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Carol J. Burkard  
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## WHITE LAKE TOWNSHIP

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### WHITE LAKE TOWNSHIP PLANNING COMMISSION

Regular Meeting  
911 N. Williams Lake Road  
White Lake, MI 48386  
October, 17 2013 @ 7:00 p.m.

Mr. Meagher called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. and led the Pledge of Allegiance. Roll was called: Mr. Pierson was excused.

ROLL CALL: Steve Anderson  
Debby Dehart  
Rik Kowall, Board Liaison  
David Lewsley  
Peter Meagher, Chairperson  
Sarah McNulty, Vice Chairperson  
Gail Novak-Phelps  
William Pierson – Secretary - Excused

Also Present: Sean O'Neil, AICP, Community Development Director  
David Birchler, Township Consultant  
Greg Gucwa, Township Engineer  
Lynn Hinton, Recording Secretary

Visitors: 8

#### Approval of Agenda:

Mr. Anderson moved to approve the agenda as presented. Mr. Lewsley supported and the MOTION CARRIED with a voice vote. (7 yes votes)

#### Approval of Minutes:

- Minutes of August 15, 2013

Mr. Meagher noted that the approval of minutes were advertised incorrectly and should have been September 5, 2013. No action could be taken this evening.

#### Call to the Public (for items not on the agenda)

Mr. Meagher opened the discussion for public comment on items not listed on the agenda, but none was offered.

#### New Business:

##### a. Discussion of the Pontiac Lake Gateway District and Vision Plan

Mr. Birchler indicated the purpose of the meeting this evening is that the township Planning Commission wants to propose the rezoning of their properties to a new Pontiac Lake Gateway District and share opportunities and the vision plan for the area with the affected business owners.

He continued that this is an opportunity to influence growth and development in the township and showed an aerial photo of why this area has potential. The proximity of this potential district is nearby White Lake Oaks, the Oakland International Airport and the Pontiac Lake recreation area, and this gateway is the primary entrance into the township from the east.

The Master Plan, which was updated in 2011, has a focus of sustainability, which is to meet today's needs while focusing on the needs of the future generation. The economy, environment and the community are all components of sustainability. He explained differences in the old economy versus the new economy and how the trends are moving towards physical and cultural amenities that are key in attracting knowledge workers. Bold partnerships with business, government and nonprofit sectors will lead the change.

Placemaking activities in rural/small town environments that attract and retain knowledge workers and the base population include improving food and entertainment options downtown, increasing intensity of use and density in small towns, expanding waterfront, walkways and bicycle systems, expanding and highlighting natural amenities for scenic viewing, and improving and expanding the regional transportation hub.

White Lake Township recognized four years ago there were certain areas of the community that could play a leadership role in placemaking and the Pontiac Gateway District property owners are in a key area in the Master Plan. For this area, the gateway's appearance needs to be enhanced and the vision is to increase visibility of Pontiac Lake, create spaces for people, and add art/signage.

He noted that road agencies now have a responsibility to look at other users, i.e., walkers, cyclists, motorized wheelchairs, etc. The Master Plan sees this area as having potential for a hotel/banquet facility, restaurants, and a mix of uses. He shared slides of how the area looks now, and what it could look like.

Growth and redevelopment increases property values, though competition will be tough in the next few years, White Lake can direct growth and redevelopment; identify what the township residents want and need; serve the needs of the aging population, and create an attractive environment for the younger population. This is all part of the comprehensive economic development strategy. Sustainable development incentives have been created for new development and businesses to come into the township.

With regard to the Gateway District, the zoning ordinance has been amended, and the Planning Commission is committed to implementing this into the Master Plan. The township wants to see the gateway developed with something new and take advantage of the area amenities. Handout materials were provided to show the uses that are allowed in the district, and also the development standards for the district.

Mr. Birchler encouraged dialogue from the affected property owners on how they feel about the concept.

Mr. O'Neil referenced the 4 areas in the master plan that the township is focusing on. He indicated that the township wanted to start with the Gateway area because it's exciting, it's on the lake, and there is a lot of population surrounding this area. It's important to note, there are 7 properties on the Point, and this doesn't mean redeveloping the area would mean the existing businesses would have to go away. If any property owner would want to expand, the township would help, but there could also be an opportunity to sell and get out if they choose, or partnering with another business owner(s) is also something for consideration. There's a lot of interest in the property to make it bigger and better than what it is today. The goal is to make it better for each property owner so the businesses can succeed.

