

WESTFIELD TOWNSHIP ZONING COMMISSION
Workshop – March 27, 2007 @ 7:30 p.m.

Chairman Russ Zupanic called the workshop to order at 7:30 p.m. Roll call indicated five members of the Zoning Commission were present: Russ Zupanic, Wayne Brezina, Jill Kemp, James Likley, and Scott Anderson. John Miller (alternate) was out of the country on business.

Also present were: Trustee Jeff Plumer, Trustee Carolyn Sims, Tim Sims, Landowner Tim Kratzer, Ron Oiler, Dennis Delagrange (9730 Westfield Road), Tom and Karen Micklas (7360 Buffham Road) and Mike Schmidt (late).

The following is a summary of tonight's workshop, which was recorded on audiotape.

Chairman Zupanic stated that Medina County Department of Planning Services (MCDPS) had been contacted after the last meeting and asked to attend this workshop session. However, they preferred to set up a meeting with the chair/vice chair to review the zoning concerns that the board has been discussing. The chairman was unable to attend but Vice Chair Kemp met with the MCDPS and the zoning secretary was asked to attend that meeting. The Board wanted to get information of what options might be available to us regarding zoning and/or what services might the county offer us regarding any demographics, planning or the like.

Vice Chair Kemp reported on the meeting with MCDPS. At the meeting MCDPS provided some planning materials, which were copied and distributed to the zoning commission members for review and discussion purposes. The materials included information on Zoning for Mixed Uses, Planned Unit Developments (PUD), Complete Streets, Meeting the Big Box Challenge and Grant Assistance Guidelines.

Kemp – One of the first things they talked about is a PUD, which I understand to be an overlay district where we could draw up some specifics of what we would allow in this overlay district. Their suggestion was for a mixed use and we could set requirements of what we would allow for retail and they suggested some residential use as well whether it be some apartments over some of the stores but they thought it would be a good idea to have some residential use mixed in with retail. The PUD doesn't really change the zoning; it just allows an overlay district. What we would do is put a PUD in our zoning text and then someone could apply to make use of that in his or her area without actually changing the zoning. We would not write it for a specific area; we would write it for the whole township. It would be available to anybody in the township but they would have to meet all the standards that we would write into the text for a PUD.

There was discussion among the board members about how a PUD could be established. The April 2002 MCDPS flyer on Planned Unit Developments indicated there was four ways to establish a PUD. The County Advisory Bulletin 97-8 October 1997 handout referenced Optional Approaches to Planned Unit Development Zoning. MCDPS was talking about Option C (CAB Bulletin 97-8) - an overlay district.

Likley – We have existing a Planned Development for Rural Residential, which is under conditional use and it addresses some of that but it doesn't get into the retail or commercial possibilities. The same principle could apply to any district that has a certain amount of land requirements like we require for RR. A PUD could then apply for a mix that would include retail, commercial, residential – the same basic principles, if you have 30 acres your lots could be smaller – whatever requirements we would establish but it would be open to any district, probably other than HC.

Chairman Zupanic – How would this bear for any development spreading outside of this interchange area?

Likley – It would open up other parcels as well. We presently have language that addresses the residential part of it that is open to any RR or SR. If you want to expand that for commercial, retail, residential mix, that would be different.

Kemp – They gave us an application if we want to hire a planner and they felt we could qualify for that to meet dollar for dollar up to \$5000 in a grant from the county to help towards planning if we decided to do that.

Kemp – MCDPS also suggested that we have a meeting and they would set it up for us open to the public with ODOT, County Engineer Mike Salay, Assistant Prosecutor Bill Thorne, the proposed landowner/developer – a general meeting and have it up there so we could get as much information as we can from everybody and possibly invite a representative from Seville and Westfield Center as well.

It was further explained that MCDPS would set up the general informational meeting and they would be the facilitator of the meeting with a representative from the various agencies present to discuss the possibility of expanding zoning, what the different agencies might propose, what they might need, what kind of studies would need to be done, etc.

Chairman Zupanic – I think we should have that meeting. Right now we need to go forward with that.

