

**FINAL**  
**CHARTER TOWNSHIP OF COMMERCE**  
**\*\*SPECIAL\*\* PLANNING COMMISSION MEETING**

Monday, September 12, 2022  
2009 Township Drive  
Commerce Township, Michigan 48390

**A. CALL TO ORDER:** Chairperson Parel called the special meeting to order at 5:30pm.

**ROLL CALL:** Present:

Brian Parel, Chairperson  
Brian Winkler, Vice Chairperson  
Bill McKeever  
George Weber  
Joe Loskill

Absent:

Sam Karim (excused)  
Chelsea Rebeck, Secretary (excused)

Also Present:

Dave Campbell, Township Planning Director  
Paula Lankford, Planner  
Jill Bahm, Partner, Giffels Webster  
Rose Kim, Planner, Giffels Webster  
Sri Komaragiri, Planner, Giffels Webster  
Julia Upfal, Planner, Giffels Webster

**B. APPROVAL OF THE SPECIAL MEETING AGENDA**

**MOTION** by Loskill, supported by McKeever, to approve the Planning Commission Special Meeting Agenda of September 12, 2022, as presented.

**C. MASTER LAND USE PLAN REVIEW**

Work session of the 2015 Master Land Use Plan update

Jill Bahm – I believe you have met Julia who was here last time. Sri Komaragiri is also here and she has been on the team in the background for this project. You will probably see Rose and I, along with Julia, and Sri as she is able to join us for some of the different activities that we do, and probably a lot during public engagement because we do like to have more of us around for that.

Thank you again for setting up a special pre-Planning Commission meeting to talk with us about the Master Plan. The last time we met in August, we went through the Existing Conditions summary. We received some comments on that, and then some comments on the maps. We made some changes to those maps and I think Rose wanted to share with you what we've updated and changed.

Rose Kim reviewed the following with the Planning Commission:

- New Publicly Owned Lands Map; update now reflects a category of Public Schools.
- The Development Constraints Map, which is now more complete, gives a better picture of what is preserved open space, and also includes watersheds. Trails were added to the map as well.
- The Community Facilities Map, which now includes the trails.
- The Developed Land Cover Map, which shows a change for the color representing developed open space.

Jill Bahm – You asked us last time to swap out the colors on the Land Cover Map. We modified those and I think it actually does look more like what you would see from an aerial.

Chairperson Parel felt it was a good time to pause and look at the Land Cover Map overall. This map is pretty important to the Planning Commission and to share with the community. It's a starting point to show how much greenspace, how much water and how much nature the community is comprised of before beginning the conversation about development. The new colors reflect this more accurately. He also discussed this map and how it would be helpful in addressing situations, such as the challenge with the school district recently attempting to sell property, which triggered a lot of phone calls about preserving greenspace.

Vice Chairperson Winkler shared the following:

- It would be worthwhile to add the Township property and the annexed property along Martin Parkway to the Publicly Owned Land Map.
- On the Public Facilities Map, it might be worthwhile to show Fire Station #4, which is along Glengary Road on the border of Wixom.
- Also at the annex is the new location for the Oakland County Sheriff Substation (8585 PGA Drive). I think by the time this Master Plan is done, that will probably be online. Maybe for the moment, call it *future*.

George Weber added that toggling between the Land Cover Map and the following map really helps to show the picture. He suggested that the order of those maps should first show, *This is the developed area*, and then the protected land shown in blue or green.

Jill Bahm cautioned everyone to be mindful of the fact that some of the green areas are developed open space and private recreation space, such as golf courses shown in bright green. The darker green are really the protected ones. She noted differences between school properties, Township properties, and State of Michigan properties. We can see they are publicly owned properties, but just because it's school property, we can't necessarily assume that will never be sold. Looking at the map that shows development limitations; wetlands, lake areas, et cetera, that helps show why some of those areas are protected. They're sensitive lands and may be challenging to develop on. Even property that isn't publicly protected still may have development challenges.

Chairperson Parel was thinking through how this will be presented to the community and what information will be disseminated. Jill Bahm agreed that maps should be presented in an open meeting where they can be explained further, especially focusing in on specific areas.

Chairperson Parel inquired about the term "grasslands". Jill Bahm and Dave Campbell speculated that grasslands are more farmland or agricultural in nature. Long Farm and Sleeth Road properties were reviewed. Jill stated that's more cultivated crops and pastures. Weber suggested changing it to agricultural.

Discussion continued regarding map colors and associations, such as blue for water, green for trees, yellow for grasslands, cultivated crops and pastures. Former mining and farming properties were also reviewed, along with natural greenspaces. Sri Komaragiri suggested a description of a line or two in the document for agricultural and grasslands.

Chairperson Parel suggested those might be shown in green as opposed to yellow. Jill would examine these areas further and define accordingly.

Weber agreed that another value of this map is that it serves as a starting point. It demonstrates following the existing Master Plan, where you have more density and commercial along the Haggerty/M-5 corridor, and as you head west, it is purposefully less dense with more greenspace. Discussions have indicated that the Planning Commission wants to keep the west low density, and the east, by design, will be developed while trying to maintain a community feel as much as possible.

Chairperson Parel – From far away, that map tells the story. The Haggerty Corridor is the more dense commercial area, and when you look outside of that, you see a lot of green and blue.

Jill Bahm – And a fair amount of red, and it's not to say that's bad. The developed areas, whether it's medium or high-intensity, those are areas that have been developed. We could be thinking about what we want to preserve, and also what we want to reclaim from development, redevelop, where we want to concentrate development, and then where we can, how do we want to mitigate the impact of that? When we look at the next map on Impervious Surface Coverage, that gets into thinking about strategies to mitigate some of the impervious surface coverage and what that means to the quality of our preserved areas, open space areas and water, particularly our lakes.

Chairperson Parel – It would be interesting to see percentages of these numbers, but I don't want to complicate this map.

Dave Campbell – A question for Jill and the team; is it easy enough to calculate the percent of these and put it right here in the key?

Chairperson Parel – Maybe for internal purposes and not for presentation. I know the result I'm looking for. We know that the Haggerty Corridor is going to be more heavily weighted toward commercial.

Jill Bahm – I think we could probably do that.

McKeever – The top half has no water or sewer either.

Jill Bahm – Right, and it's a little bit harder to access due to the winding road network. I think it is a pretty map and it does tell a lot about the community too, in ways that people might not think. For example, up in the northwest corner, you might think it's all just homes and lakes. But, when we look at the homes, we can see that they have an impact too. Now we get to have that conversation with the residents to think about how we all play a role in preserving the Township appearance and being environmental stewards on a personal level.

Chairperson Parel discussed making sure that future development continues to have a lot of greenspace.

Weber – What capabilities do you have with geography for this map? Meaning if you compared adjacent communities such as West Bloomfield and Novi to Commerce Township. I think it would maybe be a little more impressive.

Jill Bahm – Maybe make it a little more regional.

Weber – Yes, and then we can zoom in on just Commerce.

Dave Campbell – With the Impervious or the Land Cover?

Weber – Either one, and maybe just for our own knowledge to see how we compare.

Jill Bahm – Maybe the Impervious Surfaces and the Tree Canopy Coverage. I could see those two together being meaningful from a regional perspective. We are doing the Master Plan for Milford Township as well.

Weber – Milford will be a little bit skewed with the Proving Grounds.

Jill Bahm – It is, but we might use that map for them as well. We're also going to be working with Springfield Township which is north of White Lake. I think they would be interested in that too. They're also thinking along those same lines, looking at environmental features and natural resources. It's interesting to be working with all three communities right now, and seeing that feeling that we're getting from all the Planning Commissions; the recognition that this is important. It's not that it wasn't expressed before, but I think it's in tandem with, *We want to accommodate development, and we want to be sure that we're being good environmental stewards of the land.* Not to say that we are necessarily going to over-regulate everything, but being mindful and intentional about where we're allowing and encouraging growth and redevelopment. And, where we do, what else do we need to do to mitigate impacts?

