

Approved May 15, 2019

Casco Township Annual Meeting of Planning Commission and Board

April 6, 2019 9 AM

The meeting was called to order at 9:06 AM.

There were 16 people present including: PC Chairman Dave Campbell, Vice Chair Dian Liepe, Secretary Lou Adamson, ZBA Representative Dave Hughes, PC members Dan Fleming and Greg Knisley, Supervisor Allan Overhiser, Clerk Cheri Brenner, Trustee Paul Macyauski, ZA Tasha Smalley, Casco Citizens John and Susan Barker, John Fisher, Debbie and John Weaver and Recording Secretary Janet Chambers.

Chairman Campbell reviewed the agenda.

Paul Macyauski addressed his new position as Short-Term Rental Compliance Administrator. He said that Kathy Stanton has been a great help with STRs. Macyauski has talked with agents representing STRs from South Haven. Inspections have begun. They are getting on top of the inspection process before guests arrive in the summer. They have done 15 inspections so far and expect to do another 12 next Thursday. Kathy has broken the township into different sections, and they are approaching it by section. SHAES appreciates that they are getting started. Macyauski will follow up 30 days later when he finds violations. SHAES determines what qualifies as a bedroom, and if SHAES says it is 2 bedrooms, but is advertised as 3, they will be told to change the advertisement. Stanton has 8 steps to register as a STR on the website.

Macyauski said they are working on tweaking Host Compliance 24/7 call service. It is a \$1,000 option and was not as responsive as hoped, but Macyauski and Stanton are working on testing Host Compliance's response to complaints. There are approximately 5 or 6 new registered STRs and a couple have dropped off. There are 78 registered voters so far this year.

John Barkley said last year Host Compliance did not work for a total of approximately 5 weeks and it was very frustrating. He asked that testing of the system be done on a periodicity basis.

Macyauski said they are working on a testing plan.

Chairman Campbell asked if applications are publicly available.

Zoning Administrator Smalley said everything, except for attorney business, is publicly available.

John Barkley asked if the township is getting feedback from Officer Kurt Katje concerning whether he can keep up with the STR season. Barkley would like Casco to keep on top of whether he is under water with STR season.

Supervisor Overhiser said he has not heard anything from Officer Katje about it. It is very busy for Officer Katje when he returns from a day off or training. That is a normal issue with a 40-hour person. Supervisor Overhiser added it is important residents are aware of all Officer Katje does when it is time to renew the millage.

John Barkley added, Officer Katje is doing a great job, Barkley just wishes we had another.

Supervisor Overhiser added Casco does have access to another officer when Officer Katje is off duty.

Discussion ensued about Coastal Planning. Chairman Campbell said year ago there was talk about an overlay zone. Supervisor Overhiser said there is a chance to partner with the City of South Haven to access some coastal planning. Casco is going to participate to see if this is helpful.

Supervisor Overhiser said another thing he has been working on is blight. ZA Smalley and Alfred Ellingsen are working on that. It varies from piles of wood to real problems. Some vacant lots are used for piles of junk.

ZA Smalley said once they begin working on blight, they must keep the momentum going for it to work.

Chairman Campbell asked about the transition to the unified water and sewer with the City of South Haven.

Supervisor Overhiser said the City has been busy because other issues and hopes to have more information later. The merge to SHAWSA is a favorable financial situation and Casco may be looking at paying the township back. Growth is still an important driver to paying the debt back.

Chairman Campbell asked about erosion issues in parts of Glenn Shores and issues in Miami Park. There is Coastal Planning discussion. What are we doing in the short-term? Will erosion affect the tax base?

Supervisor Overhiser said as far as the Board of Review, there is no way to value property based on erosion. Tax assessment is done as a historical look back. In two years, if the market continually drops off, property owners may see some relief.

Discussion ensued about erosion and inadequate drainage and a meeting about Miami Park's issues. There is some saturation that occurs because of inadequate drainage. There needs to be more water flow off the park, into county drains. They agree with looking at redirecting rather than more downspouts.

Supervisor Overhiser gets drain calls almost every day. Tiles are failing on 109th. There are issues on 60th Street.

Knisley said they need to address properties being developed and flooding onto others.

Zoning Administrator Smalley said flooding neighboring properties should be handled at the construction phase. It needs to be in the Ordinances that you cannot flood neighbors. This needs to be discussed moving forward. It needs to be in the ordinance that draining onto neighbors is prohibited,

Supervisor Overhiser said with ditching in small subdivisions, people are putting in drains and covering the ditches.

Knisley agreed it needs to be in the ordinances because once the building is there it is too late.

Overhiser said growth brings problems to the drainage service. Ideally if an area is going to be developed it would be set up as one big drainage plan. The problem is where it is developed one lot at a time.

Discussion went to shoreline and the affect one property has on the next. In the grand scheme of things anything you do to protect erosion on your property will affect the coastline and neighbors. Every community must take charge of their coastline. You cannot allow everybody to build right up to the bluff. It will affect others. If the DEQ has a required setback, it does not mean Casco should allow

building right up to the line. If someone builds too close and erosion threatens their home, they want to put in a seawall and are told no. A seawall would threaten the neighbors around them.

John Barkley suggested a broad questionnaire to find out what the needs of the community are. What areas are covered by cities, what is not.

ZA Smalley said there should be something in the Master Plan regarding the coast. The DEQ wants a 65' setback. In some cases, applicants want a variance from the DEQ's 65' and are told to request a front yard setback from the road. Then if the city won't give you a front yard setback, the DEQ will grant a variance from the water setback.

Supervisor Overhiser said the goal of Coastal Planning will be to find best practices.

Fleming said part of the discussion should be the bluff has been caving off since the 18 and 19 hundreds. You can try to keep the water off and keep it as dry as possible, but the lake is working and going to undermine the bluff. This is not to say we should do nothing, but the bluff will keep caving off no matter what we do.

Zoning Administrator Tasha Smalley said she has been busy since starting in January. She has had 4 site plans and 2 ZBA meetings. Casco is busier than she had anticipated. Smalley passed her ZA class and is recertified.

Campbell and Smalley spoke to Municode. Ordinances and amendments have been given to Municode and they are working on getting it written in their format. Eventually, people will be able to access it interactively with searches and fully linked table of contents. Currently it is available in PDF format waiting for them to get it completed. Once completed, it will be kept codified with updates worked into the book. Instead of a change log, amendments will be worked into the text with dates of the changes in with the text also.

The purpose of adding effective dates is because of grandfathering laws. As a person enforcing the ordinance, Smalley will need to know the date an ordinance came into effect in order to determine if they are grandfathered.

Discussion continued concerning the Municode service. Supervisor Overhiser said when a change is done to one section of the ordinance, it can greatly impact another section of the ordinance. Municode will make the changes and send new pages to keep books up to date in hard copies that are issued to commissioners, ZBA and Trustees. Online copies will be available for residents to use, print, or whatever they want.

A class could be made available for those who wish to learn how to use the online version of Municode.

A short break was taken from 10:20 until 10:30.

Discussion ensued on the Master Plan. Chairman Campbell read a couple of highlighted items in Chapter 10 (Attachment #1) of *The Township Guide to Planning and Zoning*.

Chairman Campbell said a survey was done for the 2005 Master Plan getting input from the township. When doing the 2012 Master Plan there was no survey done. There were 3 or 4 open forums held while doing the 2012 Master Plan. There is a summary of the 2005 survey in the Master Plan.

Chairman Campbell shared a copy of the Solon Township questionnaire (Attachment #2).

The results of a Henniker, New Hampshire survey (Attachment #3)

<http://www.henniker.org/general/page/survey-results-master-planDemographics> was distributed by Chairman Campbell and he broke attendees of the meeting into groups of 3 or 4. Each group to discuss a different section of the Henniker survey. He instructed the groups to discuss what they would like included in the Casco survey.

Discussion topics for the groups were summarized on poster sheets:

- Demographics (Attachment #4)
- Services and Economics (Attachment #5)
- Recreation (Attachment #6)
- Township Issues (Attachment #7)
- Township Services (Attachment #8)

Each group reviewed their results. Discussion ensued about who should be included in the survey such as homeowners, renters, rental owners, registered voters and/or taxpayers.

The group on Conservation and Recreation thought the bike trail was important. The township owns 40 acres that they might be able to do something with.

Some items under Township services are shared with the City such as AlVan.

People felt the bike trail, a walkable beach and access to the beach was important

Casco is a general law township. The State and County has responsibilities that Casco depends on. Proximity to South Haven allows Casco to share resources such as SHAES, water and sewer, grocery and gas, wellness center etc. Zoning and recreation are provided by Casco.

Next generation access to employment that existed is not there today. Our future depends on the Health of the City of South Haven.

Lakeshore access at the Nature Preserve and 1st Avenue beach access are important. Prioritizing road management is important. Managing access to the Lakeshore, both public and private is a priority.

Discussion continued on how to distribute the survey and who should receive it. Community meetings or open houses are one way to get input.

Discussion included the possibility of having agendas published or on the internet. Some residents may not be interest in every aspect of the Master Plan but might want only to attend when specific topics are being discussed. Getting the agenda determined in advance could be difficult. He stated he gets the agenda to commissioners by Friday night before a meeting ~~it could be posted to the website~~ *the agenda would be sent to PC members.*

It was suggested that names be included on the survey to prevent people from filling out duplicate forms.

ZA Smalley said when it is decided to start on the Master Plan, she will need to notify neighboring communities of the fact that Casco is working on the Master Plan.

The option of having copies of the survey available in the township hall during an election was brought up. (Next elections May, possibly August and November).

