

**NORTHFIELD TOWNSHIP  
PLANNING COMMISSION  
Minutes of Regular Meeting  
December 4, 2013**

**1. CALL TO ORDER**

The meeting was called to order by Chair Marlene Chockley at 7:08 P.M. at 8350 Main Street.

**2. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**

**3. ROLL CALL  
AND DETERMINATION OF QUORUM**

Roll call:

Janet Chick	Present
Marlene Chockley	Present
Brad Cousino	Present
Kenneth Dignan	Present
Glen Ewald	Present
Sam Iaquinto	Present
Larry Roman	Present

Also present:

Planning Consultant Douglas Lewan,  
Carlisle/Wortman Associates  
Township Manager Howard Fink  
Recording Secretary Lisa Lemble

**4. APPROVAL OF AGENDA**

- **Motion:** Dignan moved, Iaquinto supported, that the agenda be adopted as presented.  
**Motion carried 7—0 on a voice vote.**

**5. FIRST CALL TO THE PUBLIC**

None present.

**6. CORRESPONDENCE**

None.

**7. REPORTS**

**7A. Board of Trustees**

Chick reported that on November 12<sup>th</sup> the Board:

- Approved application for grant regarding storm water management.
- Passed three ordinances: Municipal Civil Infractions, Weed, and Anti-Blight and Inoperable Motor Vehicles.
- Announced they are accepting applications for an appointment to the Planning Commission.

**7B. ZBA**

Roman reported that a request for setback variances for a house addition was approved, but a revised plan with an additional variance may be considered in the future.

**7C. Staff Report**

Chick and Chockley reported that MDOT presented information recently about improving traffic flows between M-36 and M-14 along US-23 by widening the shoulders along the center median. She explained that these additional lanes would be open to traffic only when needed. Fink said it appears that traffic counts do not warrant three lanes in each direction at all times, and the additional lanes could also be opened up for use in the case of accidents.

Chockley noted there will be another public meeting about this on December 12<sup>th</sup>. Fink said he hopes to have the meeting televised.

Chockley said the construction of a roundabout at US-23 and Territorial was also proposed. Chick said this would be designed to allow the North Territorial Bridge to be widened in the future. Dignan questioned whether any of the Township's resources, including backing bonds, could be used to help fund widening of the North Territorial bridge. Chick said a bridge at the desired width would cost at least \$1 million. Fink said financing options could certainly be considered by the Township Board.

**7D. Planning Consultant**

Nothing to report.

**8. PUBLIC HEARINGS**

None.

**9. OLD BUSINESS**

**A. U.S.23/North Territorial Interchange Study Area.**

Planning Consultant Doug Lewan referred to recent past discussions about this. He recalled that the Commission considered a very large study area, but said it is unlikely that there will be many changes made in the master plan in that area. He said it is likely that the Mixed Use (MU) district will be increased southward along Whitmore Lake Road, and revisions to both that district and the future land use map will be considered. He recalled that goals related to this are increased job growth and tax base.

Lewan presented a Future Land Use Plan showing the increased MU area along both sides of Whitmore Lake Road. He noted that much of the expanded MU area is currently zoned for light industrial, and while the change does not look to be very great it is significant in that the variety of uses allowed would increase.

He said the master plan calls for this area to be a high-tech jobs node, so some changes to the text of the plan would have to be made in addition to changing the map. He added that while there is also an area

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designated for mixed use development just south of the Village area, that is very different from this area, so he is proposing that they be designated as Mixed Use North and Mixed Use South, with the latter allowing more intense development.

Lewan said it will be important to avoid standalone types of developments—such as an apartment complex—being built before anything else. He said apartments would be allowed, but as part of a mixed use project. He said some uses, such as outdoor storage, would not be allowed in the district. He said many projects of the desired type will probably require use of a Planned Unit Development (PUD).

Lewan cautioned that if the master plan is amended to incorporate these changes the zoning will not change until initiated by others. He noted that this change to the master plan would be considered minor, but a public comment period would still be required. He added that he would be concerned about removing much of the Industrial zoning to the east of the MU area because that constitutes most of the industrial zoning in the Township and some of the area has already been developed with industrial uses.

He noted that the southwest part of the study area was designated Low Density Residential (LDR) with the intent of it being a buffer between the agricultural area to the west and the industrial development along Whitmore Lake Road and because the area contains significant wetlands. He said for those reasons he is not proposing a change in the designation of that area.

Lewan cautioned that significant development in this area would not be advisable until infrastructure—roads, the North Territorial bridge and interchanges, and sewers—are improved or developed.

Iaquinto said he likes the vision presented by Lewan. Chick agreed this will be beneficial to the Township. Chockley recalled that property owners petitioning for sewer service along Whitmore Lake Road expressed concern about lack of development options, so she is pleased with this proposal which will open up that area for potential rezoning and development.

Dignan referred to the LDR area in the northwest part of the study area east of Whitmore Lake Road from Five Mile to Six Mile Road which includes the high school. He questioned the continued viability of that lower density land use. He also noted the school is connected to the sewer system and said if parcels were assembled denser development could occur. Chockley said it would be good to have the information about where the sewer lines in that area run.

