

**CHARTER TOWNSHIP OF VAN BUREN
PLANNING COMMISSION - VIRTUAL MEETING ON ZOOM
April 28, 2021
MINUTES**

Prior to the start of the meeting, the public was given instructions on how to take part in the meeting.

Chairperson Thompson called the meeting to order at 7:32 p.m.

ROLL CALL:

Present: Jahr, Kelley, Atchinson, Budd and Thompson.

Excused: Cullin.

Staff: Director Power, Director Best and Secretary Harman.

Planning Representatives: McKenna Associates, Vidya Krishnan and Adam Cook.

Applicant(s) in Attendance: None.

Audience: Thirty-Two (32).

APPROVAL OF AGENDA:

Motion Kelley, Budd second to approve the agenda of April 28, 2021 as amended, delaying the approval of the April 14, 2021 minutes to a future meeting.

Roll Call:

Yeas: Atchinson, Budd, Kelley, Jahr and Thompson.

Nays: None.

Absent: Cullin.

Motion Carried.

NEW BUSINESS:

ITEM #1: INTRODUCTORY WEBINAR: SUMPTER ROAD CORRIDOR PLAN.

THE TOWNSHIP'S MASTER PLAN CONSULTANT, MCKENNA, WILL HOST A VIRTUAL WEBINAR DESIGNED TO UPDATE STAKEHOLDERS ON THE PERTINENT ISSUES FACING THE SUMPTER ROAD CORRIDOR FROM THE CITY OF BELLEVILLE LIMITS TO BEMIS ROAD, AND ELICIT STAKEHOLDER INPUT AND FEEDBACK. THIS WILL BE PART OF A BROADER PLANNING PROCESS THAT WILL EXPLORE POSSIBLE FUTURE LAND USE MAP AMENDMENTS AND OTHER RECOMMENDATIONS IN THE STUDY AREA AS AN UPDATE TO THE 2020 VAN BUREN TOWNSHIP MASTER PLAN.

Master Plan Consultant Adam Cook of McKenna Associates gave the presentation. Mr. Cook provided a PowerPoint presentation for the Sumpter Road Corridor Plan which provided an overview and discussed the following: the vision statement, Van Buren Township planning history, the Master Plan process, the south side Master Plan, project limits, goals and objectives, the existing land use map, existing land use non-conformities, the future land use map and zoning

plan. A few of the goals of the Sumpter Road Corridor plan are to ensure a strong and diverse local economy by supporting growth and development of both new and existing developments, ensure the preservation of the rural character in the corridor and limit commercial uses.

Director Power discussed why we are here, to reach out to residents and stakeholders for feedback as to what they would like to see in the Sumpter Road Corridor. South of Hull Road is planned for rural development other than a few small pockets of commercial. North of Hull Road, buildings can no longer be used as homes because of the current zoning and there is a need to define what mixed use would be in that area. A consensus is needed to lay the foundation for future development. Director Power identified some of the major project stakeholders: residents, owners of agricultural land, Township Board and Commission members, the City of Belleville Downtown Development Authority (DDA), City of Belleville, Sumpter Township, church members, school representatives and the Belleville Area Chamber of Commerce.

Residents and stakeholders provided the following questions and comments:

- Resident took a blighted home on Sumpter Road, cleaning up the home and property, thinks the zoning should be residential or mixed use. He would like the option to have someone live in the home as one of the properties former uses was as a home. Director Power, informed that this is a good example of a property that was once residential, then rezoned to commercial which has boxed in the use now as commercial. A mixed-use rezoning would potentially allow the property to return to its former use as residential.
- Resident is happy to see leadership taking a look at the corridor, he was born on that road and has a sentimental and business interest. Have the opportunity to recreate the business life with an upgrade, happy this is being looked at.
- Resident identified that several neighbors to 1166 Sumpter Road were embarrassed by the home prior to his Dad buying the home and redoing it and identified that neighbors are frustrated that it cannot be rented or sold due to the current zoning.
- Resident stated that 1166 Sumpter Road looks like a house, why isn't it a house and it's time to make it a house.
- Resident inquired if there are any business that might like to come in and are there any proposals in hand? Director Power informed that there have been different discussions, however, there are no specific businesses or any with an application or plan. Director Best inquired what the resident would like to see or envisions. The resident enjoys the nice leisurely quiet drive, but the road is speedy, she's not sure about more houses, but would stop at stores north of Hull Road if the vacant stores were filled up. She likes the idea of developing north of Hull Road.
- Stakeholder has property in the City of Belleville north of Hull Road, would like to get additional property close to their current property. The problem is the current zoning and he would like to see mixed uses will help to keep tenants. Have to have a good mix of uses to accommodate all.
- Resident moved to Belleville about 2 years ago, enjoys the area, but living off of Sumpter Road is very dangerous with speeding. She would like to see the sidewalks extended and maybe the creation of bike lanes, implementing something like that would be very beneficial for everyone. She would like to see designated bike lanes with barriers and

extending the sidewalks to Hull Road. She likes to ride her bike down Sumpter and Hull but it is very dangerous.

Director Power summarized letters received from residents and stakeholders, Facebook comments and meeting chat comments (Letters Attached):

- Resident has concern with traffic bottle necks at 5 points. Would like to see small to medium size businesses. There is an existing flood of properties with abandonment, offer incentives to rebuild.
- Resident on Martinsville near Fret, moved here for more elbow room, quieter environment that the area provides. He misses the amenities other mature cities offer, with many restaurants and businesses south of I-94 being rundown and or abandoned. Would happily invite more development on Sumpter Road
- Sumpter resident, would like to keep it rural. He travels that road every day, moved there for the rural environment, not the industrial buildings.
- Resident commented that there are many empty buildings and that traffic needs to be addressed before other development occurs.
- Resident sees no need to and is opposed to developing Sumpter Road as proposed. Would like to see the Township focus on redeveloping and improving what has already been developed.
- Letter from the neighbors of 1166 Sumpter Road, would like to take the opportunity to provide their support of zoning changes that would involve the home at 1166 Sumpter Road. Their recommendation would be that it be rezoned as residential. As nearby neighbors of the home, they were so glad to see that a former eyesore has been renovated so beautifully. There are other nearby homes on Sumpter Road, so it would be appropriate to zone this dwelling as residential.
- Resident comment, leave it the way it is.
- Resident has concerns with traffic.
- Resident would like to see re-envisioning/catering towards new types of businesses.
- Resident would like bike lanes.
- Resident commented that the lumber yard is an eyesore and the home on Sumpter Road should be rezoned.
- Resident commented that most businesses have failed and doesn't think that will change.

Commissioners agreed that they would like to move forward with exploring the changes further to help Belleville and Van Buren Township flow together better in the Corridor. Commissioners look forward to further exploring mixed uses, developing a way to slow down traffic, incentives to build and help drive businesses into the city and providing walkability with sidewalks.

Director Power will take the feedback provided to work on the Sumpter Road Corridor Plan and bring back more information to a future meeting. There will be more opportunities for public comment and he will continue to receive comments and feedback by email at: dpower@vanburen-mi.org.

GENERAL DISCUSSION:

Director Power informed that the next Planning Commission meeting will be held on 5-12-21.

ADJOURNMENT:

Motion Jahr, Atchinson second to adjourn the meeting at 8:57 p.m. Motion Carried.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'CH', with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

Christina Harman
Recording Secretary

Van Buren Charter Township

Attn: Dan Power – Director of Building, Planning and Economic
Development

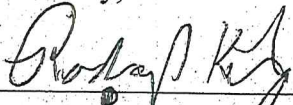
Dear Mr. Power,

We would like to take this opportunity to provide you with our support
of zoning changes that would involve the home at 1166 Sumpter Road.

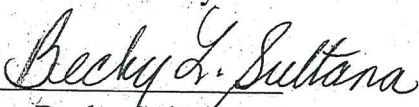
Our recommendation would be that it be rezoned as residential. As
nearby neighbors of the home, we were so glad to see that a former
eyesore has been renovated so beautifully. There are other nearby
homes on Sumpter Road, so it would be appropriate to zone this
dwelling as residential. Please find our names, addresses, and contact
information below.

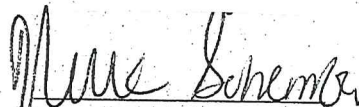
Thank you for your consideration.

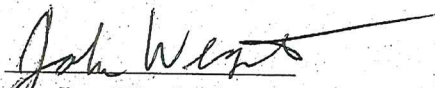
Sincerely,

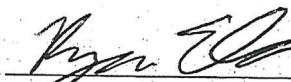

Roger King


Tom King


Becky Sultana


Nick Schenbri


Jon Wegienka


Ryan Ellis

Power, Dan

From: McNamara, Kevin
Sent: Thursday, April 22, 2021 9:41 AM
To: Brian Robert
Cc: Selman, Dan; Power, Dan
Subject: RE: Sumpter Rd - South side master plan

Categories: Orange category

Dear Mr. Robert,

I will read this into the record. WE have these public forums to get input. Sometimes, what looks good on paper to solve a problem like getting grocery stores or allowing the businesses in the Belleville industrial plaza to stay in the area by providing a new light industrial area along Sumpter sounds good on paper, but lose their luster when we look at it through the residents eyes.

