

***COUNTY PLANNING COMMISSION AGENDA
OCTOBER 29, 2020 SPECIAL MEETING
7:30 A.M.***

1. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE
2. ROLL CALL
3. DISCUSSION ON THE GENERAL PLAN UPDATE
4. ADJOURNMENT



Geauga County Planning Commission
470 Center Street, Building 1C, Chardon, Ohio 44024
Phone (440) 279-1740 Fax (440) 285-7069
www.co.geauga.oh.us/Departments/Planning-Commission

October 29, 2020 SPECIAL MEETING MINUTES

1. Pledge of Allegiance

Chairman Charles Stevens called the October 29, 2020 special meeting of the Geauga County Planning Commission to order at 7:32 a.m. at 470 Center Street, Building 8, City of Chardon. Following the Pledge of Allegiance, the roll was called by Maria Palmisano, Planner I, and the following members were present. A quorum was obtained.

2. Roll Call

Members present: Charles Stevens, Dennis Bergansky, James McCaskey, Walter Claypool, Gary Neola, Timothy Lennon, James Dvorak and Tracy Engle.

Members absent: Ralph Spidalieri, Caterina Cocca-Fulton, and Chester Miller

Staff Present: Linda Crombie (Planning Director) and Maria Palmisano (Planner I)

Others Present: Ann Wishart, Tom Jones, and Diane Jones

3. Discussion and action regarding the Geauga County General Plan Update

On the October 15, 2020 meeting, Mr. Claypool made a motion to stop the Geauga County General Plan Update Process due to lack of a proper direction, seconded by Mr. Neola. The motion was tabled with the intent to pick up the discussion at a special Geauga County Planning Commission meeting, originally to be held on October 27, 2020, and was later reschedule to be held on October 29, 2020.

Mr. Claypool presented the following summarized presentation:

Conservation easements are robbing the county tax base of developable area. Many people that agree to conservation easements are in it for a payout and cannot see behind the land conservancy curtain. They end up selling their property rights away to conservation agencies ran by boards of attorneys that can trade and sells those rights at will. Property owners do not realize that they must get permission and extra plans approved by those conservation agencies before they can do anything with their own land.

NOACA heavily imposes their urban bias in every project they are involved in and aim to take away rural funds and give it to inner city areas. It is not clear if the consultant partners chosen

for the general plan update understand Geauga and the relationship with NOACA. They have not reached out about any comments brought to them and demonstrate a lack of concern. Marxist directions and progressive policies have destroyed Cleveland, and conservation easements and conservation development will destroy Geauga County. This plan needs to recognize threats to the county and accumulate information with more appropriate methods to find answers. The survey questions have been steered with a progressive agenda and the board may have hired the wrong partners for the project. The direction of the plan needs to be reset and the consultants may need to be replaced.

Mr. Stevens thanked Mr. Claypool for his presentation and opened the discussion up for comments.

Ms. Crombie advised having data on the amount of land that is tax exempt or under conservation easement is important and research needs to be done as part of the plan. The 1,650 survey responses were good as compared to the 2003 survey that was mailed to 500 random registered voter households. The current survey showed farmland preservation is still an issue of concern and it is an important part of Geauga County's economy. Ms. Crombie stressed the importance of public participation as the plan is not written first and then present to the public.

Mr. McCaskey commented that his mom is not interested in keeping five acres and would like to downsize. There is a need for both one bedroom townhouses as well as five acre lots and there is nothing wrong with either.

Mr. Engle added that he felt the board was very involved in the general plan update process and that it needs to keep moving forward.

Mr. Bergansky stated he felt that there may be subliminal messaging related to conservation easements and that people need to be made more aware of what they are agreeing to. He also mentioned that the CAUV program reduces the amount of tax people pay.

Mr. Stevens clarified that the CAUV designation is tedious to application process, and the reduced tax rate only applies to the area of land that qualifies under the CAUV application.

Mr. Engle added that there is no tax reduction associated with most conservation easements unless the property owners successfully petition the auditor's office for a reduced rate.

Mr. Liszniansky replied to Mr. Claypool's concerns and emphasized that he was aware that most Geauga County residents desire the county to keep its rural character and are not interested in expanded sewage systems. There is a need for small housing units, but small housing units make most sense in small clusters in already somewhat dense areas such as Bainbridge, the City of Chardon, and Middlefield Village where people have demonstrated that they are already comfortable with them. The goal is for the plan to include tools and options that the county and townships can use going forward to prioritize projects that are specific to local needs and local concerns.

Mr. Dvorak mentioned that he was very pleased with Envision Group's work and felt that the steering committee and Planning Commission made adequate tweaks to the survey questions before they were published for the response period. He was disappointed the last general plan was created in 2003, but is optimistic that the plan is on track to be consistently updated in the future. He has been happy with everyone's efforts, even with all the precautions and delays related to Covid.

Mr. Stevens added that there is an opportunity to discuss and reset the direction of the general plan update at every meeting, and if there needs to be action taken, it can be done by a majority motion. He has actually never worked with a consulting group more receptive to comments or concerns, and has no issue reaching out to Emil about anything that comes up.

Mr. Claypool requested that Envision group provide the board with an executive summary of the general plan update so far for the next regular Planning Commission meeting.

Upon a vote, the motion made by Mr. Claypool to stop the Geauga County General Plan Update Process due to lack of a proper direction, seconded by Mr. Neola, was denied unanimously.

9. Adjournment

Chairman Stevens adjourned the meeting at approximately 9:22 a.m.



Charles Stevens, Chairman



Gary Neola, Secretary/Treasurer