

**EATON COUNTY
PLANNING COMMISSION SPECIAL MEETING MINUTES
August 22, 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, Tim Cattron, Michael Hosey, Frank Holmes, Ben Tirrell, Scott Hansen, Bruce Porter and Lisa Lawitzke

Staff Present: Brandy Miller, Chris Garrison, Claudine Williams, and Tammy Alger.

Agenda Approval: A motion was made by **Commissioner Hosey** to approve the agenda for the August 22, 2023 meeting. **Commissioner Lawitzke** supported. Motion carried.

Minutes Approval: **Commissioner Lawitzke** mentioned there was a spelling error in the July 11, 2023 meeting minutes and asked for that to be corrected. A motion was made by **Commissioner Cattron** to approve the July 11, 2023 minutes. **Commissioner Hosey** supported. Motion carried.

Master Plan Presentation: Mr. Jason Ball summarized what he would be discussing today, particularly the land use plan. Mr. Ball summarized what was discussed at the last meeting as well. He asked if there has been an associated increase in new housing building permits. Ms. Miller and Mr. Garrison stated they would run a report for Mr. Ball. Mr. Ball continued with his presentation by going over the various charts in his presentation.

Commissioner Cattron stated that he believes the figures in the presentation would be easier to interpret with a space between them, rather than the dashes. He thinks the table could be modified for easier reading. Mr. Ball said he could look into doing something differently to make it easier.

Mr. Ball continued with his presentation. He asked what would be the purpose of the proposed secondary agricultural district. Ms. Miller stated it was to allow for transitional future land use plan. It would allow some flex for the Planning Commission when a request comes in for a zoning district. She stated that the Planning Commission knew the intent, but it is not written down clearly. Now is a time for the Planning Commission to voice what they really need as the intent in the Master Plan.

Commissioner Tirrell asked that the intent was for secondary agricultural, but that never developed? Ms. Miller stated secondary agricultural was for something that allowed for growth outside of the city and villages, but not strictly commercial or residential. It would provide flexibility depending on where a parcel was located. Potentially commercial or residential.

Commissioner Tirrell asked if that was never decided in the master plan. Ms. Miller stated it was never discussed as it should have been. Mr. Garrison stated the intent was to be able to change the property to commercial or residential. He stated the Planning Commission would need to rework the naming of that.

Commissioner Catron stated that it seems the use makes good sense, but it wouldn't be clear to anybody how it was being used or what it's being used for. He suggested to change the name and create a zone for it, or delete it. He stated he wasn't sure which way would be the best way to go. Mr. Ball stated if the intent is to make the parcel accessible to different uses, the overarching goal was preservation of land for agricultural. Mr. Ball stated that Eaton County doesn't feel consistent with that overarching goal. The Planning Commission needs to hone in on where those potential multi-use areas are. Mr. Ball gave the example of the City of Charlotte. Mr. Ball stated there is a lot in that area designated as formal secondary ag, but seeing it converted into higher residential zones is not consistent with their goal. Mr. Ball asked where on the land use map does future land use classification for flexible zoning apply?

Commissioner Hosey stated that he would think the Planning Commission would want to reduce the flexible zoning, as property value would potentially go up. He stated a good portion of what's converted may be taken for granted as commercial property. Mr. Ball stated the Planning Commission would need to assign the land use carefully on the correct areas. The transitional area should be suitable for commercial or higher density housing development because it's along a higher traffic corridor. Not just that it's adjacent to a municipality.

Commissioner Ross stated that it does make sense to do something like that when determining the proper areas for secondary agricultural. He stated that it is pretty broad around the cities and villages. He does not think that is the direction the Planning Commission wants to go in with the master plan.

Commissioner Catron stated when the township officials are met with, there will be a range of things to consider. He asked if it would be a good idea to let the various township officials know if those areas fall on prime soils or farmland. He asked if a prime farm land map could be provided. Mr. Ball stated that the whole county is essential farmland, but sections of it could be portioned off. Ms. Miller stated that the area Mr. Ball was showing is called the five corners, and she agrees that the transitional phase should not be near Five Point Hwy, but should show it as South of that. She stated if the Planning Commission sticks to the points of the major corridors and access to existing facilities, farmland versus prime farmland wouldn't be a part of that at all. The Planning Commission should be looking at the major corridors into the cities and villages.

