

NORTHFIELD TOWNSHIP PLANNING COMMISSION

Minutes
July 1, 2015

1. CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order by Chair
Marlene Chockley at 7:00 P.M. at 8350 Main Street.

2. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

3. ROLL CALL AND DETERMINATION OF QUORUM

Planning Commission:

Janet Chick	Present
Marlene Chockley	Present
Brad Cousino	Present
Kenneth Dignan	Present
Sam Iaquinto	Present
Larry Roman	Absent with notice
Mar, Stanalajczo	Present

Also present:

Township Manager Howard Fink
Assessing & Building Assistant Mary Bird
Sharlan Douglas, Douglas Communications Group
Recording Secretary Lisa Lemble
Members of the Community

4. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Commissioners added the following items: Under New Business, *Discussion of the Interview Process for the New Planning Consultant*, and under Policy Review discussions of *Meeting Cancellation*, *Van Curler Property*, and *Two Acre Zoning*.

- **Motion:** Dignan moved, Stanalajczo supported, that the agenda be adopted as amended.
Motion carried 6—0 on a voice vote.

5. FIRST CALL TO THE PUBLIC

Nowatzke Site Plan. Dale Brewer, 11548 East Shore Drive, referred to an email he sent to Board members about the Nowatzke site plan approval. He said conditions of that approval have not been met including an approved spill control plan and sediment and erosion control plan. He said Nowatzke also has only two sewer taps and needs 12, and the Township has filed a complaint for his non-payment of past sewer usage fees.

Master Plan/Community Survey/Planning Consultants. David Perry, 9411 Earhart Road, said he

is content with the current master plan and believes it should stay in effect until 2017. He said there is a silent majority that agrees with him. He asked the Commission to look at questions used in the last community survey about preserving open space. He said valuable farm land here should be preserved.

Perry also said the letter of resignation from planning consultants Carlisle Wortman seems to indicate a difference of opinion about planning issues, and he asked the Township to make public the nature of that disagreement.

Sally Lewis, 6015 Sutton Road, said she is also part of the silent minority and asked the Commission to keep the current Master Plan. She said she wished there was some way to ask questions of Commissioners, and said she does not understand why Carlisle Wortman is resigning as planners for the Township. She said she is for very responsible development, now sprawl. She asked what the Commissioners' ancestors would like to see for the Township. She said she has been relying on David Gordon to speak for her viewpoint and said she hopes the Commission is listening to what he says.

Joann Martila Pearson, 5756 Earhart Road, expressed dismay at the resignation of Carlisle Wortman, particularly because of the statement in their letter that the Township seems to want to move in a different direction, so they will step aside to allow that to happen. She said they are the very best planners, and because of the actions of a few the Township has lost them. She said development should be in the hamlet where the infrastructure is, and the lovely, rural open spaces should be preserved. She encouraged all citizens to be on alert and said information is available at northfieldneighbors.today. She thanked the Commissioners for their service.

Jim Nelson, 7777 Sutton Road, said the bias of the Planning Commission and Township Board will show up in the survey Cobalt will be preparing. He said framing the debate as growth vs. no-growth shows that bias. He said the issue is smart growth vs. stupid growth; it's where and when the growth will be.

6. CORRESPONDENCE

Letter from Carlisle Wortman Associates, Inc. Iaquinto said the Township Board is asking for bids from planning consultants because Carlisle Wortman informed the Township of a rate increase. He said bids have not been sought in over six years, and Carlisle

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Wortman chose not to submit a bid. Stanalajczco agreed and said he can understand that Carlisle Wortman wouldn't want to bid after not having had to compete against others for 10 years. He said their resignation does not reflect well on them, but he does not think it will be a tragedy for the Township. He said even though it may be uncomfortable, it will work out well for the Township, and he wishes Carlisle Wortman had handled this more professionally.

Chick said meaning should not be read into the letter. She said she does not think their resignation was unprofessional. Dignan said it is clear Carlisle Wortman has an agenda, and dropping all work for the Township is what he thinks is unprofessional. He said they have not been visionary about the changing landscape in the Township, and planners need to work with their clients without an agenda.