Some homes would have more than one person with different input means multiple surveys might need to be sent.

Supervisor Overhiser said ~~while a survey is important~~ *to avoid the appearance no matter how many times a survey is sent out, they are accused* of doing the work in the back room. He also said the survey should be structured in a way to get good use out of it. One issue is sometimes a citizen who shows up at one meeting is heard more than the one who is at 10 meetings. The meetings should give people a chance to be heard and then cut off. Don't give people time to filibuster.

ZA Smalley said shoreline protection needs to get into the Master Plan.

The meeting was adjourned at 12:05.

Attachment #1: A Township Guide to Planning and Zoning, Chapter 10 Master Plan (pages 95-116)

Attachment #2: Solon Township questionnaire

Attachment #3: Henniker, NH survey

Attachment #4: Demographics poster

Attachment #5: Services and Economics poster

Attachment #6: Recreation poster

Attachment #7: Township Issues poster

Attachment #8: Township Services poster

Minutes prepared by Janet Chambers, Recording Secretary

Chapter 10

The Master Plan

Building a community is like completing a jigsaw puzzle, with each decision regarding land use like placing a piece of the puzzle. The master plan can be thought of as the picture on top of the box, which shows the puzzle's final form: the township's vision of its future.

Planning commissions have a responsibility to look beyond the day-to-day zoning issues and provide guidance for future land use and development in the township through the master plan. A properly crafted, well-considered master plan can help decision-makers by emphasizing planning for a well-defined future, rather than simply reacting to development. However, the master plan's value is directly related to the township's willingness to follow its course and diligence in keeping the plan current and relevant to today's conditions.

A master plan can go by many names, such as development, land use or comprehensive plan. Both the Michigan Planning Enabling Act and Michigan Zoning Enabling Act use the term "master plan." Regardless of the name, the intent of the plan remains the same: to express the township's vision of its future and provide a guide to accomplish that vision.

While the master plan has little direct legal authority, it is a powerful expression of the township's intentions for the future. The MPEA gives the planning commission the authority to develop a master plan and describes the basic purposes of the plan to guide and accomplish development that: (MCL 125.3807)

- Is coordinated, adjusted, harmonious, efficient and economical.
- Considers the character of the planning jurisdiction and its suitability for particular uses, judged in terms of such factors as trends in land and population development.
- Will, in accordance with present and future needs, best promote public health, safety, morals, order, convenience, prosperity and general welfare.

- Includes, among other things, promotion of or adequate provision for one or more of the following:
 1. A system of transportation to lessen congestion on streets.
 2. Safety from fire and other dangers.
 3. Light and air.
 4. Healthful and convenient distribution of population.
 5. Good civic design and arrangement, and wise and efficient expenditure of public funds.
 6. Public utilities such as sewage disposal and water supply and other public improvements.
 7. Recreation.
 8. The use of resources in accordance with their character and adaptability.

The master plan can support the “presumption of validity”

An accepted legal principle is that the township’s zoning actions are presumed to be valid unless it is shown by the party challenging the action that the township acted in an arbitrary and capricious manner. Proper use of the master plan and the zoning ordinance’s review standards for zoning actions helps preserve that presumption and increases the burden on the challenging party to prove that the township acted improperly.

Master plans are adopted or updated for a variety of reasons. The desire of the planning commission and township board to preserve the character that first attracted them and others to the community often initiates the planning process. Newly elected or appointed officials may have new ideas about the direction of the township’s development. An existing master plan may need updating to reflect changes that have taken place over a period of years. A controversial zoning request or court action may highlight the need to review the plan or create one where none existed. The Michigan Association of Planning has long advocated a thorough review and update, if necessary, of the master plan at least once every five years—a practice that has now been included in the MPEA as a requirement. (MCL 125.3845)

There are many advantages to having a current master plan:

■ *Consistency in decision making*—Land use decisions have the greatest effect when they are consistent over time. The master plan gives decision-makers a steady point of reference for their land use-related actions. A master plan that is sometimes ignored and rigorously applied at other times will eventually lose its effectiveness and make the township more susceptible to challenges.

■ *Strong legal support*—The township’s zoning-related actions are favorably viewed by courts at all levels, as long as actions are not made in an “arbitrary or capricious” fashion. Using the master plan to support those decisions can help guard against acting in a discriminatory manner. In fact, the Michigan

Zoning Enabling Act requires that zoning regulations be “based upon a plan.” (MCL 125.3203)

■ *Wise use of resources*—Townships have many resources that should be protected and used efficiently. These may be natural or financial resources, infrastructure or buildings. A carefully drafted master plan can help guide the wise use of these resources. The plan also provides support for obtaining, prioritizing and using financial resources, such as grant funds. When supported by a capital improvements program, the master plan can be used to implement township projects, such as buying land for parks or planning recreation facilities, utility extensions and road improvements.

■ *Preserving community character*—The master plan expresses the township’s vision for the future and establishes its existing and intended character. Not all townships are alike; some are planned for urban growth, others are concerned about preserving farmland or rural character. A master plan describes what the township’s character is and how it will be maintained, enhanced or changed.

■ *Preserving future choices*—The master plan permits the community to identify what is important to it. This allows the community to protect future choices so that the next generation still has meaningful choices available to it. The failure to plan will only ensure that the next generation has fewer options available to meet community needs.

Is the master plan “flexible”?

It is often said that the master plan is a flexible document. While this is generally true, it should not be taken to mean that the master plan can be casually changed or contradicted when inconvenient to follow. Rather, having a flexible plan means recognizing that circumstances and conditions can change in ways that were not or could not be anticipated.

For example, the sudden relocation of a major industrial facility to a rural township is not something often anticipated in a master plan. When these events occur, the township must be prepared to review the master plan, the event’s impact on the township and determine the best way to manage the situation. A change to the plan may be warranted, or the township may determine that they wish to maintain a rural character, as described in the plan.

Who is involved in the master plan process?

The authority to prepare a master plan is reserved for the planning commission. While the MPEA does not give the township board a direct role in the development of the plan, it does require that it approve the plan for distribution once it has been drafted and before the planning commission may consider it for adoption. In addition, the act permits the board, through resolution, to elect to be the adopting body for the plan, rather than the

planning commission. (MCL 125.3841 and MCL 125.3843) However, the board has no authority to make any unilateral changes to the plan.

Since the township board is involved in the adoption process, it is clearly in the planning commission's (and the community's) best interest to engage the board during the development of the plan. Doing so provides the opportunity for potential areas of disagreement to be aired and to permit a reasonable compromise to be reached. If the township board actively participates in the master planning process, it will increase the possibility of a smooth adoption process.

The MPEA requires formal coordination between adjacent townships, cities and villages either adjacent to or within the township, and the county/regional planning commissions. These communities/agencies must be sent a notice prior to the initiation of a new, revised or amended master plan requesting "cooperation and comment" (MCL 125.3839). The same communities/agencies are given an opportunity to review and comment on the draft master plan prior to its adoption (MCL 125.3841). Any comments provided, however, are advisory, but should be seriously considered by the township prior to adoption of the completed plan.

The planning commission may also wish to consider input from local schools, business interests, the county road commission, the Michigan Department of Transportation, and any other relevant state or federal agencies.

The master plan will not succeed without public involvement and support

The public must also be involved in developing a master plan. Without public support, the master plan and the zoning ordinance may lose public credibility, frequent conflicts can arise over zoning actions and the validity of the township's zoning actions could be challenged in the courts.

The steps in the process vary depending on the extent and nature of public involvement the township desires. The degree of public participation also affects the cost and time involved in formulating the plan. There are several methods that can be used to involve the public in the master plan process:

Attitude/opinion survey

A properly written and well-organized survey effort can be an effective supplement to the other public participation efforts of the planning process. However, a poorly conceived and executed survey can yield misleading or incorrect results. To avoid this, several decisions concerning the survey need to be made early in the process.

Type of survey—One of the first decisions is to determine the type of survey method to be used. The survey method typically determines the relative statistical accuracy of the results. Various survey methods are available,

such as telephone, random sample mailings and mass mailings. The survey method often depends on the budget and degree of accuracy desired. Selective surveys such as telephone and random sampling normally provide the most accurate results, if properly drafted and conducted. Mass mailings may be less accurate, but have the advantage of allowing everyone in the township to participate.

Survey format—The survey's format and design have a critical impact on how the results are interpreted. Poorly worded questions, such as "Do you favor regulations that protect the environment?" can lead to predictable answers and are of little help in trying to determine effective land use policy. Complex or technical questions with obscure or less common terms must also be avoided. One way to avoid this problem is to test the survey with various audiences to gauge its clarity.

The survey format is particularly important if it is going to be mailed. Questions and responses should be easy to read and the method of marking answers clearly understood.

Case Study

Survey identifies need for new zoning districts

Sullivan Township (Muskegon County) is a community with multiple mailing addresses and school districts. As a result, the planning commission was particularly concerned about whether the residents felt any sense of "community."

As part of the master planning process, the planning commission decided to survey residents. First, a large group of residents gathered one evening for a focus group meeting to discuss their concerns about the community's future. The planning commission then designed a community attitude survey based on input from the focus group.

The survey asked questions such as:

"How strongly to you agree/disagree with the following statements about the quality of life in Sullivan Township?"

- I am proud to say that I live in Sullivan Township.
- The people in my neighborhood look out for each other.
- I am concerned about how growth in nearby communities will affect the township.
- Smaller residential lots should be allowed to make homes more affordable."

The survey also asked residents to identify important issues, such as preserving rural character, expanding existing roads and improving public services; significant problems, such as traffic, building code enforcement and lack of sidewalks, and the type of development they preferred to see the township encourage.

