



Geauga County Planning Commission
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March 3, 2021 SPECIAL MEETING MINUTES

1. Pledge of Allegiance

Chairman Charles Stevens called the March 3, 2021 special meeting of the Geauga County Planning Commission to order at 7:35 a.m. at 470 Center Street, Building 1-C, City of Chardon. Following the Pledge of Allegiance, the roll was called by Maria Palmisano, Planner I, and the following members were present. A quorum was obtained.

2. Roll Call

Members present: Charles Stevens, Timothy Lennon, James McCaskey, Gary Neola, Caterina Cocca-Fulton, and Walter Claypool.

Staff Present: Linda Crombie (Planning Director) and Maria Palmisano (Planner I)

Note: James Dvorak arrived at 7:40 a.m. and Dennis Bergansky arrived at 7:42 a.m.

Members absent: Chester Miller and Ralph Spidalieri.

Others Present: Emil Lizniansky (Envision Group LLC.), Ryan Smalley (Envision Group LLC.), and James MacNeal.

3. Discussion On The Geauga County General Plan Update

Mr. Stevens asked about when a draft would be provided and that the executive summary is hard to get arms around without a draft.

Mr. Claypool stated that this is not a plan. A plan has findings that we should be aware of and the board creates recommendations, not the consultant. There needs to be a discussion on policy about NOACA. Where is the data to suggest that the county needs more senior housing? Young people moving into the county are replacing older residents. It is not Envision's role to give the county the answers, but to enable a better decision making process.

Mr. Lizniansky replied that there will be consensus on the draft format in about a month and that the presented recommendations are based on the data that has been provided at each meeting up to this point.

Mr. Claypool stated that he sees no listed benefits of large lot zoning in the plan. He sees a push for 800 square foot apartments and electric cars.

Mr. Lizniansky replied that Geauga is a rural setting, and people want it to remain that way. The plan does not talk about windmills and electric cars, but five acre minimum zoning has been discussed but not exactly encouraged in the plan.

Mr. Stevens added that there has to be a justification in the plan for large lot zoning. The county does not have water and sewer in most places, or the right types of soil and amount of space to hold home septic systems on smaller lots.

Mr. Neola suggested figuring out what will attract young people to come to Geauga and setting a goal to get them here. Mr. Lizniansky replied that he would follow up with some data points on that topic.

Mr. McCaskey asked how the schools would be incorporated into the plan and if there could be a more extensive profile on school rankings and community facilities.

Ms. Crombie added that she had been working on a list of apartments in the community and will hopefully present it to PC later this year.

Natural Resources

Mr. Claypool suggested an initiative to help educate people about conservation easements. If someone is truly interested in conservation, they do not need an easement for conservation purposes. The county should develop a strategy to encourage conservation that does not involve conservation easements.

Mr. Lizniansky advised he would look into it.

Infrastructure

Mr. Claypool mentioned a local congresswoman pushing for county involvement in broadband expansion and disagrees that it is the government's role to initiate that type of project.

Mr. Lizniansky replied that he is not suggesting that Geauga County should lay down fiber optic cables, but obtaining additional funding for those types of projects is a challenge as the county is a victim of its own success.

Mr. Stevens asked about rural safety and if what priorities should be focused on.

Mr. Lizniansky replied that maintaining safety, efficiency, and a state of good repair are the goals. The rural safety grant from ODOT used to be a 10% match, but is now 100% funded. ODOT scores severity of crashes a higher on the priority list than frequency of crasher per given area.

Mr. McCaskey added the Auburn/322 turn lane project starts soon, based on number of crashes, not severity. Munson Township had no say.

Mr. Claypool added that a strategy is needed if the Planning Commission is to have any influence. Mr. Lizsniansky said there are roles for the Commission and its colleagues. Mr. Stevens added that our role is to identify issues, do studies that shine a different light on things.

Mr. Lennon mentioned that Notre Dame Cathedral Latin pushed for funding and it had a lot to do with the amount of traffic in the morning.

