

# CHARTER TOWNSHIP OF KALAMAZOO PLANNING COMMISSION ANNUAL REPORT – 2013

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 2013 with recommendations for further action in 2014. 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 2013		2	
Address	Owner	Districts	Date
2038-2042 West Main Street	McDermott / Klett	B Residential to RB-2 Restricted Residential	May 2
Squires / Ravine	Rhoads	D Commercial/Industrial to B Residential	May 2

In the spring, the Planning Commission received two rezoning requests. Along West Main Street, at the corner of West Main Street and Campbell Avenue, the property owner of a vacant residential unit requested rezoning to RB-2 to allow more flexible use of the property. The zoning was consistent with the zoning across the street and with the character of the corridor. However, it was not consistent with the Future Land Use Plan. The adjacent property owner was contacted and sought a similar rezoning. The Planning Commission recommended approval (and Township Board adopted the rezoning) with intention of amending the Future Land Use Map, a process that is under review right now.

The second request was at the southeast corner of Squires Drive and Ravine Road. The large, undeveloped parcel was located in the D Commercial and Industrial District similar to most of the property on the south side of Ravine Road. The owner desired to divide the property and build a home on a portion of the lot with Squires Road frontage. Following the land division, the rezoning request was presented to the Planning Commission and Township Board, and it was adopted.

## ORDINANCE AMENDMENTS

<b>Total 2013</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>Subject</b>	<b>Decision</b>
<i>None</i>	

There were no Zoning Ordinance amendments proposed in 2013. As will be discussed later, the Planning Commission initiated a process to update the entire Zoning Ordinance in 2013 and therefore chose not to focus on minor fixes during that effort.

## SPECIAL EXCEPTIONS

<b>Total Reviews 2013</b>			<b>5</b>	
Address	Applicant	Use	PC Decision	Date
3530 Douglas Ave.	Crystal Dexter	Adult Foster Care Home	Approved	Jan. 3
3635 E. Main St.	Wilson	Banquet Hall / Photo Studio	Approved	Mar. 7
2025 Ravine Rd.	Gritter / McElwain	Accessory Structure Size	Approved	Mar. 7
2300 N. Burdick St.	ABCAT, LLC	Screening Conditions	Approved	Jul. 18
2528 E. Main St.	East Main Church of Christ	Sign with Moving Messages	Approved	Nov. 7

Following several years of increased activity in terms of special exception uses, 2013 marked a decrease in activity as there were five applications (compared to 11 in 2012). This should not be construed to indicate that the Planning Commission was not busy as some of these requests (as well as a couple of the annual reviews described below) required multiple meetings and deeper review than most applications.

In particular, the review for the Banquet Hall / Photo Studio at 3635 East Main Street stretched over a period of four months. Information provided by the applicant was limited at best, adding to the challenge of the review. The Commission ultimately approved the request with several conditions on both the operation of the use and the site plan. As it turns out, the applicant apparently walked away from the proposed project.

Another interesting item was the review of the screening conditions for ABCAT, LLC in July. The applicant originally received special exception use approval for a truck storage yard at the corner of Burdick and Mosel in September, 2011. As part of that

approval, a fence was to be constructed surrounding the property. This had not yet been done, and the applicant requested to speak to the Commission about amending the condition and reducing the requirement to only a portion of the property frontage. The Commission agreed; however, the applicant ultimately built the fence along the entire Burdick and Mosel frontage.

Total Renewed Permits 2013		7
Applicant	PC Decision	Date
Superior Gravel	Approved	Feb. 7
Consumers Concrete (1800 Ravine & 1100 Nazareth)	Approved	June 6
Stoneco of Michigan	Approved	Aug. 1
Top Grade / Vlietstra	Approved	Sept. 5
Peter's Construction	Approved	Sept. 5
Aggregate Resources	Approved	Dec. 5

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.

However, Top Grade / Vlietstra was an exception. In 2012, the renewal of the permit involved a few months discussion as a new operator – Top Grade – was brought onto the property. In 2013, Top Grade announced they would not be renewing their lease with the property owners at the end of the year. Several meetings were held to discuss requirements for reclamation of both the property owner and the operator to be completed prior to lease expiration.

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 five years ago, one of the conditions was that the site would be inspected and the permit reviewed by the Planning Commission as necessary. Having been five years since the original date of approval, the Commission requested an inspection and review, which went smoothly.

## ADDITIONAL ACCOMPLISHMENTS

### *CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT PLAN*

The Michigan Planning Enabling Act requires the Planning Commission to prepare a Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) for use by the Township and other agencies in

implementing the goals of the Township Master Plan. 2009 marked the first year that the Planning Commission prepared a CIP for the Township. In 2013, a draft update of the CIP was prepared in compliance with State requirements. To prepare the update, information was gathered from the Township Clerk, Fire Chief, Police Chief, Engineer, and other department heads to ensure consistency with current plans and budget conditions. The CIP was reviewed by the Planning Commission in March and was approved in April.

