

**Solon Township Planning Commission**  
**October 6, 2020**

The Solon Township Planning Commission held a meeting on October 6, 2020 at the Solon Township Hall. Chairman, Steve Morgan called the meeting to order at 7:04 p.m.. The Pledge of Allegiance and a moment of silence were observed.

Present were Steve Morgan, Meg Paxton, Andy Romzek, Steve Yoder, Al Laskey, Todd Yeomans and Michelle Wilkes.

Also present were Tim Cypher, STZA, Drew Leonardi, Charlie Smith, Karen Smith, Corey Flaska, Judy Robinson, Bob Robinson, Samantha VanderVlucht, Mary O'Neill and Mark Palinko. There were also 7 guest attending via Zoom.

**Minutes:** Motion made by Al Laskey and supported by Todd Yeomans to approve the September 1, 2020 meeting minutes as presented. Motion carried 7-0.

**Agenda:** Steve Morgan read through the Agenda for those on Zoom. Motion made by Steve Yoder and supported by Al Laskey to approve the Agenda as presented. Motion carried 7-0.

**Correspondence:** Tim Cypher received a letter from Corey Flaska, all PC members were provided the letter via email.

**Public comment:**

- 1) Samantha VanderVlucht was able to confirm that there will be 11 separate buildings going up in Long Lake Township across the road from her home. The buildings will have separate owners as well as separate designs. She has also spoke with three different farmers in the last month and all of them are looking for land to expand their operations, industrial parks will ruin that. She would also like clarification of the "M 72 corridor".
- 2) Mary O'Neill reviewed the fact that the PC was approached by Bob Robinson with a rezoning request for 20 acres of his property when there was property on the same side of Lautner Rd. that was already appropriately zoned for the use that he has in mind. Why expand B2 if appropriately zoned land is not utilized?
- 3) Mark Palinko stated that it would be a mistake to rezone the land, land does not get recycled back to green. We need to utilize smart design, it makes little sense to turn it into concrete.
- 4) Judy Robinson stated that she and her husband did their homework before purchasing the land on Lautner Road and yes it was a business decision. They were also aware that a request to rezone may or may not be approved. The Robinson's do not feel that this would be spot zoning and yes there is a need for more storage building in the area.
- 5) Doug Fierberg pointed out that several members of the PC made references to what sets us apart during last month's meeting, but he pointed out that no amount of buffering would ever be able to undo what is happening across the street and what Bob Robinson is proposing. People are fleeing cities looking for exactly what Solon Township has to offer (land). Just because someone has made a business investment purchasing Ag land knowing that it may not be rezoned and having options to develop that land within the existing zoning. Look at Jacob's that would fit the property with the existing zoning. Yes, he understands the Robinson's perspective,



he knows a lot of people who have investments like that but there is a big difference between what Bob & Judy are asking to do and what Corey is asking to do. Corey's project would create jobs for residents in this Township as well as possibly provide homes for residents of this Township. The Robinson proposal is going to do nothing, after the pole buildings are built they will be used to store other people's "junk" and those sorts of things. The land will sit fallow while that happens and that is a great investment for people's portfolios. No management needed and it would not create any jobs. Protecting the natural character of the Township in the future is what people are flocking to.

6) Judy Robinson sees a need for more storage in the area, would you rather see people's "junk" sitting out in their yards? The proposed development would promote a tax base for the Township. The gateway to Leelanau County is at M 72 & M 22 not on M 72. The proposed buildings would not be an eyesore it will fulfill a need. Maybe in the future the front 10 acres could be developed into Ag related businesses.

7) Samantha VanderVlucht wanted everyone to know that the Iris Farm has sold and the new owners plan to expand business there.

8) Mark Palinko stated that the gateway is Elmwood Township, for us in Solon Township that is our gateway and we have control of it.

**Conflict of Interest:** None

**Reports:**

a) Steve Yoder gave a brief review of the September 10 Township Board meeting, it was decided to wait until Spring to install the new playground equipment, Jim Lautner is checking into getting rid of the recycling center and a settlement has been reached in the Flynn/M & E case (more fencing).

b) Parks & Rec.- nothing

c) ZBA - nothing

d) ZA - busy month, Flynn settlement, last vacant 12 acres in B2 is under contract and an update on violations. Tim will email his report.

