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Supervisor Pat Hohl Clerk Mike Dolan Treasurer Jason Negri Trustees Bill Hahn, Patricia Hughes, Chuck Menzies, Cindy Michniewicz

PLANNING COMMISSION MEETING

Wednesday, July 16, 2025 at 7:00 PM
Hamburg Township Hall Board Room

MINUTES

CALL TO ORDER

Commissioner Muck called the meeting to order at 7:00 pm.

PLEDGE TO THE FLAG

ROLL CALL OF THE BOARD:

1) PRESENT:

John Hamlin
Patricia Hughes
Deborah Mariani
Ron Muir
Jeff Muck, Chair
Joyce Priebe

2) ABSENT:

Victor Leabu Jr

APPROVAL OF MEETING AGENDA for tonight.

Approval Motion made by Commissioner Mariani, seconded by Commissioner Priebe, to approve the agenda as presented.

Voice Vote: Ayes: (6) Absent: (1) Leabu

VOTE: MOTION CARRIED

APPROVAL OF THE MEETING MINUTES

Approval Motion made by Trustee Hughes, seconded by Commissioner Priebe, to approve May 21, 2025, Planning Commission Meeting Minutes with corrections as noted by Trustee Hughes and Commissioner Muir.

Voice Vote: Ayes: (6) Absent: (1) Leabu

VOTE: MOTION CARRIED

CALL TO THE PUBLIC- No public response

OLD BUSINESS

1. Village Center Master Plan -Five Year Review (Continued).

Chair Muck asked David to summarize where we ended this topic a few months ago. Muck said stated the Planning Commission would need to present a motion of recommendation to the Township Board regarding any revisions made to the Village Center Master Plan.

David recapped that May's PC Meeting ended with Commissioner Hamlin's recommendation to simplify the Village Center Master Plan's language of the overall zoning districts to provide better clarification and simplicity. David had sent out the May's meeting minutes to the PC early so they could review and bring back additional comments and questions that they had. David said that the members would consider what to do with all these different zoning classifications that were unique to the Village Center and whether it makes sense to simplify, adjust or amend the plan at this point. Does it make sense to let the plan exist as it does since proposed development has increased in this area. There is nothing that prohibits the planning commission, at any point in the future, to come back to review the Village Center Master Plan and potentially amend the plan formally.

Chair Muck asked David to explain what the State of Michigan requires the Planning Commission to do when they do a formal amendment to the Master Plan. David stated that a full review is required to be done every 5 years, which would occur in October 2025. There is no prohibition from doing this review annually. It depends on where the community and the planning commission is regarding the kind of development that is going on within that community. David let the PC members know that they could revisit this review next spring, if they wished to. If the members decide to formally amend the Master Plan, then it will become a lengthy process. We will need to notify everyone and potentially create an advisory committee of constituents who will work on the changes that we think are needed. Most communities won't review the plan so that is why the state statutorily requires a review at least every 5 years so the plan doesn't stay static.

Commissioner Muir stated that there will be enough happening next year that maybe a review at the point would make more sense. We can start filling in the pieces with all the apartments, condos, gas station and any project that might be approved in the future. David said there are two developments occurring here, one of which has broken ground and the other will be breaking ground in the fall or the spring, which could become moving targets with any proposed amendments.

Chair Muck asked David to explain about the difference between amending the Master Plan and starting with a brand-new Master Plan. Amending is just making changes to the plan. Any changes to the plan will require us to notify the public of a public hearing. We open this process to the community, and it usually lasts between 12-18 months. It can be shorter or longer. Since the Village Center Master Plan is so complicated and has much history, we would probably put out a (Request for Proposals) RFP for a plan rewrite. We would solicit the board, set a budget, the board would form a working group to select who would be hired. The board would have to approve that. Then we would start the whole planning process which would include public hearing, outreach, design, charettes, and notification.

Commissioner Hamlin asked if the plan needs to be amended, why not start this process now? Why wait till next year? David said that if the PC has consensus, then they could decide when they want to amend the plan. With all the development going on in the Village Center, formally amending the Village Center Master Plan right now might cause many unwanted issues. It might cause confusion or concern about whether these current development projects will be able to move forward. If the projects moved forward, would such amendments cause these developers problems in moving forward with a changing landscape.

