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MEMORANDUM

To: Laketown Township Board of Trustees
From: Emma M. Posillico, AICP *emp*
Date: January 24, 2020
Re: 2020 Laketown Township Master Plan Draft

On behalf of the Laketown Township Planning Commission, attached is the draft 2020 Laketown Township Master Plan. As you know, the Planning Commission initiated this planning process in early 2018 with organizational meetings that included a review of the current Laketown Township Master Plan documents. Following and based on our recommendation, the Planning Commission proposed a significant restructuring of the Master Plan to simplify its content and create a more user friendly, streamlined document that considered the 1991 Master Plan, both the 1996 and 2005 amendments to the Master Plan, as well as the 2008 Blue Star Highway Sub-Area Plan. In addition, given the age of the current Master Plan, several revisions were performed to remove antiquated planning practices and modernize the language. Following the organizational meetings, there were three (3) public participation charrettes in the summer of 2018, where we collected valuable contributions from the public that helped guide the direction of the Planning Commission in drafting the plan. As a result, the attached has been submitted for your review, comment if necessary, and authorization for distribution.

Simplicity Approach

As aforementioned, the proposed Master Plan is designed to better organize its content and simplify its use by residents, developers, and the Planning Commission. Currently, goals and objectives, as well as other information for land uses are scattered throughout the Master Plan and subsequent amendments, creating a cumbersome process to find relevant provisions not only for the public but also for the Township during application reviews. The proposed Master Plan streamlines that content and creates individual land use chapters to reduce the amount of time a user needs to reference the document. In addition, the proposed Master Plan clearly indicates how the new Goals, Recommendations, and Strategies are to be used during land use review, which additionally assists the user.

Legal Basis

The Michigan Planning Enabling Act (MPEA), Act 33 of 2008, authorizes the Township to prepare and adopt a master plan for the use, development, and preservation of all lands within the township. The Master Plan is a policy tool used by township officials to coordinate growth and to serve as the basis for zoning. In short, all land use and zoning actions must be based on a master plan to legitimize the legality of township decisions. The existing Master Plan, on which your current zoning decisions are based, was adopted in 1991 and most recently amended in 2005.

Summary of Draft 2020 Master Plan

Given the age of the current Master Plan, the two (2) amendments, and the sub-area plan that were all considered in the drafting of the 2020 Plan, we believe it would be cumbersome to provide an explanation of how each plan has been integrated into the draft Plan. However, if you would like this information, it was provided in our memo to the Planning Commission dated May 8, 2018. We believe it would be more valuable to provide a summary of each draft chapter in the 2020 Plan.

Preface

- The Preface is a new component of the Master Plan, and provides essential background information explaining the drafting of the Plan, as well as guidance for how the Plan may be utilized. The Preface is comprised of the following:
 - Introduction – includes legal requirement, intent and purpose
 - Content – includes cornerstone components of Plan, composition of document, as well as Board and Staff Involvement
 - Final Document
 - How to Use this Plan

Chapter One – Community Preferences

- Chapter One summarizes the results of the three (3) public participation charrettes held in the summer of 2018; however, for further detail the results and summary documents that were provided to the Planning Commission following the charrettes are provided in the Appendix of the draft plan.
- The findings generated from the charrettes are organized into the following categories, and reflect the focus areas of each separate charrette:
 - Core Values
 - Agricultural Characteristics – Findings presented in SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities & Threats) format
 - Residential Characteristics – Findings presented in SWOT format
 - Blue Star Highway Commercial and Industrial Characteristics– Findings presented in SWOT format

Chapter Two – Agricultural Classification

- There is a brief Introduction provided, followed by Goals, Recommendations, and Strategies.
- While some of the language utilized for the Introduction derived from the 1991 Master Plan and subsequent amendments, the Goals, Recommendations, and Strategies emphasize preserving rural character and natural features.