The survey was mailed to all township households, and over 40 percent of the surveys were completed and returned for tabulation.

The results of the survey indicated that residents felt some degree of attachment to the township and prized the community's rural character. Residents were interested in pursuing actions to preserve that character.

The survey results were used as the basis of the master plan, which called for certain areas to be zoned for larger lots and regulations to maintain the township's rural character. Subsequent to the plan's adoption, a new zoning ordinance was enacted that included new zoning districts and development requirements designed to preserve rural character.❖

Open-ended questions such as, “How would you propose to attract more shoppers to the downtown business district?” may seem like a great idea, but are time-consuming to review and difficult to tabulate. They may also discourage people from responding because they require more time and thought. It is best to keep the survey simple. Ask questions that require a “yes,” “no” or “don’t know/no opinion” answer or provide multiple choices that can quickly be checked by the respondent.

Analysis—The weight given to survey results depends on how they will be used, however, any tendency to base the entire master plan on the results of a single survey should be avoided. A wide variety of influences is always present when conducting surveys. It is ill-advised to rely completely on the majority opinions of a survey without considering the plan’s effects on other persons or entities. Instead, the results should be tempered with the need to fulfill all of the master plan’s objectives. The results of the survey should be used to help guide, but not dictate, land use policy and should be considered part of the overall effort to determine the township’s future.

Focus groups

Another effective method of involving the public in the planning process is to use specific, targeted participation in a focus group of selected township residents, property owners and opinion leaders. The focus group can be selected in several ways. One way is to request a list of prospective members from the planning commission and township board members. Each member might be asked to provide the names of five or six individuals they feel would be interested and willing to participate. Each member should invite the people on his or her list to attend the focus group. It is a good idea to seek a cross-section of participants from different parts of the township, age groups, occupations and political views, if they were not included in the original list.

If this method is used, the planning commission must make a decision early in the process about the focus group’s role. The focus group may be entirely advisory, recommending actions to the planning commission; they may be participatory, working equally with the planning commission to reach decisions, or the planning commission may empower the group by agreeing to accept recommendations on key aspects of the plan. The participation level chosen must be made clear to the focus group at their first meeting. The focus group’s meetings should always be public. **OMA & ADA**

The planning consultant or other person trained in conducting focus group meetings typically acts as the meeting facilitator.

Public meetings

Another commonly used method to involve the public is to hold periodic public meetings to present information on the plan’s progress and request input. This method is not always effective because public attendance may

be inconsistent, and those attending may have particular issues that are important to them, but not specifically relevant to the master plan. Any public meeting must be properly advertised and conducted in compliance with the Open Meetings Act. **OMA & ADA**

To be effective, however, word of the meeting should also be forwarded to various organizations, businesses and interest groups. Local media should be invited to prepare news stories about the plan and upcoming meetings. It may be helpful to prepare a news release for distribution to the media. Surrounding communities should also be specifically invited.

The public meeting should be designed to gather ideas and opinions, rather than simply present information. A workshop setting can be used to both educate and generate ideas. Informational displays can be set up and individual planning commission members and staff made available for small group discussions. To encourage participants to circulate and interact, the chairs should be removed from the room or limited in number. This format has the advantage of providing individual attention and avoids the problem of any one person or group monopolizing the hearing for their own purposes.

Developing the master plan

The first step in the master plan process should be an educational effort to learn about the process and use of the master plan. The planning commission members need to acknowledge their specific reasons for developing or revising the township master plan. Doing so allows the members to be engaged and committed to the plan's completion.

Part of this effort should include a discussion of the issues that affect land use and development in the community. These concerns may range from preserving natural features and farmland to coordinating planning efforts with surrounding communities. There must also be a wide-ranging public discussion about the township's commitment to develop and implement the master plan.

The MPEA requires the planning commission to undertake certain tasks, including: (MCL 125.3831)

- Making careful and comprehensive surveys and studies of present conditions and future growth within the planning area with due regard to its relation to neighboring jurisdictions.
- Consulting with representatives of adjacent local units of government in respect to their planning so that conflicts in master plans and zoning may be avoided.
- Cooperating with all departments of the state and federal governments and other public agencies concerned with programs for economic, social and physical development within the planning jurisdiction seeking the maximum coordination of the township's programs with these agencies.

The township is also permitted to meet with other governmental planning commissions or agency staff to deliberate.

The planning commission may make use of expert advice and information from federal, state, county and municipal officials, departments and agencies with information, maps and data pertinent to township planning. The commission can consider any information and recommendations furnished by appropriate public officials, departments or agencies. State, regional,

county and municipal officials, departments and agencies must make available public information and may furnish other technical assistance and advice to the township planning commission (MCL 125.3825(2)).

The master plan process requires three notifications. The first is sent prior to the township initiating a master planning process, indicating that the process is beginning and requesting "cooperation and comment." The second is the sending of a draft plan, and following adoption, a completed, final plan. These notices and materials are sent to:

- the planning commission (or if there is no planning commission, the legislative body), of each city, village, or township located within or contiguous to the township.
- the county planning commission, or if there is no county planning commission, the county board of commissioners, for the county in which the township is located.
- the regional planning commission, if any, for the region in which the township is located, if there is no county planning commission for the county in which the township is located. If there is a county planning commission for the county in which the township is located, the secretary of the township planning commission may submit a copy of the proposed plan to the regional planning commission but is not required to do so.
- each public utility company and railroad company owning or operating a public utility or railroad within the township, and any government entity, that registers its name and address for this purpose with the secretary of the township planning commission.

Sample Master Plan Table of Contents

Chapter 1—Introduction
What is a land use plan?
Public involvement
The planning process
Chapter 2—Our Township
Background/history
Population characteristics
Population growth
Growth influences
Chapter 3—Goals and Policies
Township character
Land use
Environment
Public services
Chapter 4—Future Land Use
Land use character
Existing land use patterns and influences
Future land use
Chapter 5—Roadways
Roads and development
Road classification
Street planning
Future roadway improvements
Chapter 6—Public Services
Description
Service capacities/deficiencies
Capital improvement planning
Chapter 7—Implementation
Plan recommendations
Strategies and actions
Future work efforts
Maps
Natural features
Traffic counts/road network
Existing land use
Future land use
Community Attitude/Opinion Survey Results

The master plan's content

There are few limitations as to what can be included in a master plan. The only major restriction is that a master plan cannot provide regulatory powers; only a duly adopted ordinance can provide that authority.

However, master plans must meet certain requirements as specified by the MPEA. The MPEA requires the master plan to include maps, plats, charts, and descriptive explanatory and other related matter to show the planning commission's recommendations for the physical development of the township. Depending on what the township feels is reasonably pertinent to the future development of the township, the master plan must include: (MCL 125.3833)

- A land use plan that consists in part of a classification and allocation of land for agriculture, residences, commerce, industry, recreation, ways and grounds, public buildings, schools, soil conservation, forests, woodlots, open space, wildlife refuges, and other uses and purposes.
- The general location, character and extent of streets, railroads, airports, bicycle paths, pedestrian ways, bridges, waterways and waterfront developments; sanitary sewers and water supply systems; facilities for flood prevention, drainage, pollution prevention and maintenance of water levels; and public utilities and structures.
- Recommendations as to the general character, extent and layout of redevelopment or rehabilitation of blighted areas; and the removal, relocation, widening, narrowing, vacating, abandonment, change of use or extension of streets, grounds, open spaces, buildings, utilities or other facilities.
- For a township that has adopted a zoning ordinance, a zoning plan for various zoning districts controlling the height, area, bulk, location and use of buildings and premises. The zoning plan shall include an explanation of how the land use categories on the future land use map relate to the districts on the zoning map.
- Recommendations for implementing any of the master plan's proposals.
- If a master plan includes a master street plan, the means for implementing the master street plan in cooperation with the county road commission and the state transportation department shall be specified in the master street plan in a manner consistent with the respective powers and duties of and any written agreements between these entities and the township.

Creating a vision of what the township can be

The master plan's goals should be natural extensions of the township's vision statement. The plan can also include policies or actions to implement those goals.

Vision statement: Our township will be a community of planned diversity, offering a balance of residential, employment and business opportunities amidst the distinctive natural amenities that abound.

Goal: To preserve those qualities that comprise the natural character of the township, including trees, topography, open space and water quality.

Actions:

- Adopt rural preservation guidelines to be applied to all areas designated "Rural Preserve" on the master plan map.
- Adopt a tree protection ordinance.❖

The master plan's content will vary in each township, depending on the township's nature and needs. A rural township with limited development and limited public utilities, such as sanitary and storm sewers or public water, may need a much less detailed plan than an urban or urbanizing township on the fringe of a major metropolitan area.

In many rural communities, the master plan is primarily a land use plan, providing guidance concerning future land uses. This is a critical component of any plan because it creates a tool to use in making zoning decisions. Such plans also contain supporting information such as demographics and development goals and policies. Other plans contain specific elements dealing with utilities, public facilities, housing, parks and recreation, and transportation.

Basic elements of the master plan

There are some basic elements that should be included in any township's master plan in some form:

1. Purpose—The purpose section should include some indication of what a master plan is and how it might affect individual property owners and residents. In addition, there should be a brief guide as to how to use the plan, including an example.

2. Background information—The background section provides a “snapshot” of the township's population, land use, infrastructure, economy and other relevant conditions, including relevant historical perspectives. Information about adjacent communities, the county and the region may also provide a useful geographic context and explain the township's relationship to its surroundings.

