

**EATON COUNTY  
PLANNING COMMISSION SPECIAL MEETING MINUTES  
February 7, 2023**

**Call to Order:** Brian Ross, Chair of the Eaton County Planning Commission called the special meeting to order at 6:00 p.m. in the Board of Commissioners Room, Eaton County Courthouse, 1045 Independence Blvd., Charlotte, MI.

**Pledge:** The Pledge of Allegiance was given by all.

**Roll Call:** Brian Ross, Michael Hosey, Frank Holmes, Ben Tirrell, Scott Hansen, Bruce Porter, Zachary Dillinger and Lisa Lawitzke

**Absent:** Tim Cattron

**Staff Present:** Claudine Williams and Brandy Miller

**Commissioner Ross** introduced the newly appointed Board of Commission Members, Commissioners Scott Hansen and Frank Holmes.

**Master Plan Presentation:** Mr. Jason Ball with Rowe Professional Services gave a brief update on what the Planning Commission has done so far with the Master Plan. Mr. Ball said on the agenda for discussion this evening was the economy chapter, the results of the stakeholder meetings, the survey, land use analysis, and a schedule for the remainder of the update.

Mr. Ball stated a draft of the community survey was distributed last month, and he would like to get the Planning Commission's input on the proposed twenty questions. He noted paper copies of the survey will be available throughout the county, but they will be primarily be distributed and available online. **Commissioner Tirrell** questioned why groundwater, woodlands, and wetlands are included in the survey. He feels including them may lend to the idea that a plan can be made to protect those areas, but the Planning Commission does not have authority over them. Mr. Ball explained they are included so when developments are considered, the Planning Commission may want to require larger buffer areas or other restrictions or requirements. Commissioner Tirrell suggested clarifying the intent as the Planning Commission does not have final authority over these areas and whether they can be disturbed or not.

Mr. Ball stated agricultural land protection came up a lot in the stakeholder meetings. He said all comments were in favor of preservation, however, people were also mindful of limited areas for housing development. The Planning Commission held a discussion in regards to the location of housing, jobs and affordable housing.

Mr. Ball stated access to internet, cell service, public water, public sewer, and recreation areas were also brought up a lot during the stakeholder meetings.

Mr. Ball added some stakeholders noted more land might be utilized in Eaton County for solar and wind systems. Ms. Williams stated she would like to see wind and solar separate on the survey.

Mr. Ball stated ROWE received forty-five responses from the short survey; he expects to have more responses from the longer survey. Ms. Williams asked what the expected time frame for

the longer survey is. Ms. Ball stated it depends on the timing of the training, Basic Essentials of Planning and Zoning, he and Ms. Williams have been discussing. Mr. Ball stated it would be nice to pass out the survey after the training with the hope of obtaining more responses. Mr. Ball suggested having the survey available through the month of April which would allow the training attendees to fill it out and share it. Ms. Williams stated they are considering April 20, 2023, for the training but have not confirmed yet.

Mr. Ball gave a summary of the stakeholder meetings, noting they were attended by townships within the county zoning jurisdiction, but also by townships and villages that are not. Mr. Ball said virtual meetings were held with local schools, Tri-County, Road Commission, MEDC, MDOT, and local public works departments. He stated there were thirty-six participants total. Mr. Ball said one subject was the same across all meetings; access. Eaton County has access to open space, is close to larger cities, but is still rural. He said participants thought the County did well at collaboration internally and externally. He stated challenges brought up included housing, blight, aging infrastructure and access to public services and water.

Mr. Ball stated the basic themes from the stakeholder meetings were:

1. The County has great parks, but access to them is not so great. Is there a way to make them more accessible; the county just did an update to the Parks Master Plan, we will have a copy soon.
2. Transportation and road maintenance, lack of a vehicle and public transportation. Rural schools took snow days they did not want to because of lack of road maintenance.
3. Community Development is great to work with and willing to help. Other departments were mentioned as not being so great.
4. If we are going to maintain businesses, we need to maintain people, and people need housing. Lack of access to housing; think of finding ways to provide for housing but also balance preservation.

Mr. Ball went over the land use maps. **Commissioner Lawitzke** stated one of the issues they have run into in Bellevue Township is a lot of land had dual classification before the map amendment in 2006. In the new maps property went to residential rather than agricultural zoning.

The Planning Commission held a discussion regarding the Land Use Maps and the change in tax classifications from 2011-2021. **Commissioner Hosey** said it looks like we are on track, as a lot went on during those years. **Commissioner Dillinger** stated the trend makes sense to him; he lives in an old farm house that was split off from a larger parcel. Mr. Ball stated houses being split and sold while the farm land is retained and farmed is the trend. Mr. Ball noted they have historical data from 2011, but not from 2008.

Mr. Ball discussed the remaining schedule of the update with the Planning Commission. He stated the Planning Commission should receive the information for the March meeting in a couple of weeks. The plan is to have three public open houses in May and June.

**Public Comment:** There was no public comment.

A motion was made by **Commissioner Hosey** to adjourn the meeting. **Commissioner Tirrell** supported. Motion carried.

The meeting adjourned at 7:01 p.m.