

Bridgewater Township

Planning Commission Minutes of Special Meeting – January 30, 2006

Location: Bridgewater Township Hall, 10990 Clinton Road, Clinton, MI

1. Call to Order Acting Chair Glenn Burkhardt called the meeting to order at 7 PM

2. Roll Call Present: Mike Bisco, Glenn Burkhardt, Dave Faust, Glen Finkbeiner, Mark Iwanicki, Amy Riley, Jim Tice and Dave Woods
Also present: Douglas Parr, Trustee, Cynthia Carver, Clerk, Wanda Fish, Administrative Assistant, Bill Swaney, Joanna Rasmussen, Gerald Marion, Alvin Wahl, Carlos Acevedo, Martin Way, Lorrie McCormick, Grant Howard, Carol Peacock, Steve Marsh, Vicki Marsh, Dennis Wilkin, Dale Vershum, Gretchen Barr

Chair asked that people step forward to comment and give their names. He also thanked Gretchen Barr for her work on the survey and welcomed Jim Tice who has been ill.

3. Agenda Motion: Finkbeiner, second by Riley: Accept the agenda as approved.
Motion adopted unanimously.

4. Public Comments – None

5. Master Plan

Gretchen Barr presented a slide show of the results of the survey of Bridgewater's property owners and registered voters. She provided a summary of comments. Noted that instead of mailing one survey to each household, had mailed to each listed voter and property owner, including those at the same address. This is a change from the 1990 and 2000 surveys, made because people said they did not necessarily agree. One possible result is that more women than men responded, a switch from 2000.

A copy of the slide show and comments are attached to the record. A short summary of the presentation follows:

- Property owners who are not residents hold different attitudes than those who are residents.
- Registered voters and residents hold the same attitudes.
- People with larger parcels have different attitudes and those who have held property longer show different attitudes.
- The gross response rate was 37%.
- Respondents' mean age was 51 – 52.
- "Baby boomers" purchased land about 10 years ago.
- Trend that people buy property, then within a year, 55% become residents, within five years, 82% become residents.
- People who are buying property in Bridgewater appear to be planning to live here.
- Within the last 10 years, people are coming predominantly from Saline, Ypsilanti and Ann Arbor to live in Bridgewater.
- 24% of residents are retired, and 30% of non-resident property owners are retired.

Residential attitudes

- 91% of residents said they live in Bridgewater because of the natural and rural environment, an increase of 6% since the 2000 survey.
- 66% said the natural/rural was the most important reason they lived in Bridgewater. The next highest identified was close to family and friends at 13%.
- People do business primarily in Clinton and Ann Arbor, but there is a shift from Adrian and Tecumseh to Saline from 2000 to 2005.
- 28% live on 20 or more acres, and 25% live on 2 – 5 acres. 63% of residents live on five or more acres.
- Large parcel tend to be owned by older people who have owned the property for a long period.

Attitudes towards Growth

- In 1990, 20% thought residential growth was much too fast, in 2000 29% and 30% in 2005.
- Non-resident property owners were less likely to see residential growth as much too fast, at 22%, vs. 31% for residents.
- The same split between residents and non-residents shows up in attitudes towards industrial growth and commercial growth.

Lot size preference

- All respondents indicate a slight preference for two acre or fewer lots, at 29% to 25% favoring 5 acres. 54% of registered voters prefer lot sizes of five or more, while 18% of non-resident owners prefer lot sizes of five or more.
- People living on a one acre or less lot prefer a two acre lot.
- The majority of residents live on two to five acre parcels and prefer that size. People generally tend to prefer that lot sizes reflect what they already have.
- When asked how single-family residential development should occur, respondents indicated they did not want a suburban type development.
- More people want either small lots in cluster developments or lots on five acre parcels than want lots of two acres.
- Overwhelmingly, people want preservation of open space/farmland as single family or multi-family development occurs.
- The 2000 and 2005 surveys were consistent in that people want residential development placed in areas already developed, such as Clinton or Manchester.
- From 2000 to 2005, people were also consistent in wanting commercial and industrial development in Manchester or Clinton. However, fewer people in 2005 vs 2000 wanted commercial or industrial development in Bridgewater Hamlet (6% drop).
- The number of farmers dropped 5% from 2000 to 2005. 21% of parcels of 100 or more farmed acres are owned by non-residents.
- The most important reason people want to live in Bridgewater is owning land, followed by affordable housing, agriculture and less population.
- Privacy, less population, and agriculture were the three most identified reasons for living in Bridgewater.

