

CHARTER TOWNSHIP OF ORION PLANNING COMMISSION

***** MINUTES *****

WORKSHOP, WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 17, 2021

The Charter Township of Orion Planning Commission held a workshop meeting in person at the Orion Center, 1335 Joslyn Road on Wednesday, November 17, 2021, at 6 p.m.

PLANNING COMMISSION MEMBERS PRESENT:

Don Walker, PC Rep to ZBA	Don Gross, Vice-Chairman
Scott Reynolds, Chairman	Jessica Gingell, Commissioner
Kim Urbanowski, BOT Rep to PC	Derek Brackon, Commissioner

PLANNING COMMISSION MEMBERS ABSENT:

Joe St. Henry, Secretary

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
Matt Wojciechowski, (Township Planner) of Giffels Webster
Mark Landis (Township Engineer) of Orchard, Hiltz, and McCliment, Inc.
Tammy Girling, Township Planning & Zoning Director

OTHERS PRESENT:

None

3. AGENDA REVIEW AND APPROVAL

Moved by Vice-Chairman Gross, seconded by Commissioner Walker, to **approve** the agenda as presented.

4. NEW BUSINESS/UNFINISHED BUSINESS

A. PC-2021-07, 5 Year Master Plan Update

Planner Arroyo said they are actually starting to get towards the end. They have documents up to 124 pages.

Planner Arroyo stated that he wanted to show them a few things to see if there was any discussion. They have seen the Future Land Use Map they haven't made any changes since the last time. Just to review this is the updated Future Land Use Map and what they have that is new that is parallel to that is now the Density Map. The Density Map reflects those densities in those categories but it is now shown just as a pure Density Map. One of the key differences between the two is that for those types of areas such as golf courses, and public places like schools, that are planned for public or recreation use they are going to have a density number associated with that parcel in the event that that use goes away. So, it makes it easier, they are kind of planning for the future based upon what the surrounding area is. That is one of the key differences between the Density Map and the Future Land Use Map. It is reflecting what the Future Land Use Map says but it covers a slightly wider area because it is picking up some of those parcels that are really planned for uses that they think might not go away. They never thought that golf courses would never go away when they were building them all the time and now, they are going away. Schools, the same thing, as the population gets older and all of a

sudden, they don't need as many schools, they close schools all of a sudden people want to build residential subdivisions where they had schools before. This way they will have a density number already associated with those areas.

Planner Arroyo said for the mixed-use areas like the BIZ and the Village Center areas those just don't have a specific number density because the thought there is that the density is really going to be controlled by the zoning and form regulations. Just like in the BIZ District if they allow some residential but there is not a density cap there, it is based on how many stories, how many stores, how many floors, all of that. There is really no need, he thought, to have a density number so they identify that in a note that it varies and it is based on building form, and it is really the zoning regulations that ultimately control that. He added that it is nice to know when they look at the map that these areas could potentially have some residential, they just don't know the full extent until development occurs because it could happen in a mixed-use.

Planner Arroyo stated that they have gone over the Economic Development Plan but now they see it in the format that it goes into the documents so they have their specific strategies and there are ten of them. Then they go through the specific redevelopment area as well, so that is all kind of formatting getting a feel for what it is going to look like, he thought it reads pretty nice. They have some photographs and some graphics to go along with that as well.

Planner Arroyo said they are getting the housing chapter put together so they have a whole section on obtainable housing which he thought was very fascinating looking at between 80-120% of the area median income and what can those folks afford in that range, and seeing how that compares to what the trends are in the metro area. What they find is that it is not all that bad but prices are going up and the thought here is that they are helping this situation by planning for a wide variety of housing types. They are going to have some areas that are dense where the units will be smaller, they will be more affordable and they will have others that are going to be larger with large lots and those are going to be expensive and they are not going to be affordable. The whole idea here is that, and it says right here in the Master Plan, addresses obtainable housing by targeting a wide range of housing options that go beyond single-family detached, and that includes the multiples, manufacturing housing, missing middle-housing types, and all of those, serve to expand what is available within the Township. He thought they were providing for a range of options, which is important.

Planner Arroyo stated that the next area is they are filling in the transportation area, it has been known as the safety path plan. They are calling it the complete streets/safety path plan, just to modernize the term a little bit. There are not really any changes here, what they did is they did an evaluation, the current plan holds up really well, they were looking at those four 15-minute neighborhoods and looking at how the pathways are heading into those, to feed those, so if they wanted to ride a bike or they wanted to walk to reach those. Really, with some of the changes that have been made over the last few years since the Master Plan, they have made some at the Safety Path Committee to add some new roadways and it is really kind of filled out the network. The only thing they did which is kind of a minor tweak was along Silverbell it wasn't showing the completion of the path along the south side. A lot of this is starting to fill in some of it is in place and there are only a few gaps. Because they have got one of the 15-minute neighborhoods and they have Jesse Decker Park, and Herron Springs, they thought it would make sense to actually have that pathway filled out on both sides of Silverbell because there really isn't that much more to do to get all of those pieces in place.

Planner Arroyo said that the other one that they wanted to talk to them about is whether or not it would make some sense to go part-way down Bald Mountain to the frontage in front of Herron Springs. They have two public resources here and then they have the 15-minute neighborhood core, he asked if it would make sense to make it easier for people, he knew it wasn't a paved

road right now, but one day it might be, would it make sense at some point to at least plan in the future for a path on one side of Bald Mountain at least along that frontage. He realizes that Herron Springs is much more of a natural area but there are paths that people may want to traverse through there and seemed like connecting that might make some sense given the location. He wanted to get their input on that, and then also see if they think there are any other gaps here that should be added or anything that is missing from this non-motorized plan.

Chairman Reynolds said his comments pertaining to Bald Mountain Rd., he was very familiar with the area. He said it brings up a bigger discussion point of Jesse Decker Park faces Squirrel Rd. and Herron Springs kind of faces Silverbell. There are not tons of connections even to Jesse Decker Park except through the backside of the that, and they are traversing through private property. He thought that it was important to maybe bring up how they address the public access to some of these areas just because Herron Spring and potentially Lavender Ridge down the way, everyone saying they are going to give them some acreage for engagement. He didn't know if Bald Mountain at this point makes tons of sense but thought at least promoting those interconnections of how do they get from one to the other. Right now, that paved road that they are going to get to which would be Roxbury there is no connection through Jesse Decker, so they would have to go out to Silverbell and back around. Maybe it is bringing up a point of just saying how else do they connect those community benefits down the road.

Planner Arroyo said last time they did talk about some of the corridors, particularly on Lapeer Rd. They are going to develop a little concept for trying to get some frontage there to give it some identity. They are working on a corridor section right now, and they are going to focus on the Baldwin Corridor, the Lapeer Corridor, the Brown Rd. Corridor, and then looking at the more natural ones like the Indianwood and the ones that have that character. Those are really going to be the primary focus of that section. Talking about what the expectation and the vision are for those corridors and then ultimately, they are probably going to want to a little bit of zoning ordinance adjustments to implement some of those recommendations, that is something that they are working on.

Planner Arroyo stated that another thing they as they start to get close to pulling the final document together is they wanted to talk a little about, now that they have heard a lot of the different ideas, and they have looked at some of these plans, he asked if there were any other specific action items that they would like to include in the plan? They are going to have a section on implementation that they are starting to pull together now, and that is going to include action strategies. A lot of those will flow from the plan, they will be able to extract those but they also wanted to see if they have some specific ideas about action items that they would like them to include in the action strategies. Even if they just wanted to raise a crazy subject, that is fine, it is kind of an open discussion on action items to see if they have any thoughts on those, and he was looking for some input if they had any ideas.

Vice-Chairman Gross asked if that would include things like Conditional Zoning and PUDs? Planner Arroyo replied if they want to develop something related to those he certainly can. He asked if he was trying to encourage them, discourage them, or have certain characteristics. A Conditional Rezoning, they can't do much about it because it is 100% applicant-driven, but PUDs they can. Vice-Chairman Gross said just a definition of what it means. He understood that it was development-driven. Planner Arroyo said that they could certainly include something like that and talk about some of those alternative ways that development might occur in some of the challenges and issues that might come up with those.