Chockley noted Carlisle Wortman's rates have not increased since 2009, and they asked for a 2.9% increase—about \$2.50/hour—and a \$50 increase in their retainer. She said all four proposals that have been received are significantly higher than that. She said it is unacceptable to make charges against their professionalism. She noted they are completing the work they started, and they will continue to be available if needed. She said they operate under a code of ethics that puts the public first. She said the Master Plan was adopted in 2012, and the motion from the Board to approve it was made and seconded by Iaquinto and Stanalajczco, and both praised the work of the Planning Commission. She said since then not a lot has changed, except that one proposal for development has come in. She said the Plan can be changed, as it has been, when appropriate. She said the Planning Commission is a professional body, and she asked that all members respect each other and behave well.

Dignan said when he ran a consulting firm for 20 years and never once did he walk away from a client until they had new consultants. He said Carlisle Wortman's letter says they are walking away as of July 8th.

7. REPORTS

7A. Board of Trustees

Chick reported that on June 9th:

- A budget public hearing was held and the budget approved.
- A request from Kiwanis to use 75 Barker Road was approved.
- Amendments to the ES District, the zoning map, and the site plan manual were approved.
- The Cobalt contract to prepare a community survey was approved.

She said at the workshop session on June 23rd the Board discussed:

- developing an appeals process for commercial sewer accounts and establishing a grace period for payment of sewer bills.
- Alternatives for the non-motorized path since two property owners not granting easements.

7B. ZBA

The ZBA has not met since the last Planning Commission meeting.

7C. Staff Report

Chockley reported the Huron River Watershed Council is working on natural areas mapping for the Township, and that information will probably be presented at the August 19th agenda. She also noted that proposals from Steel Trucking and Al Dente Pasta will probably be ready for the July 15th agenda.

7D. Planning Consultant

No report.

8. PUBLIC HEARINGS

None.

9. OLD BUSINESS

None.

10. NEW BUSINESS

10A. Cobalt Community Research—Discussion of Citizen Survey Objectives.

Sharlan Douglas of Douglas Consulting Group and Cobalt Community Research said they have met with Township officials and listened to the Board and Planning Commission, and said she wants to make sure Cobalt and the Township agree on the objectives of the work. She read the nine draft objectives she had prepared for the work they propose to do.

Chockley said she wants to know whether residents think the sewer capacity is large enough or needs to be expanded, but questions whether residents would have enough information about this. Dignan said the Commission has to be careful not to use planning jargon that the general public will be unfamiliar with. Stanalajczco said this is a complicated issue that took an entire evening for someone to explain to the Commission, and he questioned how survey questions could be formulated about this.

Douglas said she has some draft questions the Commission could review, but she wants to make sure all questions speak to the issues the Commission wants to address.

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Chockley suggested including questions about what basic services residents would like to see, such as municipal water and public transit. Dignan Cousino suggested including garbage pickup. Stanalajczko said residents should be asked if they would support a millage to preserve open space. Iaquinto said the same should be asked about recreation services. Chockley, Dignan, and Chick said residents should be asked whether they want amenities such as a waterfront park, other recreation amenities, or economic growth support for the downtown to make it a vibrant place.

Douglas said she has reviewed the community surveys done in 1999 and 2009, and she could include questions in this survey that allow them to measure how opinions on some issues have changed. Dignan questioned whether it would be worthwhile to ask questions about US-23 since so much about it will be changing in the next couple years.

Chockley said she would like to know what kinds of businesses residents would most like to see and not to see in the Township. Dignan said the emphasis should be on the positive—what kinds of businesses the Township should work to attract.

Chockley said she would like questions about the value people put on preserving open space and farm land, whether they think there is enough commercial and industrial land, and what they think housing densities should be. Dignan said in addition to asking about purchase of development rights to preserve land, there are also proposals about allowing limited access to such lands, such as for connecting trails.

Douglas suggested adding as an objective testing of the public's tolerance for paying for what they want. She said this can give Trustees confidence in proposing spending or taxes for things people say they want.

Chockley asked how confidentiality will be handled, noting this is a small community and some people may be concerned about their opinions being made public. Douglas said they will know the addresses the responses came from, but they are committed to confidentiality and will share only aggregate information with the Township to allow opinions in different zones to be compared.

Douglas said their preferred way for people to complete the survey is on-line, but a paper survey can be requested. She said surveying the entire community, rather than using sampling, will provide powerful results. She suggested doing publicity about it in advance. Iaquinto said an article can be published in *The Courant*. Chockley noted any such articles would be written by Cobalt.