Chockley said it would also be useful to have a map showing the Downtown Development Authority (DDA) boundaries. Lewan said he will try to get that information and overlay it on the study area map.

Roman said he lives in the LDR area referred to by Dignan and is concerned about the lack of buffer between the general industrial area to the south. He

questioned whether an intermediate land use could be designated for that area. Lewan said most of the area designated industrial on the land use plan is actually zoned Research, Technology, and Manufacturing (RTM), but he could look at options for this area.

Regarding the designations of MU-North and MU-South, Fink suggested using the terms Traditional Neighborhood Design (TND) for the MU-North area and Jobs Node (JD) for the MU-South area.

Lewan asked Commissioners to consider the information he had provided and said once there is agreement he can distribute a proposal to neighboring communities for review.

## **10. NEW BUSINESS**

**A. 2014 Planning Commission Calendar.** Chockley referred to the proposal for meetings on first and third Wednesdays of each month with the exception of January 1<sup>st</sup>. She noted meetings can be canceled as appropriate.

► **Motion:** Iaquinto moved, Chick supported, that the Northfield Township Planning Commission Regular Meeting Schedule for 2014 be adopted as presented. **Motion carried 7—0 on a voice vote.**

**B. Review of Planning Commission By-laws.** Chockley referred to the proposed changes to the by-laws prepared by Lewan to bring them into conformance with current State law. Lewan reviewed these changes and recommended that Sections 4.5—Public Works Review and 4.6—Review of Public Directors be given further review.

Regarding conflicts of interest, Chockley said from her understanding of this subject it is appropriate for Commissioners with a conflict not only to disclose it but to recuse themselves from the discussion and even leave the room. Lewan said good judgment must be used, but it may be sufficient for a Commissioner with a conflict to leave the table yet still sit in the audience. He said Chockley's points are well taken, and he always advises officials that they should avoid even the appearance of impropriety regarding potential conflicts of interest.

Iaquinto noted that while he should disclose that he owns a property in the downtown area when matters generally pertaining to that area are discussed, that ownership should not preclude him from voting on general matters regarding the area. Chick said there can be gray areas, such as a business next door to a Commissioner's property seeking an approval that might affect the value of the Commissioner's property. In answer to a question from Dignan, Lewan agreed that it is the responsibility of the Commissioner to declare a conflict. Dignan said anyone with an axe to grind with a particular Commissioner could make an unjustified case for a conflict in some situations.

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Chick brought up the issue of ex-parte communications about proposals before the Commission. Lewan said it is best to avoid them, but if they occur Commissioners should disclose them publicly.

Chockley questioned whether some of the items listed in the Purposes section should be eliminated. She asked Commissioners to review the draft with the proposed changes and to make suggestions for additional changes.

In answer to a question from Cousino, Chockley said changes to the by-laws must be posted for public review, but do not require a public hearing or approval by the Township Board.

### **11. MINUTES**

#### **November 6, 2013, Regular Meeting**

Chockley corrected several minor typographical and syntax errors.

- ▶ **Motion:** Dignan moved, Iaquinto supported, that the minutes of the November 6, 2013, regular meeting be approved as corrected, and to dispense with the reading.

### **12. POLICY REVIEW & DISCUSSION**

None.

### **13. COMMENTS FROM THE COMMISSIONERS**

**Ordinances adopted by the Township Board.** In answer to a question from Chick, Fink said an amendment to the zoning ordinance regarding civil infractions will be required before enforcement action can be taken regarding the ordinances approved by the Township Board. In answer to another question from Chick, Fink said he has been working with the zoning administrator and Township consultants on developing a fee schedule for the Township. He said while the

Board will need to approve this, he would like it to be reviewed by the Planning Commission first because many of the fees are related to site plan reviews.

Iaquinto asked that when Fink calls other communities to research their fees that he use communities of a size similar to Northfield Township. He also said he liked Dignan's suggestion about reducing or eliminating sewer tap fees to encourage development in the Township.

**Outgoing Commissioner.** Chockley noted that this will probably be Ewald's last meeting. She said he has been a conscientious and dedicated Board member, thanked him for his service, and said he will be missed. Ewald said it has been a pleasure working with the other Commissioners.

**Thank you—WWTP.** Dignan thanked the staff of the Wastewater Treatment Plant for their quick response when he called about a possible sewer problem. He said a crew arrived within 10 minutes.

### **14. SECOND CALL TO THE PUBLIC**

None present.

### **15. ANNOUNCEMENT OF NEXT MEETING**

**December 18, 2013**, at 7:00 P.M. at the Public Safety Building was announced as the next regular Commission meeting time and location.

### **16. ADJOURNMENT**

- ▶ **Motion:** Roman moved, Chick supported, that the meeting be adjourned.  
**Motion carried 7—0 on a voice vote.**

The meeting was adjourned at 8:40 P.M.

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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 January 15, 2014.

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Marlene Chockley, Chair

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Kenneth Dignan, Secretary

Official minutes of all meetings are available on the Township's website at [http://twp-northfield.org/boards/planning\\_commission/Minutes](http://twp-northfield.org/boards/planning_commission/Minutes)