Kemp – MCDPS gave us a copy of a book that's interesting and it brings up a lot of issues to look at as far as big box stores – quite a few are ahead of where we are now. One of the things it mentioned (something that I would like to see handled somehow is if this were to happen and we end up with big box stores, what happens 5-6-10 years and they go out of business and we end up with an empty building) is having an ordinance put in for demolition of the building if it is abandoned. It also states economic impact, traffic impact studies, green studies, landscaping, outside storage, overnight parking of RVs, design specifications – there is really a lot to consider.

Chairman Zupanic – Did they discuss any demographics for this area?

It was reported that no demographics were discussed. They are concerned we might want to revise our comprehensive plan - not a complete revision but they suggested a subcommittee be set up just for that particular area because when those studies were done

in 1996 or even the update nobody was even aware of or the extent of the interchange revamping and how it would change everything.

Likley – The highway interchange changes, the way I see it, is going to divert that cloverleaf traffic from the intersection. It will move traffic away from 224 – the 71 and 76 interchange – those outside ramps look to be high-speed ramps, probably 45-50 mph ramps. It's going to clear traffic away, which is good for safety purposes. I talked with Mike Salay and the improvements they are making on the south side on 224 on Lake are only going about half way down to Pilot – those improvements were part of the agreement I guess with the old truck stop when T/A was built so no future uses could go into the old truck stop until there was improvements made on Lake Road. Those south side Lake Road improvements will bring the lanes in line and give us additional turning lanes, etc. to make the old truck stop more accessible.

Chairman Zupanic – They will open up redevelopment of the old truck stop. The interchange is not going to bring in more people and it will divert people away from the intersection. But once they do develop the property and the lanes on Lake Road, it will open up the truck stop to development, which would increase our traffic and spur further development.

Kemp – MCDPS did make a comment that if we do decide to do something that we need to take the time and opportunity to do something nice – they are talking 6-8 months, not an extended indefinite period.

Likley – I think we can look at the Lake Road corridor, the HC that is existing – whether it's additional permitted or conditional uses in HC to possibly encourage some business in that old truck stop. Now we have three permitted uses and some conditional uses but those conditional uses could be opened up to additional retail – there might be options to increase the permitted and conditional uses in the HC district.

The secretary related that in looking through an older MCDPS flyer the projection was that by the year 2025 Medina County would be the fourth largest county in the state.

Chairman Zupanic – I see that as being possible but we still need to see revised projections. During the MCDPS brief meeting was there any discussion about Seville's use around Route 3 or down Greenwich Road or any possibility of annexation.

Kemp – Nothing was discussed about Route 3 and it was brought up about annexation but they didn't think Seville would be interested at this time. They were pretty much stressing PUDs and mixed-use developments.

Likley – When you talked to them did you talk to them about Lake Road as far as the options available to us there?

Kemp – We told them we wanted to work on Lake Road but really didn't get into that; we mainly concentrated on this stuff.

Brezina – Is there a time frame when this informational meeting might develop?

Kemp – I think a lot of it might be when ODOT can come. I think they were talking about the next two or three weeks.

Chairman Zupanic – Listening to what you said, I picked up a couple things – #1 we really need to have that meeting with the county people etc.; #2 we need to take a close look at PUDs; and #3 we have an option for a planning grant for up to \$5000 with the county matching our funds. The other thing, we talked about rezoning or looking strictly at Lake Road but again, in the back of my mind, I'm looking out to the future, this area is just ripe for development and I want to do it right and I want to make sure that we get all the information that we need to and I think it does include that area by Seville – just my thoughts.

Chairman Zupanic – Mr. Kratzer, have you decided when you might go forward or are you still not at liberty to discuss.

Landowner Kratzer – I've been talking to my attorney and with the developer and we're trying to get all our ducks in a row.

Chairman Zupanic – So we can anticipate that you won't have anything in the next couple of weeks.

Landowner Kratzer – Probably not.