Economic Development

Mr. Lizsniansky stated that Geauga is not going to be the employment center in the area, but there are opportunities to work in Geauga instead of leaving the county for work as most residents do.

Mr. Claypool had questions about what a bedroom community is and why people working outside the county are considered a "net loss". Ms. Crombie agreed that the language puts a negative connotation on the term and should be revised.

Mr. Claypool stated that zoning inspectors are not consistent and that biased communities have their own bias. If someone wants to put 40 units on ten acres, it would be a challenge to work through the zoning involved with that request. He suggested the Planning Commission create a resource center for unusual requests brought to the townships.

Mr. Stevens agreed that a table or chart listing all the county departments, phone numbers, what they do, and how they help should be created.

Community Facilities

Ms. Crombie stated that Geauga Growth Partnership and how they tie in to community roles should be added to the chart.

Ms. Cocca-Fulton pointed out that the survey results clearly indicated a community interest in preserving rural character even as substantial development changes have taken place over the years. In a time when development is pushed everywhere, it is important for infrastructure to be expanded in a way that protects rural character and the desires of the residents.

Mr. Lizsniansky added that he will add context to the plan to make sure it reflects that rural culture is a way of life in Geauga and something that should be preserved over time.

Mr. Claypool reiterated the need to counteract NOACA's 2050 plan and requested an index of what will be in the general plan document.

Mr. Stevens asked what priorities are most important to the board to focus on going forward.

Comments from the board included:

- Support for local farms
- NOACA

- Formal policy agenda
- Review and Update to Model Zoning Resolution
- Inventory of houses by type (continuously updated)
- Tracking of conservation easements (Mr. Lizsniansky offered the suggestion of creating model language for conservation easements as opposed to standard language used by conservation entities)
- Transportation Safety
- Business engagement
- Housing needs of the young and old
- Large lot zoning
- Planning Commission support to townships

Mr. Berganksy mentioned that he has never had a positive experience of selling land with a Western Reserve Land Conservancy easement present on the property. He also has a hard time selling homes that lack internet access. Ms. Crombie said it would be helpful to have data on the number of homes for sale in the county and Mr. Bergansky advised that is something that could be done.

Parks, Schools, Internet

Ms. Crombie advised that she will follow House Bill 2 about broadband expansion. Mr. McCaskey said options need to be identified. Hotspots may be workable; towers are along the highways.

Mr. MacNeal suggested the creation of a resource center for citizens in addition to the townships, and an inventory of internet options available in the county. Christian schools should be mentioned in the plan. It would be helpful to measure the benefits of forestry tax credits against the benefits of conservation easements. NOACA has three million dollars to provide communities with charging stations, but who pays for the maintenance after the stations need to be repaired or replaced. Do political subdivisions really want to go into the electric business? There should be an environmental impact statement created because electric cars generate ozone and Geauga is already out of compliance with air quality standards. It is NOACA's responsibility to monitor air quality.

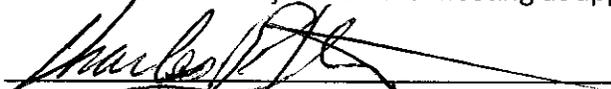
Mr. Stevens added that the Amish schools should also be included and asked the board if they felt they should be discussing charging stations at this point. It makes sense for the more dense areas like Chardon and Middlefield Village to install charging stations.

Mr. Claypool stated that people with electric cars will charge them at home and that charging stations are a ridiculous idea. It is improper to divert federal funds to electric charging stations meant for rural communities. He suggested a motion be made to schedule a special meeting for Planning Commission to discuss the plan without Envision present.

Mr. Stevens stated that they can discuss an additional special meeting at the next regular Planning Commission meeting.

4. Adjournment

Chairman Stevens adjourned the meeting at approximately 9:32 a.m.



Charles Stevens, Chairman



Gary Neola, Secretary/Treasurer