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## WHITE LAKE TOWNSHIP

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### WHITE LAKE TOWNSHIP PLANNING COMMISSION

Regular Meeting  
7525 Highland Road  
White Lake, MI 48383  
**May 19, 2011 @ 7:00 p.m.**

Mr. O'Neil announced that Mr. Long has retired from the Planning Commission after many years of service.

Mr. Anderson called the meeting to order at 7:14 p.m. and led the Pledge of Allegiance. Roll was called: Ms. Phelps and Ms. Spoor were excused and Mr. Meagher arrived later in the meeting.

ROLL CALL: Steve Anderson, Chairperson  
Todd Birkle, Board Liaison  
Steve Martinko, Vice Chairperson  
Peter Meagher, Secretary  
William Pierson  
Gail Novak-Phelps - **Absent**  
Beverly Spoor - **Absent**  
Stan Woodhouse

Also Present: Sean O'Neil, AICP, Planning Director  
Jason Iacoangeli, Staff Planner  
David Birchler, Township Consultant  
Kristin Goetze, Township Engineer  
Lynn Lindon, Recording Secretary

Visitors: 12

### Approval of Agenda

**Mr. Pierson moved to approve the agenda as presented. Mr. Birkle supported and the MOTION CARRIED with a voice vote. (5 yes votes)**

### Approval of Minutes

• April 21, 2011

**Mr. Martinko moved to approve the minutes of April 21, 2011 as submitted. Mr. Birkle supported and the MOTION CARRIED with a voice vote. (5 yes votes)**

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

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

### Public Hearing

Mr. Birchler gave a brief overview of the rezoning request and reviewed an aerial photo of the subject properties. The township property is zoned (R1-D) which is the highest density single-family zoning classification. The Master Plan for the township shows the primary frontage along M-59 in a category of Planned Business that allows a wide variety of uses that may not be allowed in a (R1-D) district.

If this site were rezoned to a business classification, no improvements would be necessary to Highland Road, but some improvement to Porter Road would be required such as adding an additional lane to accommodate the additional traffic for the left lane.

The existing zoning pattern going west includes General Business and Planned Business. Based on analysis it was found the request was consistent with the Master Plan designation, and the existing civic and business uses would all be permitted uses in a General Business district. The small residence would be non-conforming, but it is in the intent to incorporate it with the business use and use it for a public site. It is common for municipalities to have recreation facilities within business uses as part of a civic center site in the district and would not be out of character with the civic center.

The total area proposed for rezoning is 13.6 acres. Mr. Birchler is recommending that the Planning Commission recommend approval to the Township Board to rezone from (LB) and (R1-D) to (GB).

Mr. O'Neil noted that the Township Board had discussed cleaning up some of the zoning, which is being accomplished with this request. The Township Board also discussed a residential piece of property next to the library that is currently for sale. The concern is that if the home is suitable to live in and is zoned (GB), there might be issues, and it would give the lot a legal non-conforming status. The timing is not appropriate to approach the homeowners on this, but if they wanted to rezone on their own at some point, it would square off the property.

Mr. Anderson opened the public hearing at 7:30 p.m.

Lori Dawson, 1010 Porter, owner of the property in question, stated the home is currently being rented out. Mr. O'Neil indicated that they, or a future owner, are in no way prohibited from coming back with a rezoning request. Ms. Dawson stated that when they decide to sell, they would be selling the property as a business parcel.

Steve Grablin, 1165 Dolane, stated the property has been zoned wrong for decades and questioned the purpose of the rezoning now. Mr. O'Neil indicated that rezoning would clean up the non-conformity and that there may be a desire in the distant future to sell. For current or future use, this zoning makes the most sense.

Mr. Grablin asked if Target was coming in, and would be concerned with a big cement wall going up, as it would decrease his property value. Mr. O'Neil stated he understands Mr. Grablin's concern, but there is no offer at this time to purchase the property. With regard to a large brick wall, Mr. O'Neil referenced the residents behind JC Penney, where the developer provided landscaping, screening, and limited the deliveries hours.

Mr. O'Neil indicated that if this property were redeveloped, he could see a mixed-use type of development with multi-family or office. He doesn't think any retail component would want to be 1,000 ft. off M-59. Further, larger developments enjoy having parking in front of their buildings and this is not a location suitable to do something different from Kohl's. In addition, there is a significant drop off in the land and bringing the property to grade would be significant.

Mr. Grablin doesn't understand why the township is asking for the rezoning rather than an applicant. Mr. O'Neil indicated that in the next 5-10 years whether the township looks for more storage space or whatever purpose, they would have to come back for a Special Land Use. By rezoning now, the township is changing the district to be appropriate for current and future uses. This doesn't add a tremendous value to the property, but rather cleans up the land use issue.

Diane Labrush, 7655 Highland Road, stated the new property lines make her nervous. She feels the township is starting a process that's there's no turning back on and the residents feel helpless. There is business on each side of them and they are stuck in the middle. She doesn't feel the township is helping



the residents and questioned what this would do to their homes/property. She has lived on M-59 for 43 years and they would love to be able to sell commercial and get off M-59, but every supervisor/commissioner in the past has told her to be patient.

Mr. O'Neil indicated that when this came to the board for discussion, the township controls this large parcel and the parcel immediately west, but it does not control the corner piece. The township typically would not rezone someone else's property unless there was a reason. There are no homeowners on the 3 properties in question and the (GB) classification means nothing further could be done with the property as a home.

Mr. Martinko referenced the house next door to the township hall in that the rezoning would be for clean up purposes and doesn't precede a development.

Ms. Labrush asked whether the Commission's intent is to leave Dolane all residential. Mr. O'Neil stated the residents could continue to exist in a single-family residential classification and anything else becomes a legal non-conformity. This is very problematic and if you intend to stay in your home, rezoning to (GB) not the way to go. To change the zoning now without selling the home would not make sense.

With no other comments, the public hearing was closed at 7:58 p.m.

- a. No. 11-003 White Lake Township Rezoning**
- 1. Location:** Property described under parcel number 12-21-251-008 (7505 Highland Road), located on the northeast corner of Porter and Highland Road, consisting of approximately 0.47 acres, currently zoned (LB) Local Business.
- Request:** Rezone approximately 0.47 acres from (LB) Local Business to (GB) General Business.
- Applicant:** White Lake Township  
7525 Highland Road  
White Lake, MI 48383
- Property Owner:** Edward Esshaki  
3625 DuPon Dr.  
Sterling Heights, MI 48310
- 2. Location:** Property described under parcel number 12-21-251-009 (7515 Highland Road), located on the northeast corner of Porter and Highland Road, consisting of approximately 0.39 acres, currently zoned (LB) Local Business.
- Request:** Rezone approximately 0.47 acres from (LB) Local Business to (GB) General Business.
- Applicant:** White Lake Township  
7525 Highland Road  
White Lake, MI 48383
- Property Owner:** Edward Esshaki  
3625 DuPon Dr.  
Sterling Heights, MI 48310
- 3. Location:** Property described under parcel number 12-21-251-027 (7525 Highland Road), located on the northeast corner of Porter and Highland Road, consisting of approximately 12.77 acres, currently zoned (R1-D) Single Family Residential.
- Request:** Rezone from (R-1D) Single Family Residential to (GB) General Business
- Applicant:** White Lake Township  
7525 Highland Road  
White Lake, MI 48383
- Property Owner:** Edward Esshaki  
3625 DuPon Dr.  
Sterling Heights, MI 48310

Mr. Birkle moved to recommend to the Township Board rezoning File 11-003 Location (1) 7505 Highland Road from (LB) to (GB); Location (2) 7515 Highland Road from (LB) to (GB); and

**Location (3) 7525 Highland Road from (R-1D) to (GB) as submitted. Mr. Woodhouse supported and the MOTION CARRIED with a voice vote: Pierson – yes; Birkle – yes; Anderson – yes; Woodhouse – yes; Martinko – yes; Meagher – yes. (6 yes votes)**

**Continuing Business:**

**a. White Lake Township Master Plan, Action Strategies**

Mr. Birchler indicated that the Planning Commission has discussed the importance of a path towards sustainability since the conception of the Master Plan update. Initially that discussion revolved around a regulatory approach, which involved the use of incentives and bonuses to sustain physical development. They looked at the concept of a town center; the redevelopment of the township's gateways, and the 4-towns center, and analyzed background data on public input to develop focus areas.