Vice Chair Kemp and the secretary explained that the MCDPS informational meeting might have to be a late afternoon or early evening meeting because of ODOT. It would be a public meeting but they are specifically inviting certain governmental entities to give input. MCDPS would set up the meeting and facilitate the meeting. What Patrice Theken explained is probably at the end of the meeting they would reserve 15-20 minutes for any public comment or questions but they particularly wanted to bring in all the entities to discuss the different aspects and get feedback going back and forth and then if there were any questions from the public there would be a limited time at the end of the informational meeting – however, MCDPS is facilitating the meeting so it is their decision of how to conduct the meeting. The meeting would be held at MCDPS, 124 West Washington Street, Suite B-4, Medina, Ohio. If three or more Zoning Commission members plan to attend the meeting, it will be advertised as a workshop session.

Chairman Zupanic recognized a hand from the audience – the question was asked about workshop minutes being available. The secretary stated that workshop minutes have to be prepared but they do not need to be approved, although usually they are. Once the zoning board approves any minutes (regular, special or workshop), the secretary forwards them to the webmaster for inclusion on the township website. (It is not known whether MCDPS would prepare minutes for their meeting.)

Carolyn Sims – I've got a question, you guys are confusing me. I understood that the current comprehensive plan policy objectives are to maintain a rural atmosphere. Last year I asked the trustees to go for the grant up to \$5000 and was told it was not necessary to rewrite the comprehensive plan. So the comprehensive plan is what it stands as and

the update that we have from Northstar also supports staying rural and low density, I don't understand what you are doing and when we had the public meeting to hear residents' opinions, I didn't hear anybody overly excited about this and I did not hear the majority wanting this development – this is a radical change.

Kemp – It is but I think we have to look at everything and as far as the meeting, I'm not trying to be argumentative, but generally the people who show up at meetings are the people that are against things, they don't show up if they are for it and there were a lot of people here but we've had more for other things.

Carolyn Sims – I would comment that I came here for the small rural atmosphere and others tell me they came here for the lower tax knowing there was less in services and one of the key people who call me are the large landowners saying they took a hit – they agreed with the comprehensive plan and allowed the township to increase the lot size and frontage so that we could maintain the rural atmosphere and then to benefit one farmer they took a hit– why not change the comprehensive plan back to the lower lot size. I try to appease them by saying there's no application, which leads me to my next point – if Kratzer were just another developer there would be no action without application. Spend that planning proposal money redoing your comprehensive, take the two years, update that plan, invest that money in the entire community.

Jeff Plumer – If I could mention something, our plan update was less than five years old and there was no reason to change that plan at all. We have a comprehensive plan that talks about the rural integrity of the township. I had one of the same phone calls you mentioned and five years later he's talking about 3 acres as opposed to 1 ½ acre lots. People want the rural integrity but they also want fairly large lots – 3 acres everybody agreed to. I don't know that it needs to be completely changed. I think they mentioned taking a look at it but not a complete overhaul so it is still a good study. The county did that for us – the Planning Commission did - and did a very good job.

Ron Oiler – I'd like to beg the difference between applications versus zoning changes. I'd like to refer you back to a time and place last year where the entire zoning code (as to campgrounds) was rewritten based on a letter of intent from an out-of-state resident to purchase the campground. We have set a precedent and you did change the zoning – and the buyer did not buy the campground. It is now zoned local commercial and the campground is essentially gone.

Chairman Zupanic – Duly noted.

Mike Schmidt – I think we probably all agree that this is going to be the 4th largest county in the state; this area is growing. Right now it is the 2nd richest county in the state. Geauga County is the only other county with higher wealth so this county is definitely going to grow. Take a look at where we are situated – this area is going to grow. There is absolutely no doubt about it and I think it needs to be looked at very carefully. There is going to be businesses, there is going to be hotels, there is going to be restaurants and all those kinds of things. I would make a strong suggestion to this board to look at maybe not redoing the entire comprehensive plan but certainly reviewing it. Right now Lafayette Township is doing this and I know the guy doing it and I can have him contact

you to see what the process would involve and what costs would be involved. I would also suggest that because of the complexity of this whole situation that it's a collaborative effort with the Village as they have to go through that area to get to their community. We have to be absolutely sure that this is going to be the right thing for the area so you need to take a look at a comprehensive plan review, maybe not the whole thing as some of the things haven't changed, but it would be good to review it and get the community involved and along with that there might be a lot of the facets of the project that may come to light.

Chairman Zupanic – Can we count on you to help spearhead this endeavor?

