

Calhoun County Metropolitan Planning Commission
Minutes
February 27, 2012

Present: Comrs. Rebecca Rocho, Daniel Kesselring, Robert Bolton, Larry Rizer, and Blaine VanSickle .
Staff: Planning Consultant Jennifer Bomba and Executive Assistant/Deputy Clerk Chris McComb.

Excused: Terence Lunger

1. The February 27, 2012 Planning Commission Meeting was called to order at 4:00 p.m.
2. Roll was called by the Deputy Clerk.
3. Approval of Agenda

“Moved VanSickle, supported by Rizer to approve the February 27, 2012 Planning Commission agenda as presented.”

On a voice vote, Motion CARRIED.

4. Public Comment

There was none.

5. Approval of January 30, 2012 Meeting Minutes

“Moved Rizer, supported by Kesselring to approve the January 30, 2012 Metropolitan Planning Commission minutes with the correction of numbering of agenda items 12 through 15, replacing the word “maintained” to “managed” under agenda item 12, paragraph one, replacing “Foundation” with “Corporation” under agenda item 12, paragraph two and changing “The City of Battle Creek was” to “The City of Battle Creek will be” under agenda item 12, paragraph two.”

On a voice vote, Motion CARRIED.

6. Communication

There was none.

7. New Business

- a. Kimball Pines Timber Proposal

Planning Consultant Bomba gave the Commission background information on activity in Kimball Pines created from storm damage. Environmental Services Coordinator Tiffany Eichorst has been spearheading the cleanup project with assistance from Kesselring and Lindsey. She stated managing county assets was one of the tasks of the Planning Commission and they were a valuable resource when it came to land use. This was an opportunity for Planning to get involved and work with the Parks

Department to move forward with cleanup activities. She stated there were two proposals in the packet to review, discuss, resolve and support the Parks Trustees in selection and moving forward.

Corporation Counsel Lindsey stated the destruction in Kimball Pines was unbelievable. The Silver Leaf and the North Country Trail people signed releases and helped with a lot of the cleanup. The Parks Trustees asked him to look at the legal restrictions on the property. He stated the trees were almost all gone. The Parks Trustees had a forester look at the work that needed to be done and they were supportive of the project. The Planning Commission hasn't had a role in these types of things before but they will in the future.

Environmental Services Coordinator Eichorst stated the proposal was to hire a forester to manage timber harvest and cleanup within the park. She stated they had consulted with the Conservation District about the stumps and tree tops that would be left. Right now no one is allowed in Kimball Pines because of liability issues. There was a disc golf course group out there but they have removed their stuff. It is currently not a usable park and they want to be able to open it up and use it again. She noted there wasn't much that was salvageable. Her recommendation would be to move forward with the proposed forester.

Kesselring stated he would like the Parks to try to establish more of a native forestry rather than a pine plantation. He felt losing so many trees might be a good thing because it was so shaded and barren underneath. He believes that the loggers should have been in last year to salvage what timber would have been useful.

Eichorst stated the Parks Trustees would like any trees that weren't damaged to stand so they will have another person go out with the logger to be sure they aren't cutting too much.

Rizor suggested Kimball Pines could become a project of the Michigan State University Forestry Department and they could plant and harvest trees, using it as an educational interpretive center.

Bolton noted that in reference to #13 of the contract, any conditions should be in the county's favor.

Kesselring would like the language to read "cleanup" instead of "timber harvest".

"Moved Rizor, supported by Kesselring to recommend support of the County Parks Trustees resolution recommending the hiring of Tree Tech, Inc. to provide forestry management services to facilitate cleanup in Kimball Pines Park."

On a voice vote, Motion CARRIED.

The Commission held discussion on the Planning Commission getting more involved and what other areas they could expand into.

8. Township Planning & Zoning

- a. 2-12-01, Albion Township: PA 116 Application for Miller

Staff recommended for approval.

“Moved Bolton, supported by Kesselring for approval of 2-12-02, Albion Township: PA 116 for Miller.”

On a voice vote, Motion CARRIED.

9. Department Report

A. Calhoun County Master Plan

Planning Consultant Bomba stated that amendments to the Master Plan were made with the updated census information. Bomba provided the Commissioners with a portion of the changed demographic information and offered for review new tables she had developed with the information. She noted that some census data still has not been released. She stated she would like to do a full review at the next meeting, after members have looked over the Plan in its entirety, the second half of which would be sent out before the next meeting.

Rizor believed college towns such as Albion could become great retirement communities and they needed to look at trends to see if they could give indication on where they should head in the future. He would like to come up with a vision for Calhoun County that includes such goals.

Bomba stated they were positioned properly to use Michigan State University's expertise, as there was a movement in Battle Creek for urban gardening and for local food to be used in the restaurants.

Kesselring stated that he liked the local foods idea, but he felt that there was disconnect between local foods and commercial agricultural. He noted that what is available always depends on the time of year. He discussed farmland preservation and areas that are designated for farmland preservation, where businesses could look at areas and know they could build a business related to what was popular.

10. Member Comments

Bomba explained the Kalamazoo River/Ceresco watershed project, another data set for making land use decisions. It was a combination of Emmett, Marshall, Newton and Fredonia Townships using a wetland functionality test. They compared wetland maps from pre-settlement and current to determine that the watershed has only lost 9% of its wetlands since pre-settlement. She stated they could look at specific types of wetlands and based on the type and the loss, they could determine what functions were being lost. This test gave the townships a strong analytical tool for preservation, unfortunately only 2 of the 4 townships showed up at the meeting. The consultant they would like to use came up with recommendations for zoning ordinances, but they need all four townships on board.

Rizor stated the County needed to have some kind of ability to protect county wide resources.

Kesselring stated he attended a Calhoun County Local Task Force meeting where they discussed disbursing funds for road repairs. He learned that if they accepted federal funds to improve roads they would have to agree there would be no load limit on bridges.

11. Public comments

There were none.

12. Announcements

The Calhoun County Planning Commission meeting is scheduled for March 26, 2012, time to be confirmed.

14. Adjournment

“Moved Rizer, supported by Kesselring to adjourn the February 27, 2012 Calhoun County Metropolitan Planning Commission meeting at 5:20 pm.”

On a voice vote, Motion CARRIED

Respectfully submitted,

Chris McComb
Deputy Clerk