Thank you for your input. It does matter.

If you want to discuss I am available at 734-699-8910.

Sincerely,

Kevin McNamara

From: Brian Robert
Sent: Thursday, April 22, 2021 6:34 AM
To: McNamara, Kevin <kmcnamara@vanburen-mi.org>
Subject: Sumpter Rd - South side master plan

As a resident of Van Buren Township (_____), I see no need to and am opposed to developing Sumpter Rd. as proposed. Our area is already littered with empty businesses and half full strip malls full of low end stores. Could we focus on redeveloping and improving what's already been developed?

Respectfully,

Brian Robert

Power, Dan

From: Albrecht, Alysha
Sent: Thursday, April 22, 2021 9:31 PM
To: Sean De Gennaro; Communications
Cc: Power, Dan
Subject: Re: Resident Comment on Sumpter Road Corridor Change

Categories: Orange category

Hello Sean,

Thank you so much for your feedback and taking the time to reach out to us. I've CCed the Director of Building and Planning Dan Power on this email, so he can read your comments and share them with the Commission.

We're also inviting the public to the next Planning Commission meeting on Wednesday, April 28 at 7:30pm via zoom to discuss the Sumpter Road Corridor. If you wish to attend to make a public comment please let me know and I'll send you the zoom information. You can also find the info on the VBT website under the meetings and agenda tab, but I'm happy to share with you if that is easier.

All the best,

Alysha Albrecht

Get [Outlook for iOS](#)

From: Sean De Gennaro
Sent: Thursday, April 22, 2021 6:23 PM
To: communications@vanburen-mi.org
Subject: Resident Comment on Sumpter Road Corridor Change

To whom it may concern on the Van Buren Township Board,

After hearing about the rezoning investigation for Sumpter Road through the Belleville Independent, I wanted to share my thoughts.

I'm a resident on Martinsville Road in Van Buren Township (near Fret Road) and have lived here for 4 years now. I moved to the area for more elbow room, a quieter environment, and less hub-bub overall and have found that Van Buren Township has that in spades. I've also been pleasantly surprised at how centrally located we are to Novi/Northville to the north, Ann Arbor to the west, and Dearborn/Detroit to the east. It's been very convenient in that regard.

However, I've missed the local amenities Royal Oak and other mature cities offer. Of course, one understands that by moving to the country, fewer restaurants, stores, and services will be available...but VBT south of I-94 feels especially lonely. Many restaurants and services south of I-94 are rundown, mediocre, or outright abandoned, and stores are limited or non-existent in offerings. I've personally appreciated the improvements that Belleville Road has been seeing north of 94 and am envious of the convenience those nearby residents have while I have a ~20 minute drive to get there. And as a resident who can already lay claim to a peaceful, large lot on a quiet side road, I would happily invite more development on Sumpter Road---which is "close", but not "too close".

Van Buren Township has a golden opportunity to expand smartly and provide premium housing, retail, and restaurants to its residents. The fact that we haven't grown more as a centrally located township, while areas like Canton, Ann Arbor, Saline, Pittsfield Township, and Plymouth/Northville race to build is

quite sad...especially at a time when COVID-19 has families rethinking urban living and seeking large lots and bigger homes to space out. We could have the best of both worlds: more amenities and more residents, while still maintaining a rural charm--if we choose to zone smartly and build commercial spaces/homes on larger lots set back from the road. Others, like Saline, Pittsfield, and even Scio Township have done it and look very appealing for it.

I hope the committee chooses to rezone Sumpter Road, taking a crucial step forward for our residents that retains our rural charm but offers much more for our residents.

All the best,

Sean DeGennaro

Power, Dan

From: Bellingham, Sean
Sent: Friday, April 23, 2021 3:04 PM
To: Power, Dan
Subject: Re: Van Buren Township Introductory Webinar: Sumpter Road Corridor Plan

Categories: Orange category

My vote....keep it rural. I live in Sumpter. Travel that road every day. Moved there for it's rural environment, not industrial buildings. Just my opinion in case it means anything.