**Public Hearing:** none

**New Business:** none

**Unfinished Business:**

A) Master Plan review per Township Board request - M 72 corridor: Tim emailed the PC members the Findings of Facts worksheet, a comparison of the two proposed projects as well as a correspondence letter from Corey Flaska.

Master Plan Designation - Amend Future Land Use Map?

M.W. has a lot of thoughts, many things could work in the corridor. I would like to hear from those three farmers themselves.

Tim C. pointed out that it was never the intent of the PC to develop all of the land from Lautner Rd. to Solon Rd.

M.W. asked if this is an all or nothing decision?



Tim C. stated no it is not, remember that high density residential does not require any permits. T.Y. pointed out that eventually we are going to have to look at the zoning in the entire Township.

S.M. has never agreed that we should be looking at this situation without reviewing the Master Plan first. The first three pages of the Master Plan point out that it is a 20 year vision and it is to be used by the PC as a guide and that it talks about preserving the natural resources in the Township. The vision statement indicates that most of the residents want the Township to grow and provide jobs but also to preserve the character of the Township. Nobody wants the entire corridor developed but one project leads to another and so on. Steve wants to review the Master Plan first and then take a look.

A. R. has been thinking alot about the term "keeping the rural character" as well as all of the other residents of the Township that we haven't heard from (3000). Andy showed the Future Land Use Map from the Master Plan (pg. 32) pink represents B2, very little to almost no pink on the map, looks like we are preserving the rural character. The two proposed projects are not going to make a huge difference, we need to provide for the whole Township. Storage buildings and businesses would benefit residents as well as visitors. He also understands the impact to the neighbors but if Samantha's property value is going to go down because of what is happening in Long Lake Township developing on the same side of the road is not going to make that much more difference.

A L. asked how many lots would be on the proposed 20 acres of Bob's. Bob indicated a max of 16. Al also asked how many businesses are in his existing development? We never really got a clear answer on this. Al agrees with Andy.

T.Y pointed out that the Master Plan conflicts itself, growth vs. conservation. If we amend the Future Land Use Map for the corridor area then we will need to work on the Township as a whole. Robinson is asking to build on 20 acres but he could build on all 40 with high density residential, we need to be aware of what could happen if the zoning is left as is or do we want to have control? What would happen to Samantha's property value then. Corey has alot more property and could potentially put alot more houses than Bob ever could.

Tim reminded everyone to look at this as a whole and think about B1 uses as well as B2.

S. Y. reminded everyone that the Township Board wants us to look at this a whole not just the two proposed areas. He doesn't have a problem amending the Future Land Use map as long as the areas can be properly screened where we do rezone. Some areas will be easy to screen while others will be more difficult, we need to be thoughtfull of passers by as well as neighbors. He is open to hear areas that the PC members think rezoning could occur.

M.P. sees both sides of this discussion, she is a business owner and this is her neighborhood, but if we want to survive change is necessary. Meg struggles with the Robinson proposal, it is what we hear (lite noise) not just what we see. The two proposals are different situations and it is like comparing apples to oranges.

M.W. we need to be thoughtfull if we amend.

Public comment:

Mark Palinko: What is the typical landscape requirement on a one acre parcel? Before you make a rash decision you need to have an ordinance with alot of teeth in it regarding buffers.

Judy Robinson pointed out the two 10 acre lots not being considered for rezoning, those could actually be considered a buffer.



Mary O'Neill pointed out that there were 200 people at the Public Forum and most spoke against the rezoning and the population of the Township is only 1700 so stop looking for the other 3000 people cause they aren't there. She not sure how many on the PC are elected but you better remember the elections are coming.

Samantha VanderVlucht: The Master Plan is to used by the PC for direction, she thinks the PC's thoughts are on Industrial growth. Long Lake Township is a warning, the corridor is the entire length of M 72 not just our area. To develop some areas would be spot zoning.