The action strategy necessary has 6 primary elements: a matrix, zoning framework, new zoning districts, a comprehensive economy strategy; new sustainable development incentives; and a framework for benchmarking and assessing progress.

Mr. Birchler gave a brief overview of each of the 6 elements. The intent is to create a matrix for a sustainable community.

Creating a true town center will require a zoning policy shift and utility incentives, and it will very likely require a comprehensive economic development strategy. This would establish the framework for a new zoning classification, i.e., form and character of the district, with regulations on the kinds of uses allowed in the district. This would allow a mix of uses, retails/service oriented that would be more flexible with businesses that need office space. Further, it would create a more dense, complete neighborhood approach.

With regard to new zoning districts to accommodate new types of developments, this would allow for a system of subordinate activity that can move the community in the direction of having more intense places to attract the younger crowd. Mr. Birchler noted that it would take a huge effort to make White Lake Township a place where children and grandchildren want to make it home. Developing a basic framework of a new zoning district would be a new approach to redevelopment by allowing uses to mix together and make this community attractive to the younger generation.

The Pontiac Lake Gateway could be enhanced to encourage a center of activity associated with Oakland International Airport and would create a place where travelers want to be when they are here in our area.

An economic development strategy should be developed because White Lake Township is now in competition with every other community to attract new development. The township needs an active approach to recruiting the right development to come here. Three objectives are to enhance existing business, attract new business, and sustain it. The vision is the same as the vision for Master Plan.

Mr. Birchler noted one important point to concentrate on is improving the approval process. Companies will no longer wait 6+ months to have their project approved. The township has to be more nimble to have a part of the economic development strategy to get the high quality developments with a quick review process.

Mr. Birchler encouraged the commissioners to take an overall look at everything that has been done. He is ready to present the Master Plan update at a public hearing, but needs to get board approval and a 60-day review prior to the public hearing. He asked for comments from the commissioners.

Mr. Martinko felt Mr. Birchler provided valuable information, but questioned form use and whether it would be too stringent versus a planned or mixed-use district. Mr. Birchler responded that developments look at form-based codes, which relaxes restrictions that give them fixes. In this setting, it allows developments to have space that is more than retail, i.e., rentals, office space, etc and diversifies what they have to offer. There's a significant benefit with mixed use and the density allowed.



Mr. Martinko feels that looking at a form district, the township has to do a good job presenting to potential principals since it is a higher scale of a project. He questioned whether a form use district would be a sustainable development more so over a planned development or mixed use. Mr. Birchler responded that in terms of impact on the community, the higher density would help to sustain the future of White Lake Township.

Mr. Anderson commented that to be able to support and promote this as having a large company come to the township would bring people and housing, but questioned whether it would be easier to develop if the township first attracted those businesses. Mr. Birchler responded that the township has to get development on the ground that will attract the workforce of those companies. The township has great outdoor entertainment, but not the nightlife and dense development style. The intent is to promote what we have and attract what we need.

Mr. Birkle stated he recently attended a Green Energy seminar that talked about a Property Assessed Clean Energy (PACE) district. Michigan adopted and encourages businesses to incorporate green energy. He asked where the initial capital would come from. He referenced windmills in that the township should have an ordinance that governs this. Mr. Birchler indicated that the township is not in a primary wind-generating zone, but it does have provisions within the ordinance.

Mr. Pierson questioned how much this will cost the township to move this forward. He doesn't see White Lake Township as ever being like Ann Arbor. The township is split by M-59 and the outlying areas with lakes and recreation areas are what bring people to the township. He feels kids that will come back to the township will want to be here for the small town community with lakes. He thinks the 4-towns concept is nice, but is concerned with the cost of advertising this to the world.

Mr. Birchler responded that he can't tell how much the township will invest in this to get something in place to make it a player in the game, but it should focus on new development into a more concentrated core area where the growth occurs that will support the viability of this community.

Mr. Meagher agreed with Mr. Pierson's thoughts. Mr. Birchler noted that property values won't be climbing and everything would be supported with a voted millage.