Sent from my iPhone

On Apr 23, 2021, at 1:55 PM, Power, Dan <dpower@vanburen-mi.org> wrote:

Good afternoon, Directors:

Please see information about the upcoming **Sumpter Road Corridor Plan** introductory webinar coming up next at the time of our next Planning Commission meeting next Wednesday, 4/28/21 at 7:30 p.m. Let me know if you have not already received a direct Outlook invitation and would like one, or if you have any other questions about this planning initiative.

Thank you,

Dan Power, AICP
Director of Planning and Economic Development
Department of Public Services
Charter Township of Van Buren
dpower@vanburen-mi.org. 734.699.8900, ext. 9392
Van Buren Township's administrative office is currently open to the public from 10:00 a.m. – 3:00 p.m.
Monday-Friday

Power, Dan

Subject: FW: Southside

-----Original Message-----

From: LRHogan

Sent: Monday, April 26, 2021 3:38 PM

To: McNamara, Kevin <kmcnamara@vanburen-mi.org>

Subject: Southside

Dr Mr McNamara,

I am writing to you because I don't do Zoom but as a resident of the South Side of town I would like to say something about changing the master plan.

Just go down this section of Sumpter Road. Currently there are so many empty buildings/store fronts it's ridiculous. I think I counted 14 or more. You don't need to build down Sumpter Road. Fill the empty buildings we have now.

We had a grocery store in the strip mall by Owens School. (East side of Sumpter Road.) It went out of business. Not enough business to keep them open.

South of 94 we have that whole shopping center that used to have Kmart and Chatham Grocery Store. Almost all empty store fronts.

After Chathams they put in a Save-a-lot. Currently that Save-alot works fine in Ypsilanti on Washtenaw but there was not enough supported in the Belleville area so they left. They are closing Dunhams.

If I need something in a pinch I go to the gas station or one of the dollar stores down Sumpter Road. And there is another store on the corner of Willis and Rawsonville. A nice pharmacy/food store in the gas station on Sumpter and Willis.

We have Hidalgo Authentic Mexican Restaurant, Bobby McShane's, Red Rooster, Bentios Dine-in or out, nearby. We had a very nice restaurant called "Paula" where the Dollar Tree is now. Also went out of business for lack of customers. Next to the Dollar Tree is an empty bar. Been empty for over 10 years even though the shopping center owners has put money into the strips.

We have had two ice cream stores, dog groomers, hair salons, vets, liquor stores, a doctor's group go out of business on south Sumpter. The Secretary of State did not stay moved into town.

We don't need anymore traffic going south through downtown. I sat in traffic for 20 minutes Thursday from the x-way to the tracks on South/Sumpter Rd. (On Facebook Community page someone wrote that we need porta pottys from the x-expressway to the tracks because it takes so long to get through to the homes and business on the south side)

We get stuck by the trains. Cars stuck all the way from 5 Points trying to go south down Sumpter Road. What a mess the traffic is now. Why would residents want a bigger mess?

PLEASE figure out traffic before you do anything else.. Thank you for listening and all you do for residents of VBtwp.

My husband lived in this home since 1945 and I since 1975. (his parents bought this land in 1938) Please we do not want to see more traffic congestion and empty store fronts on Sumpter Road.

The building down Sumpter on the southside are only filled for a short time if ever.

Thank you, Linda Hogan

To: Van Buren Township, Michigan

Kevin McNamara, Supervisor

From: William Alati

Dear Supervisor Kevin,

I read about the township wanting to hear from residents on the proposal to change zoning along Sumpter Rd from agricultural to commercial. I have some comment on that proposal, coming from many years spent in big box store property development.

Starting off, I do not believe a change to commercial would be in the best interest of the community, some reasons for that are;

1. The access roads going to the proposed Sumpter road development area simply is not there, nor are they likely to be there in the future. There will be a bottle neck at 5 Pts, the lake will stay in place(hopefully), and Main Street businesses will not want to give up street parking.
2. If changes to zoning were made, the attraction would be to small to medium size businesses, again the major players would most likely not be interested for the same access reasons.
3. Assuming the changes are still made, then the most likely businesses interested, will be the small independents that in reality have a greater record of failure, and a resulting burden on the township.
4. Lastly, look at the existing glut of business properties along Sumpter Rd, going north from Hull to 5Pts, many of them have been closed and in disrepair for years, some look like the properties on the tv show Abandoned Structures.

I believe what would be in the Townships best interest, would be to offer some kind of incentive to rebuild or renovate the existing commercial/light industrial properties that already exist in areas along Sumpter that is already zoned for them. Another item to consider, is the already heavy traffic we have on Sumpter and Bemis roads, additional new development would certainly put pressure there and undoubtedly upset the many residents along those roads.

Thank you,

William Alati