Another important part of the background section is a description of the township's physical features, such as wetlands, topography, woodlands, floodplain and soils. Information regarding the township's natural resources should be collected and analyzed to highlight environmentally sensitive areas.

The master plan should not attempt to describe every detail of community life and list every “fun fact” the authors can uncover. The information included should have some bearing on the ultimate direction of the plan. Data about the people, land use and natural character of the community is usually relevant to the plan. However, a description of the township's geologic history may not be important to the outcome of the plan. Existing soil information would be sufficient, especially for plans that address agriculture. Likewise, devoting lengthy text to descriptions of climate, annual precipitation and average monthly temperatures is generally unnecessary. Brief descriptions of that information might be useful in a community whose unique climate plays a major role in the economy by encouraging fruit growing or winter sports, for example.

Sample Township Goal Statements

The following examples illustrate the types of actions a township can take to implement its goals:

■ *Goal—The character of Willis Township will be primarily agricultural with homes in rural settings.*

Policies

- The township will adopt and implement ordinance provisions whose purpose is to foster the establishment of residential developments that maintain rural character and preserve agricultural land.
- Before approval, the township will seek information from applicants for land development projects to ensure that adequate utilities/septic or wells, roads, fire and police services, and other township services are available to serve the proposed uses.
- Protection of groundwater resources, natural features and other environmental features will be a primary consideration of the township when reviewing development proposals.
- The township recognizes the potential for conflicts between agricultural and residential uses and will support the agricultural needs in Willis Township.

■ *Goal—The township will contain an appropriate mixture of land uses, but will emphasize agricultural uses and homes in rural settings.*

Policies

- Review of land use and zoning changes will include considering how the proposed development preserves the agricultural and rural character of the township.
- Areas of dissimilar land uses will be separated by adequate landscaping, open space or other means to limit conflicts between uses.
- New commercial development should be designed to reflect the rural character of Willis Township, with uses necessary for daily needs of the neighborhood and limited sizes of buildings and parking

areas.

- Industrial development will be directed to those areas where public utilities are available and residential areas will be unaffected.

■ *Goal—The township will encourage public utility services that are appropriate for a rural and agricultural community.*

Policies

- Significant new commercial or industrial development will only be permitted in areas where public sewer or water are available.
- Areas of residential development equal to or exceeding a density of three dwelling units per acre will be required to provide public water and sewer service prior to development.
- The extension of public water and sewer services will be the financial responsibility of the property owners who require such services.
- Development reviews will include information pertaining to the development's impact on area groundwater sources.

■ *Goal—The township will pursue land development policies that foster a safe and efficient transportation network appropriate for a rural and agricultural community.*

Policies

- In cooperation with the county, the township will develop and maintain a priority review system for paving streets, considering such factors as resident desires, traffic volumes, roadway function, land use and other appropriate elements.
- The township will encourage land development along major roadways that reduces the number of access points for individual uses.❖

Collecting relevant information can provide valuable insight into how past land use decisions and regional or national trends have affected the township. It may also suggest how these decisions and trends might affect the future.

3. Direction, vision and goals—This is the most important part of any master plan. The planning process is based on the assumption that a community consensus is achieved on the township’s planning goals and policies before realistic plans for future growth can be prepared. It further assumes that once those growth goals have been agreed upon, a plan for future growth will be more readily used by township leaders because it reflects accepted goals and policies.

A direction for future growth is often identified in two ways. It may evolve from the township’s desire to remedy some existing or projected concern, or it may be based on achieving the ideal vision of the township’s future. As a result, the township’s growth goals and policies should be formulated following a careful study of needs, concerns and existing policies.

There are many ways to state the future direction of the township. A “vision statement” may be expressed in a few sentences or paragraphs summarizing the overall view of the township’s future.

In addition, specific goals may be established to help implement the vision statement. Goals are statements that describe how the township views its own future, and the remainder of the plan is based on the steps needed to implement those goals. The process of developing the goals should include both the planning commission and township board. The goals may be topic-oriented, including subjects such as land use, the environment, transportation, public services, and other areas relevant and important to the township.

The language used for the township’s goals must be carefully and thoughtfully drafted. Saying that the township’s goal is to “protect the quiet, rural character of the township,” is admirable, but provides little guidance. Rural character can mean many things to many people. A goal to keep the character of the township primarily agricultural with homes in rural settings more clearly identifies the township’s goal.

The wording of the goals should meet the following three guidelines:

1. *Goals should provide guidance, but not be too detailed.* Detailed actions or numeric targets should be avoided. A goal that asks for 25 percent open space in new developments is limiting—it may be interpreted to prevent a development from incorporating 40 percent open space. Such a goal also does not explain that the requirement’s intent is to maintain rural settings and open space, which might be accomplished through other, more flexible methods. Ultimately, the goals should be easily recalled while reviewing zoning applications.



2. *Goals should be realistic and achievable.* Returning an urbanized township to its rural roots may be desirable, but likely impossible. On the other hand, setting aside some undeveloped areas for lower density development is realistic and probably achievable.

3. *Goals should inspire people to action.* Goal statements offer the planning commission the chance to paint a picture of the township as it could be. An effective goal can provide the inspiration necessary to gather the resources needed to shape the township.

The next level in the hierarchy of plan statements may include policies or specific actions geared toward achieving individual goals. The detail included in these statements will depend on the township's needs. Some may be very specific, delineating responsibilities, time schedules, budgets and regulations. Others may be more general, stating the means to implement the goals without specifying the actual steps to be taken.

4. Existing land use—This section will include a view of the township as it exists, providing a snapshot of current land use patterns and a thorough description of existing community character. A key feature to include is the existing land use map that should show the actual residential, commercial, industrial, public and agricultural uses, as well as vacant land, in all areas of the township.

The existing use of land can speak volumes about the township's past development policies and how effectively they were implemented. Even a cursory look at mapped land uses will present an interesting picture of how the community has developed. For example, isolated commercial or industrial uses scattered throughout the community in the midst of residential uses may be a reflection on the wisdom of past zoning, and land use decisions could complicate planning in those areas.

The current land use section will examine trends, patterns, conflicts and opportunities. It may also include a description of how land is intended to be used in the future, considering any environmental constraints, needed land uses, community service capacities and effects on existing land uses.

5. Future land use—The future land use section of the master plan examines land use trends, patterns, conflicts and opportunities to provide a long-range view of the township's future. No other element of the master plan attracts as much attention as future land use. Too often the master plan is considered to be the future land use map. The view is often taken that as long as a proposal complies with the map, it is what the township wants. This is a little like showing someone a zoning map and calling it the zoning ordinance. The map is of little use without the text that goes along with it.

The future land use element of the master plan determines the type and intensity of development for every area of the township and classifies them as land use categories. These land use decisions are based on a variety of factors, guided by the goals developed earlier in the process. These factors include, but are not limited to:

- *Community character*—Just as goals describe the desired character of the township, the future land use element of the plan describes how land use promotes that character. If, for example, the goals emphasize a strong agricultural character, future land use categories should be drafted to reflect the value of farmland and minimize residential intrusions.
- *Adaptability of the land*—Land use will be restricted by the physical characteristics of individual sites. Consideration must be given to soil types, natural features and other environmental conditions that may limit or prevent development for some potential land uses. Environmentally sensitive areas also deserve respect and consideration. Once destroyed, a natural resource can rarely be recovered.
- *Community needs*—Rapidly growing communities need places for housing, businesses, parks and other facilities. Other communities may need to provide additional opportunities for economic growth. These needs must be considered when planning the location and extent of future land use.
- *Services*—Ambitious development plans must be measured against the township's ability to provide an adequate level of public services, such as utility systems, public safety and roads. It can be difficult for rural townships with low-density development scattered throughout the community to economically respond to demands for road paving, law and code enforcement, fire protection, and emergency medical services as growth occurs. Urban townships may be faced with infrastructure crumbling under growth pressures. Congested streets, aging utility lines or sewers, and other growth-related problems can stretch already-tight budgets. In both cases, careful land use planning is needed to ensure that existing infrastructure is used efficiently, and new infrastructure is planned for those areas where new development is anticipated.
- *Existing development*—One of the most important considerations in developing a future land use plan is how new development may affect existing homes, businesses and farms. Rural townships are constantly faced with inherent conflicts between agricultural operations and new residents unfamiliar with daily farming activities. Urban townships must balance requests for higher density housing and new commercial development with resistance to any new development from existing homeowners.

It is important for the future land use section to describe and document the need for and objective of each classification in the future land use section.

Categories of future land use will vary, depending on the township's goals. However, future land use plans generally include the following three essential land use categories:

- Residential.* This classification is generally based on development densities, measured in the number of residential dwellings per acre. Densities may range from less than one unit per acre to urban properties allowing many units per acre. The planned densities typically depend on the objectives that each classification is intended to fulfill.

It is important, however, to ensure that each classification has a specific and appropriate objective. For example, a classification that has the objective of preserving farmland should be carefully supported by information documenting the importance of farming to the community and the suitability of the soils for productive agricultural use. A separate agricultural classification may also be used to highlight this use.

- Commercial.* A range of individually described commercial classifications may also be used to separate varying intensities of development, ranging from commercial lands that serve specific neighborhoods or areas to regional shopping areas intended to serve several communities. Many townships are also attempting to provide centralized areas for development, allowing a mix of land uses similar to downtown business districts found in many cities.

Locations for commercial uses will generally be guided by issues related to the amount of land needed, availability of adequate roadways and utilities, and compatibility with existing and planned uses in the vicinity.

- Industrial.* Areas intended for industrial development may also be created as a separate classification. Industrial classifications can be divided by levels of intensity, such as light manufacturing and heavy industrial. The master plan should provide a general description of the difference between the various classifications.