#### **New Business:**

##### **a. Review Economic Development Strategy Proposal**

Mr. Birchler indicated the initial strategy proposed, depending on market analysis would cost in the \$26,000 to \$32,500 range. He is also proposing clear zoning to the township, which includes developing the manual. There is \$5,000 worth of crossover between the 2 projects. The entire package would be a \$60,000 investment for the township.

Mr. Anderson asked what would be used for a measurement. Mr. Birchler stated the strategy would identify this. Periodic evaluation and measurement would be done. The number of new jobs or businesses opening in White Lake Township and what has been the positive change to property values would contribute to this, but anything done might not be easily reflected.

Mr. Birkle noted the Plante Moran audit would be done in 2014, which is more of an incentive for the township to encourage new development.

Mr. Martinko added that the township has marketable assets and it is a small type community with an identity. He has talked to many principals and they are looking to network for opportunities they haven't seen before. He thinks some of them will take the risk.

Mr. Anderson stated that he doesn't want this to be another book on a shelf. He is a strong proponent by saying the township has to try something. The township has to have something that will generate results and let people know what a great thing it has by showing it can offer something.

Based on a memo of May 11, Supervisor Baroni is eager to see what the commission can do and there's no timetable. If the Planning Commission wants to send something to the Board, it needs to make sure it

has added/omitted things and really thought about the concept. This is a huge undertaking that can go in many directions.

Mr. Martinko indicated that there has been a lot of ideas talked about and questioned what could be done to take ownership of the township's destiny. He talked with Supervisor Baroni and showed him an advertisement from another company, which could be a concept for consideration. There are major events in the township and the message has to be clear in the Master Plan and the community. He feels investing \$60,000 is an easy decision.

Mr. Meagher requested to see this as a flow chart. This proposal encompasses so many things with so many pieces and a conceptual vision tied to the Master Plan would be beneficial.

Mr. O'Neil commented that with the change in power at the township, the game has also changed and it's time to start thinking outside the box. He feels that if the township does nothing, it will lose control of its destiny. The Planning Commission is charged with the foresight, which should be based on other quality of life issues and showcase all of the township's amenities. This has to come from all departments and functions. He thinks this is a great start and something to build from.

Mr. O'Neil requested that Mr. Birchler prepare a program for the board and to be prepared to discuss this, along with the Master Plan, at a June 16 special joint meeting.

Mr. Birchler would like to review the draft Master Plan at a joint meeting and if time allows, talk about clear zoning and the economic development strategy.

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

Mr. Birkle reported that the board has been discussing parks items and Bloomer Park.

The board is granting the C of O for the new Root restaurant, pending sewer tap fees owed. The developer of the center will contract with Giffel's to see if REU's were calculated correctly and this could open Pandora's box. Something needs to be done with the sewer tap fees and this could involve Commerce too. He will have more information soon.

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

Mr. Iacoangeli reported that the Parks & Rec committee is in the process of selecting firms for Bloomer Park. They had 5 proposals submitted and they will be meeting next week to interview those firms in person. Each firm will get an hour interview and the selection committee will recommend one of them to the Township Board. The selection committee consists of 2 park members and 2 board members (Mr. Lewsley and Mr. Lilley). They will be presented with sealed envelopes containing dollar amounts at the next meeting.

#### **Director's Report**

Mr. O'Neil announced that "The Root" restaurant would open on March 31. There is a private Open House on June 9 from 4:30-6:30 p.m.

Mr. O'Neil announced that the Planning Department and the Building Department have been combined into the Community Development department and have blended the staff of the two. They are operating with 7 full time and 2-3 part-time personnel.

The Board approved the budget for the Capital Improvement Plan (CIP). The process will start within the next week and will concentrate on a temporary sign ordinance.

#### **Communications:**

##### **Next meeting dates:**

- Regular Meeting – June 2, 2011 – possible cancellation
- Regular Meeting – June 16, 2011 - joint mtg with township board

**Adjournment**

**Mr. Birkle moved to adjourn the meeting at 10:03 p.m. Mr. Meagher supported and the MOTION CARRIED with a unanimous voice vote.**