Chairman Reynolds said he had two thoughts, one is recognizing that PUD strategy and maybe outlining how they are talking about forward thinking with the garbage dump and what do they

do with that down the road, are there other areas that they envision greater opportunity than what exists right now, similar to what they did with Brown Rd. and the (BIZ) District, and Baldwin Rd. and that whole street improvement. He thought that there was a handful of maybe of not that grand of scale everywhere but are there areas. He was thinking of Clarkston Rd. and Baldwin and they have a couple of those intersections where they kind of have a little bit of Village Center or a Hamlet effect but then there are other areas especially they know that is not an easy site on the southwest corner to develop, is there something that they can guide as a vision to say that this would be great especially if it means checking some of those boxes of those missing pieces that they have talked about, entry-level housing, are there stores that are missing in those districts. He thought that maybe tying into what Vice-Chairman Gross was saying the visionary for a couple of points so they can outline what they are envisioning with PUDs, it should be a creative zoning type because it can be "spot zone" and it can have a mixture of uses. That would be one thing he would love to explore and maybe that is just jotting down some ideas and doing a little bit of a brainstorm session on two or three sites so if anyone else has any thoughts on that he would love to get their own backyard or however. He thought that communities change because of that forward-thinking and that vision. They are saying there is a Master Plan but they have struggled along the way of PUDs saying they just want a density bonus. Their tool is that they get it, they are at Silverbell and there is a train track and there is everything that is a little complex there but let's make the fabric of the community flow and still connect.

Chairman Reynolds said that the second one and it was within their packet, would be, do they want to consider how they engage, transition or have that fringe zoning as it relates to the Village of Lake Orion. Right now, they pretty much say they are the Township and then there is a big white box and that is the Village. Maybe in the same light as the first point, there are a couple of properties along there that maybe crucial to the transition from the Township to the Village or they are open to a joint PUD, or just a bigger vision that might happen there. What they are doing south of the Village of M-24 exactly what needs to happen or should there be a secondary transition on that Lapeer Corridor that might exist. Those were his two what-ifs do they add or talk about here because he thought they are issues that they have had and they know that they run into and it is not a harsh line when they drive down the road from the Village to the Township. He thought that there should be some thinking there to say do they allow something different there.

Commissioner Brackon asked what did he mean by density bonus? Chairman Reynolds said meaning a PUD is a tool that says that alright what you have here doesn't fit so let me tell you what can. Sometimes developers are coming in here with a PUD because isn't necessarily a straight zoning slam dunk, it has to have creative thinking. They are asking for more than just the density, they get that density might be a thickened corridor of trees and a big landscape buffer and because of that, that concept that they developed along Baldwin Rd. that kind of checking all of the boxes of great planning, yes, it is pretty dense, but it is really a well thought out solution that also happens to be dense not just there are 365 homes going into that undeveloped parcel. They use the most out of a PUD, they always ask for a community benefit, all of those 10 criteria items, and he didn't know if always in their eyes they are A+ answers they think they are just an answer. Let's show them what they want to see and what might guide that tool so they can say here is an example of why they are allowing PUDs.

Planner Arroyo said they are hoping, if all goes well, that the next study session in a month, they are going to have a pretty complete first draft. They have a lot of it here but a few things to fill in but they hope to have that implementation section to them and then have some of those other pieces that he talked about filling in, and at that point, then he thought they could start to talk about the final Open House. Remember that was what they were going to do before they actually start the process of going through approval and sending it out for comments, they

thought about having another Open House. They might want to start thinking about, based on where they are now maybe it is something like February. Once that is done the next step would be they would make a formal request to the Township Board to release the plan for comments, just like they did with the Lake Orion Village just sent theirs out for comments, they would have to go and ask the Township Board for permission according to State law, and then they say yes, they can release it then it gets released and then they go through a 63-day review period. Nothing happens for 63 days, and then once that happens, they can hold their public hearing and then actually go through the approval and adoption process. If they had the Open House in February and then they ask the Township Board and they released it, then potentially they could be looking at a May public hearing and approval. The Master Plan is funny how they have State law now because of the way they baked in the review period. They go, go, go, go, go, and then they sit and wait for over two months, and then they go back to it, so it is kind of an odd process. That is the likely schedule, it could move a month or two here or there but they are definitely getting to the end here. He thought it was looking pretty good and thought they had some good ideas in here and look forward to bringing the next version next month.