Industrial uses will be located using the same general criteria as commercial uses, and in many cases, with a general emphasis on public water and sanitary sewer availability or, where these utilities are not available, the land's suitability for on-site water and sewer systems.

In addition, there are a broad range of other land use classifications that may be included, depending on individual township needs. Common classifications include public lands, waterfront development, environmentally sensitive areas, forest resources and others.

6. Public services and community facilities—The content for this section of the master plan will vary, depending on the township. Townships that provide a broad range of services can use the master plan to anticipate where

and to what extent additional resources related to those services will be needed. This is particularly the case when public water and sanitary sewer services are available. The presence of these utilities will have a significant influence on the rate, type and location of new development. This section may be very limited in scope for townships that provide few services. It will be very detailed in townships that have access to and use utilities as a tool to manage growth.

The township's transportation network may also be discussed in this section or provided as a separate part of the plan. Since townships do not have jurisdiction over roadways, this element may be limited to discussions about needed improvements, possible new roads or road connections, access management, and other topics that require cooperative efforts with the county road commission.

Descriptions of public buildings, parks and recreation facilities, schools, fire protection services and other infrastructure components can also be included in this section.

7. Other elements—Some elements, such as parks and recreation, housing, and economic development plans, may be prepared independently from the master plan process and incorporated at a later date.

The MPEA also permits the planning commission to complete the master plan in geographic sections in the form of a subplan (MCL 125.3835). For example, the planning commission may elect to prepare a land use element for a specific area of the township, such as an inland lake or a highway corridor.

8. Zoning plan—When the township has a zoning ordinance, the MPEA calls for a “zoning plan.” The primary purpose of the zoning plan is an explanation of how the land use categories on the future land use map relate to the districts on the zoning map. This helps ensure that the zoning districts are clearly defined and how they fit in with the various future land use designations.

Steps to adopting a master plan

Unlike past years when a master plan adoption process might take less than 60 days, the MPEA now requires an extensive and longer adoption process, generally divided into three parts.

1. Township board review and comment and approval for distribution. (MCL 125.3841(1))

Once the plan is drafted, it must be submitted to the township board for their review. Presumably, the intent of the MPEA is to require that the legislative body be in general agreement with the land use policies written by the appointed planning commission. As previously noted, if the township board has actively participated in the planning process, this stage of the adoption procedure should proceed without major disruption.

However, if the board disagrees with the content of the plan, they may elect to prevent its distribution and interrupt the adoption process. The MPEA only continues the process with the presumption that the board approves the plan for distribution. If they do not, it is assumed that the board will submit its comments to the planning commission to allow corrections, additions, or revisions to be made and resubmitted to the board. At this point, a joint meeting would be useful to address any potentially contentious issues.

If the planning commission accepts the board's changes, the adoption process may continue. If they do not, the board has the option of not approving the plan for distribution, which effectively halts the adoption process. As previously noted, this points out the need to involve the board *during* the planning process and not just at the end.

2. Distribution and comment period (MCL 125.3841)

Once the township board has approved the plan for distribution, copies are sent to the same communities and agencies to which the original notice to initiate the planning process was sent (see page 102). These entities have up to 63 days in which to comment on the proposed plan. If no comments are received, the presumption is that the plan is acceptable.

All comments received are advisory; none of the reviewing bodies has veto power of the plan or any part of it.

3. Public hearing and adoption (MCL 125.328)

Following the expiration of the county's review period, the township may conduct its public hearing. The township planning commission must publish a notice of the hearing in a newspaper of general circulation in the township. The first publication must appear not less than 15 days before the date of the hearing. (Note that the hearing cannot be held until the expiration of the comment period, but the *advertising* for the hearing may take place *during* the review period.)

Once the planning commission has held the public hearing, one of two courses of action is available.

First, the planning commission may pass a resolution formally adopting the plan. The resolution must be passed by majority of the *entire membership* of the commission (not just a majority of those who are at the meeting). For example, on a seven-member commission, four must vote to adopt the plan. See Appendix E for a sample resolution to adopt a master plan.

If, however, the township board has adopted a resolution declaring its intent to be the adopting authority for the plan, the planning commission will make a recommendation for adoption to the board. The board may then accept the recommendation and adopt the plan, or submit a "statement of objections" to the commission. The commission must then consider these objections

and revise the plan accordingly. If the commission determines that they are unwilling to accept the changes as proposed by the board, it may resubmit the plan to the board with commission comments. However, if the board determines the plan to be unacceptable, it may decide to not adopt it.

The MPEA does not have a provision that allows the township board to alter the plan to meet its own objections. Accordingly, if the planning commission does not revise the plan, and the township board fails to adopt it, the adoption process will be halted and the township will not have an adopted plan. As previously noted, this highlights the need for the planning commission and township board to work together on drafting the plan.

If, however, the planning commission makes the changes desired by the board, the board may adopt the plan. No specific voting requirement for the board is noted in the MPEA, therefore, a majority vote of a quorum is acceptable.

After adoption, copies of the final plan must be sent to those entities that were asked to comment on the draft plan.

Adopting plan revisions and amendments

A plan "extension, addition, revision or other amendment" is adopted in the same manner as a new plan, except that the review and comment periods are reduced to 42 days rather than 63 for all reviewing agencies.

Using the master plan

Once the master plan is in place, the normal reaction is to relax and not think about it for a while. Too often, the plan sits on a shelf and collects dust. It seems that the planning commission's hard work has paid off, and the plan is completed. In reality, the work has just begun!

However, if the townships fails to consistently follow the master plan, any attempt to use the plan as a defense for actions that are challenged in court by property owners or developers diminishes its influence.

However, consistent and vigorous use of the plan will lend credibility to the township's decisions on rezonings or other zoning actions. While Michigan courts do not recognize the absolute authority of the master plan, they do lend much more credibility to actions supported by careful planning than those that appear to be arbitrarily taken against an individual property owner. Few cases directly address the master plan, but many have considered it in their decisions. For example, cases such as *Raabe vs. City of Walker* (383 Mich 165, 1970), *Countrywalk Condominiums, Inc. vs. City of Orchard Lake Village* (221 Mich App 19, 1997) and *Bell River Associates vs. China Charter Township* (223 Mich App 124, 1997) have established that the reasonableness of a zoning ordinance may be supported by the existence of a well-reasoned and flexible master plan, when it is carefully prepared, properly adopted and noticeably implemented.

The master plan should be referred to by the township board, planning commission, ZBA and other township bodies and officials for direction when considering the following issues:

- *Rezoning decisions*—Since the master plan determines land use, rezoning decisions should be consistent with its provisions. This is not to say that all rezonings consistent with the future land use map should automatically be approved. The plan's land use language and zoning plan must also be consulted to determine if the request is consistent with the plan's goals and stated intent. Often the use is consistent, but the timing is not. The area may not be appropriate for the requested class of use until utilities are in place. If utilities are not available, it would be premature to rezone. Including information like this in the zoning plan adds to the master plan's effectiveness.

In the same way, if a rezoning request is not consistent with the master plan, it should not automatically be rejected, particularly if the plan has not been reviewed in some time. Each rezoning request should be evaluated to see if the relevant conditions have changed since the plan was adopted. If they have, the master plan may deserve reconsideration. If a change to the master plan is appropriate, it should be made before the rezoning is approved.

- *Utility extensions/capital improvements*—One of the master plan's most useful functions is to determine the intensity of land use to measure the need for new or additional utilities, improved roadways, expanded fire protection and other public improvements. Such major capital expenditures should be planned before they are required by a specific development. This is accomplished by preparing a capital improvement plan, or CIP. Using the master plan as a guide, the CIP can anticipate the needed improvements and allocate resources necessary to complete them so they are in place concurrently with development.

Capital improvements plan

Under MCL 125.3865 of the Michigan Planning Enabling Act, a capital improvement plan is mandatory for a township if the township, alone or jointly with one or more other local units of government, owns or operates a water supply or sewage disposal system. A capital improvement plan continues to be a very useful tool for all townships.

The capital improvements plan should show the amount of proposed capital outlay expenditures, including the estimated total cost and the proposed method of financing each capital improvement. It is common for a CIP to include short- and long-range components. The short-range component typically addresses expenditures programmed for an ensuing three- to six-year period. At this stage, targeted items are generally high-priority, non-speculative and within the financial capabilities of the township, such as a new fire truck or fire-fighting equipment. The long-range component identifies programs oriented to future implementation. Long-range elements

are often linked to anticipated future needs such as a new fire station to more efficiently serve a specific area of the township, or the expansion of a sanitary sewer or water system necessary to encourage and support desired future growth or to resolve issues that are outside the present financial capacity of the township.

The CIP should also show the projected additional annual operating cost and the method for financing the operating costs of each capital construction project for three years beyond the fiscal year covered by the budget. The MPEA designates a period of six years, with the first year being a capital budget. This is an annual process where a new year is added and any changes

Case Study

Baxter Township Capital Improvements Plan

Community background

Baxter Township contains a variety of inland lakes that, due to their excellent water quality, are heavily used by residents and tourists for boating, sailing, fishing and swimming. The township lies contiguous to the U.S. 131 freeway, within 22 miles of one of the state's fastest growing metropolitan regions. Between 2000 and 2010, the township experienced an 18 percent population increase. Current estimates indicate that growth will continue. Most of the new construction in the township relates to home sites, including large residential site condominium projects on or near the township's lakes.

Planning issue

The Baxter Township Master Plan identified significant local concern over the potential degradation of several of the township's inland lakes due to an increasing number of private septic systems associated with new housing development. County health department studies and research completed by a local university reveal increasing levels of bacterial counts within Hart and Willoughby Lakes. Decreasing fish and wildlife levels have also been recorded.

