The Charter Township of Orion Planning Commission held a workshop meeting on Wednesday, February 17, 2021, at 6:00 pm VIA VIDEO CONFERENCE - GoToMeeting Access code 599-669-285 or VIA TELEPHONE 1-(571) 317-3122 Access Code 599-669-285 (Meeting being conducted via video/telephone conference due to the health concern of COVID-19 and the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services)

PLANNING COMMISSION MEMBERS PRESENT (Commissioner location):
Don Walker, PC Rep to ZBA (Orion Twp.)
Kim Urbanowski, BOT Rep to PC (Orion Twp.)
Joe St. Henry, Secretary (Orion Twp.)

Scott Reynolds, Chairman (Orion Twp.)
Don Gross, Vice-Chairman (Orion Twp.)
Jessica Gingell, Commissioner (Orion Twp.)

PLANNING COMMISSION MEMBERS ABSENT:
Garrett Hoffman, Commissioner

1. OPEN MEETING
Chairman Reynolds opened the workshop meeting at 6:00 pm.

2. ROLL CALL
As noted

CONSULTANTS PRESENT:
Rodney Arroyo, (Township Planner) of Giffels Webster
Eric Fazzini, (Township Planner) of Giffels Webster
Eric Pietsch, (Township Planner) of Giffels Webster
Mark Landis (Township Engineer) of Orchard, Hiltz, and McCliment, Inc.
Tammy Girling, Township Planning & Zoning Director

OTHERS PRESENT:
Annette Battaglia
Sofija Kalaj
Jason Wisniewski
Ken Zmijewski
Penny Shults

3. AGENDA REVIEW AND APPROVAL
Moved by Vice-Chairman Gross, seconded by Commissioner Walker, to approve the agenda as presented.

4. NEW BUSINESS
A. Discussion of Mater Plan 2021

Planner Arroyo said that they kicked off the Master Plan. He said that the first study session they had a few months ago, where they got the Planning Commission, Township Board, and the CIA got together for a joint meeting. They are now getting into the work of the actual Master Plan. They have been working hard over the last couple of months. He stated that they want to meet with the Planning Commission, the second meeting of the month.

Planner Arroyo added that he wanted to make sure that everyone's aware of the public input opportunities that are out there now for members of the public to participate. He asked that they invite friends, colleagues, and businesses to participate. Whether they are a resident of the township or they work in the Township, he wanted people that have an interest in the community to participate.
Planner Arroyo stated that one of the opportunities is called “PictureThis!TM”. He added that if they go to the Orion Township website, they will find all of the links. PictureThis!TM is a way to upload pictures and provide comments. He said to click on it to participate, and they will have the opportunity to tell people what they think about the community by uploading a photo and then describing that photo. He showed them the steps to take via GoToMeeting. If there was something that needs improvement, or something they saw in another community that would be a great idea to have here. He added there is an online survey, and it is tied specifically to the market assessment http://www.surveymonkey.com/r/ORIONRES21. They have received over 300 responses so far.

Planner Arroyo stated that the Open House they are looking to schedule in April 2021.

Planner Arroyo noted that they brought together Orion Township Staff who work day-to-day in different departments working on different tasks. They talked about strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats. They also asked them to identify emerging trends from their perspective.

Planner Arroyo went through the transmittal of the first draft of the Master Plan.

Chairman Reynolds noted that this is the first Master Plan that many of the Planning Commission members are going through. He was looking for a roadmap that they are going to be tackling over the next number of weeks that might be helpful. Planner Arroyo replied that was what he was going to talk about next.

Planner Arroyo said that building the existing conditions information is important, but really what is important is the plan itself. The first major public input process, where they can start to test some of their planning theories, and ideas that they may be interested in getting some information on, is the Open House. They are hoping it will be in person, if not it can be done through a virtual forum. They are targeting it for April 2021 but will move it to May 2021 if it enables it to be in person. He said that in an open house setting they establish stations, they are land use, environment, economy, transportation, and housing. They provide documentation that shows what the existing conditions are, and then they have the opportunity to ask folks who are attending, questions about what they believe, or what their opinion is about certain ideas that the Planning Commission wants to explore. He knew that residential density was a significant topic in this community. He thought that they could have boards up that shows density at different levels from a visual perspective, and get people to say, ok in this part of the Township, and how they felt about what existing development pattern, and if it were to change according to the Master Plan, and if they were thinking about different housing types.