Commissioner Hamlin said the PC wouldn't amend the plan so much as to muddy the waters. He stated that the projects already approved for development don't follow the plan already as written. Hamlin said if we are going to amend the plan next year, why not start now.

Trustee Hughes said she wants to discuss a few things as well. She said we are a linear village. We don't really have anything other than the township complex. She said that she doesn't know of any place where we could create a village unless we utilized open undeveloped land. The plan talked about commercial developments down on E. M-36. This undeveloped land will more likely become subdivisions for homes. Are we going to stay a bedroom community? The gas station, apartments and townhouses have been approved so she said she doesn't feel like there is any need to amend the Village Center Master Plan right now.

Commissioner Muir said the objectives of the plan is to create development within a walkable distance. The opportunity to do this is along the Village Center Drive paralleling to M-36. We must draw businesses in Hamburg that people will want to walk to like restaurants, another barber shop, and other businesses along the stretch towards the hardware store. Trustee Hughes asked how we draw restaurants and businesses to our community. She said with her time on the PC, it is usually the developer that decides where they will build houses or subdivisions. Hughes asked Commissioner Muir with all his experience, should we change the zoning here to require what types of businesses are permitted here? Muir said tax breaks incentives help attract the types of businesses wanted sometimes. He said that is why you find fast food chain franchises either in Pinckney or near US 23.

Commissioner Mariani said she was talking to David last month about how to attract an Aubrey's or other family style restaurant in Hamburg rather than a Mc Donald's. She said we need more affordable dining businesses in this area for families to go to. It will be too expensive for a mom-and-pop business to locate here. This is why a fast-food franchise can locate in townships much easier than family diners. Hamburg Township doesn't have a marketing department to do outreach to such businesses. Chair Muck said we don't have an economic or community development department here either. We don't have a township supervisor who focuses on such conversations, being the person who makes those contacts in bringing certain businesses into the township. We are at the developer's mercy, asking do

they want to locate here. Trustee Hughes asked if this is something that the Planning Commission or David could do? Commissioner Mariani asked how do we establish something like that within our township? How do we get the Township Board to see that this is something that is necessary in our township? Hughes said people would look at locating their businesses in our township so we could have places to walk to in our neighborhoods. We have vacant land. How do we make commercial people aware of this vacant area, and give them tax breaks to encourage their businesses in our neighborhoods? How do we do this as a township?

Commissioner Hamlin said we are going to have 250 apartments coming into the township. These new developments will drive the need for such economic growth. He said that this township is 190 years old. We shouldn't feel like we need to rush into anything. It might be another 190 years. Commissioner Priebe said with reality, whenever we have a project, what do we hear from the public? They don't want things to change. Right? We want it to be just like it has been for years, vacant open land with trees. We don't want any development here. For the PC to say we need development when people are moving out here because there is no development, forcing us to see things from these residents' point of view. The public never says we need more stores or restaurants. They are happy to drive elsewhere than to have businesses located near their homes. This is their bedroom community and that is why they moved to Hamburg Township. This is why they stay here in Hamburg Township because they don't like to see anything new being built.

Commissioner Muir said the people that want new development within proximity to their homes, have not moved into Hamburg Township yet. Commissioner Mariani agreed and said that the people that live here have been here forever. Those are the people that say they don't want anything to change. We need to offer new development to the younger people that are coming into our community, who have jobs that are close by. The younger generation will decide not to move to Hamburg Township because they don't have anything new to offer. We need to balance both generational needs.

Trustee Hughes spoke to David about increasing the buffers along busy streets like M-36 such as volunteer bushes and shrubs. As you drive along the streets, you see a lot of greenery and many of the buildings are screened from the driver's view. Muir said this sounded like an increase in the street setbacks. Hughes said many developers seek a reduction in street setbacks. Hughes said maybe the PC needs to increase the required street setbacks, and the PC should stick to their guns when asked to reduce the setback requirements for new development.