Master plan recommendations

Due to the high population levels around Hart and Willoughby Lakes, projected growth, and the health department and university findings, the Baxter Township Master Plan recommends that the Baxter Township sanitary

sewer be extended from its present location out to each of the lakes. This represents distances of approximately three and five miles.

Preliminary engineering study

Based on the master plan's recommendations, the Baxter Township board authorized a preliminary engineering study to determine the need, feasibility, scheduling and cost of extending sewers to each lake. The study provided an analysis of potential funding sources, including fees and payments associated with estimated sewer connections.

Capital improvements program

Based on the master plan's recommendations and findings of the preliminary engineering study, the Baxter Township board included extending the sanitary sewer system as a long-range CIP element. Accordingly, funds were earmarked and set aside on an annual basis as part of a sewer improvement program. Other funding sources to leverage local dollars were also sought and captured during the planning period. The township also used this time to educate citizens on water quality needs and the importance of public sewers to the lake systems.

Conclusion

Within seven years of establishing the sewer improvement program as part of the Baxter Township capital improvements program, the extension of sanitary sewers to Hart and Willoughby Lakes was initiated. Both projects were completed over an 18-month period.❖

in priorities or financing are updated. The capital improvements plan can be an invaluable tool for implementing the master plan's provisions.

• *Environmental impact*—The master plan should reflect the degree to which the township desires to protect its environment and natural features. The plan should document the value of these resources to the community and propose steps to implement the appropriate regulations.

Environmental issues encompass an extremely broad range of topics and may be associated with variables such as:

- surface water and wetland resources;
- eyesore land uses such as open dumps, non-regulated junk yards and dilapidated structures;
- wellhead and general groundwater protection programs;
- obnoxious site factors associated with the use of land including excessive noise, odor, glare or dust;
- open space, farmland and historic/archaeologically significant features;
- natural flora and fauna with associated habitat;
- waterfronts and coastal features;
- natural resource extraction and land reclamation;
- placement of sanitary landfills;
- visual impacts of communication towers and satellite dish antennas; and
- proliferation of highway/road signs leading to visual clutter.

Local concern over environmental issues can result in the hasty implementation of weak management programs or poorly prepared regulations. As with most planning and zoning matters, environmental concerns need to be carefully and properly analyzed. That analysis should consider the following questions:

1. Define the issue. What are its elements?
2. Is the issue controlled by state or federal regulation? If so, are those regulations sufficient to respond to local concerns and needs? Will state or federal regulation permit the township to be more restrictive in controlling the issue?
3. How does the issue relate to the master plan and zoning ordinance? Does the master plan or zoning ordinance need to address the issue?
4. How does the public perceive the matter?
5. What are the public implications of regulating the issue?
6. Are any local regulations implemented to deal with this issue exclusionary or discriminatory? How will the township support its regulations if they are challenged in court?
7. Does a need actually exist to protect or regulate the environmental resources involved?
8. How have other townships with similar concerns addressed the issue?
9. Does the township have the resources and long-term willingness to tackle the issue, including enforcing any regulations it may adopt?

Environmental issues are often volatile ones, pitting one side of the community against another or, to use an old cliché, “the environmentalists against the developers.” As a result, the level of investigation must be extensive enough to completely and accurately define the issue’s needs, opportunities and solutions.

- *Recreation planning*—The master plan should generally anticipate the location and density of new population growth. This can indicate where additional recreational or open space lands will be needed. The master plan can also assist in setting priorities for park development.

Caution should be exercised in designating specific private properties for recreational or public use, because such a designation could be construed to be a taking. If not owned by the governmental unit, language designating such properties should be kept general, as in, “The plan identified a need for additional park land in the southwest quadrant of the township.”

- *Transportation improvements*—As development occurs in the township, new or improved roadways will most likely be needed. By measuring the intensity of future development shown in the master plan, transportation planners can estimate the rights-of-way, number of lanes and access management level needed to provide efficient transportation. The master plan can be used to coordinate the township’s road plans with those developed by the county road commission or Michigan Department of Transportation.

SOLOON

Established in 1857

Township

Solon Township

Dear Solon Township Property Owner,

The Township Planning Commission is in the process of updating the Township Comprehensive Plan. The Comprehensive Plan serves as a general guide to growth and development in the Township. As we go through this process, it is very important that we have as much input from the community as possible. This questionnaire is designed to obtain your input and opinions regarding Solon's opportunities, present conditions, and future growth. Your input will provide the Township a perspective on your preferences concerning the quality of life in the Township. The information you provide will be a valuable and necessary component in the process of determining the direction of future endeavors for the whole Township.

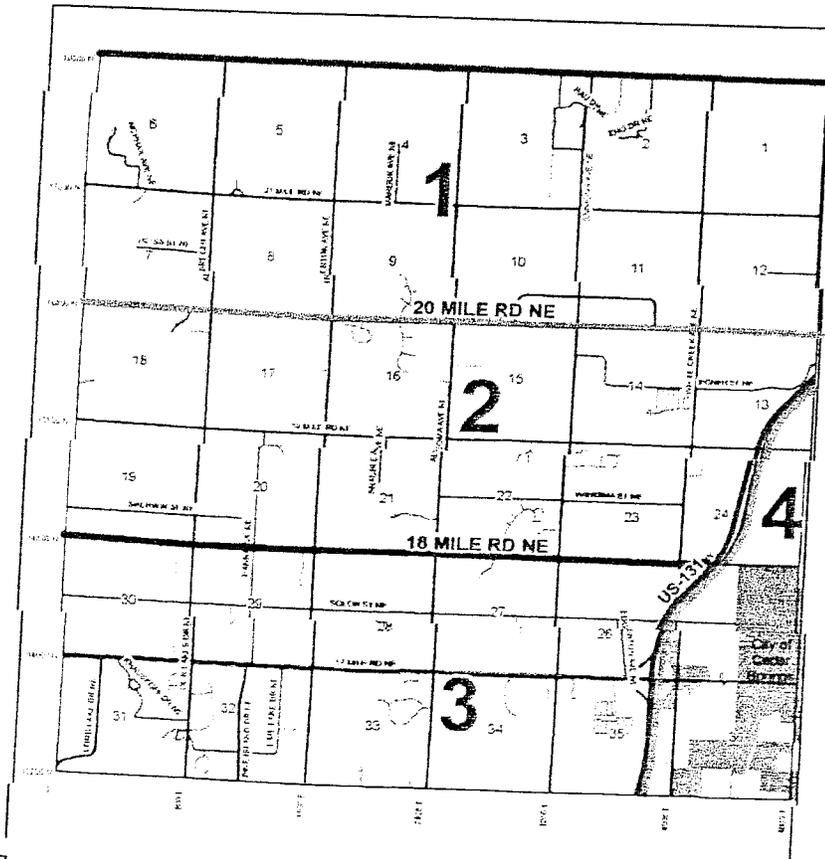
Please take a few minutes over the next few days to complete the questionnaire.

If you would like to stay informed about the effort to update the Comprehensive Plan or participate in the community meetings, check the website at www.Solontownship.org. Planning Commission work sessions are generally the 4th Wednesday of every month at 7:30 p.m. until we have completed the Plan, probably sometime next year.

Please carefully consider the following questions, and thank you for your time and support.

- 1** Referring to the attached map of the township, please indicate in which numbered area you live or own property.

1. Referring to the map of the township below, please indicate in which numbered area you live or own property.



- Area 1
- Area 2
- Area 3
- Area 4

2. What best describes the type of property you own in Solon Township? Check all that apply.

- Vacant land
- Primary residence
- Secondary residence
- Commercial/business
- Rental housing
- Agricultural
- Other (Please Specify) _____

3. What size parcel(s) do you own in Solon Township? Check all that apply.
- acre or less
 - 1.1 to 5.0 acres
 - 5.1 to 10 acres
 - 10.1 to 20 acres
 - 20.1 to 40 acres
 - 40.1 or more
4. How long have you owned property in the township? Select only one.
- 5 years or less
 - 6 to 10 years
 - 11 to 30 years
 - 31 years or more
5. Do you generally support the division of large parcels of land into smaller parcels for single-family dwellings?
- Yes
 - No
6. Currently, how is your drinking water quality?
- Poor
 - Fair
 - Good
7. Currently, how does your drain field function?
- Poor
 - Fair
 - Good
8. In your opinion, what is the primary reason residents locate in Solon Township? Select only one.
- Rural character
 - Proximity to US-131
 - Low taxes
 - Proximity to Grand Rapids
 - Proximity to Lake Michigan

Proximity to Cedar Springs

Other (Please Specify) _____

9. Do you ride a bicycle for recreation?

Yes

No

10. Do you use the Rogue River State Game Area?

Yes

No

11. Would you utilize the proposed Velzy Park at the Township Hall property (ballfields, trails, farmer's market, etc.)?

Yes

No

12. Do you utilize Long Lake Park?

Yes

No

13. Would you utilize the proposed North Country National Scenic Trail (hiking trail)?

Yes

No

14. Do you utilize the White Pine Trail (all-purpose trail)?

Yes

No

15. Should the Township do more to create *outdoor* recreational opportunities for any of the following? Select all that apply.

Playgrounds

Lake and creek access

Biking and hiking trails

Camping

Other (Please Specify) _____

16. Do you think the Township should do more to create *traditional* recreational opportunities such as tennis, basketball, play equipment, ball fields, etc...