Planner Arroyo said some other ideas that they may what to test is, a 10 or 15-minute neighborhood. That is the idea where, they may look to an area that they could ride a bike from the center of that neighborhood out in 15-minutes and then from that core, maybe that would be an area where they might have a community center or a small retail area, or some type of core to draw them into that kind of focal point of that neighborhood. Then around that, they can either walk, bike, or go by car, and start to create neighborhoods that have some connectivity and a focal point. Is that important in this community, and is it something that they want to explore? Do they want to test that with the public, through the Open House, process, and show some examples of that?

Planner Arroyo asked regarding the rural areas within the township, how do they see those areas evolving? Because some development will occur there particularly in the northern part of the township. For example, that residential developments be set back from the roadway, and that way they maintain the rural look along the roadway as much as possible. In exchange, they
would have a greater setback and maybe have a little bit of exchange of lot size to encourage that open space on the roadway. He added that these are the types of planning concepts that they might float at an open house and get public input on, and then that would help them in their decision, in terms of what the actual Master Plan recommendations are going to include. They are going to come to them with some ideas in March, and then they want to hear their ideas.

Planner Arroyo said that the other thing they want them to start looking at is the existing Future Land Use Map. What they will do is, between now and the next meeting, put out another packet that shows them what the current plan says. They are also going to try to get some information about developments that have been approved and what type of density, and what type of pattern they had, and how that relates to the land use plan. They have had a lot of Plan Unit Developments, and they have not all closely matched the Master Plan. He added that they want to look at what is happening with the developments that they have within the community or is being proposed, and what the marketing is telling them is desirable in the community and then compare that to what they would have planned before.

Planner Arroyo stated the next steps would be developing goals and objectives. The goals and objectives is the policy statement that are going to guide the plan. From there, they are going to get into the plans, and as they will be working with them and bringing those back to them, as they test new concepts.

Secretary St. Henry asked if they will have access to the survey feedback, in real-time? For example, is there a way that they can access the respondent, the 300 that have come in, so far? Will they have a chance to review that information before the Open House? Planner Arroyo replied that they would not see it until the surveys are closed out. They try not to give them the results until it is over because they don’t want to influence decisions and survey responses. They are trying to get an honest assessment. He added that the surveys will likely be closing in the next two to three weeks. He said he is hoping, by the time they get to the Open House, they have some preliminary findings from the market assessment. Then they can start to share exactly how much additional retail can this community support. What type of housing market is out there for different types of housing units? What is the demand for office, industrial, and technology uses? Typically, the market assessment is only going to go out about 10-years, because that is about realistically as far as they can go out with it, with a market assessment, after that the data starts to get pretty weak.

Planner Arroyo asked them to start thinking about public input for the Open House, and they will be sending them a link to the current Future Land Use Map.

Chairman Reynolds asked what is the best way to compile and collect that data? Planner Arroyo replied that if they want to share some thoughts and information to do that through Tammy, and then she can forward that to them. Planning & Zoning Director Girling asked the new members not to send their ideas to all of the Planning Commissioner’s because that would be considered a quorum, and it is not allowed. She added that if they want to send anything to the Planning Commission members that they need to send them in sets of three, and not to send more than three members at a time so that there is not deliberation on anything.

Secretary St. Henry asked looking at southeast Michigan are there any communities that kind of mirror of Orion Township, in terms of their history or their growth in the last 20 to 25-years, that they would not necessarily emulate or mimic, but at least draw some comparisons and just get a feel for maybe they are doing something that they should consider here? What came to his mind is with his experience working with the school district as well as Oakland County, and Lake Orion is often compared to South Lyon. He wondered if there is any value in drawing any type of those comparisons as they move forward? Planner Arroyo replied that they are never going
to find a perfect comparison, but there are certainly some communities that are facing the same types of issues. He said they will give some thought to that, and maybe they will come back with some additional information.

Secretary St. Henry thought that they would be remiss if they don’t draw the relationship between the Township and the school district. He added that they do surveys and they continually see that people move to this area because of the quality school district. He knew that they didn’t have any influence over the school district operationally, but there is a relationship between the attractiveness of the Township and the school district. He wanted to make sure that it is at least captured in this document somehow. Planner Arroyo replied that they will do that. Planner Fazzini stated that if they have any school district planning documents or studies that they are aware of that might mention land use or the Township, send those to Tammy, they like to cross-reference current plans or good plans that are outside of the Master Plan to make people aware of those things.

Vice-Chairman Gross asked when the 2020 census data is going to be coming out, so they can get more current, accurate, as accurate as it can be because the census, is so screwed up? At least the updated census information. Planner Arroyo replied that they will check. He added that they have heard delay after delay but will get the latest information for the next meeting when they expect to get the latest information.

Planner Fazzini said from a physical standpoint, you will see in the history section that the Lake Orion, Orion Township relationship, is similar to Rochester, Rochester Hills, where they have the village in the northeast corner, they have a major north-south corridor, Rochester Rd. and Lapeer Rd. They will see that there is a relationship with that historic transit, between Rochester and Orion, not looking at demographics from a layout standpoint, he thought they could compare it with Rochester Hills, Rochester.

Planner Arroyo said that they could add Milford Township, and Lyon Township. He stated that there are a lot of different communities that have some similarities, in terms of having the township with the village, and then having a major corridor going through.

Chairman Reynolds asked what the agenda looked like for the next meeting in March? Planner Arroyo stated that the primary focus of the March meeting will be a game plan for the April Open House. They will be providing them some additional information related to existing conditions that were not in the draft that they received before this meeting. They will be updating that every meeting. Then they start to lay the framework for the future land use plan, and starting to think about goals and objectives because that is their next key task after they are done with the public input. He said that they might also want to do is review the goals, and objectives from the last plan. They will make sure that they forward the future land use map from the 2015 plan, the goals and objects, and then their development analysis to them so, that they have that available for the next meeting.

Secretary St. Henry said that the review and evaluation of the future land use plan are going to be huge. He thought that he was a little lax in staying up with the future land use plan and making sure that it is still relevant over the last several years, and that it still made sense. He thought that they needed to take a close look at certain areas around the Township and just make sure that the zoning and the future use plans still make sense. He added that their communities have changed a lot in the last five years, let alone the last 10, 15 years.

Planner Fazzini stated that for the future land use analysis, they plan to go section by section and then have the Township broken up into the bottom third, middle third, upper third and then group a couple of sections and look at those areas together. In some communities, it makes
more sense to look at intersections but with the amount of development that they have experienced, he thought they needed to look at, the entire Township section by section and then just check what has been developed since 2015, what is in the works, what PUD’s have been approved. They will have housing density and other information that is part of that to make a good future land use plan that is accurate.

Secretary St. Henry said he was hoping that this new report, when it comes out, explains that somehow. He thought that they needed to capture the essence of the PUD process and why developers pursue it, why townships work with developers in PUD situations. He thought there had been a lot of controversy over PUD’s over the last several years, that they need to spell out where PUD’s fit in the big picture of their Master Plan.

Planning & Zoning Director Girling said the current Master Plan has a ton of goals. She asked if they foresee having that numerous amount of goals? As a Planning Commission they don’t necessarily have them in front of them as they should, but even going back and looking at the ones they have right now there is a lot there. She asked at this point, or in their experience, is there overkill on what they currently have, and do they envision something lesser? Planner Arroyo replied that they like to keep the number of goals down to the bare minimum. He thought a lot of times, they see if they have 20 or 30 goals for a community like this, that is probably more than they need because they are supposed to be generalized statements. He thought that they could boil it down to a much smaller number and then use the objectives which are taking it to the next level. He added that they will likely come to them at some point and reorganize, if they like the general direction of their current goals and objectives, they would probably totally reformat them and restructure them in a way that they think works better and is easier to work with. He was sure that they were going to get that modified as they go through the process.

Vice-Chairman Gross said he liked the approach. He thought it was ready, aim, shoot as opposed to ready, shoot, aim approach. He liked the fact that they are going to get into looking at the areas as opposed to coming up with conclusions first.

5. ADJOURNMENT
Moved by Commissioner Gross, seconded by Trustee Urbanowski to adjourn the meeting at 6:47 p.m. Motion carried.

Respectfully submitted,

Debra Walton
PC/ZBA Recording Secretary
Charter Township of Orion

March 18, 2021
Planning Commission Approval Date