Minutes: Russell Township Zoning Commission

Russell Fire-Rescue Station

October 23, 2013

Present: Richard E. Snyder, Chairman

Bruce Murphy

Donna Weiss Carson (arrived at 7:50 p.m.)

Ben Kotowski

Diana Steffen, Secretary

Tom Warren was absent with apologies.

The Chairman called the meeting to order at 7:46 p.m.

MINUTES OF SEPTEMBER 25, 2013 – *Mr. Murphy moved to approve the minutes as submitted, Mr. Kotowski seconded and the motion passed unanimously by 3-0.*

LAND USE GUIDE PLAN UPDATE: Demographics – Mr. Snyder said that the previous guide plans used population estimates, but he suggested using the information on the number of potentially buildable lots that Mr. Kotowski and Mrs. Steffen compiled, which estimated the number of additional homes that can be built before reaching build out. He felt this will be a more accurate method to estimate future township growth than simply considering population projections, the estimates of which have been inaccurate to wildly off the mark in the previous and current guide plans. After discussion the Commission agreed to use this data, since a range of population growth can also be estimated using the number of potential new households.

Mr. Kotowski handed out a suggested layout for bar graphs, which he preferred to use in most instances rather than pie graphs or line graphs. The Commission suggested a few improvements and noted that the CSU Land Use Survey completed last June primarily used bar graphs. Mr. Snyder asked Mr. Kotowski if he can update the tables in the Demographics chapter with assistance from Mrs. Steffen, and Mr. Kotowski said he can if he has enough time. Mr. Snyder mentioned that it is important to document the population change with respect to adjacent communities and the region. The Commission agreed that the "tree" graph showing age and sex data should be updated to include the data from 1970, 1990, 2000 and 2010, which will show how dramatic the change has been over those years. The Commission also agreed that the graphs should be in color, since the updated guide plan will be in digital format, thus requiring a minimal number of copies to be printed. The black and white shades in many graphs in the current guide plan are difficult to distinguish.

Land Use Patterns – Mr. Snyder suggested a solution to the problem of defining current land use in the Township. He suggested not documenting the actual land use, which in the current guide plan uses five different categories that were not defined and were not the same as used in the previous guide plan. Instead he would like to show how well the large lot zoning implemented in 1974 has preserved open and green space within the residential districts. The recent residents' survey indicated that residents are satisfied with Russell for reasons such as quality of life, air quality, availability of open green space, and the rural character and overall look of the Township. The verbatim comments confirmed this when many said they do not wish the Township to change. Due to the 3 and 5 acre zoning districts, and the regulations regarding impervious surface, riparian setbacks, and planned residential developments, a large amount of land will be preserved in its natural state. People can see how the zoning has preserved many natural areas. Mr. Snyder suggested showing these areas on a map and comparing it to a map showing how the Township would have looked with one-and-a-half acre zoning and without the new restrictions. Any challenges in court could be defended by showing that the current land use reflects the wishes of the residents. It would be measurable.

Mr. Snyder said he talked to the Chagrin River Watershed Partners about this approach, and was told they have software that can document the "undeveloped" land which they would then tweak manually as needed. He said C.R.W.P. is eager to do this work. It will demonstrate in a measurable way the result of

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the zoning by highlighting that the large lot zoning has achieved the goals set forty years ago. Separate maps should be generated that show the conservation easements and parks. All these maps will indicate how much land has been preserved and how much can be developed. The developable land will include the 400 remaining buildable lots estimated by Mr. Kotowski and Ms. Steffen. A comparison between 1974,1995 and now will be possible with the use of aerial photos from each year. In twenty years time this land use map would be repeatable using the same criteria but with any enhanced techniques available by that time. Mrs. Steffen said there are aerial photos in the Zoning Office from the 1990's.

Mr. Snyder said he understood Mr. Murphy's problem with trying to determine land use by reviewing the aerial photos of all 3,000 individual parcels. Mr. Kotowski noted that by using Mr. Snyder's approach agricultural uses and vacant parcels are irrelevant since the zoning has no control over these. This may solve the dilemma of the 'agricultural' lots. Mr. Snyder said that by compiling the map using this criteria the ZC and Trustees can educate residents as to the benefits of zoning restrictions such as riparian setbacks. The Commission agreed that open space must be defined for this type of analysis. Mr. Snyder said he will ask C.R.W.P. to come up with some options for the map. Mr. Murphy said that C.R.W.P. will need to use an objective measure that is related to the zoning and can be repeated in the future. He suggested giving C.R.W.P. a set of standards they can apply using their software tools, and asking them what they can produce.

Mrs. Steffen mentioned that the Commission scheduled one meeting for November and December on December 11th. Mr. Snyder said he definitely wants a meeting in November, preferably the week of the 19th. Mrs. Steffen will inquire into the availability of the meeting room.

Mr. Snyder asked everyone to create folders for the guide plan topics and bring them to the meetings so that documents such as maps, tables, etc. that have been handed out previously will be available at meetings. Mrs. Steffen will provide folders to anyone who needs them.

Regional Relationships – Ms. Weiss Carson handed out a first draft of an update of the Regional Relationships chapter. She had updated the text and added paragraphs about C.R.W.P. and the Western Reserve Land Conservancy. However because most of the existing chapter concerns N.O.A.C.A. that part overwhelms the text regarding the other agencies. She said she would like suggestions as to how to integrate the new information. The maps in the chapter are useful and need to be updated. Mr. Snyder said he will approach N.O.A.C.A.'s executive director to request assistance with the maps.

<u>Action Items</u>: Mr. Kotowski and Mrs. Steffen to work on the tables and graphs in the Demographics chapter for the next meeting; Mr. Snyder to discuss the land use map with C.R.W.P.; Mrs. Steffen to schedule a meeting in November; Mr. Snyder to contact N.O.A.C.A.

PROPOSED HOUSEHOLD SEWAGE TREATMENT SYSTEM RULES – Mr. Snyder reported that the proposed rules may not be published until the end of November. Ms. Weiss Carson expressed concern that it appears that the State of Ohio is permitting certain systems that are not meeting the E.P.A. quality standards. Mr. Murphy said he reviewed the rules and the statute and he thought that some aspects of the statute were being ignored in the proposed rules.

There being no other business, Ms. Weiss Carson moved to adjourn, Mr. Murphy seconded and the meeting adjourned at 9:39 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,			
Diana Steffen Secretary	Date	Richard E. Snyder Chairman	Date
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