Yes

No

17. Should the Township acquire land for future parks and playgrounds?

Yes

No

18. Would you be willing to pay a small millage to provide better recreational opportunities?

Yes

No

19. Presently, the "AR - Agricultural Residential Zoning District" has a minimum lot size of 1.0 acres. Do you think it should be:

Increased

Decreased

Stay the same

20. Presently, the "R-1 - Residential Zoning District" has a minimum lot size of 1 acre. Do you think it should be:

Increased

Decreased

Stay the same

21. Presently, the "R-3 - Lake Front Residential District" has a minimum lot size of 15,000 square feet. Do you think it should be:

Increased

Decreased

Stay the same

22. Do you support increased controls on development to protect water quality in rivers and streams?

Yes

No

23. Which natural features in Solon Township are important to you? Select all that apply.

- Public access to Township Creeks
- Water quality of lakes and creeks
- Protection of drinking water supply
- Access to Lakes
- Other (Please Specify) _____

24. If the township were to consider the creation of a new zoning district called "Low Density Residential" or "Rural Estates", what minimum size lots would you like to see?

- Less than 1 acre
- 1 to 3 acres
- 3 to 5 acres
- 5 to 10 acres

25. In the area where you live, should the following types of new housing be encouraged?

- Single-family homes on 5 acres lots or larger
- Single-family homes on one acre lots or smaller
- Apartments, duplexes or attached condos
- Both housing and commercial development together
- Single-family homes on lots 1 to 5 acres

26. In the area where you live, what best describes your preference for future residential development? Select all that apply.

- Small lots with houses close to the street
- Large wooded lots
- Connected streets rather than dead-ends
- Dead-end private streets with few houses
- Smaller clustered lots with some open space
- Pedestrian trails, sidewalks, bikeways and paths
- Houses set back a long way from the road
- Mixed residential and commercial

27. Would you be in favor of having a gas station or convenience store near where you live?

Yes

No

28. Would you like to see any of the following types of senior citizen housing in the township?
Select all that apply.

Assisted Living

Senior Apartments

Nursing Home

Retirement Community

Other (Please Specify) _____

29. Housing developments with lots clustered to preserve open space, are a good way to protect the rural feel of the township.

Agree

Disagree

30. Accessory buildings should be limited in number and size according to the size of the lot.

Agree

Disagree

31. Would you like to see more aggressive enforcement of zoning violations?

Yes

No

32. Do you have any other comments?



Our Community Doing Business Town Departments

Survey Results for Master Plan

The Master Plan Survey results are in (see below) and not surprising, the response rate was outstanding! The Planning Board mailed out 1,190 surveys and 373 responded as well as 110 who filled out the survey on line; resulting in a total response of 483 residents. The Planning Board appreciates your comments which will provide great insight into the community's opinions covering a wide range of topics. The Planning Board will be using the information contained in the survey to help guide them as they develop an update to the 2002 Master Plan; a major public policy document for the community.

The Master Plan provides a fundamental planning tool to help a community meet the challenge of making sound decisions related to its development. The Master Plan is both a reference and policy document. It contains appropriate maps, charts, and supporting text that present the recommendations of the Planning Board and offers guidelines for community decision makers. By developing coordinated policies within the Master Plan and addressing such topics as future development, transportation, environmental protection, community facilities, and fiscal management, the plan should help a community meet change responsibly, guiding its growth in an orderly, constructive manner.

The Planning Board will continue community outreach efforts as they proceed with the master plan update to ensure the resulting document accurately reflects the community's opinion relative to key land use issues.

Mark J. Fougere, AICP
Town Planner
Town of Henniker

EVENTS AND MEETINGS

- Tucker Free Library Meeting
Announcement & Agenda
02/28/2019 - 5:30pm
Azalea Park/Riverwalk
- 02/28/2019 - 7:00pm
Supervisors of the Checklist
Meeting 3-2-19 11-11:30am
- 03/02/2019 - 11:00am
Hazard Mitigation Committee
Meeting
- 03/04/2019 - 9:00am

[View Calendar](#)

NEWS

- 2019 Town Meeting Warrant/
2018 Town Report
- Opening of Energy Upgrades
Proposals
- Board of Trustees of the Tucker
Free Library Meeting
Announcement

[View all News](#)

Supporting Documents

- [Survey Results, Quantitative Questions - Fall 2013 \(463 KB\)](#)
- [Survey Results, Comments & Opinions - Fall 2013 \(837 KB\)](#)

QUANTITATIVE QUESTIONS

1190 mailed
 483 total responses (41% response rate)
 77% responded via paper
 23% responded via online/digital

Part I - Demographics

1. What is your age group?

a.	18 to 25	8	2%
b.	26 to 35	35	7%
c.	36 to 45	62	13%
d.	46 to 55	126	26%
e.	56 to 65	139	29%
f.	Over 65	111	23%
	Did not respond	2	0%

2. How long have you lived in Henniker?

a.	Less than 5 years	67	14%
b.	5 to 10 years	67	14%
c.	10 to 20 years	117	24%
d.	Over 20 years	226	47%
	Did not respond	6	1%

3. Regarding your residency in Henniker, are you a:

a.	Home owner	445	92%
b.	Renter	18	4%
c.	Other	11	2%
	Did not respond	9	2%

4. How often do you attend the annual Henniker Town Meeting?

a.	Every year	118	24%
b.	Every other year or less	106	22%
c.	Only when there is a major town issue	114	24%
d.	I never attend Henniker Town Meetings	134	28%
	Did not respond	11	2%

5. Is privacy when voting at a Town Meeting an issue for you?

a.	Yes	157	33%
b.	No	238	49%
c.	No opinion	76	16%
	Did not respond	12	2%

QUANTITATIVE QUESTIONS

5a. If you answered "yes" to the previous question, would you be inclined to attend more Town Meetings if you could vote privately on issues that concern you?

a.	Yes	114	24%
b.	No	19	4%
c.	No opinion	23	5%
	Did not respond	327	68%

6. Have you attended or been a participant in any of the

a.	Selectmen Meeting	155	32%
b.	Planning Board Meeting	90	19%
c.	Zoning Board Meeting	79	16%

7. Are you involved in any type of community service

a.	Yes	180	37%
b.	No	283	59%
	Did not respond	20	4%

8. Why do you feel Henniker is a desirable place to live? (Please check all that are important)

a.	Small town/Rural atmosphere	436	90%
b.	Proximity to New Hampshire cities	239	49%
c.	Education system	166	34%
d.	Employment opportunities	21	4%
e.	Effective town government	51	11%
f.	Town services	93	19%
g.	Historical character	226	47%
h.	Business opportunities	26	5%
i.	People/community spirit	271	56%
j.	Town recreational services	100	21%
k.	Privately owned recreational services	42	9%
l.	Scenic beauty/Natural Resources	343	71%
m.	Other	37	8%

9. In your opinion, which statement best characterizes Henniker's growth rate?

a.	Henniker is growing too fast	45	9%
b.	Henniker is not growing fast enough	66	14%
c.	Henniker's growth is realistic in relation to other towns in the area	214	44%
d.	Growth is not an issue in Henniker	74	15%
e.	No opinion	75	16%
	Did not respond	9	2%

QUANTITATIVE QUESTIONS

10. Are you in favor of Henniker trying to encourage commercial/industrial uses (non-residential growth) to broaden its tax base?			
a.	Yes	382	79%
b.	No	55	11%
c.	No opinion	32	7%
	Did not respond	14	3%

10a. If your response was "yes", which of the following commercial enterprises would you like to see more of in Henniker?					
Commercial Enterprise		Like	Dislike	No Opinon	Did not respond
10a.1	Professional offices	321 66%	10 2%	28 6%	124 26%
10a.2	Light industrial uses	280 58%	44 9%	29 6%	130 27%
10a.3	Business franchises (e.g., pharmacy, grocery store, sporting goods store, auto parts store, etc.)	183 38%	115 24%	38 8%	147 30%
10a.4	Restaurants	297 61%	25 5%	36 7%	125 26%
10a.5	Outdoor retailers/recreational rental firms	246 51%	23 5%	68 14%	146 30%
10a.6	Retail businesses	271 56%	35 7%	44 9%	133 28%
10a.7	A major grocery store	164 34%	141 29%	37 8%	141 29%
10a.8	Service businesses (e.g., electrical, plumbing, etc.)	250 52%	25 5%	63 13%	145 30%
10a.9	Home businesses	272 56%	17 4%	56 12%	138 29%
10a.10	Recreational businesses	291 60%	11 2%	41 8%	140 29%
10a.11	Tourism-related businesses (e.g., hotel/motel, Bed & Breakfast, etc.)	288 60%	18 4%	44 9%	133 28%

11. Are you in favor of Henniker trying to encourage diversification of available housing (other than single family homes) to broaden its tax base?			
a.	Yes	219	45%
b.	No	172	36%
c.	No opinion	72	15%
	Did not respond	20	4%

QUANTITATIVE QUESTIONS

11a. If your response was "yes", which of the following types of housing would you like to see in Henniker?				
Housing Type	Like	Dislike	No Opinon	Did not respond
11a.1 Manufactured homes on individual lots	91 19%	64 13%	36 7%	292 60%
11a.2 Two.family duplexes	143 30%	36 7%	20 4%	284 59%
11a.3 Housing for persons over 55 years of age (i.e., an adult community)	188 39%	8 2%	10 2%	277 57%
11a.4 Condominiums	140 29%	35 7%	19 4%	289 60%
11a.5 New apartment buildings	83 17%	75 16%	27 6%	298 62%
11a.6 Cluster developments (single family homes on smaller lots with remaining area as open space)	139 29%	37 8%	18 4%	289 60%
11a.7 Accessory dwelling units/In.law apartments*	164 34%	14 3%	24 5%	281 58%
11a.8 Conversion of large homes into apartments	99 20%	61 13%	36 7%	287 59%

* An accessory dwelling unit/In-law apartment is defined as a separate apartment that is part of a property with an existing single family home.

