

**Highland Township Planning Commission
Record of the 1405th Meeting
December 7, 2023**

Roll Call:

Grant Charlick, Chairman
Kevin Curtis
Chris Heyn
Beth Lewis (absent)
Roscoe Smith
Scott Temple (absent)
Russ Tierney (absent)
Guy York
Mike O'Leary

Elizabeth J. Corwin, Planning Director
Megan Masson-Minock, Carlisle-Wortman Associates

Visitors: 4

Chairman Grant Charlick called the meeting to order at 7:30 p.m.

Roll Call:

Agenda Item #1: Call to the Public: Opportunity for anyone to bring forward issues of interest or concern for Planning Commission consideration. Each participant limited to 3 minutes.

Mr. Tim Faull, 3300 N. Duck Lake Road thanked the Planning Commission for their efforts on the short term rental ordinance. He suggested that the Planning Commission may wish to consider limits in the Highland Station District to avoid saturation of housing units in any given neighborhood. He was in favor of permitting short term rental in non-residential zoning districts.

Public Hearing:

Agenda Item #2: Text Amendments—Short Term Rental, Farm Market and corrections

Mr. Charlick opened the public hearing at 7:35 p.m.

Mr. Tim Faull requested clarification about the definition of short term rental. Ms. Corwin assured him that for commercial properties, the property owner may rent any dwelling registered and inspected under the rental property ordinance provisions daily if they wish. Mr. Charlick explained that the 30 day period applied to properties that do not qualify for the rental program, namely any property not located in the office, commercial or industrial districts.

Mr. Charlick observed that another reason to be cautious about allowing short term rental in the residential zoning districts is that if we remove housing stock from availability to families with children, the schools will suffer. The population projections for Highland Township and Oakland County show limited growth. Incentivizing transient populations reduce the potential student population for the K-12 schools. Since schools are funded in large part by the per student grant from the state, this would lead to decreasing budgets

Mr. Joe Karcher, owner of vacant property on West Highland Road, mentioned that other communities restrict short term rental to owner occupied units. Mr. Charlick noted that short term rental as a home occupation is already allowed in Highland Township.

Mr. Charlick closed the public hearing at 7:45 p.m.

Mr. Guy York asked if the Planning Commission had discussed the letter from the Michigan Realtor and if the concerns had merit. Ms. Corwin noted that it had been discussed at the last meeting, and it was determined that the risk that a neighbor would even be concerned about an adjacent rental agreement when there was no change of occupancy was remote and such a rental was unlikely to lead to any enforcement action.

Mr. Charlick moved to recommend approval of Zoning Ordinance Amendment Z-030, regarding short term rentals, farm market definitions and some technical corrections to the Board of Trustees.. Mr. York supported the motion. Roll call vote: Charlick, yes; Curtis, yes; O’Leary, yes; Smith, yes; Heyn, yes; York, yes. Motion carried (6 yes votes, 0 no votes).

Agenda Item #3: Master Plan Discussion: Goals and Objectives and Map Review

Mr. Charlick invited the guests to explain their interests and ideas concerning the future land use map.

Mr. Jack Knowles, 3420 Woodlawn, Ann Arbor explained that he was present to represent the interests of Mr. Jim O’Neill who owned vacant property along South Milford Road, near the Township Line. The parcels in question were encumbered by an existing high pressure gas transmission main. The property owner envisions the best use of the property as multiple family, perhaps a duplex or townhouse type product, and is willing to work with the Township to maintain a green space at the gateway to the Township, particularly since the pipeline creates a natural demarcation of the property there.

The commission members and guests gathered around proposed future land use maps to discuss not only this parcel, but to review the map as a whole. The commission members agreed that Mr. O’Neill’s parcels could work as multiple family land use; but asked that the Master Plan provides some more direction about the “character” of Multiple Family land use in Highland Township. The interest is in encouraging a low profile, less dense development pattern. It was agreed that the Milford Road corridor continues to provide a good option to cluster multiple family, since there is a potential for walkable routes to shopping, the recreational opportunities provided by the school district, and potential for future utility expansion, especially public water supply.

Mr. Karcher’s property on the west side of Highland Township was discussed and some changes were suggested for mapping in that area. The Planning Commission was not generally in favor of changing the map designation for Mr. Bryson’s parcel at the southeast quadrant of Tipsico Lake Road and M-59.

Other properties of interest included school district owned properties at Duck Lake Road , Wardlow Road and at N. John Street, with agreement that compatible land use designation should be selected instead of Institutional. It was also agreed that Park designations should be replaced with Agricultural and Rural Residential designations at Highland Hills Golf Course. It was determined that the Levy Property Consent Judgment designation should be amended to include the 80 acre parcel purchased from the Giegler family in 2020 and also the former Preservation Area parcel on the west side of Hickory Ridge Road. The West Highland Cemetery should be incorporated into the Institutional designation as has the Highland Cemetery. It was determined that the Future Land Use Plan for the LaFontaine dealership at 4000 W. Highland should show general commercial designation.

There was considerable discussion over where the limits of agricultural designation should end. It was agreed that the consultants will review aerial photographs for some large parcels to determine the current land use before resolving the map limits. It was also determined that it is premature to show the Robinson Farm parcel that currently belongs to the Six River Land Conservancy as Park designation since the funding for acquisition is not yet determined and more work is needed before the parcel can be designated as a park.

Mr. Smith noted his concern that in the last master plan update, office and low intensity commercial designations were combined into one category, OLIC. The Board of Trustees has routinely approved any rezoning request in that designation for C-1, Local Commercial, Zoning, meaning there is little difference between the two, and it undermines buffers between commercial and residential land uses. Ms. Minnock acknowledged that concern, but also noted that the Master Land Use Plan should not mimic a zoning map, but should rather provide a forecast for what the community would accept or promote as future land use. Buffers can be provided through careful site plan design and review and other land uses such as multiple family residential. Mr. Smith noted that there are current instances where existing office buildings or even former residences have provided that an office buffer to existing residential neighborhoods. It would not be appropriate to allow those places to transition to more intense activity than the current conditions.

Mr. Charlick added that traditional office land use is simply not in demand, and that many of the former office tenants work from their homes if they have no need to greet the public regularly. This leads what is left on the use list to be more similar to retail uses. He is more concerned that the Master Plan and Zoning regulations do not set up a case where property owners lose incentive to maintain and improve their properties. The Township should not put barriers in the way that lead to a lot of vacant space and should allow the property owners to put their parcels to productive use.

Ms. Masson-Minnock will refine the map as discussed for further discussion at the January 4, 2024 meeting. Statements about the intent and character of multiple family districts will be worked into the goals and objectives or map description sections of the Master Plan.

- Agenda Item #4:** Committee Updates
- Zoning Board of Appeals:
 - Township Board:
 - Highland Downtown Development Authority:
 - Planning Director's Update

Committee reports were discussed.

- Agenda Item #5:** Minutes: October 19, 2023

Mr. York moved to approve the minutes of October 19, 2023 as presented. Mr. Charlick supported the motion, which was unanimously approved by voice vote.

Mr. York moved to adjourn the meeting at 9:24 p.m. Mr. Curtis supported the motion, which was unanimously approved by voice vote.

Adjournment:

Respectfully submitted,

A. Roscoe Smith, Secretary
ARS/ejc