

Minutes

THOMAS TOWNSHIP PLANNING COMMISSION

Thomas Township Public Safety Building, 8215 Shields Drive, Saginaw, MI 48609
September 16, 2015 at 7:00 p.m.

Ruth McDonald called the Planning Commission meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

Present in addition to Mrs. McDonald were: Rod Iamurri, Rick Lorentzen, Diane LaMountain, David Sommers, Dale Halm and Patrick Lynch. Also present were Dan Sika, Director of Community Development, Connie Watt, Planning Assistant/Code Enforcement Officer, and Rob Eggers of Spicer Group.

1. Call to Order and Roll Call

2. Pledge of Allegiance.

3. Approval of Agenda:

It was moved by Sommers, seconded by Iamurri to approve the Agenda for the September 16, 2015 meeting. Motion carried unanimously.

4. Approval of Minutes:

It was moved by Halm seconded by LaMountain to approve the minutes of August 19, 2015 as presented. Motion carried unanimously.

5. Communications – Petitions – Citizens Comments – None.

6. Hearings-None

7. Sign Board of Appeals-None

8. Presentations-None

9. Old Business

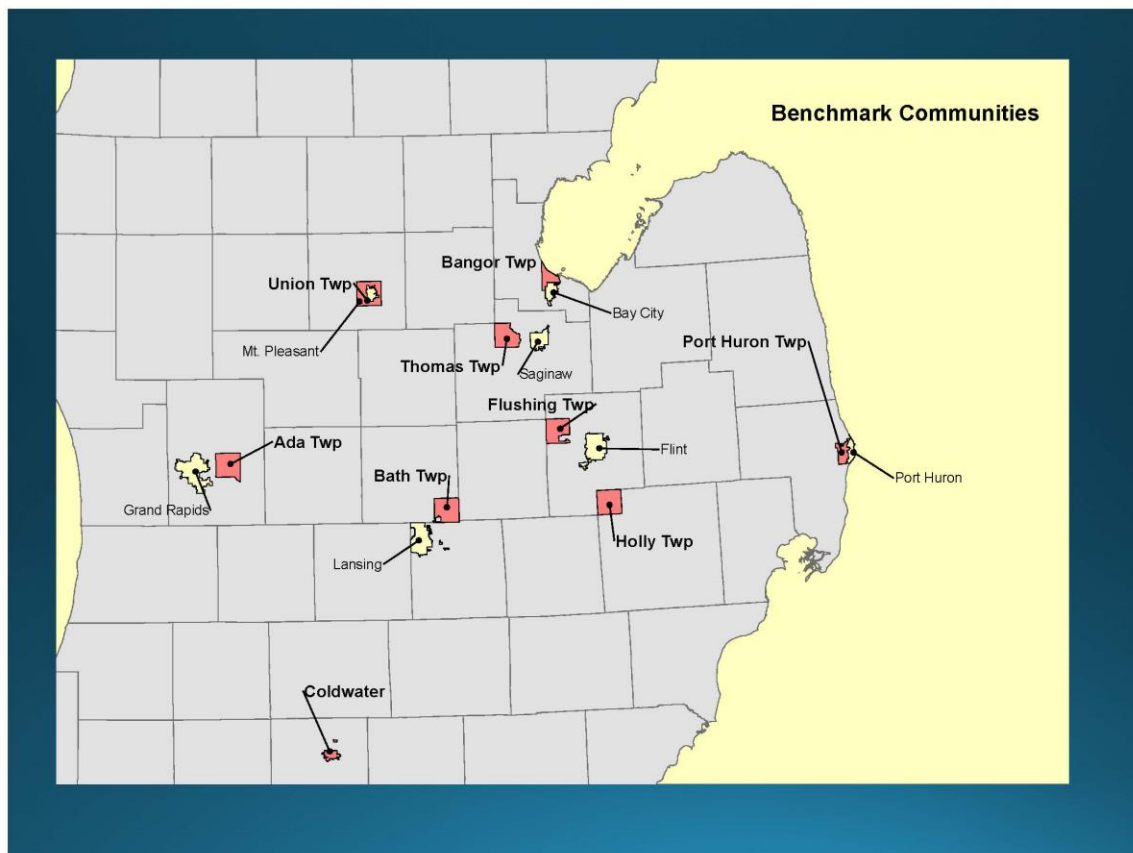
A. Master Plan Update-Continuation of the Master Plan Update Process from previous meetings.