Sri Komaragiri – I was thinking in the context of, if we expand the edges of Commerce Township, that way we can see the transition at the boundaries. If not the entire cities, but just looking at how the borders transition. Is there high-density development next to a low-density neighbor?

Jill Bahm – Yes, we can see a little bit, but maybe we haven't gone out far enough.

Weber – If any other Townships have any great ideas, we're okay with copying those shamelessly.

Jill Bahm – We will make sure they reflect your individual communities, but there may be some strategies that would apply throughout.

Vice Chairperson Winkler – Something that comes to mind, assuming this is based on a previous Impervious Surfaces Map, we might need to make sure this is updated to include development that has taken place since 2015. I don't mean to put an undue burden on your team and I don't know if that has been done or not. One example is in the central south section of Commerce Township, there is a development, under where it says Loon Lake Road, on the corner of Benstein Road, Windwheel Estates is being built right now. It should be taken into account as it's almost all built out.

Jill Bahm – That’s good and we’ll make a note. We exported the map in August of 2022. The data comes from the USGS, the geological survey, and Michigan’s Open Data. Maybe it would be helpful to have the date of that data on here. We can reference that. Also, if there is something really significant, we can always describe that in the text. This would be the most current data that we have available from USGS and Open Data.

Dave Campbell – Don't they use some sort of radar to get this data?

Jill Bahm – Yes, and aerial imagery as well.

Dave brought Jill’s PowerPoint up on the overhead.

Jill Bahm – We will take a look at the 2015 Goals & Objectives in a minute. We also wanted to talk about the public engagement opportunities.

- We talked about the idea of an Art Contest, open to kids K-12.
  - We’d like to get some prizes, such as gift cards to local businesses and restaurants, to use as awards.
  - We thought we would have that to the schools with a proposed deadline of November 30<sup>th</sup>.
  - (Discussion continued regarding networking, school contacts, the PTA, and the plan for disseminating information.)
  - This will allow kids to share what they think is important for the community, which they will likely share with their parents who might also get involved.
- Another opportunity is “Picture This”:
  - Following the link in the PowerPoint, this is an example of what we did for another township last year.
  - We are in the process of updating this web-based application.
  - If you click on any one of those pictures on the side, they’ll show you images that people put up.
  - People were able to upload photos and tag it to the map.

Chairperson Parel – Is this already live?

Jill Bahm – This is live, but that project is over. The one for Commerce is not live yet because it’s not completed.

Discussion continued regarding feedback received.

Sri Komaragiri – I think it helped spread the word and people were using that to have conversations.

Chairperson Parel – How did you get people to the site? Through social media?

Jill Bahm – Yes, primarily and also through Township staff. We have observed that we need to be more specific about what we are asking. In our next version of “Picture This”, we are trying to get the ability to also let people post comments and not just a picture. We will have links to that on our project website with a description about how to use it. It’s another tool.

What are the prompts that you think would help engage Commerce Township residents and business owners in participating in this? We put in some potential questions; *What is special about Commerce Township? What does the community want to protect?* In this case, people might take pictures of Parks. There might be historic structures, or agricultural structures. There might be special trees, businesses, anything that people think the Township should make an effort to protect.

Another question, *What does the community want to improve?* People might put in suggestions for a land use, a public facility, or photos of places that might be falling into disrepair.

Or, *What do they want to add?* Say you were in another community and you see something you like there. If you think we need that in Commerce Township, you could take picture of it, tag it to the map in the actual location, and it will show something beyond our borders. That can be really interesting.

Loskill – You're going to get a thousand pictures of Chipotle.