Chapter Three – Residential Uses

- There is a brief Introduction provided, followed by Goals, Recommendations, and Strategies.
- While some of the language utilized for the Introduction derived from the 1991 Master Plan and subsequent amendments, there has been language added to explain the residential development pressure that Laketown Township faces, coupled with its unique geographic location.
- The Goals, Recommendations, and Strategies emphasize thoughtfully considering development patterns while planning residential neighborhoods, ensuring consideration for maintaining the surrounding rural character.
- There are two (2) Strategies drafted that are new concepts for your consideration:
 - Developing and adopting a residential zoning district that accommodates a density between the R-1 and R-2 Zoning Districts. This is identified on the Draft Master Plan Map as Very Low Density Residential (VLDR).
 - Consider establishing a zoning overlay district for a variety of residential and limited small-scale commercial operations that support the rural and lake shore heritage of the Township along Lake Macatawa.
 - As you may be aware, this is a draft strategy that has generated continued public input. At the January Master Plan meeting, the Commission agreed to proceed with including this draft strategy, but emphasizing in the draft Plan that the overlay district is a consideration, and not a strategy that will definitively be accomplished. As such, the

overlay district is not shown on the draft Master Plan Map, per the Township Attorney's recommendation.

Chapter Four – Blue Star Highway

- The majority of this chapter was derived from the 2008 Blue Star Highway Sub-Area Plan, and emphasizes the Vision Statement for the corridor that was developed during that planning process.
- Also included is the Conceptual Basis for the Blue Star Highway Corridor, which has several images showcasing architectural styles. While our streamlined approach to master planning does not include many images, these were provided in the 2008 Sub-Area Plan, and we found them valuable to include in the draft 2020 Plan.
- The Goals, Recommendations, and Strategies proposed emphasize focusing commercial and industrial development to the Blue Star Highway Corridor, while ensuring the surrounding rural character is preserved through carefully planned infrastructure expansions and architectural design standards.

Chapter Five – Commercial Uses

- While the majority of commercial land use area within the Township is located along the Blue Star Highway, the Commercial Chapter is intended to address the other limited neighborhood commercial service areas, with an emphasis on preserving lake shore heritage and supporting residential uses.
- The Goals, Recommendations, and Strategies proposed emphasize preserving the surrounding rural character through carefully planned infrastructure expansions and architectural design standards.
- As previously explained, the zoning overlay district that is being considered for the northwest portion of the Township along Lake Macatawa is mentioned in this Chapter. We included this provision in the Commercial chapter as the strategy does make reference to limited small-scale commercial operations.

Chapter Six – Industrial Uses

- This chapter focuses on the existing limited area of industrial land uses within the Township, and notes that industrial uses outside of the Blue Star Highway are not intended to be extended beyond the existing locations shown on the Master Plan Map and the Zoning Map.
- The Goals, Recommendations, and Strategies proposed emphasize preserving the surrounding rural character through carefully planned infrastructure expansions and architectural design standards.

Chapter Seven - Recreational & Facilities

- This chapter provides information on the recreational and community facilities that are currently available to the residents and visitors of Laketown Township. Much of this information was generated from the current Master Plan but updated for any changes that may have occurred in years passed.
- The Goals, Recommendations, and Strategies proposed are primarily generated from the 2018 Laketown Township Five-Year Community Parks and Recreation Plan.

Chapter Eight – Municipal Utilities

- This chapter summarizes the municipal utility services provided to Laketown Township through privately-owned systems, the City of Holland, or the Kalamazoo Lake Sewer and Water Authority.
- The Goals, Recommendations, and Strategies proposed focus on providing public facilities and services to accommodate future growth in carefully coordinated locations that consider the availability of existing utilities, as well as soil and groundwater conditions.

Chapter Nine - Transportation

- This chapter provides information on the agencies that influence transportation in Laketown Township (Allegan County Road Commission, the Macatawa Area Coordinating Council, and MDOT), but also provides information on the existing roadways in the Township. Much of the information on the existing roadways was generated from the current Master Plan, but was carefully updated by the Planning Commission to include roadway work that has been completed since the last Plan amendment.
- This chapter also includes a sub-section devoted to Multi-modal Transportation, addressing biking and pedestrians in Laketown Township. Further, reference to the West Michigan Regional Airport is included, as the Airport Approach Plan and Airport Layout Plan are included in the Appendix.
 - In late 2019, Laketown Township was contacted by the West Michigan Regional Airport about the necessity of including nearby airport plans in the Master Plan. While Staff concluded that the MPEA actually requires that said plans be included in a community's Zoning Ordinance, they are provided in the Appendix for reference.
- The Goals, Recommendations, and Strategies proposed emphasize inter-agency cooperation when planning transportation systems, creating a multi-modal transportation system, shared driveways for commercial development, as well as pedestrian pathways for new developments.
- The last sub-section of Chapter Nine addresses the Complete Streets Plan, which is a requirement of the MPEA. We have included a statement that addresses this requirement, as reviewed by the Township Attorney.