An update on the progress of the Master Plan Update was presented by Mr. Rob Eggers of Spicer Group. He reviewed with the Planning Commission that during the meeting last month he had reviewed demographic information regarding Thomas Township with them. He said he had

mentioned at that time that this evening they would be discussing a comparison study that has been done to ten (10) other communities in the area. He will go over this study tonight. Along with that, they will go over the Thomas Township Community Survey in detail and then discuss launching it.

Eggers said a comparison study of Thomas Township to other very similar townships, similar in size, located near a bigger city with a university nearby, has been completed.

The following map was presented by Mr. Eggers to show the location of the communities that were used as a comparison:



He went over the following information detail for detail with the Planning Commission members concerning the comparison of Thomas Township to the chosen communities and to see how similar the results actually were.

Thomas Township and Comparison Communities																	
	Population 2010	Population Change 2000 to 2010	Size (square miles)	Community % of County Population	Median Age	Black & Hispanic Population	Foreign Born Population	% Bachelor's Degree or Higher	Median Household Income	Individuals Below Poverty Level	Owner-occupied Housing	Median Housing Value	Housing Units Built Prior to 1980	Mean Commute Time (Minutes)	2012 SEV	Top Industry, by Percentage of Employment	2nd Top Industry, by Percentage of Employment
Bangor Charter Township	14,641	-5.8%	21.9	13.6%	45.6	5.4%	2.0%	15.9%	\$44,947	13.5%	76.8%	\$108,100	56.9%	19.8	\$452,548,550	education, health, accommodation and food services (24.3%)	manufacturing (13.7%)
Ada Township	13,145	33.0%	37.0	2.2%	39.8	2.7%	5.6%	56.7%	\$105,132	2.7%	91.9%	\$260,000	40.5%	20.4	\$922,384,900	education, health, accommodation and food services (26.4%)	manufacturing (18%)
Union Charter Township	12,927	70.5%	28.6	18.4%	22.8	7.0%	2.5%	29.7%	\$25,590	13.3%	34.7%	\$129,700	29.0%	13.7	\$375,654,723	arts, entertainment, accommodation and food services (32.3%)	education, health, accommodation and food services (24.2%)
Thomas Township	11,985	0.9%	31.9	6.0%	47.1	4.6%	1.7%	21.8%	\$55,203	4.4%	87.5%	\$127,400	58.4%	20.9	\$506,183,700	education, health, accommodation and food services (27.2%)	manufacturing (15.1%)
Bath Township	11,598	20.4%	36.7	15.4%	30.1	8.6%	5.6%	45.0%	\$56,844	23.2%	62.0%	\$167,800	26.5%	20.9	\$402,450,491	education, health, accommodation and food services (26.9%)	arts, entertainment, accommodation and food services (24.4%)
Holly Township*	11,362	13.0%	36.6	0.9%	39.3	5.3%	2.2%	20.9%	\$62,324	9.3%	81.2%	\$119,000	53.5%	30.3	\$270,151,740	education, health, accommodation and food services (21.3%)	manufacturing (20.4%)
Coldwater City	10,945	5.2%	8.3	15.6%	35.2	7.2%	5.0%	13.0%	\$36,014	20.1%	60.5%	\$80,300	70.7%	20.3	\$318,085,014	manufacturing (23.9%)	education, health, accommodation and food services (21.9%)
Port Huron Charter Township	10,654	23.7%	13.1	6.5%	38.5	8.3%	1.9%	12.6%	\$41,238	25.1%	68.9%	\$113,400	58.9%	21.1	\$240,981,766	manufacturing (24%)	education, health, accommodation and food services (20.3%)
Flushing Charter Township	10,640	-4.0%	31.0	2.50%	42.9	4.5%	2.10%	30.3%	\$61,224	9.1%	93.4%	\$113,700	59.7%	29.3	\$264,820,000	education, health, accommodation and food services (28.4%)	manufacturing (12.7%)

* Includes village of Holly

Mr. Eggers presented the draft form of the Thomas Township Survey. He used the version as it will appear on the Thomas Township website when launched so the members could see exactly how it will look and how it will flow. The following is the draft of that survey.