### *SCHEID PARK*

The development and formalization of Scheid Park began in October of 2012 when a group of interested residents from the Westwood neighborhood approached the Township Board regarding a vacant property owned by the Township in the Pinehurst Boulevard neighborhood. A sub-committee of the Planning Commission was created to consider the use of the property for recreational purposes. They then developed a Management Plan following a public meeting of neighbors and interested citizens. This management Plan was approved by the Planning Commission in February with the Board ultimately approving the establishment of the Park in the spring. Members of the Commission continue to be involved in the implementation of the Management Plan.

### *ZONING ORDINANCE UPDATE*

One of the primary goals for 2013 was to update the Zoning Ordinance. It was determined that there were several weaknesses in the Ordinance, and a new, more user-friendly document could be created that addressed those weaknesses. The Commission decided to try to accomplish the task internally without seeking outside assistance. A sub-committee was formed to assist Staff with the update. Several meetings were held to discuss and document issues and concerns, and Staff documented their own recommendations. However, by April it had become obvious that the task was too significant to be reasonably accomplished with the resources currently available while also accomplishing other goals and tasks of the Commission. It was also clear, based on the rezonings that had been requested and approved, that an update to the Master Plan was also needed.

### *MASTER PLAN UPDATE*

Three separate events prompted the desire to update the Master Plan. First, the rezoning requests that were approved in May were in conflict with the designations for those properties on the Future Land Use Plan. In order to maintain consistency between the Master Plan and Zoning Ordinance, an amendment to the Future Land Use Plan was necessary. Second, the Master Plan had not been amended in over five years, and State Law requires that the Plan be reviewed at least once every five years.

Finally, the Law also requires that zoning be based on a plan. So, if the Zoning Ordinance were to be updated, it should be based on an updated Plan.

Therefore, in June, the Commission initiated an effort to update the Master Plan. Starting small with a focus on only minor changes, the effort grew as additional items or corrections were located. The amendments focus primarily on updated demographic information, transportation and economic shifts and updates, a focus on community and economic development, and refreshed ideas and discussions for improving the neighborhoods within the Township. The Commission has completed the hard work in developing the draft amendments. It is anticipated that approval of the amendments will be completed in spring of 2014.

### *COMMISSIONER OF THE YEAR*

Definitely noteworthy for 2013 is that Bob VanderKlok was selected by the Michigan Association of Planning (MAP) as the Commissioner of the Year. MAP presented him with the award in front of family and fellow Board and Commission members at their Annual Conference Awards Banquet in Kalamazoo in October.

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## ADDITIONAL ROLES

### *RECREATION COMMITTEE*

The Planning Commission also serves as the Recreation Committee for the Township. Charles Rothrock, Steve Leuty, and Bob Talbot all served on this committee during the year. The Recreation Committee made several significant accomplishments during 2013 and looks to accomplish the following in 2014:

- Continuing with the development of Scheid Park
- Updating the Recreation Plan to make it DNR eligible

### *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.

# MEETINGS AND ATTENDANCE

## MEETINGS

The Planning Commission had 12 regular meetings in 2013. There were no special meetings held. This does not count the Sexual Harassment Policy meeting held at the Township Hall that all Commission members attended. In addition, all members also attended a Planning & Zoning Essentials training session that was held in Oshtemo Township and offered a refresher on basic planning & zoning techniques and fundamental information. (Steven Leuty attended the session in Lansing.)

## ATTENDANCE

Commissioner	Meetings Attended
Robert VanderKlok (Chair/ZBA Liaison)	10 of 12
Sarah Milne (Vice-Chair)	12 of 12
Henry Dingemans (Secretary)	12 of 12
Steven Leuty (Township Board Liaison)	12 of 12
Charles Rothrock	11 of 12
Robert Talbot	11 of 12
Carol Waszkiewicz	11 of 12

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## LOOKING AHEAD

One of the purposes of the Annual Report is to look ahead at 2014 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.

These items and other projects that the Commission anticipates tackling in the coming months include the following:

- Update the Zoning Ordinance. As stated previously, the Zoning Ordinance is in need of an update. This does not mean that all the work that has been done over the past many years should be lost; it primarily just needs to be reorganized and supplemented with new information in a more user-friendly format. It was

realized in 2013 that this is not a project that can be completed internally. Outside assistance will be necessary to complete this project.

- Update the Master Plan. The Planning Commission has completed a final draft of proposed amendments to the Master Plan. It is anticipated that by the end of spring 2014, the adoption process will be completed. At some point in the future, a more thorough update including specific planning activities in each of the four neighborhoods is recommended.
- The City plans to initiate 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.
- Develop a plan that will identify locations for future non-motorized facilities to aid in obtaining grants and implementing trail and sidewalk construction.
- Continue improvements to and extension of the Kalamazoo River Valley Trail in conjunction with the County as well as providing connections between neighborhoods and trail.
- 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.
- Establish areas for multiple use zoning to reduce travel and spur redevelopment.
- Update the Capital Improvement Plan.
- Update the Recreation Plan so it can be DNR eligible.

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.