Jill Bahm – My husband wants to see Pot Belly here. So that's an example of "Picture This". We think the new version will be better. Our GIS team is working on this. It has potential to be a good tool.

Chairperson Parel – I like it better than just opening up a forum on a Facebook page.

Jill Bahm – We're really being mindful of that.

Weber – Who is the administrator, you?

Jill Bahm – Yes. We have had varying levels of success.

Extensive discussion continued regarding "Picture This", public engagement, feedback, use of social media, prompts to keep reminding and engaging the public, and sharing links. The Commerce Township Residents group page on Facebook gets a lot of activity. There are also web pages for Commerce Township, Parks & Recreation, Senior Center and the Library.

Jill Bahm – "Picture This" is different than a survey because respondents can see what other people have done. We try to make sure it stays positive. We have debated whether we want to allow comments. It's a fine line. Previously, the person posting had the ability to caption their photo, but it was not open to other comments.

Vice Chairperson Winkler – If I go back, maybe four years ago, there was an MAP award given to a planner for a planning department, around the Battle Creek or Kalamazoo area. The award was for their development of processes, in addition to what you're proposing, to engage the community. I'd be glad to research that to see if we could find out what those methods were that resulted in the award. The Planning Commission nominated David for the same MAP award for his efforts on the M-5 pedestrian bridge, and how quickly he did it.

Jill Bahm – It was probably Kalamazoo because I know they did win some awards for their public engagement plan. I know they have a lot of staff and they did a lot of in-person meetings. That takes a lot of time and resources to do.

I am on the Board of Directors for the Michigan Association of Planning along with Christina Anderson, Planning Director in Kalamazoo. The two of us are doing a session at the upcoming conference. I'll talk to her this week.

We also helped the City of Rochester Hills win an award for public engagement for the Master Plan in 2018. Some of the things we did we are applying here as well.

We'll work on those prompts, and I like the idea of sending them out on a weekly basis.

I think the Neighborhood Toolkits are another nice tool.

- We've talked about this briefly, having a member of the Planning Commission, facilitate a small group discussion.
- We will provide all of the materials for that.
- This is an example that we did for the City of Charlotte.
- We have a sign-in sheet, directions for the facilitator, post-it notes for the meeting, blank pieces of paper, and even a giant piece of paper that they could stick up on the wall.
- Two things that I think could work in terms of prompts for this would be thinking about those study areas; the north end and the commercial center. *What are the key strengths and weaknesses of each of those areas?* We can divide them geographically, and have some discussion about that.
- Then, *What ideas do you have to protect, improve or add into each of those areas?*
- It's straightforward and simple. It takes maybe an hour and a half to facilitate.
- We'd like to have your thoughts on those questions, as well as ideas about how we want to break those down. I think we said 10 would be a good number to do.
- This can be done at a neighborhood level, or through an organizational level. What seems to make sense to you?

Chairperson Parel – I'm a little pessimistic and I see a lot of people participating online through the first two methods.

Weber – I think we have to make the effort and provide the opportunity to do it. I participated in the Parks when they've done it. It's valuable to get them in a room and be able to have an interactive conversation.

Chairperson Parel – I agree and I think there's still some people who are not on social media. I'd be interested to see what kind of participation we get in the first one. Where do we hold that?

Discussion took place regarding locations to hold meetings for Neighborhood Toolkits, and the facilities they each might offer. Suggestions included the Township Library, the Richardson Center, the Township Hall, and also local restaurants, such as Blazing Bagels and Matter of Taste. Weber noted that the restaurants would also have the authority to promote the event themselves on their own Facebook pages. Themes such as *Wine, Cheese and Planning*, or a prior *Valentine Vodka Open House* were discussed.

Jill Bahm – We can work on the Toolkits. We will get the other two launched. We can do a few now and a few later, to get more specific feedback.