Chapter Ten - Environment

- This chapter provides information on the natural features that have played a significant role in the development of the Township, and continue to be valued by the residents and visitors of Laketown Township. Much of this information, particularly the detail provided on sand dunes, flood plains, wetlands, and waterways, was generated from the current Master Plan.
- The Goals, Recommendations, and Strategies focus heavily on preservation of natural resources, and future development that carefully considers preservation of the Township's unique natural features.
- It should be noted that the footnote on page 37, regarding a website for mapping wooded areas, was requested to be included in the Plan as a resource for those considering tree preservation.

Chapter Eleven - Implementation

- This chapter serves as a guide for utilizing the Master Plan effectively, emphasizing the adoption of ordinances, policies, and administrative procedures. This chapter does provide reference to the proposed Very Low Density Residential land use classification, as well as the Strategy to consider a new zoning overlay district for the northwest corner of the Township along Lake Macatawa.
- One of the recommendations that we made in our proposal for master planning services to the Township was adding a Zoning Plan to the Master Plan, which is required per the MPEA. The Zoning Plan serves to correlate the classifications shown on the Master Plan Map with the current districts shown on the Zoning Map.
- Additionally, while not a part of the Zoning Plan nor required by the MPEA, we have provided a table that associates the classifications of the Master Plan Map with the text chapters of the Master Plan. This is intended to make it easier for the Planning Commission and Township Board to utilize the Master Plan when a request for rezoning or development is submitted.
- The Master Plan Map is presented within this Chapter, as well as in the Appendix.

Appendix

- There are several items included within the Appendix that we found may be valuable to the reader of the Master Plan, but perhaps were best included as supplements rather than included within the text of Chapters One through Eleven.

- Appendix A – Community Mapping includes eight (8) maps of Laketown Township. We updated existing maps from the current Master Plan, but also included supplemental maps that visually enhance the text of the Plan.
- Appendix B – Community Profile provides demographic information from the U.S. Census. While this information is included within the body of the current Master Plan, we find that it can be cumbersome for the reader and does not add value to the individual chapters. However, we find that it is informative data and have included it as an Appendix.
- Appendix C – Master Plan Workshop Summary & Results – As aforementioned, the three (3) public charrettes conducted in summer 2018 provided valuable information for the master planning process. As such, we have included the workshop summary and results as an Appendix.
- Appendix D – West Michigan Regional Airport Approach Plan & Layout Plan (2018) – As aforementioned, the Airport Plan & Layout Plan are included for reference.

Professional Staff Reviews

Given that the Planning Commission desired to provide the most comprehensive draft document for your review, we consulted with professional township staff, as necessary, throughout the entire process. In particular and most importantly, the proposed Master Plan has received review from the Township Attorney. Consequently, it has been designed and verified as thoroughly as possible to withstand legal challenges prior to your review.

Responsibility of the Board of Trustees

As aforementioned, in accordance with Section 41 of the Michigan Planning Enabling Act, the Planning Commission has provided this proposed Master Plan for your review, comment if necessary, and authorization to distribute to surrounding municipalities, Allegan County, and any registered public utility company, railroad company, or public transportation agency owning or operating a public utility, railroad, or public transportation system, as well as any other government entity that registered with the Township.

In an effort to provide you with an understanding of your responsibilities to the Planning Enabling Act and to simplify the requirements of the Act, we have provided a synopsis of your role and timeline below.

1. Review Period. The Board of Trustees does not have a time limitation to review the proposed Master Plan. However, it is important to achieve adoption within a reasonable amount of time.
2. Comment Period. Following your review of the proposed Master Plan, the Board of Trustees can submit comments to the Planning Commission for additional review and revision, in the instance the Planning Commission agrees to revise. The comment period can include as many exchanges as necessary between the Board of Trustees and the Planning Commission.
3. Authorization of Distribution. The Board of Trustees holds the authority to approve the distribution of the Plan as aforementioned. The process of adopting the Plan shall not proceed further until the Board of Trustees grants said authorization. It is important to note that once the Board of Trustees authorizes distribution of the Master Plan and it returns to the Planning Commission following a 63 day period, the Board of Trustees will not have another opportunity to review the Plan. Adoption is finalized at the Planning Commission, following a public hearing.

If you have any questions regarding the proposed Master Plan, please let us know. It is our understanding that this will be on the agenda for your February 5th and 12th meetings.

EMP
Associate Planner

Attachment