Commissioner Catron stated that he was just making a point that it's another item to consider, the prime corridors and such. Mr. Ball stated again that for the transitional zone, it shouldn't be on the prime farmland areas.

Commissioner Lawitzke stated that it might be helpful for the meetings with the township officials to have a map with various overlays that show the difference in zoning. She stated having multiple maps makes it hard to follow. Mr. Ball stated he could work on something like that. He asked how the internet in the township halls is. Ms. Miller stated that she is going to reach out to the townships tomorrow to discuss where they would like to meet. If they want to meet at the Eaton County Board of Commissioners Room, then the maps can be displayed on the computer screens here. Otherwise, the maps may have to be printed which will be cumbersome.

Commissioner Lawitzke stated Bellevue Township has internet capacity if the county has the technological capacity. Ms. Miller stated that the county does have portable internet and she can bring it with her. Mr. Ball stated he can use the portable internet too.

Commissioner Ross asked if the Planning Commission is giving any kind of control in decision making to the townships or that the townships can just make recommendations? Ms. Miller stated the townships would be able to make recommendations. Mr. Garrison stated that the Planning Commission would show the townships what they're working on and then give us recommendations.

Commissioner Ross stated that was his concern. He stated previously they had followed what a township had recommended, but it ultimately wasn't in the best interest for the county. He stated that the Planning Commission will therefore take recommendations from the townships and take them seriously, but ultimately the Planning Commission will have the final say. Ms. Miller added that there weren't any big issues at the last master plan update, and the townships are very receptive. She stated the townships were more appreciative to be brought into the conversation.

Commissioner Ross stated that there may be some township supervisors who are not agreeable to the proposed secondary agricultural, which may be problematic. Mr. Ball asked if the Planning Commission does want to hone in on the previously discussed areas for the transitional zone, does the Planning Commission want to decide that before they see the townships, or have that discussion with the townships and then bring it back to the Planning Commission?

Commissioner Lawitzke stated that speaking to the townships first and getting their input might be more helpful. She stated they can "self-narrow" down the areas they see as potential secondary agricultural. Ms. Miller asked if the Planning Commission was ok with going with the parameters put forth and not necessarily having the specific maps for the township discussions?

Commissioner Lawitzke stated that having everything within a half a mile is problematic. She stated the townships would know better which areas are problematic or potentially agreeable to the flexible zoning. The townships have internal knowledge to make decisions on those areas that the Planning Commission might not be able to look at and say definitively.

Commissioner Ross stated he would be ok with going to the townships first for their input. He stated he had one other question, that Hamlin Township should be out of there as well? Mr. Ball stated that was correct.

Mr. Ball continued with his presentation. He stated that the next steps would be to discuss the descriptions of future land use, which could be changed to agricultural preservation. He asked if those land uses make sense to the Planning Commission? Mr. Ball stated they could also add general language about renewable energy.

Commissioner Catron stated he thought agricultural preservation made good sense.

Mr. Ball asked if there were any other comments on agricultural preservation? There were none. Mr. Ball went on to ask about including industrial as part of the flexible commercial and residential zoning areas. Does the Planning Commission want to include industrial?

Commissioner Lawitzke stated that she personally would think it would have to be a really limited industrial because there are some industrial uses that are not appropriate in a transitional zone. She stated the Planning Commission would have to be careful with how they write the wording so that it is not too difficult to fit the Planning Commission's goal. Mr. Ball stated that on future land use, the Planning Commission would be leaving an option for future zoning. They cannot necessarily limit industrial zoning.

Commissioner Ross stated he is more familiar with Eaton Rapids, but there are some industrial areas on the border. He asked if the Planning Commission would want that transition area around the existing industrial parks? Mr. Ball stated that if the Planning Commission gave that a different designation, it would make the map look quite different. Could transition from one zoning use to another, as seen in the Composite Future Land Use Map. Ms. Miller stated that she is familiar with both areas. She stated the industrial park is accessible to many, it's mixed with a lot of other types of zoning. She stated that the questions to ask regarding these areas are; is there public city services? Can their public services go out into the townships without annexing into the city? Mr. Ball added that it is about making land available today that wasn't available in the appropriate places. Mr. Ball stated again that the Planning Commission needs to hone in on where those areas are that are most appropriate for that type of growth.