There was discussion about whether to include any questions about the schools. Dignan, a school board

member, said he would ask the school board about this. Douglas said if that information is desired, it should be one of the objectives because that is quite a different direction. Dignan said if there were questions they should be about whether people think there are other educational opportunities that should be provided.

Chockley suggested a question about whether parents want kids to be able to walk to school. She said subdivisions built near schools would allow more children to do that. Dignan said the infrastructure would have to be there, and those things are very important. He said parents like it when their kids can walk safely and do not have to be on a bus for an hour. He said the Barker Road non-motorized path is very important to the school district.

Cousino asked if there is an optimal length of a survey, what they expect the response rate to be, and what response rate is considered high enough to get good data. Douglas said they see the optimal length as four pages, and 800 responses would provide for very reliable data.

Douglas said she would like action on the proposed objectives with the addition of "We will measure the tolerance for the cost of additional amenities that people list as priorities." It was agreed that objective 6 should read (addition underlined):

"Determine the relative strength of opinion about how people perceive they might benefit from development and preservation." "

- **Motion:** Chockley moved, Dignan supported, that the *Proposed Objectives for Community-Wide Opinion Research* be approved, with the wording of item 6 changed to, "Determine the relative strength of opinion about how people perceive they might benefit from development and preservation." and the addition of "We will measure the tolerance for the cost of additional amenities that people list as priorities."
- Motion carried 6—0 on a voice vote.**

Douglas said she will provide the draft list of survey questions next week, so the Board can review them at their July 14th meeting, and the Planning Commission can discuss them on August 5th.

10B. Discussion of Interview Process for Planning Consultant.

Chockley noted four proposals have been submitted, and the Township Board will interview all of the firms on either July 14th or 28th. She said the Planning Commission could also interview them, but the July 15th agenda is full. She said this could be done at a special meeting or on August 5th. Stanalajczko said he

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feels comfortable having only the Township Board conduct the interviews. Allowing Commission members to speak with applicants individually, or forming a subcommittee to do so was suggested. Dignan said interviews should be conducted in public. Iaquinto suggested a joint Township Board and Planning Commission meeting. Chockley said she suggested that. Iaquinto said it would be beneficial for Board members to hear questions Commissioners might have, and a joint meeting would be most respectful of the applicants' time.

- **Motion:** Iaquinto moved, Chick supported, that the Township Board be asked to call a joint meeting for the sole purpose of the interview process for the planning consultants' proposals.

Cousino said since the Commissioners deal with the planning consultant more closely than the Board members the Commission should definitely be involved with the selection process.

Motion carried 6—0 on a voice vote.

11. MINUTES

June 3, 2015, Regular Meeting

Chockley made several minor corrections.

- **Motion:** Iaquinto moved, Stanalajczo supported, that the minutes of the June 3, 2015, regular meeting be approved as corrected, and to dispense with the reading. **Motion carried 6—0 on a voice vote.**

12. POLICY REVIEW AND DISCUSSION

Van Curler Property. Iaquinto said this is a 28 acre parcel adjacent to the Post Office with some buildings on Main Street and Barker Road which is being offered for sale for about \$2.5 million. He asked if there is an interest in the Commission asking the Township to consider acquiring this property for public use. Chick said she would be interested in having that discussion. Iaquinto said the community survey could help with this. Chockley noted there is a vision in the Master Plan for this area, and if the Township bought it there is the possibility of retaining part of it for public use and splitting off part for sale and development. It was agreed by consensus that the Commission asks the Township Board to consider this.

Two Acre Zoning. Chick said she was surprised to learn when this was discussed some time ago that the size for rural lots in adjacent communities is two acres, rather than the five acres used in Northfield Township. She asked what other Commissioners think about this. Iaquinto said it would be appropriate to put this on the next agenda for full discussion. Chockley suggested holding off on this discussion until new planning consultants are hired.

Meeting Cancellation. Chockley explained that there were no applicants ready for this agenda by the advertising deadline, and she had not heard from Cobalt at that point, so she canceled the meeting. She said when she received information the same day from Cobalt she reinstated the meeting. She said she had also been told that the Commission was not supposed to making any zoning ordinance changes, so she did not see a reason to meet.

