



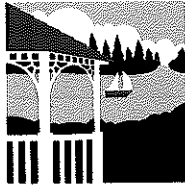
VILLAGE OF PENTWATER

327 South Hancock Street, P.O. Box 622, Pentwater, Michigan 49449
(231) 869-8301 - FAX (231) 869-5120
www.PentwaterVillage.org

Planning Commission Meeting Agenda January 28, 2020 - 6:00 P.M.

1. **Opening** – Welcome, Call to Order, Pledge of Allegiance, and Roll Call.
2. **Approval of Agenda and Minutes**
 - A. Approval of Agenda.
 - B. Approval of Minutes of the:
 1. Regular Meeting held November 19, 2019; and,
 2. Special Meeting held December 12, 2019.
3. **Public Comments**
4. **Public Hearing** – None.
5. **Old Business:**
 - A. Report from the Pentwater Visioning Team – Mark Benner, Chris Conroy, Tom Davis and Paula DeGregorio.
6. **New Business:**
 - A. 2020 Meeting Schedule.
 - B. Joint Meeting with the Pentwater Township Planning Commission – 2020/2040 Pentwater Community Master Plan - Organizational Meeting.
7. **Department/Committee Reports**
 - A. Zoning Administrator – See attached report.
 - B. Zoning Board of Appeals – The ZBA did not meet in December, 2019.
8. **Communications from Planning Commission Members**
9. **Public Comments**
10. **Adjournment**

Next Scheduled Planning Commission Meeting – February 25, 2020 at 6 pm



VILLAGE OF PENTWATER

Planning Commission

ON PENTWATER LAKE AND LAKE MICHIGAN
327 South Hancock Street, P.O. Box 622, Pentwater, Michigan 49449
(231) 869-8301 – FAX (231) 869-5120

Regular Meeting Minutes – November 19, 2019

Chairperson Ron Christians called the regular meeting of the Pentwater Village Planning Commission Meeting to order at 6:00 pm, with the Pledge of Allegiance.

ROLL CALL

Present: Chris Conroy, Bruce Koorndyk and Michelle Angell-Powell, Ron Christians, and Paul Anderson.

Absent: Mark Benner & Kirstin McDonough.

Staff Present: Keith Edwards, Zoning Administrator.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Motion by Angell-Powell, second by Conroy to approve the agenda as presented.
Voice Vote: Aye: 5 Nay: 0 Absent: 2 Motion passed.

APPROVAL OF REGULAR MEETING MINUTES

Motion by Benner, second by McDonough to approve the October 22, 2019 regular meeting minutes as presented.
Voice Vote: Aye: 5 Nay: 0 Absent: 2 Motion passed.

PUBLIC COMMENTS – None.

PUBLIC HEARING – None.

OLD BUSINESS

A. Report from the Pentwater Visioning Team – Chris Conroy.

Chris Conroy stated that the Community Survey closes December 2, and that the results of all three public input efforts would be presented at the December 16, 2019 Town Hall Meeting at the First Baptist Church at 5:30 pm. January 28 The Village Planning Commission will host a joint meeting of the Village and Township Planning Commissions to organize for the 2020/2040 Pentwater Community Master Plan.

B. Complete Streets Design Concept – Carroll & Lowell Streets – Presentation by Fleis & Vandenbrink (F&V).

David Bluhm from F&V provided a summary of the grant funding and timelines for the complete streets project. A recommendation from the Planning Commission to the Services Committee of Village Council is expected in December of 2019. Rick Stout of F&V presented several design concepts for consideration and discussion by the Planning Commission. All proposed improvements along Carroll and Lowell Streets would take place within the existing 66-foot-wide right-of-way (ROW) of each street.

Public Comments

- Bob Sandberg of 38 Hancock Street – agrees that there is not really a parking problem in Pentwater.
- Pat Sanders of 14 Hancock Street – concerned about the loss of green space, more flooding (storm water management problem) and does not like angled parking in front of her house.
- Judy Levich of 55 E, Lowell – had several questions regarding the design concepts.
- Mary Jo Todd of the Lakewood Manufactured Home Park – was concerned that community trees are in trouble, need a millage for tree care and management, values quietness & pedestrian facilities. Sidewalks are in need of repair.
- Rise Rasch of 40 E. Lowell – concerned about angled parking and backing out into traffic with a concern for hitting bicyclists. Traffic flow should look @ traffic counts, sight distance to corners and drainage.