Weber – I would start with, *What do you love and what do you want more of?* Let's start with what's right and make sure we continue to enhance and move forward. *What are we missing that we want to see included?* What are the pain points, other than traffic?

Loskill – Yes, *What do we need to improve on* rather than *what's wrong*.

Jill Bahm – If you think you might want to help facilitate, you can let Dave and Paula know. We will strategize a way to get people involved from the community. We would hold a facilitator's meeting so they have a brief understanding.

Weber – You want a focus group or a test group. It would be easy to do it with Emily at the Richardson Center. They have a crowd several days a week, and we would check events to be held on those days. I'm assuming it would be similar at the Library. We could test the process.

Dave Campbell – Jill, in terms of scheduling, whether it's test runs or neighborhood engagements, when would those land on the calendar?

Jill Bahm – I think those would land in October. The Art Contest we can send out soon. "Picture This", probably the end of September, beginning of October, and the Toolkits we can talk about again on October 3<sup>rd</sup>. Then we can have those toward the middle to end of October.

Weber – Dave, On the Dunes might be another good facility for a Toolkit meeting.

Chairperson Parel – I try to tell people what On the Dunes did with the trailhead. When we're talking about mobility and this plan, it's an easy transition into that where we could show people. Not everybody knows about it and I thought it was great thing. However, there's a few different groups and some may not be comfortable going to a bar to have that conversation.

Jill Bahm – On the next slide are the Guiding Principles. Those were included in your packet, so I'm not going to go through them again. I just wanted to remind you that we still have the donut.

On the next slide, these are the 2015 goals. It's 6:30pm so I don't know that we'll be able to get through this, but I'll set it up so we can talk again about it in October. These are the goals you had. We may not know the answer to this question yet. Maybe we look at it now, but we refine it after getting public input. Be thinking about these 2015 goals. They might be fine, or they might need tweaking, refinement or replacement all together when we think about our guiding principles and the vision that we have.

- *For residential, to achieve well-planned, safe, balanced and pleasant, high-quality residential neighborhoods for all income levels within the Township.*

Any thoughts that jump out at you on that?

Weber – I almost want to compare it to the words that we chose in the donut.

Chairperson Parel – I do like the idea of waiting for input from the community before finalizing it.



Jill Bahm – Yes, I think so. Just be thinking about it. They go hand-in-hand when we think about the kind of engagement that we want to get from the community. What questions do we want to know the answers to?

Dave Campbell – The only thought I had on that one is, in addition to all income levels, I wonder if it would also include all age groups or life stages, or however you want to say that.

Weber – Yes, all income and age levels.

Jill Bahm – One of the key phrases that we use are all ages and abilities, which gets to even more of an inclusive level.

- *Commercial & Office – To maintain and improve existing commercial areas, while encouraging further, high-quality commercial growth within appropriate areas of the Township.*

Chairperson Parel – The only thing I notice on that, there's always the question, what supports what? Is the commercial supporting our residential? Or vice versa? And what's more important to us in this community.

Weber – Is commercial a better word for business? Business seems more personal.

Loskill – Business makes it relative to our area.

Chairperson Parel – So the first sentence, it's existing commercial area, but high-quality *local business growth*.

Vice Chairperson Winkler – There should be something in there about *repurposing*. We have so many big boxes and they're not going to be around forever.

Dave Campbell – I was going to say something similar; *being adaptive*, especially with changes we're seeing because of Amazon, and now a pandemic, and all of the commercial changes that came with that. Then something we discussed and it's probably going to come up with Lafontaine; the different ways that people acquire their goods and services. We have discussed some automotive uses becoming obsolete as we move toward electric vehicles. So maybe some language in here about *adaptability*.

Chairperson Parel – That's also proactivity.

Dave Campbell – Proactive in addition to reactive.

Jill Bahm – Those are really good. The next one:

- *Industrial – Promote well-located and diverse industrial development, while protecting the relationship between industrial and non-industrial land uses.*

Chairperson Parel – I think commercial includes industrial, but maybe not to everyone.