Hamlin said with the plan update, we shouldn't be in a hurry. As development happens, we will make sure that the residential element that moves into these developments will drive the development of businesses nearby. As Priebe said, everyone that comes to the PC meetings says they don't need or want more development. Hamlin said the only people that say that we need more development are the township officials.

Chair Muck asked why should we amend verses start from scratch? We should take the good points from the old plan, using them for a new fresh plan. We can watch what is coming in, instead of amending a plan that is already kind of old. Trustee Hughes said that when she looked up to see what the PC could do as an amendment, there are only tiny edits that can be done. Chair Muck said that is what was concerning him regarding amending this old plan. Muck said he heard Hughes talk about issues with Hall Road. This is a much bigger problem that will not be resolved through amending this plan with edits. We need to look at making a new whole plan from scratch. We need to take our time

and do it right. Hughes said the thing that disappointed her about Hall Road was the storage units. We had changed the map to be something else along there, but a developer came in, saying you haven't really changed your plan or your ordinance. It feels like we are in catch 22 here, if we leave things the way they are. You will get whatever people believe its interpretation is. Muir said that the Hall Road development needs to be something that will not dig up the ground since it is a brownfield property. This limits what can be built there. No single-family home could be built on that site. Hughes mentioned that Green Oak Township will be building 583 more homes on Winas Lake Rd.

Commissioner Priebe said that when she retired from the PC and then came back, she asked if the Village Center Master Plan was realistic. She asked who came up with the idea for this plan. Muir said it was a consultant. He said no one knew what the Village Center was and paid them for it. Chair Muck asked why does Hamburg need a Village Center Master Plan? Hughes said that area had sewer connections so that more dense development could occur there for homes, apartments and businesses. Muck said this plan began in 2010 and now we are in 2025. Hughes said in the surrounding townships, the goal is to just build and build. She said by the time they get everything built, they will have to see if anyone can afford the homes. Muir said that the VC Master Plan came out during his first year on the Planning Commission Board. This consultant had been paid to plan many of these types of communities. Only a few larger communities have built them, such as Northville (or Dearborn).

Chair Muck asked David what he thought. He continued, if the commissioners decided to recycle this plan, do we need to come up with another plan right away? David stated that our zoning ordinance is tied to both plans, so we can toss either plan. The plans need to support (comply) with our zoning ordinance. David said one of the first things that I heard when I started working here two years ago as the Planning Director was that previous planners have had some questions about the plan, but it has just lived on. If the PC believes that it wants to explore whether this plan needs to exist or how much of it can fundamentally change, then I'm all for that. The plan has been a guiding vision for what the Village Center Master Plan could, should and would look like for the past 15 years. Some things have come to fruition, but some haven't. Chair Muck said he agrees. He said do we need this plan at all, should we get rid of it and start all over while being realistic with a Hamburg 2025 or 2030 Vision, instead of doing some spot revisions.

Hamlin said he thought that there could be a small working group that is willing to document some ideas. Are we changing small portions of the plan or are we reevaluating the whole chunk. If it takes one or two years, we have time to do this well. Priebe said if we get rid of the whole Village Center Master Plan, it doesn't mean that we can't have a zoning district called Village Center that will still use the VC requirements such as setbacks. We don't need a separate master plan, that complicates development within the VC district.

Chair Muck said do we task David with going back to the Township Board or Township Supervisor and have a discussion with them. Muck said Hamlin's idea of bringing two Planning Commissioner members and two Township Board members together for a subcommittee, to start working on ideas and talking about what's the overall future of the VC, seemed logical. We need the buy-in from the Township Board.

David said that the PC should just recommend that no formal changes need to be made to this plan right now. Then creating a working group to start meeting monthly, bi-monthly, or quarterly would be a good way of updating this plan without rushing to make changes by October. Commissioner Mariani said that

amending the plan isn't enough. Scraping the plan, starting from scratch with a whole new plan or try to absorb the best parts of this plan into the new master plan seems to be the way to go.