NEW BUSINESS – None.

COMMITTEE/DEPARTMENT REPORTS

A. Zoning Administrator – Mr. Edwards' written report was accepted by the Planning Commission.

B. Zoning Board of Appeals – The ZBA did not meet in October 2019.

COMMUNICATIONS FROM PLANNING COMMISSION MEMBERS – None.

PUBLIC COMMENTS – None.

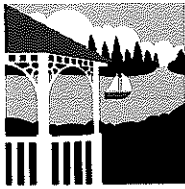
ADJOURNMENT - The meeting was adjourned by Chairperson Ron Christians at 7:30 PM.

Respectfully Submitted,
Keith Edwards, Zoning Administrator

November 29, 2019

Approved by the Village of Pentwater Planning Commission on _____.

DRAFT



VILLAGE OF PENTWATER

Planning Commission

ON PENTWATER LAKE AND LAKE MICHIGAN
327 South Hancock Street, P.O. Box 622, Pentwater, Michigan 49449
(231) 869-8301 – FAX (231) 869-5120

Special Meeting Minutes – December 12, 2019

Chairperson Ron Christians called the special meeting of the Pentwater Village Planning Commission Meeting to order at 6:00 pm, with the Pledge of Allegiance.

ROLL CALL

Present: Chris Conroy, Bruce Koorndyk, Michelle Angell-Powell, Ron Christians, Paul Anderson, Mark Benner & Kirstin McDonough.

Absent: None

Staff Present: Keith Edwards, Zoning Administrator.

Guests: David Bluhm & Rick Stout of the Fleis & Vandenbrink engineering firm.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Motion by Anderson, second by McDonough to approve the agenda as presented.

Voice Vote: Aye: 7 Nay: 0 Absent: 0 Motion passed.

PUBLIC COMMENTS – None.

PUBLIC HEARING – None.

OLD BUSINESS

A. Complete Streets Design Concept – Carroll & Lowell Streets – Presentation by Fleis & Vandenbrink (F&V).

David Bluhm and Rick Stout from F&V provided revised conceptual drawing for creating complete streets along Carroll Street from Sixth Street to Lowell Street and Lowell Street from Carroll to the beach. A recommendation from the Planning Commission to the Services Committee of Village Council is expected as a result of this meeting. Rick Stout of F&V presented several revised design concepts based on the public's comments and Planning Commission discussion from the November 19, 2019 meeting for consideration and discussion by the Planning Commission today. All proposed improvements along Carroll and Lowell Streets would take place within the existing 66-foot-wide right-of-way (ROW) of each street.

Public Comments

- Cathy Crumb of 94 W. Lowell – concerned about turning movements @ Dover, Concord, Hancock & Lowell Streets.
- Paula DeGregorio of 270 Sands asked a whether the Lowell Street multi-use pathway was moving south along Carroll Street?
- Rise Rasch of 40 E. Lowell – asked if the multi-use pathway along Lowell was 10 feet wide?
- Bob Sandberg of 38 Hancock Street – asked whether the throat of the intersection at Lowell and Hancock be improved with the pedestrian bump-outs?
- Rise Rasch of 40 E. Lowell – likes the concept of no parking on the north side of Lowell east of Hancock Street. She is concerned about a small strip of green space remaining when the multi-use pathway goes in and the maintenance of the multi-use pathway during winter.
- Pat Sanders of 14 Hancock Street – concerned about the loss of green space, more flooding (storm water management problem) and does not like angled parking in front of her house.
- Judy Levich of 55 E, Lowell – had several questions regarding the design concepts.
- Mary Jo Todd of the Lakewood Manufactured Home Park – was concerned that community trees are in trouble, need a millage for tree care and management, values quietness & pedestrian facilities. Sidewalks are in need of repair.

Motion by Benner, second by Koorndyk: The Planning Commission recommends approval for the following improvements within the Lowell Street right-of-way from Carroll Street to the beach for:

- a. The proposed drop-off and turn around lanes within the cul-de-sac;
- b. Golf cart parking on the north side of the street between the cul-de-sac and Medford Street (State Park entrance);
- c. Multi-use pathway on the north side of Lowell Street;
- d. Add a cross-walk across Medford Street (State Park entrance);
- e. No on-street automobile parking on either side of Lowell Street from Medford Street (State Park Entrance) to Mears Street;

- f. Parallel automobile parking on both sides of Lowell Street from Mears Street to Hancock Street;
- g. No on-street parking on the north side of Lowell from Hancock Street to Carroll Street with parallel parking on the south side of Lowell Street and,
- h. Final design to come later with possible locations for loading zones.