Stanalajczo said the Commission is not operating according to the by-laws adopted in 2014. He said there is nothing in the by-laws about one person canceling meetings, and since the entire body sets the meeting schedule cancellations should be agreed upon by the entire Commission. He said the role of the Chair is quite limited in the by-laws, and the role of the Secretary is not being followed at all.

Stanalajczo said the Commission should always meet to work through its objectives unless there is a Commission consensus to cancel. He said the by-laws call for the Secretary to receive all correspondence, minutes, and notices, but he does not see any of those things. Chockley said the way some things are done have come about by custom. She said she has not ever not put something on an agenda that she has been told should be on, but she has tried to avoid putting on things that are not ready. She said she tries to be conscientious about that.

Dignan said he does not question Chockley's dedication and the effort she has put in, but custom is not a defense to not following the by-laws. He said actions taken by the Commission are handed over to staff to follow through on, and no one on the Board should be doing that work. He said, for example, the things Mr. Brewer brought up during the First Call to the Public need to be brought to the attention of staff because they are staff duties, not policy issues. He said it can be hard for Commissioners to step back, but that must be done.

Chockley noted that there should not be email discussion among Commissioners about proposals; all of that discussion should be done in public to maintain the integrity of the Board.

13. SECOND CALL TO THE PUBLIC

Community Survey. Joann Martila Pearson, 5756 Earhart Road, said she appreciates the language adjustment in the objectives to recognize the need to ask residents about their opinions on land preservation.

Dale Brewer suggested sending the survey to businesses in addition to residents. David Perry said that would make sense as long as they are residents of the Township.

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David Perry said he is in favor of maintaining the current Master Plan, but said there was a lot of good discussion about the survey. He asked Commissioners need to continue to be careful about wording of questions so they are clear. He said preservation and development are not four letter words, and it should be clear with the language used that people are making choices.

Carlisle Wortman Resignation. Joann Martila Pearson said it is disturbing to hear that the four proposals made are all proposing higher rates than Carlisle Wortman's.

Two Acre Zoning. Dale Brewer said this is a very good idea. David Perry said it might be good to include questions about this in the survey because this would have a big effect on the Township.

Zoning Enforcement and Follow-up. Brewer said he appreciated Dignan's comments about staff following up on Planning Commission decisions, but his point was that the Commission's directions are not being followed by staff.

Correspondence. Brewer said the email he sent to Commissioners—and all other correspondence—should have been listed under Correspondence.

Van Curler Property. Township Trustee Dockett said it would be a boondoggle for the Township to buy this property. He said people on the lake will not like seeing a beach and public access added.

14. COMMENTS FROM THE COMMISSIONERS

Independence Day. Stanalajczo asked that everyone keep men and women in uniform in their thoughts.

Dignan noted the school district is hosting a community celebration July 2nd through 5th at the middle school

property, including a carnival and run. Iaquinto noted the fireworks display will be Friday night, July 3rd, and the parade will be Saturday morning at 10:00 A.M., and the festival of lights will start at 9:45 P.M.

Thank you. Chockley thanked Commissioners for the good discussion.

Public Comment. Chick noted that a lack of response from Board members about public comments does not indicate agreement or disagreement.

Support. Chick asked for support for a family injured in a car accident recently.

Planning Consultants. Chick said the only agenda that Doug Lewan of Carlisle Wortman had was the Township's, and she thanked him for his service to the Township.

Sound system/Meeting Room. Dignan said the acoustics in the meeting room are terrible for people in the room and viewing on television, and he asked the Board to make an investment in a proper meeting room.

15. ANNOUNCEMENT OF NEXT MEETING

July 15, 2015, at 7:00 P.M. at the Public Safety Building was announced as the next regular Commission meeting time and location.

16. ADJOURNMENT

- **Motion:** Dignan moved, Chick supported, that the meeting be adjourned.
Motion carried 6—0 on a voice vote.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:21 P.M.

Prepared by Lisa Lemble.

Corrections to the originally issued minutes are indicated as follows:

Wording removed is ~~stricken through~~;

Wording added is underlined.

Adopted on July 15, 2015.


Marlene Chockley, Chair


Mark Stanalajczo, Secretary

Official minutes of all meetings are available on the Township's website at
<http://www.twp-northfield.org/government/>