- When asked what needs protection most, residents and voters cited groundwater and then farmland. Non-residents indicated less concern about either resource.
- Asked about adequacy of services – police, fire, roads, traffic, schools and township – the results from the 2000 and 2005 surveys were generally within the same range.
- When asked to rank the most important goal for the township, respondents indicated preservation of rural character as most critical, followed by support for agriculture.
- Respondents indicated willingness to support preservation of farms and natural features, with a mean of \$13.80/month. Registered voters indicated support at a mean of \$14.92/month.

D. Review Current Master Plan Assumptions

Chair Burkhardt said a primary focus in the review of the Master Plan should be whether or not it is defensible. Where is it open to challenge? Does the response indicate we need to rethink how we plan? It appears that people with larger tracts of land may want to develop those. At the same time, it also appears that people do want preservation and are willing to support it financially. We also need a level of diversity because without it, there is more risk of challenge. Need to focus on the tradeoff between development and preservation.

Joanna Rasmussen commented that some preservation based on the historic Sauk trail work would be very appropriate. The visual stretch between Saline and Clinton is important and steps should be taken to retain it through planning. Not suggesting that saying no development at all, but need to focus on where and what it looks like in the context of the community.

Woods: Believes the current plan is good, but should be reviewed to be sure it can withstand legal challenges.

Steve Marsh asked if the Township needed to be as prepared for challenges as more urban areas that have different soils. Glenn Burkhardt said that you see more willingness to install private wastewater and water treatment plants to facilitate development. Not as much a deterrent, need to be cognizant of changing technology.

Doug Parr: What is “rural?”

Intensive discussion about what people mean when they say they want the Township to retain rural character. Agreement that “rural” is a term that means different things to different people. Suggestion that survey respondents had somewhat defined rural on slides 43, 44 and 45 when they identified what is important to them, such as owning land, affordable housing, an agricultural environment and privacy.

Jim Tice brought up the need to educate people, including the farming community, about the PDR program.

Dennis Wilkin and Doug Parr exchanged viewpoints regarding the need for farmers to ask the local government for permission to enter the PA 116 state program. Wilkin said they should not have to ask and Parr explained it was a state requirement and that the Township Board always approved the requests. Lorrie McCormick asked if the Township can build on what some other communities are doing, five years ahead of us on planning and development.

Burkhardt: Some communities decided years ago they would have development and planned for it actively. It also allowed them to manage the development.

Parr: Asks if we can have analysis of how that has affected the financials. Issue of service needs, costs and revenue.

Carlos Acevedo: States that he believes that tax revenue flow is positive for communities that encourage growth.

Joanna Rasmussen pointed out that people are also moving away from such development. Need to be aware that enhanced transportation corridors will be coming to this area and will add to development pressure. Need to plan before that point is reached.

Steve Marsh: Issue of private treatment plants becoming a burden on the township. Additional problem of one acre lots not having long-term space for septic field and viable well water. Lodi Township problems.

Burkhardt: Systems now have to have escrow accounts for operation, maintenance and replacement of the system. The master deeds for those projects reflect that property owners in the project area are solely responsible for all costs involved in maintaining/replacing the plants. Master deeds provide for protection of other taxpayers. Marsh said that general revenue is still used to police the systems.

6. Amendment to Zoning Ordinance Section 1442

Burkhardt explained that he had come across a reference in 1442 back to Ordinance 25, which was replaced with a new Ordinance Extraction Ordinance. Want to focus the language of 1442 more specifically. Would like to deal with this soon. Township Attorney Lucas prepared the draft language before you, and there is also a sheet that tracks the changes.

Motion: Woods, second by Iwanicki: Accept the language as drafted for public hearing at the March 13, 2006 meeting. Motion passed unanimously.

7. Public Comments

Lorrie McCormick said she had a petition for people to sign if they would see her after the meeting.

8. Move to adjourn: Woods, second by Riley. Meeting was adjourned at 9:38 PM.