Voice Vote: Aye: 7 Nay: 0 Absent: 0 Motion passed.

Motion by Benner, second by Anderson: The Planning Commission recommends approval for the following improvements within the Carroll Street right-of-way from Sixth Street Lowell Street for:

- a. Two ten (10) foot wide drive lanes with bicycle sharrows;
- b. Parallel parking on both sides of Carroll Street from Sixth to Lowell;
- c. No Multi-use pathway; and,
- d. Five (5) foot wide sidewalks on both sides of Carroll Street;

Voice Vote: Aye: 7 Nay: 0 Absent: 0 Motion passed.

Motion by Benner, second by Koorndyk: The Planning Commission recommends approval for the following improvements along the Numbered Streets between Hancock and Carroll Streets:

- a. Alternate angled & parallel parking on opposite sides of each street, where appropriate; and,
- b. Return all numbered streets to two-way travel.

NEW BUSINESS – None.

COMMITTEE/DEPARTMENT REPORTS

- A. Zoning Administrator** – Mr. Edwards’ written report was accepted by the Planning Commission.
- B. Zoning Board of Appeals** – The ZBA did not meet in October 2019.

COMMUNICATIONS FROM PLANNING COMMISSION MEMBERS – None.

PUBLIC COMMENTS:

Pat Sandberg of 38 Hancock Street recommended the Village consider a shuttle service to large parking lots like churches and the school during the summer.

Paula DeGregorio of 270 Sands recommended parking all on-street parking spaces appropriately.

Bob Sandberg of 38 Hancock Street asked for consideration for alternative transportation.

Rise Rasch of 40 E. Lowell stated that parking downtown should be considered with future land uses.

ADJOURNMENT - The meeting was adjourned by Chairperson Ron Christians at 8:15 pm.

Respectfully Submitted,
Keith Edwards, Zoning Administrator

December 13, 2019

Approved by the Village of Pentwater Planning Commission on _____.

DRAFT

**RESOLUTION TO SCHEDULE THE
PENTWATER PLANNING COMMISSION
2019 MEETING SCHEDULE**

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the 2020 meeting schedule shall be at 6:00 PM on the fourth Tuesday of the Month, specifically:

January 28, 2020
February 25, 2020
March 24, 2020
April 28, 2020
May 26, 2020
June 23, 2020
July 28, 2020
August 25, 2020
September 22, 2020
October 27, 2020
November 24, 2020
December 22, 2020

MEMORANDUM

To: Pentwater Township and Village of Pentwater Planning Commissioners

From: Keith Edwards, Zoning Administrator

Date: January 16, 2020

Subject: **Joint Planning Commission meeting January 28 2019
Organization of the Master Plan Process and Steering Committee
Pentwater Community Master Plan 2020-2040**

Enclosed, please find the agenda packet for the joint Planning Commission meeting of January 28, 2019 to begin at 6:00 pm. Since this is a regular meeting date of the Village Planning Commission, I have talked with both Chairpersons and we agreed to ask Ron Christians, Chairperson of the Village Planning Commission to be the Chairperson for this joint meeting.

I have sent this agenda packet out early in order to give Planning Commissioners more time to review the enclosed "Chapter 10 – The Master Plan". This is an excerpt from a Planning & Zoning Guide produced by the Michigan Townships Association (MTA). I selected this document, because it is the most recently updated document among those available from the various government and trade associations in Michigan such as the MTA, MML, MAP, Planning & Zoning News and MSU. The Master Plan requirements are essentially the same among Cities, Townships, and Villages.

Please review this document prior to the joint meeting.

I will have a more detailed memo sent out to you next week via email regarding what I believe we will be able to accomplish at the Joint meeting on January 28, 2020 at 6pm at your regular meeting place, 327 S. Hancock Street.

See you then.

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)).

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 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.

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:

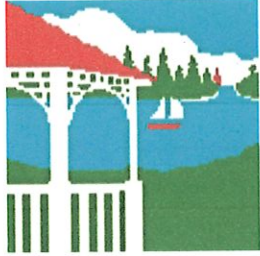
1. Define the issue. What are its elements?
2. Is the issue controlled by state or federal regulation? If so, are those regulations sufficient to respond to local concerns and needs? Will state or federal regulation permit the township to be more restrictive in controlling the issue?
3. How does the 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.