Doug Fierberg: The Township has no standards regarding buffering. Judy already stated that the front 10 acres were not going to stay fallow. The PC's version of buffering is not what the Robinson's have in mind.

Corey Flaska: He has attended many meetings in the past year and believes that not as many people oppose his project like they do the Robinson's.

Steve Morgan pointed out that now that the Findings of Facts are complete we have finished what the Township Board asked of us.

Tim C. - The Township Board is looking for recommendations to amend/not amend the Future Land Use Map. We need to take a look at our existing ordinance and solidify the screening requirements.

Steve Morgan asked if the PC has the authority to dictate how much buffering is required per site?

Tim C. yes you do and there is a statement in the ordinance to cover that. We require a landscape plan and that includes screening and buffering.

Motion made by Andy Romzek and supported by Todd Yeomans to propose to change the Future Land Use Map to include more commercial zoning along the M 72 corridor.

Paxton - yes

Romzek - yes

Yoder - yes

Morgan - no

Laskey - yes

Yeomans - yes

Wilkes - yes

Motion carried 6-1

Steve Morgan asked other than the two proposed rezonings is there other areas that the PC has considered yet?

Tim Cypher pointed out that is up to the Township Board we are just the recommending body.

Steve Yoder stated he wouldn't support any type of rezoning at the 651/72 area, only other commercial is near Lautner Road and Grumpy's.

Al L. pointed out that there is quite a long stretch of the corridor in Solon Township.

Tim Cypher asked the PC to take into account the two proposed sites, there is no reason to look at anymore than has been asked.

Steve Yoder stated the Flaska proposal would be alot easier to screen than the Robinson site (he is hesitant about this one).

Meg would like to see how it would even be possible to screen the Robinson proposal.

Steve Yoder pointed out that it would be possible but would take a really long time.

Tim Cypher stated that when you screen it is best to do it closest to the point of where people

are going to be looking from. The PC does not look at the economics to the owner.

Todd asked if we could separate these two proposals?

Tim Cypher stated it is up to the PC to decide on the approach to amending the Future Land Use Map. We could be vague or hone in on specific properties.

Steve Morgan felt it doesn't need to be specific.

Todd wanted to do them separately.

Steve Morgan asked if we vote to amend certain parcels tonight then can we say no more until the Master Plan is reviewed.

Separate the two proposals:

Wilkes - yes

Yeomans - yes

Laskey - yes

Yoder - yes

Romzek - yes

Paxton - yes

Morgan - yes

Motion made by Andy Romzek and supported by Todd Yeomans to recommend the 35 acre Flaska proposal be rezoned from Ag/Con to B1.

Paxton - yes

Romzek - yes

Yoder - yes

Morgan - no - only due to the need to review entire Master Plan

Laskey - yes

Yeomans - yes

Wilkes - yes

Motion carried 6-1.

Motion made by Todd Yeomans and supported by Al Laskey to recommend the 20 acre Robinson proposal be rezoned from (not prime farmland) Ag/Con to B2.

Yeomans - no

Laskey - yes

Morgan - no

Yoder - no

Romzel - no

Paxton - no

Wilkes - no

Motion failed 6-1.

**B) Parks & Rec rep - no PC members interested, try to fill it from community.**

**ZA/PC comment:** none

**Public comment:**

Samantha asked if the idea of putting future rezoning requests on hold was part of the motion.

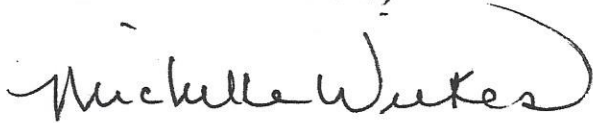
**This discussion will be put on the Agenda for November.**

Corey Flaska thanked everybody, he knows this has been very difficult.

Doug Fireberg would like to be put on the Agenda for November to provide information/contacts for affordable housing.

Meeting adjourned at 9:06 p.m. by Steve Morgan.

**NEXT MEETING IS SCHEDULED FOR NOVEMBER 4, 2020 (PLEASE NOTE THIS IS ON WEDNESDAY)**

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Michelle Wilkes". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large loop at the end.

Michelle Wilkes  
Recording Secretary