Weber – Maybe not by definition, but I agree, the connotation.

Chairperson Parel – There's residential, and then there's everything else.

Weber – You have your local business, which provides services to the community, whereas industrial provides jobs.

Chairperson Parel – Technically you'd have office in there too. That would be separate.

Jill Bahm – I think the point about job creation is a good way to think about industrial land uses too.

Vice Chairperson Winkler – What comes to mind is reading through the minutes from last month's Planning Commission meeting, where we had that industrial developer come in. He talked about how, in that particular industrial sub, a lot of those sites have been vacant for years. So maybe we talk about *promote well-located and diverse industrial development within existing industrial zoned properties*.

Weber – That's a good point, Brian, by incorporating into existing industrial zoned property, so we're not giving the feeling that all of the sudden we are creating new square footage for industrial space.

Jill Bahm – It would be interesting to know too, if they're vacant, why are they vacant? Is there anything about them that is not conducive to industrial uses? Is it their location, or their size, or is it just that the market is not here?

Chairperson Parel – Have we made a decision that we don't want to expand industrial in Commerce Township?

Weber – We shouldn't, not yet. That's part of this process.

Chairperson Parel – If we say redevelopment, or we hint at no future growth, you're right, we don't make that decision now. Maybe we can't make that decision at all.

Weber – If we looked at it, where would TLM fit? Is that commercial or industrial? We zoned it TLM from industrial. We don't have a lot of industrial, but what we do have, most of it is being used. I might look to Dave and Paula. We have the Ladd Road area.

Dave Campbell – I would say those industrial parks in there are more undeveloped. I don't know if there's a shortage of available industrial zoned properties in the Township currently.

Weber – We have space that's open and available, and it's not used. That might lead you to say, why would we need to create more?

Chairperson Parel discussed the Beaumont property and what might be a good fit there. Dave Campbell noted that is one of the properties being looked at as part of this process.

Loskill – One of the issues with the Ladd Road properties is access to freeways. You've got a lot of development going on in Wixom and the freeway is right there. You've got to find someone who is not worried about location.

Weber – Good point, it would be small industrial.

Dave Campbell – We've heard the Ladd properties may be over-priced for the current market. The owner recognizes that and has been patient. The owner developed them and he knows his investment, so he's not looking to discount the price on them. We might see another project on one of those properties in October.

Jill Bahm – Let's go through the last few.

- *Transportation*
- *Environmental Issues*
- *Community & Public Facilities*
- *Infrastructure*

Chairperson Parel – Obviously nonmotorized sidewalks and pathways are important to me, and to this process. I know our Supervisor is interested in getting input from the community. He's putting out a survey to gauge the public's view. How do we think we can incorporate that into these conversations?

Jill Bahm – I think one of the guiding principles that we have talks about that as well.

Jill and Dave discussed survey questions, survey schedules, and incorporating the findings into the Master Plan.

Dave Campbell – I think we continue to have the 5:30pm workshops leading into our regular 7:00pm meetings. The other thing we are doing this week is the Leadership Summit, with the non-elected Township staff directors.

Jill Bahm – We're doing that Thursday at 10am. It will be a visioning session with leadership staff, tapping into their expertise as professionals from all across the different Township departments, and getting their thoughts on strengths and weaknesses of the community, and what opportunities and threats they see. I think staff often has a really interesting and different perspective that is worth sharing with the community, because you have a lot of good people that work here.

**D. OTHER MATTERS TO COME BEFORE THE COMMISSION:**

Deferred to the regular meeting at 7:00pm.

**E: PLANNING DIRECTOR'S REPORT**

Deferred to the regular meeting at 7:00pm.

**F: ADJOURNMENT**

**MOTION** by Loskill, supported by Weber, to adjourn the meeting at 6:47pm.

**MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY**

---

Joe Loskill, Secretary