VILLAGE OF PENTWATER

ON PENTWATER LAKE AND LAKE MICHIGAN
327 South Hancock Street, P.O. Box 622, Pentwater, Michigan 49449
(231) 869-8301 FAX (231) 869-5120
www.Pentwatervillage.org

ZONING ADMINISTRATOR'S REPORT January 7, 2020

The following is a summary of activity conducted by the Zoning Administrator in December 2019.

Code Enforcement – Nothing to report at this time.

Planning Commission

The Planning Commission cancelled the regular meeting scheduled for December 24, 2019. However, they did hold a special meeting on December 12, 2019 listen to a presentation of the Complete Streets Cross-section Design Concepts for Lowell and Carroll Streets from Fleis & Vandenbrink Engineers. At that meeting the Planning Commissioners passed the following motions:

- a. To accept the conceptual design of Lowell Street from Carroll to the beach, with final design to come at a later date which may include possible loading zones;
- b. To accept the conceptual design of Carroll Street from Lowell Street to Sixth Street; and,
- c. To accept the conceptual design of the numbered streets between Lowell Street and Sixth Street with alternating parallel and angled parking where appropriate and return all of those streets to two-way travel.

Zoning Board of Appeals - The Zoning Board of Appeals did not meet in December.

Zoning Permits - Zero Zoning Permits were issued in December, 2019, we issued 43 for the year, eleven more than in 2018. A complete summary will be forwarded for the February 2020 Council Meeting.

Other – The Vision Team held a Town Hall meeting on Monday, December 16, 2019 at 5:30 pm at the First Baptist Church to summarize all of this year's public input for the Master Planning process. To my surprise, the meeting was attended by over 130 people to hear the results that resulted in the following community themes that the public would like to have addressed:

- **Affordable housing choices for all stages of life**
- **Address short-term rentals in single-family neighborhoods**
- **High Speed Internet Service throughout the community**
- **Too short retail season – seasonal economy**
- **Lack of basic goods and services for residents**
- **Infrastructure, transportation, internet improvements**
- **Continue/greater collaboration across all agencies and organization throughout the whole community**

A joint meeting of the Pentwater Township and Pentwater Village Planning Commissions is scheduled for Tuesday, January 28, 2019 at 6 pm where we will discuss a draft outline for master plan content and process.

Sincerely,

Keith J. Edwards

Keith Edwards
Zoning Administrator

WMSRDC
WEST MICHIGAN SHORELINE
REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION

January 3, 2020

Keith Edwards
Village of Pentwater and Pentwater Township
327 S. Hancock St.
Pentwater MI, 49449

Dear Mr. Edwards,

I'm pleased to notify you that Golden Township has successfully updated the Golden Township Master Plan. The Golden Township Board officially adopted the Plan at its December 10, 2019 meeting.

Thank you for your time and cooperation throughout the planning process. The Golden Township Planning Commission appreciated and carefully considered the comments submitted by the Pentwater Township Planning Commission.

The Golden Township Master Plan is available to view and download at <https://wmsrdc.org/publications/>.

Sincerely,



Stephen Carlson
Program Manager



TOWNSHIP OF WEARE
OCEANA COUNTY, MI
6295 N. 88TH AVENUE
HART, MI 49420



January 9, 2020

Paul Anderson, Planning Commission Secretary
Village of Pentwater Planning Commission
327 S. Hancock Street
P.O. Box 622
Pentwater, Michigan 49449

RECEIVED

JAN 13 2020

Village of Pentwater

By: 

RE: Notice of Planning

Dear Mr. Anderson,

The Weare Township Planning Commission will be developing a Comprehensive Plan. The purpose of this letter is to advise you of this activity and to invite your cooperation, comments, and participation in our process pursuant to Section 39 of the Michigan Planning Enabling Act (Act 33 of 2008), as amended.

Weare Township intends to distribute drafts of the plan in digital format.

Thank you for your interest.

Sincerely,



Kathy Walicki, Secretary
Weare Township Planning Commission

Email: wearetpw@frontier.com Phone: 231-873-0144
Township Hall Physical Address: 6506 N. Oceana Dr. Hart, MI
Board Meetings: 2nd Monday of each month at 7:30 p.m.