master Plan Update, the Commission turned its attention to the Zoning Ordinance. A project this substantial requires outside assistance and therefore would need to wait until adequate funds were budgeted. In the interim, the Commission undertook a thorough review of the current Ordinance by reporting back to the Commission at each meeting elements of specific, limited, assigned sections of the Ordinance that they liked, disliked, were confused by, should be kept, and/or should be eliminated. These comments were documented and will provide a good base of understanding to a consultant upon initiation of a comprehensive update project for the Zoning Ordinance.

PARKS AND RECREATION MASTER PLAN

A subcommittee of Planning Commission members worked closely with Township Staff and the Parks Commissioner to develop a five-year Parks and Recreation Master Plan for Kalamazoo Township. Such a plan, approved by the MDNR allows the Township to apply for and receive state park grants from the Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund and the Land and Water Conservation Fund.

The Plan provides a description of the recreational resources in and around the Township as well as the stated parks and recreation needs of the community. Using this and the public input received through the planning process, goals and objectives were developed that guide an action plan for implementation. The Plan was thoroughly reviewed by the Planning Commission and approved by the Township Board in January, 2015.

MIXED USE ZONING

The Zoning Administrator presented the Commission with information regarding an increase in requests for mixed use zoning within the Township. The requests involve primarily houses also being used for offices or other commercial ventures with impacts that would exceed the current requirements for home occupations. While not appropriate in all districts, it could be very useful in commercial and transitional districts to build density and vitality along busy corridors. The Commission agreed this is a priority and asked Mr. Milliken to try to come up with recommendations.

ADDITIONAL ROLES

RECREATION COMMITTEE

The Planning Commission also serves as the Recreation Committee for the Township. Charles Rothrock, Steve Leuty, and Bob VanderKlok all served on this committee during the year. The Recreation Committee made several significant accomplishments during 2014, most significant of course being the completion and adoption of a Parks and Recreation Master Plan. Going forward, the committee will aim to implement that plan and apply for grant funding through DNR as a result of the new plan.

BROWNFIELD REDEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY

The members of the Planning Commission also serve as the Brownfield Redevelopment Authority. This group held one meeting in January to elect officers. It also discussed whether or not the group needed to continue meeting or whether its functions were better performed at the County level.

MEETINGS AND ATTENDANCE

MEETINGS

The Planning Commission had 11 regular meetings in 2014. There were no special meetings held. A Joint Meeting was held with the Township Board in February to discuss the Master Plan.

The tally of 12 meetings does not count the Sexual Harassment Policy meeting held at the Township Hall that all Commission members attended. In addition, various members attended a variety of training sessions throughout the year.

As shown here, the Planning Commission members are clearly very dedicated and are committed to their role with health issues causing the majority of absences from members.

ATTENDANCE

Commissioner	Meetings Attended
Robert VanderKlok (Chair/ZBA Liaison)	12 of 12
Sarah Milne (Vice-Chair)	7 of 12
Henry Dingemans (Secretary)	12 of 12
Steven Leuty (Township Board Liaison)	12 of 12
Charles Rothrock	12 of 12
Robert Talbot	12 of 12
Carol Waszkiewicz	10 of 12

LOOKING AHEAD

One of the purposes of the Annual Report is to look ahead at 2015 and anticipate those items that the Planning Commission desires to address or work on over the next 12 months and beyond. Although it is impossible to predict everything that will arise in the next year, based on issues that have arisen over the past several months and current problems in the community, the Commission is aware of certain items that must be addressed in the near future to resolve these problems.

Based on this, the Commission has identified the following goals for the next 12 months and beyond for the Planning Commission and Township overall:

- Update the Zoning Ordinance. An RFP has been issued and proposals are anticipated in April from consultants to assist with a comprehensive update to the Township Zoning Ordinance. Efforts taken by the Commission over the past year to review and provide feedback on the current Ordinance will prove very helpful as that process begins. Through the course of this update, the Commission will look to increase opportunities for mixed use development in order to spur redevelopment and increase neighborhood vitality.
- Parks and Recreation Improvements. Having completed the Parks and Recreation Master Plan, the Township now has a five year plan for improvements to the Township recreation facilities. The Township is also now eligible for grant funding from the Department of Natural Resources. Such funding could lead to substantial improvements to one or more of the Township park facilities in the Township.
- The City completed the first phase of improvements on BL-94 as proposed in the multi-jurisdictional beautification plan. The Township should continue to work

with its partners – City of Kalamazoo, Kalamazoo County, and MDOT – on the implementation of the plan along this corridor.

- Having completed a Non-Motorized Plan for the Township, the community should now work to implement that plan through partnerships with other entities, improvements in conjunction with road projects and other improvements as well as through grant funding.
- Work with Kalamazoo County, other agencies, and/or private foundations to fund various projects in the community.
- Encourage State to develop a full interchange at the intersection of Business Route 131 and US-131, which would create increased economic development opportunities in the northern portion of the Township.
- Update the Capital Improvement Plan.

A variety of these projects exceed the scope and budget traditionally assigned to the Planning Commission. Funding could be sought through grants or other partner agencies. The remaining items can be accomplished working internally with the typical budget allocation made for the Planning Commission in the Township budget.