Thomas Township Community Survey

Your input is important!

The Thomas Township Master Plan is currently being updated. This plan will guide growth and development in Thomas Township for the next ten to twenty years. As a resident or stakeholder of Thomas Township, your opinions and vision of the future of your township is important for this plan to be successful. Please read the statements and questions on the following pages and select the answers that best describe your opinions. It should only take a few minutes. Thank you!

General

1. Check all of the following that are reasons that you live in Thomas Township.

- ☐ Like rural living
- ☐ Born and raised here/Near my family
- ☐ Close proximity to large urban centers (Midland, Bay City, Saginaw)
- ☐ Easy for me to drive to the places I want to get to
- ☐ Affordable housing
- ☐ Like the community
- ☐ Recreational opportunities
- ☐ Quality of schools
- ☐ Neighborhoods are clean and attractive
- ☐ Retired here
- ☐ Other: _____

2. How do you feel the following categories have changed in Thomas Township in the past 5 years?

	Much Better	Somewhat Better	About the Same	Somewhat Worse	Much Worse
Road Conditions	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Traffic	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Natural Environment (e.g. rivers, agricultural land, and open land)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Aesthetics / Blight	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Emergency Response	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Township Services	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Overall Quality of Life	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

3. Thomas Township should grow in population in the coming years.

- ☐ Strongly Agree
- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Neutral
- ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Strongly Disagree

4. Thomas Township should have more development in the coming years.

- ☐ Strongly Agree
- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Neutral
- ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Strongly Disagree

5. Five years from now, I still see myself living in Thomas Township.

- ☐ Strongly Agree
- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Neutral
- ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Strongly Disagree

**6. I use the following resources to get the information I need about Thomas Township.
(Check all that apply)**

- ☐ Thomas Township website
- ☐ Thomas Township facebook page
- ☐ The Township Times
- ☐ Saginaw News
- ☐ Other, please specify... _____

Residential Planning

7. The Township should plan for the following housing choices: (check all the apply)

- ☐ I prefer no new residential development.
- ☐ Single family homes on large rural lots
- ☐ Single family homes in planned subdivisions
- ☐ Duplexes and townhomes
- ☐ Mobile home parks
- ☐ Senior citizen communities/assisted living facilities
- ☐ Condominiums
- ☐ Other: _____

8. Thomas Township should plan for more affordable housing.

- ☐ Strongly Agree
- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Neutral
- ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Strongly Disagree

9. Thomas Township should plan for more high-end housing.

- ☐ Strongly Agree
- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Neutral
- ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Strongly Disagree

10. The Township should continue to increase its efforts to ensure that homes are properly maintained (windows are not broken, roofs are in good repair, etc.).

- ☐ Strongly Agree
- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Neutral
- ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Strongly Disagree

Commercial Planning

11. Which describes how you view the amount of commercial businesses (retail and services) in Thomas Township?

- ☐ Not enough
- ☐ Just right
- ☐ Too much

12. Compared to 10 years ago, the M-46 business corridor: (Please check all that apply.)

- ☐ Looks better than it used to
- ☐ Is safer to drive
- ☐ Is safer to walk or bike
- ☐ Has more businesses that I use regularly

Industrial Planning

13. The growth at Hemlock Semiconductor in the past 10 years has been good for Thomas Township.

- ☐ Strongly Agree
- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Neutral
- ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Strongly Disagree

14. Thomas Township should plan for more industrial land uses.

- ☐ Strongly Agree
- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Neutral
- ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Strongly Disagree

Agricultural Land Planning

15. What are your feelings regarding the agricultural land use statements below?

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Agriculture is important to the economy in Thomas Township.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Thomas Township should preserve agricultural land.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Using agricultural land for new development is appropriate for accommodating growth.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Other

16. My family and I have used the Thomas Township Trail that extends from the Saginaw Valley Rail Trail north to the Township Governmental Complex on Shields Drive.

