SPRING LAKE TOWNSHIP
PLANNING COMMISSION MINUTES
MARCH 15, 2023 – REGULAR MEETING

PRESENT:  Harry Dyck, Greg Latsch, Jerry Rabideau, Sarah Somers, Russ Tiles
ABSENT:  Kelly Clark, Jack Ketchum
PARTICIPANTS:  Lukas Hill, Township Community Development Director

A meeting of the Spring Lake Township Planning Commission was held at Barber School, 102 W Exchange St, Spring Lake MI 49456.

A.  Call to Order
Latsch called the meeting to order at 7:02pm.

B.  Approval of Agenda
Latsch made a motion, support by Somers to approve the agenda as presented. The motion was approved unanimously.

C.  Approval of Minutes
Somers made a motion, support by Tiles to adopt the Planning Commission February 15, 2023 regular meeting minutes as presented. The motion was approved unanimously.

D.  Public Comments
A time for public comment was provided. One comment related to a bike path on 152nd Ave was offered.

E.  Rezoning Requests – P5 Land Investments LLC, Agricultural to R2 Medium Density Residential for Multiple Parcels
Don DeGroot, Exxel Engineering, presented the request to rezone parcels on West Spring lake Rd and Hickory, and West Spring Lake Rd and Van Wagoner. Included parcels are 70-3-03-400-001, 70-03-03-400-008, 70-03-03-400-015, 70-03-10-200-003, 70-03-10-100-017 and 70-03-10-100-049. DeGroot stated that they wish to rezone the parcels from AG to R2, which is consistent with the master plan. This is the first step in the process. If the parcels are rezoned, they will develop a PUD on the parcels.

The public hearing was opened at 7:12pm.

Susan Meyer, 16431 Taft, asked who the applicant is and how many houses will be included. Latsch indicated the applicant is P5 Land Investments. This current request is just for rezoning. There is no development plan at this time.

Anthony Petix, 16448 Van Wagoner, asked for the definition of R2, and asked whether the infrastructure would support the development. Latsch stated that engineering studies were done of the infrastructure, and all utilities can support the development. Hill read the definition of R2 zoning from the Zoning Ordinance.

Norman Meyer, 16341 Taft, stated there is a high water table in the area, and wondered if he would get sewer. He also stated his property is a former strawberry field and the soil is saturated with pesticides and herbicides, and doesn’t grow grass.
Jeff Ferguson, 18629 W Spring Lake Rd, is in opposition to the rezoning away from AG. The properties can continue to be blueberry farms, as the current farmer would buy the land to continue farming. The Township is losing AG land, and it will never return. Drainage is an issue. Adding 120 to 150 new houses is too many.

Chad Laug, 16409 Hickory, stated that the water table is high. Adding 140 more homes will result in too many students for the school district. The drainage will go past his house and may degrade his driveway. The development will bring too much traffic, and he moved to live on a quiet road.

Ulrich Kuester, 16398 Van Wagoner, stated he came to Spring Lake for quiet, woods, and other access to nature. If we keep building we will destroy what we have. Traffic will be an issue.

Taryn Forbear, 18192 West Spring Lake Rd, stated she has lived on this road for 20 years. They are across from a subdivision and traffic is too much and too fast. She opposes the change to the zoning. The water table is high and the schools are full.

Joe Shalla, 18791 West Spring Lake Rd, stated there is too much traffic and they drive too fast. He would like the traffic to be slowed. He is concerned about soil contamination from years of farming.

John VanDyke, 18705 West Spring Lake Rd, asked why the zoning in the Master Plan was changed to R2, and he would prefer less density.

Motion by Tiles, support by Somers, to close the public hearing at 7:37pm. The motion was approved unanimously.

Latsch stated that some properties in the area under consideration are already zoned R2. The zoning should be considered in a broad area, not just for the requested parcels.

Tiles asked Hill to summarize the historical zoning for the requested parcels. Hill reviewed the current zoning proposed in the Master Plan. He also stated that when the 2008 Master Plan was written the properties were not zoned AG. The property owners requested the change to AG to protect their farming operation. When they decided to sell the property they requested the change to R2. The current Master Plan was changed to R2 zoning because the infrastructure is there to support the change.

Hill reviewed the rezoning criteria. Latsch noted the Planning Commission is gathering information and will make a recommendation to the Board of Trustees. The Board of Trustees will make the final decision on the rezoning.

Motion by Somers, support by Dyck, to table action on the rezoning request by P5 Land Investments, LLC, to the April 19, 2023 Planning Commission meeting to allow consideration of additional properties to be rezoned that would create zoning consistency in the region and support the intent of the Master Plan. A roll call vote was taken. The motion was approved unanimously.
F. Master Plan Amendment

Bruce Callen presented the request for a change to the Master Plan for the area near parcel 70-03-01-200-034. The area is located between a medium density residential area and a high density residential area. The area is readily served by utilities, and it is better to put high density where there are utilities, rather than extending utilities. The current parcels in the Township that are zoned R4 are already developed or not in a location that is as convenient as this parcel. The parcel has not developed in several years, indicating the current zoning is not correct. The parcel is very close to Fruitport, allowing for access to services. The Ottawa County housing needs survey indicates there is a need for apartments and housing for younger families.

Latsch asked if they were considering a property or an area. Hill stated there are many uses in the area, with Mobex, a trailer park, and some commercial uses. Therefore, the rezoning should be considered regionally. Additionally, he would like to contact Fruitport for their comments on the process.

Tiles asked about other possible zonings, rather than R4, that would allow apartments and townhomes. There could be a text amendment to modify the NC zoning to allow for residential uses. Hill stated that was a possibility, or a MU zoning could be considered. Hill will explore that option while still considering a Master Plan amendment.

Motion by Tiles, support by Latsch, to direct staff to begin the Master Plan amendment process and seek support from the Township Board. A roll call vote was taken. The motion was approved unanimously.

G. Zoning Ordinance Text Amendment Considerations

Hill presented possible updates for the R4 zoning district. Based on comments from the Township attorney, he will develop criteria for deciding when Commissioners could relax the standards. Commissioners requested updates to other sections of the proposed standards. Hill will revise the text amendment based on comments, and schedule the public hearing for the April meeting.

Commissioners then discussed lot size requirements for the RR district. Currently the Master Plan suggests 5-acre parcels, and the Zoning Ordinance requires 2-acre parcels. There was not strong support for a change at this point. Hill will continue to gather information.

H. Commissioner Comments

1. Township Board: The Board passed a waste hauler resolution, confirming the single provider for the next 3 years, when the contract will be revisited. Tucker Chartier was named the Firefighter of the Year, which is an award voted on by the firefighters. The contract for engineering the Krueger bike path has been awarded. Supervisor Nash has resigned and there will be a celebration on March 27 after the Annual Meeting of the Electors.

2. ZBA: The February meeting had one application, where they are asking for a waterfront setback determination, accessory building authorization, lot coverage variance and accessory building variance. The waterfront setback was determined and the accessory building authorization was approved. The lot coverage variance was denied, and the accessory building variance was withdrawn by the applicant.

3. Other: Harry Dyck is a member of the Board of Review. He stated that home values in the Township went up 13% in the last year, and the market is still strong.
4. Community Development Director: Hill stated that Dollar General has submitted an official application for the parcel at M104 and 148th Ave. It is still being reviewed by staff, as adjustments need to be made.

J. Adjournment
Rabideau moved to adjourn the meeting at 8:50pm. Latsch seconded the motion, which was approved unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,

Greg Latsch, Chair
Planning Commission