Commissioner Tirrell stated that he would agree that the Planning Commission has some room to consolidate in that regard. He asked if secondary ag would be the most effective way to plan for rural residential districts. He stated the county has very large but not very organized agricultural areas. Mr. Ball stated one of the options is to consider being a little more restrictive, or requiring larger lots in the limited agricultural districts. Mr.

Ball stated there are a lot of limited agricultural districts that go as high as ten acres, which would also limit the splits. Being restrictive with lot size would also limit land splits. Mr. Ball stated the easiest thing to do would be to up the minimum lot size on limited agricultural properties. This could also impact how agricultural land is sold down the road.

Commissioner Tirrell stated the new classification could bring in growth. Mr. Ball agreed. **Commissioner Tirrell** asked if there were any other tools people could use in the transitional areas. Possibly lot size? Mr. Ball stated that lot size is one of the more common options to drive growth, possibly density in those areas. Mr. Ball stated the Planning Commission should point to those needs in the master plan.

Mr. Ball turned to discussing the recommended zoning ordinance amendments. He stated more doors could be opened with the secondary agricultural zoning. He asked the Planning Commission what the process would be to drive that growth to go? Mr. Ball stated he thinks the Planning Commission has some pretty clear direction. To get ahold of townships and making discussion with the township officials. Mr. Ball said they could bring it back around to the end of next month. Ms. Miller stated the Planning Commission would not be able to give an answer yet, but they can let them know by the September 5, 2023 Planning Commission meeting when they have the meetings with the townships scheduled.

Commissioner Catron asked if it would be useful to ask a city or village and its township at the same time? Mr. Ball stated he thinks the Planning Commission can. He stated that the townships should be treated as consulting clients in a way. Mr. Ball stated the Planning Commission could start with the townships, and then go back to the city or village to confirm.

Commissioner Catron asked about the possibility of getting city services in an area outside of the city, but what if the city says no? Ms. Miller stated the city services cannot be taken into the townships without getting annexed into the city or village.

Commissioner Tirrell stated he had a question regarding recommendation number five. Mr. Ball stated he just wanted to be sure those provisions currently fit. It gives a clearer sort of guidance. Mr. Ball stated the Planning Commission may evaluate them and determine if they are needed or not.

Commissioner Tirrell stated the Planning Commission just adopted those, so he does not believe it would be appropriate to re-evaluate now.

Commissioner Ross stated that he agreed. Mr. Ball said the Planning Commission can strike that then. **Commissioner Ross** suggested that the commissioners may want to go to the meetings at the townships. Ms. Miller suggested they could invite the members of the zoning committee as the meetings become available. **Commissioner Ross** said he would be fine with that.

Mr. Ball added there are other portions of the chapter, such as guidance on how to conduct the five year review and whether or not it's appropriate to make an update or not to the master plan. Mr. Ball stated that there is a note about the annual report that is required. Mr. Ball stated that would have these things to discuss for next month. Mr. Ball asked if there were any other questions.

Commissioner Lawitzke asked if 2008 can be swapped for 2021 in Figure 12-1. Mr. Ball said yes.

Commissioner Ross asked why there is more acreage total in 2001 than 2008. Mr. Ball said that there isn't a definitive reason, it was the number that was calculated with the data that was available at those times. Ms. Miller stated that is was because Assessing and Zoning do not always go hand in hand. Ms. Miller stated that over the last ten years, closer to five years, more assessors found properties that weren't currently being assessed. That is why there is more acreage now versus 2008. Mr. Ball stated that number can be fluid.

Commissioner Ross asked is there was anything else to discuss. Mr. Ball said there was not.

Commissioner Ross asked for public comment at 6:59 p.m. There was none.

Commissioner Ross asked if Ms. Miller had anything else to add. Ms. Miller stated there is a meeting on September 5, 2023 to hear the CUP for Crandell Trucking.

Commissioner Porter moved to adjourn the meeting. **Commissioner Lawitzke** supported. Motion carried.

The meeting adjourned at 7:00 p.m.