

Hopkins Township Planning Commission
Minutes Special Meeting 3/16/2010

Planning Commission Members: Chair Lori Castello; Tadd Heft; Bob Hoffmaster; Lee Murray; Mike Timmer; Chuck Wamhoff; Fred Morley

Members Present: Bob Hoffmaster; Lee Murray; Mike Timmer; Chuck Wamhoff; Fred Morley

Meeting Called to Order at: 7:14 PM Meeting Adjourned at: 8:32 PM

Location: Hopkins Township Hall

- + Meeting called to order at 7:14 PM by Vice Chair Murray.
- + Commission attendance noted above.
- + Mark Evans Hopkins Township Supervisor and Kirk Scharphorn Zoning Administrator in attendance.

Agenda Items

This is a special meeting to discuss and collect ideas on Zoning Ordinance changes needed to make the Ordinance consistent with the Master Plan. One of the goals stated in the Master Plan is the preservation of farmland.

One way to implement the preservation of farmland is the Ag District minimum 40 acres lot size proposed in the Master Plan. This minimum lot size was the consensus of the input from all sources when the Master Plan was in the development process. This 40 acres minimum has recently come under scrutiny now that Ordinance changes are being proposed.

The present minimum lot size in the Ag District is 20 acres. The Ordinance allows for smaller lots, 1.25 to 2 acres under specific conditions. Before 2001 a Special Use Permit was required to build a house in the Ag District.

Zoning Administrator Scharphorn handed out a document analyzing some examples of how the 40 acres minimum would affect splits. One scenario that has been discussed is using a divisor of 20 instead of 40 in the Ordinance formula for determining the number of parcels allowed. Using a divisor of 20 would increase the number of parcels allowed over using a divisor of 40, in the Ag District. With a 40 acres minimum, an 80 acres parcel would be needed to have more than one parcel. A house would be allowed on the 40 acres parcel.

Present zoning, with the 20 acres minimum lot size, allows 32 houses per mile in the Ag District. Eight houses per mile are recommended in national planning standards for gravel roads.

As discussed previously, a goal of the Master Plan is to preserve farmland. The question becomes what is the best way to achieve this goal?

Public comments were expressed in favor of the 40 acres minimum and against the 20 acres minimum. One opinion was that the 40 acres minimum is the best way to preserve farmland. Why opposition to the 40 acres minimum was expressed. Selling property could be difficult; parcels smaller than 25 acres are presently being farmed; giving lots to family members could be difficult; and the Township is saying what the owner can or cannot do with the land, infringing on the rights of the land owner. Putting every possible scenario into the Zoning Ordinance would be impossible.

Other discussion points include: many acres are leased; lots created legally will be okay; contiguous lots are considered one parcel; a lot is recorded by the Register of Deeds even if it is not a legal lot per local Zoning Ordinance; a variance is a means of dealing with some of the issues raised; zoning laws are in place to intentionally control land development; citizens have the opportunity to influence zoning regulations, showing up is a good idea; Leighton Township has a provision in their Zoning Ordinance that does consider fairness of decisions; most existing 20 acres options have not been taken; other size parcels could be an option, for example 38 and 2 acres; and infrastructure influences development.

Summary:

1. 40 acres minimum with divisor of 40.
2. 40 acres minimum with divisor of 20.
3. Eliminate the 20 acre parcel.
4. Other lot sizes, 40 acres divided into 2 and 38 acres.
5. Leave the Zoning Ordinance as it is.
6. If the Master plan is not going to be followed, the Master Plan needs to be changed.
7. Balancing farmland preservation and property owner rights.
8. Houses off road.
9. Chair Castello and Zoning Administrator Scharphorn will digest the issues raised.

MOTION: A motion was made and supported to adjourn. This motion was approved.

The meeting adjourned at 8:32 PM.

Submitted By:

Fred Morley, Secretary
Hopkins Township Planning Commission

Minutes Approved: