

Joint Meeting
Highland Township Board of Trustees
Highland Township Planning Commission
Highland Township Zoning Board of Appeals
Highland Downtown Development Authority
Record of the 1407th Meeting of the Planning Commission
Highland Township Auditorium
January 24, 2024

Roll Call:

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|-------------------------------|----------------------------|
| Rick Hamill, Supervisor | Dave Gerathy, ZBA Chairman |
| Tami Flowers, Clerk | Michael Borg |
| Jennifer Frederick, Treasurer | Peter Eichinger |
| Judy Cooper, Trustee | Anthony Raimondo |
| Brian Howe, Trustee | Robert Hoffman (absent) |
| Beth Lewis, Trustee | John Jickling (absent) |
| Joseph Salvia, Trustee | Mary Michaels |
| Grant Charlick, PC Chairman | Roscoe Smith, DDA Chairman |
| Kevin Curtis | Michael Zurek (absent) |
| Chris Heyn | Christina Hamil |
| Mike O'Leary | Matt Barnes (absent) |
| Scott Temple | Cassie Blascyk |
| Russ Tierney (absent) | Dale Feigley |
| Guy York | |

Also Present:

Elizabeth J. Corwin, PE, AICP – Planning Director
Kariline Littlebear, Zoning Administrator
Tina Lloyd, Communications and Community Engagement Specialist

Visitors: 8

Supervisor Rick Hamill called the meeting to order at 6:36 pm. He thanked the participants for participating in the meeting, which was an opportunity to draw the active boards and commissions together to share progress and discuss the future.

Elizabeth Corwin presented a summary of the progress the Planning Commission has made towards completing a draft Master Plan. In 2022, they completed a resident opinion survey, which was distributed by mail to twenty five percent of the households in the Township. The results were consistent with past surveys that had been completed in 1998, 2005, and 2016, showing the communities desire to maintain a rural atmosphere and encourage small scale entrepreneurial businesses.

The Planning Commission also conducted a visioning session in 2023, in which 63 residents participated in an open conversation, centered on topic areas of residential land use, business environment, infrastructure and natural resources/recreation. Public feedback from that session had

been used to guide the formation of goals and objectives related to topic areas of maintaining the rural/historic character of Highland, natural features, housing density/availability, promoting the uniqueness of Highland as an oasis amidst sprawl, facilities/services, non-motorized trails/paths, limited scale commercial/encouraging ag commerce, and manageable scale for industrial uses.

Ms. Corwin distributed excerpts from the draft goals/objectives and invited the participants to reflect on the items the Planning Commission had developed and comment on their appropriateness for the community. Other questions for discussion were suggested including the role of each Board or Commission in furthering the objectives, additional goals that may have been overlooked and priorities for projects or streamlining processes or modifying existing regulations.

The floor was then opened for an open discussion. The areas of particular interest included:

- trails development, with a particular interest in extending a bike path south from M-59 to Milford Township and connections between local and regional parks.
- ordinance enforcement, with the Supervisor noting that the Board is expected to consider adding a part time position to assist in enforcement efforts
- broadband availability, with a review by the Supervisor of current efforts to work with Comcast to fill gaps in their system, perhaps financed by redirecting royalties to such improvements
- sanitary sewer extensions, with concern noted about the unintended consequences of inducing growth. It was noted that the community would be interested in containing the scale of any system to serve specific commercial areas and the lakes.
- various ordinance amendments, including the addition of definitions and regulations for short term rentals (“Air BnB”) in commercial districts, accessory dwelling units and event venues. These have all been recent topics studied by the Planning Commission with ongoing work on these topic areas. The impacts on availability of housing and senior housing in particular was discussed.
- acknowledgment that maintenance costs must be considered in developing any project, including bike paths. The condition of aging subdivision streets and our parks was discussed.
- the possibility of a millage to cover parks/recreation acquisition/development/operation and maintenance was also discussed. Mr. Hamill briefly explained the current revenue scenario, and suggested that considerable effort would be needed to educate the community on the costs and benefits before presenting a millage proposal to the voters. He also noted that the recreation fees collected by the state through the recreation passport on vehicle registrations is expected to amass and create a better funding source for local efforts in the future. Ms. Corwin noted survey results over the years show a mixed reaction at best to a millage.
- Mr. Hamill introduced Tina Lloyd as the new Communications and Community Engagement Specialist who was developing a quarterly magazine from the Township for the residents to aid in communications. He noted that the demise of the local newspaper had left a gap not easily filled by social media, websites and email.
- regulatory approach to electric vehicle charging stations. This use is currently allowed as an accessory use in any property. Condition and limitations of the electric grid were noted as obstacles to full rollout in the community.
- Ms. Corwin introduced the group to the newly launched Township website and encouraged participants to follow the track of progress on the Master Plan through the website and forward

any additional comments/concerns about the goals/objectives to her.

Mr. Hamill invited public comment. Mr. Andy West, 2675 S Milford, thanked the Boards for their continued efforts and noted his support of the goals and objectives and policy directions discussed this evening.

Ms. Corwin noted that the input from tonight would be considered as the Planning Commission completed the draft Master Plan. She expects that the document will be wrapped up by the Planning Commission and presented to the Board for release to public comment in the next few months.

Mr. Hamill thanked the participants for showing up and for their continued efforts on behalf of the property owners and residents of the Township.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:53 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

ARS/ejc