12. Do you feel that the Town of Henniker has a satisfactory relationship with New England College?			
a.	Yes	260	54%
b.	No	91	19%
c.	No opinion	113	23%
	Did not respond	19	4%

13. Taking into account issues associated with funding, do you feel that the community services currently provided by the Town of Henniker should be:			
a.	Increased	88	18%
b.	Decreased	47	10%
c.	Remain as is	241	50%
d.	No opinion	78	16%
	Did not respond	29	6%

14. Regarding the quality of services already provided by the town, do you feel that the Town of Henniker should:			
a.	Improve the quality of services	91	19%
b.	Cut back on the quality	15	3%
c.	Maintain the current level of quality	272	56%
d.	No opinion	63	13%
	Did not respond	42	9%

QUANTITATIVE QUESTIONS

Part 3 - Conservation/Recreation

16. Do you use the Contoocook River for any of the following activities? If yes, how often?

		Yes, Weekly	Yes, Monthly	Yes, Yearly	No	Did not respond
16a.	Fishing	21 4%	43 9%	77 16%	202 42%	140 29%
16b.	Swimming	20 4%	24 5%	56 12%	227 47%	156 32%
16c.	Hiking	73 15%	83 17%	55 11%	154 32%	191 40%
16d.	Canoeing, kayaking, boating	19 4%	68 14%	88 18%	177 37%	131 27%
16e.	Birding	45 9%	30 6%	20 4%	223 46%	165 34%
16f.	Nature observation	132 27%	69 14%	34 7%	133 28%	115 24%

17. Do you feel the Contoocook River is an important recreational resource for the Town of Henniker?

a.	Yes	416	86%
b.	No	18	4%
c.	No opinion	42	9%
	Did not respond	7	1%

18. Do you feel the Town Forests (there are 3) are an important recreational resource for the Town of Henniker?

a.	Yes	326	67%
b.	No	41	8%
c.	No opinion	99	20%
	Did not respond	17	4%

Part 4 - Transportation

22. In your opinion, what is the general condition of roads and sidewalks in Henniker?

a.	Good	155	32%
b.	Fair	217	45%
c.	Poor	87	18%
d.	No opinion	3	1%
	Did not respond	21	4%

26. Do you have access to broadband internet (DSL, cable) that is adequate for your needs?

a.	Yes	397	82%
b.	No	48	10%
c.	No opinion	25	5%
	Did not respond	13	3%

QUANTITATIVE QUESTIONS

27. At this time, many parts of Henniker do not have high speed broadband internet service. Would you support the Selectmen initiating a town-wide master plan and funding mechanism that would expand high-speed broadband internet service to rural areas of the community, keeping in mind that the service provider may need to add an additional 1 to 2 dollar charge to the current monthly cost paid by existing subscribers in order to provide greater town coverage?

a.	Yes	199	41%
b.	No	155	32%
c.	No opinion	102	21%
	Did not respond	27	6%

Part 5 - Town Issues

28. To help Town Officials direct their efforts to meet the needs of the community and its residents, please provide your opinion on the level of effort that should be directed toward the listed issues.

	Henniker's effort should be:				
	More	Same	Less	No Opinon	Did not respond
28-a. Preservation of farmland	180 37%	205 42%	20 4%	44 9%	34 7%
28-b. Protection of woodlands & wildlife habitat	196 41%	210 43%	21 4%	26 5%	30 6%
28-c. Promotion of commercial/retail growth	248 51%	126 26%	41 8%	24 5%	44 9%
28-d. Encourage the development of light industry	247 51%	102 21%	60 12%	33 7%	41 8%
28-e. Expansion of town forests and conservation	163 34%	197 41%	55 11%	28 6%	40 8%
28-f. Further development of hiking/walking trails	259 54%	135 28%	24 5%	29 6%	36 7%
28-g. Improve access to ponds, rivers and streams	258 53%	139 29%	24 5%	21 4%	41 8%
28-h. Expansion of town water system	61 13%	197 41%	73 15%	107 22%	45 9%
28-i. Expansion of town sewer system	61 13%	189 39%	73 15%	111 23%	49 10%
28-j. Preservation of historic sites & buildings	130 27%	257 53%	36 7%	25 5%	35 7%
28-k. Operation of parks & recreational facilities	171 35%	227 47%	23 5%	25 5%	37 8%
28-l. Economic development	270 56%	132 27%	16 3%	30 6%	35 7%

QUANTITATIVE QUESTIONS

Part 7 - Community Services

30. Please rate each service listed in the table below and in general terms, follow with your opinion regarding the amount of funding the Town should spend on each service.

PART 1		Please "rate" each service.				
		Good	Fair	Poor	No Opinon	Did not respond
a.	Animal control	169 35%	77 16%	36 7%	160 33%	41 8%
b.	Building code enforcement	119 25%	109 23%	43 9%	158 33%	54 11%
c.	Cemetery care	245 51%	66 14%	7 1%	123 25%	42 9%
d.	Fire protection	364 75%	33 7%	4 1%	47 10%	35 7%
e.	Garbage disposal and recycling	331 69%	52 11%	26 5%	41 8%	33 7%
f.	Health regulations and enforcement	130 27%	83 17%	24 5%	202 42%	44 9%
g.	Library	339 70%	54 11%	8 2%	50 10%	32 7%
h.	Natural resource conservation	233 48%	103 21%	10 2%	92 19%	45 9%
i.	Parks & recreation	221 46%	138 29%	25 5%	58 12%	41 8%
j.	Planning regulation administration and	136 28%	119 25%	29 6%	150 31%	49 10%
k.	Police protection	355 73%	57 12%	4 1%	32 7%	35 7%
l.	Rescue/ambulance service	376 78%	21 4%	6 1%	44 9%	36 7%
m.	Road maintenance	181 37%	181 37%	75 16%	12 2%	34 7%
n.	School system	258 53%	104 22%	21 4%	63 13%	37 8%
o.	Snow removal	325 67%	80 17%	18 4%	25 5%	35 7%
p.	Welfare	101 21%	53 11%	43 9%	240 50%	46 10%
q.	Zoning administration & enforcement	117 24%	94 19%	28 6%	193 40%	51 11%

QUANTITATIVE QUESTIONS

PART 2		How much money should the Town spend on each service?				
		More	Same	Less	No Opinon	Did not respond
a.	Animal control	14 3%	235 49%	45 9%	102 21%	87 18%
b.	Building code enforcement	40 8%	189 39%	60 12%	95 20%	99 20%
c.	Cemetery care	14 3%	269 56%	19 4%	89 18%	92 19%
d.	Fire protection	44 9%	267 55%	35 7%	51 11%	86 18%
e.	Garbage disposal and recycling	54 11%	274 57%	22 5%	48 10%	85 18%
f.	Health regulations and enforcement	34 7%	188 39%	36 7%	121 25%	104 22%
g.	Library	75 16%	241 50%	43 9%	41 8%	83 17%
h.	Natural resource conservation	86 18%	192 40%	46 10%	66 14%	93 19%
i.	Parks & recreation	126 26%	188 39%	33 7%	41 8%	95 20%
j.	Planning regulation administration and	28 6%	170 35%	75 16%	99 20%	111 23%
k.	Police protection	57 12%	218 45%	89 18%	35 7%	84 17%
l.	Rescue/ambulance service	58 12%	266 55%	25 5%	45 9%	89 18%
m.	Road maintenance	155 32%	187 39%	24 5%	29 6%	88 18%
n.	School system	70 14%	187 39%	90 19%	52 11%	84 17%
o.	Snow removal	38 8%	288 60%	24 5%	46 10%	87 18%
p.	Welfare	54 11%	114 24%	72 15%	142 29%	101 21%
q.	Zoning administration & enforcement	14 3%	178 37%	72 15%	117 24%	102 21%

PART 1

DEMOGRAPHICS

1. What is your age group?

18-25 26-35 36-45
46-55 56-65 over 65

2. What Zone do you live in? -

a. West of I 196 - E
b. Middle - East of I 196 to 64th St
c. East of 64th St to Twp line

3. Type of property?

a. Vacant land b. Primary Res
c. 2nd Res (summerhome) d. Commercial Business
e. Rental house (Long & Short) f. Ag

g. Are you
or Part time
or Full time
or No time
Resident

4. How long lived in Casco Twp

a. Less 5 yrs b. 5-10 c. 10-15
d. over 10-20 e. over 20

5. Does your Property have:

A. Public Water / Sewer
B. Private Septic & well

PART 3

RECREATION

11

BLUE Star Bike Trail
+ others

Walkable Beach

Improving Access to Lake

PAGE 4

TOWN ISSUES RECREATION

Keep all Section 28 except:

28b - protection of Lakeshore, ~~Woodlands~~ ^{Woodlands} & wild life habitat

28g Improve access to lake, rivers, streams

28h $\left. \begin{array}{l} i \\ j \end{array} \right\}$ combine

28j - preservation of Lakeshore's bluff area

+ Should we have compensation guideline (reparation)
for zoning changes that impact township residents

? creation of business/revenue venues

TOWNSHIP SERVICES

Animal control

A ✓

B ✓

C ✓

d ✓

e ✓

f ✓

g ✓

h ✓

I ✓

J ✓

k ✓

L ✓

M ✓

N ✓

O ✓

P ✓

Q ✓