Mike Schmidt – Absolutely, I can contact him and have him contact you.

Carolyn Sims – I'm just beside myself. I almost get emotional about the direction that you as a board appear to be interested in going. I've heard things thrown out like retail destination – not where I want to live at all.

Chairman Zupanic – I can say this one thing – we are blessed or cursed with having two major highways intersect in our township. We can bury our heads but they are not going away. We are a focal point for some major traffic here. If we think this is going to stay farming ten years from now I think we are sadly mistaken and I think we owe it to ourselves, like Mr. Schmidt said – we need to redo, we need to investigate, we need to look ahead and we need to come up with what can happen.

Carolyn Sims – I want you to be aware that I've had some conversations with Landowner Kratzer and I have suggested to him getting with Jim Dowd of Economic Development and sitting down and planning something like what I call a shift economy and a shift economy is something that creates jobs 9-5 while our commuters are at work and then when we return home to our community, those people return to their homes and that creates a better job base instead of a minimum wage job – it creates the \$15-20-22 an hour job, which would be your light industry or your warehousing, commercial office, your distribution center, your banking/finance and he's already zoned for that now. PUD would be the perfect opportunity to do that behind the retail facilities. If he wanted to do a PUD of mixed uses, there is a definite need for the person who is downsizing and wants the smaller home but doesn't want to leave the community.

Chairman Zupanic – I have no problem looking into that but again I keep stating the fact that if you take a look at the property over there, it goes an awful long way with vacant land all the way to Seville, all the way to Route 3 and I think we owe it to everybody to look at that whole section to see what direction we should go.

Kemp – We don't want something to start to happen without us having done our homework in getting as much information from everybody that we can. We need to work ahead instead of waiting until after the fact.

Carolyn Sims – I just want you to know how critical the five of you are because if it comes down to Jeff and I and that's a split, my understanding per the Prosecutor's Office is that it reverts back to your decision and I have told that to the people who call me.

Chairman Zupanic – So what we have decided upon as action items – we are going to have MCDPS come up with a meeting with various people within the next couple of weeks. I will contact Mr. Schmidt in the near future to set something like that up for review of our comprehensive plan and I think we need to take a look at that and if we can get a committee going of 20-25 people I think that is a fine way to start.

Likley – Are we looking at a revision to our comprehensive plan prior to any zoning changes, whether it be a PUD or any other proposal.

Kemp – I think it's probably all going to be in conjunction with – we need to have this meeting and get as much information as we can and move forward the best way we can. MCDPS suggested having a couple different committees or subcommittees – one to work on our comprehensive plan and another to work on this.

Anderson – I agree. Are we thinking about having Lafayette Township involved in this because it's going to affect some of them as they have to come through here also to get to work.

Chairman Zupanic – I would imagine that we could probably get input from them.

Kemp – When we have this meeting it is open to the public.

Chairman Zupanic – The key points that we want to take away from this meeting is #1 we need to have that meeting with MCDPS within the next few weeks – that would be a goal. The other take-away is that we set up a revision to our comprehensive plan. I think those two are huge things and then we go from there.

Jeff Plumer – One suggestion when you get to the point where you are starting to pick residents to be on the committees you are going to need to emphasize to those people the dedication and the time it's going to take because when we did the previous plan we had a lot of people come to the 1st, 2nd and 3rd meetings and attendance trailed off near the end and when we really needed the input, they weren't around.

There was discussion relative to getting a rounded citizen base with people from all sides and not only Westfield Township residents but Village of Westfield Center residents and also getting input involving Seville and possibly Lafayette. There was a concern whether or not the comprehensive plan committee members have to be township residents and this will be checked with MCDPS or the Prosecutor's office. (Input would still be open to all.)

There were various continuing and repetitive comments from earlier discussion items relative to zoning, planning, applying for a grant, the need to proceed on this particular topic, why MCDPS was even involved, etc. – many comments were unclear because several people were talking at the same time.

Chairman Zupanic stated that we would wait until MCDPS provided us with a meeting date. The chair adjourned the meeting as 8:30 p.m.

Marlene L. Oiler, Certified PP, PLS
Westfield Township Zoning Commission Secretary

(Minutes approved 4/10/07)