

Meeting Minutes

Cascade Charter Township Planning Commission

Farmland Preservation Sub-Committee

Thursday, November 2, 2023

7:30 am

ARTICLE 1: Call the meeting to order

Chairman Scott Rissi called the meeting to order at 7:31 am. In attendance were sub-committee members Joe Engel, Ryan Bruneau and Ralph Moxley.

Also in attendance were Zoning Director Madison Smith-Jacoby and Parks Director Melanie Manion.

ARTICLE 2: Approve the Agenda

Member Engel moved to approve the agenda. Member Moxley supported. All members voted to approve the agenda.

ARTICLE 3: Approve the minutes from the October 26 meeting

Member Engel asked if the changes to the meeting minutes are made by staff. Zoning Director Smith-Jacoby stated that the changes will be made before the next meeting. Until the changes are made the document is labeled as a "Draft" copy.

Member Bruneau asked that Article 1, 3rd paragraph start with "Also in attendance were..."

Member Bruneau asked that Article 5, paragraph 2 be changed to "Dennis Hefron noted that his **maternal** family homesteaded a farm in Cascade Township..."

Suggested changes to Article 6 by Member Engel:

Paragraph 1: "Grattan Township **takes** money out of the general fund every year..."

Paragraph 2: "Matching funding is crucial because major donors will want to see that "the local folks have skin **in** the game". **In** a survey **done as part** of the Grattan Township **Master Plan**, community taxpayers overwhelmingly **supported** setting aside matching funds for farmland preservation."

Paragraph 5: "The **PUD/Open Space** can be non-contiguous in Grattan Township." "The Township **identifies** target areas designated for open space."

Paragraph 6: **“As part of the process, Kent County, or a land trust, places a Conservation Easement on the land being preserved.” “Kent County will then be the holder of the Conservation Easement, not Grattan Township.” “Enforcement and monitoring will now be provided by Kent County staff members.”**

Paragraph 7: **“Kent County can then assume responsibility as holder of the Conservation Easement, not Grattan Township.”**

Paragraph 8: **“Existing homes may be grandfathered in, but new homes must be carved-out from the preserved land for that house.”**

Paragraph 9: **“Conservation Easements, in theory, can be extinguished and the rights changed back to the original owner.” “This is rare, and would be very difficult to accomplish. This has never been done in Kent County.”**

Paragraph 12: **“Determining soil overlays over a wide area in a Township is a difficult and time-consuming project.”**

Paragraph 13: **“Cascade Township may want to include commercial and not just residential development in this preservation approach.”**

Paragraph 16: **“Grattan Township’s PUD Ordinance was first passed about 15 years ago.”**

Motion to approve meeting minutes by member Engel. Motion seconded by member Bruneau. All members voted in favor of approval.

ARTICLE 4: Disclose any conflict of interest

No members had a Conflict of Interest.

ARTICLE 5: Acknowledge visitors and those wishing to speak

There were no visitors at this meeting. Note that Parks Dept. Director Marion is a staff member and is welcome at future meetings and has no time limits on her speaking at these meetings.

Member Engel is concerned about the timeline for completing this study by the Farmland Preservation sub-committee. This could be a 6 to 8 month effort to pull together the **Landcaster Pennsylvania** information and the **TDR** information. If we need to get something into the Master Plan in the next 60 to 90 days, we may have to describe it generically.

Member Bruneau feels that the bonuses in the new Master Plan should be tied to the 6 to 8 month effort by this sub-committee. Bonuses should be tied directly to Farmland Preservation.

Chair Rissi noted that Farmland Preservation sub-committee was started early so that the recommendation could tie into the next Master Plan. The group discussed concern over the vacancy on the PC by Treasurer Korstange. There did not seem to be support of the idea to

shrink the Planning Commission to 7 members as opposed to the current 9 members, especially with all the work being done currently.

At the last Board of Trustees meeting there was again discussion about new laws or ordinances. The Board should be asking the Planning Commission to work on these things for them. Chair Rissi gave the example of earlier this year when residents on Thornapple River Drive asked for an ordinance for Jake Brakes. The Board should send these projects to the Planning Commission if they want them addressed.

ARTICLE 6: Review and discussion of Agri-business and tourism

Many thanks to Zoning Director Smith-Jacoby for researching and developing the new document "**Special Uses in the Agricultural District**".

Grand Valley Metro Council told Cascade Twp. which areas to make Farmland Preservation zone. No one told us how they decided on which areas were included in this FP zone.

Member Bruneau stated that the list should be divided into two categories: **Agricultural Tourism** and **Agribusiness**. Sub-committee members want to support Agricultural Tourism, and do so frequently.

Chairman Rissi is concerned that while we support Agribusiness, we want to avoid major farm businesses (such as a John Deer Tractor dealership) in the Township.

Lowell Township has a unique mixture of Agribusiness in the area east of Alden Nash and north of Grand River Ave. (but south of the river). This area is zoned Light Industrial.

Zoning Director Smith-Jacoby developed the "Use Type"s list that is very comprehensive. We can decide which items should be **Uses by Right** and which items should be **Special Uses**.

Uses by Right to leave out of the list: Indoor/Outdoor Kennels, Dairy Product Processing, and Bonfires.

Chair Rissi is concerned that we not get into detailed analysis of what is **Agritourism** vs. **Agribusiness**. We may get bogged down on this effort if we go too far in pursuing this issue. On the airport sub-committee, we spent much time developing a hybrid plan for zoning that never went anywhere. We should be careful to avoid that same scenario here. Provide the PC with a broad plan, but avoid getting too specific. We were not asked to get into the specific Use Types.

Member Engel feels we should be specific on what we will allow for Use Types. He feels we should go to the PC with too much information rather than not enough specific detail.

ARTICLE 7: Goals of the sub-committee for our next meeting

Chair Rissi asked that we differentiate between **Uses by Right** and **Special Uses**. Some items like "Bed and Breakfast" should be listed under Special Uses to allow more control.

Category C should be divided into two categories: **Uses by Right**, and **Special Uses**. This approach will be helpful when we go into the PC.

Master Plan Future Land Use does not match the Zoning in Cascade Township. McKenna may not be receptive to matching the two. McKenna needs good direction from the PC to make the needed changes to Future Land Use so that it matches Zoning.

Chair Rissi is very concerned that a new planner for the Township will focus on growth in the Township, when the PC is telling them to hold back on growth with lower densities.

Chair Rissi asked that Zoning Director Smith-Jacoby show **Use by Right** and **Special Uses** on next document and compare them to what our zoning currently allows or restricts. Show analysis as a spread sheet. Note which is **ARC** zoning, or **Farmland Preservation** zoning and what uses should be added. Additional types to consider should be listed below.

Chair Rissi should update the PC that we may not be done by the end of 2023.

Next meeting of the sub-committee will be **Wednesday, November 8, at 7:30 am**.

ARTICLE 8: Any other business

Parks Director Melanie Manion talked about the concept of **“Strong Towns”**. Focus is on quality of life rather than growth. Focus on improved safety of the streets. Next planner should agree to this approach to planning.

Some young folks would be willing to live in apartments above commercial stores.

Chair Rissi to meet with Chris to talk about timeline.

Member Bruneau requested that Parks Director Manion send **“Strong Town”** info to Zoning Director Smith-Jacoby and that she pass it on to the sub-committee members.

ARTICLE 9: Acknowledge visitors and those wishing to speak

No visitors were present.

ARTICLE 10: Adjournment

Member Moxley moved to adjourn the meeting at 9:02 am. Member Engel supported the motion. Members voted approval to adjourn.

Ralph W. Moxley, recording secretary