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

17. The Township has developed conceptual plans to extend the Thomas Township Trail north to Geddes Road and west along Geddes where it would ultimately travel through Richland and Ingersoll Townships to connect to Midland. Do you support this extension of the Thomas Township Trail?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ Not Sure

18. It is important to improve and protect the quality of the Tittabawassee River.

- ☐ Strongly Agree
- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Neutral
- ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Strongly Disagree

19. What do you like best about Thomas Township?

20. What is one thing you would do to improve Thomas Township?

**The following questions are for classification purposes only and will be kept confidential.
Please pick the appropriate responses.**

21. What is your age?

- ☐ Under 18
- ☐ 18 to 24
- ☐ 25 to 44
- ☐ 45 to 64
- ☐ 65 and over

22. What is your relationship to Thomas Township?

- ☐ I live in Thomas Township.
- ☐ I own property in Thomas Township but do not live there.
- ☐ None of the above.

Thank you for taking the time to complete this survey!

Iamuuri felt that an additional item needed to be added to Question #2; Parks & Recreation. In addition, Sika felt that maybe the selection “Road Conditions” needed to have some sort of preface such as “Do you know how roads are funded in Thomas Township?”. This way people would understand how the process works before they evaluate the condition of the roads. Eggers noted that a pop-up box could possibly be added when they click on the topic “Road Conditions”.

In Question #4, Sika felt that it needs to be more specific as to commercial development or residential development. Eggers noted that since that is brought up further in the survey it is possible the question could be eliminated.

Question #6 it was felt needed more sources included. Sommers suggested T.V. and radio stations and MLive. Sika also suggested the addition of the Township View. LaMountain noted that the Township quarterly newsletter was also a good addition to the list. McDonald mentioned the use of the banners across Gratiot Road.

For both Questions #8 and #9, Sika felt that a definition or what this includes is needed when asking about affordable housing and high-end housing since people have different concepts of what each of those could be.

In Question #10 Sika said he would like to see it worded to somehow state if the residents would like to see an increase in Code Enforcement for such things as blight or possibly stating if they would like to see stronger Code Enforcement.

For Question #13 Sika felt that it needed to be worded differently. He thought that it should read something like “The growth at Hemlock Semiconductor, which provides X amount of dollars to the tax base, has been good for Thomas Township”. Then follow through with the choices (Strongly Agree, Agree, Neutral, Disagree, Strongly Disagree).

For Questions #16 and #17, the Planning Commission was pleased to see something mentioned about the Rail Trail. They would like to see some sort of map added but felt it was good to be able to note the support for an expansion.

Iamurri mentioned that he’d like to see a question targeted towards the installation of additional sidewalks in Thomas Township to clarify the majorities opinion.

Eggers then discussed how the survey will be launched. He demonstrated one method which will involve scanning by your smartphone to download the survey so it can be completed on your phone. An email blitz will take place and Eggers encouraged the Planning Commission as well as other boards to share the survey among friends that are residents. The Community Development Department will be given a public service format so the survey and link to it can be sent to local newspapers. Information will also be placed on the Township website, Facebook page, in the Township Newsletter, water bills, and others with links to the on-line survey. Sika noted a computer will be made available at the Township office along with paper copies of the survey for those who wish to complete it at the office.

Once again Eggers noted that he hopes to see the survey launched within the next month and left available for completion for the same timeframe. He is hoping to get a 10% completion rate based on the population.

Eggers suggested that the survey and suggested changes get placed in the Thomas Township Board packets for their input.

Next month he noted, there may not be a lot to present and it depends on when the survey gets launched. The Planning Commission did agree that the changes should be made and have it be presented to the Township Board and then launched at that point. They did not feel they needed to see a “rough draft” next month to delay the survey from getting out there.

10. New Business-Discussion Only-Nonconforming Ordinance

Sika said that the Township Manager had brought up a concern with Section 3.1 Nonconforming Ordinance. It reflects a six (6) and twelve (12) month standard. Sika told the Planning Commission that the information had been turned over to the Township Attorney, Otto Brandt in August to have him review it and make a recommendation. He added that this should come before the planning Commission in October if all goes well and just wanted to make them aware that it would be coming up. Sika also told the members that this Nonconforming ordinance section 3.1 differs from the Nonconforming section of the RV Ordinance and they are two separate things.

11. Receive and File All Correspondence-Memo to the Township Board from Dan Sika

Adjournment

Motion by Iamurri seconded by Sommers to adjourn the meeting at 8:10 p.m. Motion carried unanimously. ***The next meeting date is October 21, 2015.***

Respectfully submitted by Connie Watt, Planning Assistant/Code Enforcement Officer