Chairman Reynolds asked if they are going to get The Woodlands features map and those kinds of things? He knew that there were some drafts and some natural features that were in the packet. Planner Arroyo said that there was Wetland and Woodlands maps in their packet based on GIS, they are in the draft. He knew that they did refer to some of those. They use those as guides when development comes in, they are not definitive that they absolutely have wetland or a wooded area that is of significance. It is a way of giving them a "hey you need to check this site out to see if in fact there is something to be concerned about. They do have these maps and he knew they were important because they reference them in other documents. This one combines the wetlands, the surface water, and their flood hazard areas, which is another helpful map to see where certain threats are to development, and where certain natural features may be there that are important.

Planner Arroyo said he knew there were a lot of pages here so between now and next month look it all over and then they will get some more coming their way, and they will talk again next month.

Chairman Reynolds said he would like to circle back on the added items that they are potentially talking about and just wanted to have a quick discussion here. Reiterate where they were talking about projects, they want to see but that may also include corridors or areas they want to maintain. There has been a lot of changes in the community over the past few years, what is working well, what is missing in some of those corridors. They talk about Brown Rd. and they have had recent projects talking about berms, trees, and different design standards do they find that some of those are working well, not working well. Some of those guides back into an ordinance change but in a bigger vision are they creating what they thought they wanted. He knew that all of them were not necessarily part of that discussion initially but are they doing what they set out to do. This is our road map so he thought that was an important discussion to have to say what else could we do or what else do they want to throw the breaks on.

Vice-Chairman asked what were the missing elements of the Land Use that came out of the survey? Where there anything that stood out as being a missing element? Planner Arroyos replied missing he felt that there was support for those 15-minute neighborhood core areas, places people could walk to. He felt that there was support for some of those missing middle housing types that don't really exist. Those things come to his mind as key things that were identified.

Planner Arroyo said some of the weaknesses that were identified were congestion, road stuff, pedestrian mass transit, no adult sports beer leagues, future business, unknown to the big

developer, grocery store options, affordability, lack of multi-family housing, urban/city mix, ugly industrial, and landfill. They have really addressed a lot of these in a plan. They also had their housing styles preferred there was a lot of that duplex side-by-side courtyard. Widening certain roadways there was support for that. More crosswalks, mobility enhancements, bike lanes, a lot of support for that, 15-minute neighborhoods, and what they would like to see. A lot of things that they would expect are restaurants, dog parks, pedestrian areas, basic needs.

Chairman Reynolds said one of the other things would be natural features. They have some of the development areas that they have seen, what is their stab on trees, and grades, things like that when they have a project that comes in is that important to them. He knows that all of them on paper would love it but is it something that as they have guiding principles in the future to maintain more wooded areas, and natural features and things. Is that something that some people get bonuses on or things that we're encouraged as looked at as a community benefit versus going in and leveling out a site and saying that this is the maximum homes that they can get in there.

Commissioner Walker said that there are no weaknesses in what Planner Arroyo has done. He thought that Planner Arroyo has laid it out very succinctly for them it is all there. He thought the question has now become which way do they want to go? It is not a bindery proposition tonight, yes or a no, it is over a large landscape, and they have to decide. His own personal thoughts are they have gone too far in development already, he thought so. He thinks that he has been clear on that all the time that he has been there. They do not hold the developer's feet to the fire enough. They cave in too quickly on much of it. He thought that they should have more trees. They hear the citizenry when they come up when they quote "where living is a vacation". Well, he gets that, and he has been here a long time, and he is lucky where he lives it is still a vacation but he can't get there because the traffic is too bad. That is what he thinks they should do is they have to decide which way they should go he is just one thought on here, and then on to the BOT and that is where the ultimate decisions lay. He thought it was all laid and it is up to them to decide what to do.

Commissioner Brackon asked if the Township had the ability to purchase privately owned land for preservation purposes. Chairman Reynolds said that he knows that municipalities have acquired parcels he thought that they could acquire them to zone them and have them locked in a land trust. Where the president is sent or how the funding comes about, anything is possible, raise a park's milage that supports acquisition for public land. Planner Arroyo said some communities are using crowdfunding sources to do that. They are saying that they want a park or this and the municipality doesn't have the money to do it and they are going on, and there are a lot of tools now available and they can donate, there are grants. Open space can be part of that so they can have open space as part of the park it doesn't all have to be active.

Chairman Reynolds said he has been part of communities that have acquired parcels or buildings and things to say that this is a catalyst to where they need to go. Their firm was actively engaged in let's talk about that vision let's develop it and then they are going to put it out to bid and have a developer essentially take it from there forward. It was reconfiguring a downtown that was killed through essentially urban renewal. They shut off the downtown they kind of killed it, it was Fenton. The city was directly involved the DDA was involved so there were a couple of other entities at play that are slightly different than the Township but the bigger volume was, they have to get this started. So, it kind of sparks the new interest of a core, a hamlet, whatever it might have been. That is what he is saying from their Master Plan vision is there something that is missing that they envision could be a key pivot point for some of those areas. Or something in a land trust that they need to say this should be an extension of what is there or something new to set the tone of that is not developed or that is an area to maintain that natural aesthetic.

Planner Arroyo said the Township could buy a fairly small piece of property in the Decker Hamlet Area and turn it into a small square. Just put some basic improvements sidewalks running through, a few trees, and some benches. Then see if that could spark some new developments, maybe a few restaurants that would flank it that could then take advantage of that they could look over the park while they dine outside. Those are little things like that that could turn out to be catalysts for creating the type of pattern that they are looking for.

Chairman Reynolds said things like PUDs and a community benefit and someone says that they will give you this piece of land is that in our framework is that something they want to see. Yes, it is part of a bigger discussion with the BOT but is the value adequate to say sure, that is a great contribution to our community based on what they are doing here and giving back. Some of those are fitting into that pocket park, there is one close by the Fire Station, and then there is the other that is by La-Z-Boy, and it was because they had the vision of Baldwin and then the pocket park fit into that.

Planning & Zoning Director Girling said when that division came through that large area that they committed to leaving natural there was discussion if the Township wanted it, they didn't because they get into the insurance and any maintenance on it. They asked them to restrict it so that it always remains natural but they don't want it.

Chairman Reynolds said ownership is just one piece of it, it doesn't mean that there couldn't be a designation or a deed restriction. Just their safety path framework says alright we will invest in private property for this, maybe it is not paved but just something to create a connector through the developments from Silverbell Rd. or something like that.

Vice-Chairman Gross asked if there was an opportunity to create a partnership with either the County or the State on some of the property that they have that could assist in promoting what they are trying to do? Clarkston and Joslyn, the dog park, is there something that they could create there? His point is that there is an opportunity to get partnerships with other government agencies too.

Chairman Reynolds said that is what is happening just south of them at the new Township Hall property. That investment there was to create utilities and a drive and yes, a new Township Hall, but it ultimately kind of engaged 77.6 acres of land that was there and undeveloped but it also maintained and is going to return the existing Township Hall, all of that area is being improved to be additional park area. That was a swap there isn't just anything that can go on that parcel meaning the new parcel, it's specifically for government use and for parks and recreation. There was a vision for a new Township building and that was one opportunity just based on discussions and came about and said let's do it and that is where the investment wants to go.

5. ADJOURNMENT

Moved by Vice-Chairman Gross, seconded by Commissioner Walker, to adjourn the meeting at 6:38 p.m. **Motion carried.**

Respectfully submitted,

Debra Walton
PC/ZBA Recording Secretary
Charter Township of Orion

December 15, 2021

Planning Commission Approval Date