

CASS COUNTY PLANNING COMMISSION

March 27, 2024

The regular meeting of the Cass County Planning Commission was called to order by chairman Dan Stutsman at 4:02. In addition to Stutsman, commissioners present were: Tyler Augst, Sam Barrera, Jayne Bailey, Annie File, Dianna McGrew and Richard Palmisano. Members missing were: Roseann Marchetti, Dave Kring and Char Hiemstra.

Guests were representatives from Wayne and Pokagon Townships including Linda Preston, Pokagon Township Supervisor. Representatives of the Village of Vandalia were present as well as township delegates. McKenna's Rebecca Harvey, Senior Consultant and Paige Brodeur, Planning Assistant were present for kick-off meeting of Cass County's Master Plan.

MOTION by File, second by Palmisano to approve agenda. Motion carried.

MOTION made by Augst to approve February 28 minutes with correction of chairman Stutsman's name from Don to Dan. support came from Barrera and motion passed.

It was noted that Milton Township's Zoning Administrator, Eileen Glick sent a Letter of Intent to Update that township's current Master Plan.

Linda Preston presented for Pokagon Township's rezoning of one-half of parcel #14-110-015-260-30 (1.52 acres) from Residential to Light Industrial. All commissioners at the township level voted in favor of the request as it complies with their current zoning. MOTION made by Barrera to approve this zoning request. Second by McGrew. Motion passed.

Request for rezoning came from Silver Creek Township Planning Commission for 3 parcels as portions of 725 N. Front Street, Dowagiac. (#130-036-013-00, #130-036-012-00, #130-036-011-00) All township planning commissioners voted in favor of changing district zoning classification from Agriculture/Residential to Commercial. MOTION made by Barrera with a second by McGrew to approve Silver Creek's rezoning. Palmisano expressed concerns of possible contamination of ground surface and water caused by parked vehicles brought in by True's Towing. Augst pointed out that the rezoning is in compliance with Future Land Use Map and coincides with the M-51 Corridor for Commercial use. Motion carried with one opposing vote by Palmisano.

Regarding the Letter of Intent sent by Cass County Road Commission announcing abandonment of undeveloped roads in the Village of Corey, Newberg Township, MOTION was made by File to approve intent of letter, seconded by Barrera and motion carried.

Rebecca Harvey began presenting on the Master Plan project with introductions and stated that letters of Intent to Update have gone out to proper entities. She mentioned that roughly 75 - 80% of the demographic studies and maps have been completed.

The following are monthly objectives to help reach the goal of Master Plan adoption:

MAY: On-line survey to be up and available for use.

JUNE: Open house month. Date to be determined in April regular meeting.
(On-line survey will still be available at this time.)

JULY: Report on survey results. Ms. Harvey plans to be at regular July Planning Commission meeting.

AUGUST/SEPTEMBER: Draft of the Plan will be ready, complete with Future Land Use maps and Action Plan.

SEPTEMBER/OCTOBER: Full draft review will be presented with another opportunity in October for public input. (Possible additional open house.)

NOVEMBER-FEBRUARY: Projected adoption of the Master Plan is February.

This coming APRIL will be spent helping with survey and selecting a specific date in mid-June for the open house.

Paige Brodeur showed findings on demographics. Some key takeaways: Dowagiac is the largest commuting destination, unemployment is consistent with the State's and is steadily decreasing, and workforce is educated with over 55% having some college. Examples of topical maps were shown i.e.: wetlands and agricultural lands. Both of these are to be considered key resources.

Advertising for both on-line survey and open house was talked about. McKenna will help with design elements for flyers, postcards, web page and FaceBook page. Expertise of Ambrosia Neldon, Marketing and Communication Manager, will be very helpful here.

It was also mentioned that marketing and informational items used for presentation could be duplicated to be used at individual township or village open houses providing these entities are part of the Cass County Master Plan.

Chairman Dan Stutsman made the MOTION to set May 10, 2024 as the cut-off date for all townships/villages that wish to be included in the Plan. Support was given by File and the motion carried. It was noted here that giving additional time for possible joiners may require flexibility in some of the objectives as far as timing. Ms. Harvey stressed that flexibility is built into this process.

MOTION was made and duly supported to adjourn meeting. Meeting ended at 5:50.

Jayne Bailey

DRAFT