There was concern from a property owner whether the township would help with funding to improve his area and with tax increases. Mr. O'Neil responded that the township could not help with funding, but uniformly rezoning those properties would create opportunities. Mr. O'Neil added that the businesses and the area are taxed commercially.

He continued that rezoning would save time and money for the property owners if they ever wanted to improve or expand. The Gateway area is one of 4 focus areas, and there will probably be 20 more focus area in the future. He explained this is an opportunity to expand uses and improve their business. This does not negatively impact the properties in any way.



Mr. Kowall shared that in 1978 he was faced with the same situation as the property owners today. He owns Accurate Woodworking and Waterford rezoned his property to create an area for the best use. This turned out to be the best thing for him. He has commercial and industrial rental and has been able to expand over the years. In the future, if he decided to sell, the property value has increased. There was no downside to what transpired. He was apprehensive at first, but over the years, his business is still there and he's been able to expand. He feels the biggest obstacle for a developer is to have a plan that the property doesn't fall under the use they want. Pontiac Lake Gateway is the entrance to the township. He assured the property owners that no one would come in and take or condemn their property. In the long run, it will be to their benefit.

Mr. O'Neil said they are looking for feedback and discussion from the property owners affected. The townships position is that undertaking this will save property owners time and money. The thought is to increase the attractiveness of the property to a developer who might be interested in coming in and developing it.

Another property owner asked whether there was a timeline for all this to happen. Mr. O'Neil responded that this is in the current 5-year Master Plan. Mr. Birchler added that the market would decide the timeline. The township wants to have an attitude that it wants these focus areas to develop and grow.

There was concern that if the 7 properties are connected and one or two of them didn't want to sell, what would happen. Mr. O'Neil referenced Gin Mill as one of the smallest properties who is redeveloping and no one can stop him. This plan is not trying to get anyone to leave. Gin Mill is leading the charge by reinvesting in their business.

The MDOT easement was discussed and parking issues will have to be addressed down the road.

The question was asked if anyone was currently interested in buying the property. Many years ago a hotel was interested, but went elsewhere. Mr. O'Neil responded there is no interest at this time, but this is a prime piece of property and they could be approached down the road.

Another question was whether the property is grandfathered in if it were rezoned. Mr. O'Neil stated those properties are afforded protection via legal non-conforming status. If you're currently running a business, you can continue as long as you like. However, if you change businesses, then you wouldn't be able to go back to that business at a later date.

The next meeting will be at township hall possibly in November. The meeting this evening was to give information. There is no timetable or deadline for the rezoning to happen. The township will schedule a follow up at a future meeting and hold a public hearing to continue this discussion.

There was a brief discussion regarding the potential new bridge and how it would affect the apartments next door. Mr. O'Neil responded that there will be issues when it comes to the bridge and this is a question for MDOT. MDOT has indicated that a complete replacement of M-59 will be done in 5 years. They have been working with Senator Kowall's office to get his help in bringing MDOT to the table. MDOT is aware of what the township wants to do and appears to be on board with the idea. Mr. Birchler added that MDOT doesn't have a responsibility to make the area pretty. That's a local decision. MDOT has to take into consideration all the residents when they update transportation, and they will look at the bridge. They will have to put in a barrier free walkway, etc. when redeveloping the road.

Mr. Birchler concluded the discussion by indicating that if the Planning Commission does propose to rezone, the property owners would get direct notice and a date and time of a public hearing, and neighbors within 300 ft. will also be notified.

#### **Liaison's Report**

Mr. Kowall had nothing further to add.

#### **Planning Consultant's Report**

Mr. Birchler had nothing further to add.

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181 **Director's Report**  
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183 Mr. O'Neil had nothing further to add.  
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185 **Communications:**

186 **Next meeting dates:**

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  - Regular meeting – November 7, 2013 (possible cancellation)
  - Regular meeting – November 21, 2013  
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190 **Adjournment**  
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192 **Mr. Anderson moved to adjourn the meeting at 8:20 p.m. Ms. Novak-Phelps supported and the**  
193 **MOTION CARRIED with a voice vote. (7 yes votes)**  
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