Chair Muck stated that he felt that the PC should recommend to the Township Board to approve this process. David would then have a conversation about forming this subcommittee. We can assign a couple of people to this committee, if the Board or the Supervisor agrees with that plan. David said that the PC doesn't need to make a motion to the Board since this is just a recommendation for a subcommittee. If the Board agrees, then we can establish this subcommittee who would be tasked to formally review and look to make substantial changes to this Village Center Master Plan. The committee could figure out if this old plan is even needed and how it might be incorporated into the new plan. The subcommittee would report back to the PC and the Township Board. We have some new board members so it would be good to have buy-in from the board. It is a good time to reexamine this plan. Commissioner Muir said we could even consider what the VC boundaries would be for this new plan. David agreed that if we are going to create a working group for this, then the whole master plan would be on the table, every aspect of it. Mariani clarified that Hamlin wanted to reduce the existing 10 zoning districts in the VC plan.

Commissioner Priebe said that once the Township moved out of the downtown, there was no hope for the Village Center plan. When the Township was down there, there was a lot of activity going on there. A couple more stores had opened down there as well. Now there is nothing but the Pub and Barber Shop. The working group could have that discussion about what should that vision of a public gathering space be that was discussed in the VC Master Plan. Where will these people go?

Commissioner Hughes said she could talk to the Township Board. She said that she could see this going in one of two ways based on time and how things play out. If a developer came and wanted to build a big subdivision between the hardware store and CVS, and they put in the connecting roads so that M-36 isn't the access point, then you will have a walkable community. Hughes said that she has walked from the Township Hall to the Hamburg Pub. We also have a parking problem. If we have a center that will attract people, can we find a place where more parking is available, such as Winkle House Park for example. Hughes said this is worth talking to the Board about. She was uncertain if things would come along in the interim that will be like the Self-Storage units were a few years ago. The developer said I am here, and I want to do this. This is what your ordinance says so give me some conditions, but I may or may not agree to but get out of my way. Hughes said if the PC wants to charge her to go to the board, and maybe David could come along to that meeting, she could express the PC's concern and conundrum.

Chair Muck said the first conversation should be with the Township Supervisor. David said that Muck and he would be meeting with Jason Negri in a few weeks. David said he would be happy to be a part of the working group. There's enough concerns and questions about the Village Center Master Plan that we should review it. The PC as a group stated that there was no need for "a motion". They gave directions to David for his next steps. Chair Muck asked if David could report back on the results of this meeting at the next PC meeting. David said yes.

Hughes said she remembered going to the charette for the Village Center Master Plan where there were 30 people in the room. Drawings were handed out of different architectural styles, and they were asked what they would like to see in the future. The apartments, multiple housing units and the historical

district were the images or what the group had chosen during that meeting. That was a long time ago. People who move here don't want anyone else to move here. They don't want any more change.

NEW BUSINESS- none

ZONING ADMINISTRATOR'S REPORT

David said that he gave everyone an aerial of a parcel along M-36 regarding the Village Center Plan. David said he met with some developers earlier this month. He is meeting with the Township Supervisor tomorrow. There is some discussion about doing a mixed-use development there, commercial along M-36, with some small four and six plexes, which is a type of duplex behind it, around the CVS. Again, this is interesting timing, that we are reviewing this plan. This development is potentially on the horizon.

Commissioner Hamlin asked David some clarifying questions about this location. David said that there will be residential buildings behind it. Hamlin asked if they knew anything about what kind of commercial development would be going there. David said the company had ties to a national retail restaurant chain such as Applebee's.



Hughes mentioned that the road north of the post office has had its potholes filled but the parking lot for CVS does not. She asked if there was anything that could be done to get those potholes filled. David said he would call the folks at CVS to ask them to fill the potholes in their parking lot. David mentioned that *Village Center* is paved all the way from M-36 through to the fire department. If these developments happen, then these all would actually connect CVS all the way across through that subdivision.

Chair Muck asked if David could give them an update on the Zander Flex Building. The lighting is still the same. David has been emailing Victor. Zander has offered to change some of the facades. He is offering to put the same stone that is on the front porch around all the doors along the side of the building. He is also offering to do some other architectural features with the doors. Muck asked David if these changes would need to come back to the PC board. David said because they are such minor architectural changes, that they would not. It is a minor site plan amendment that is very limited. If he added more things, then that would constitute a site plan that needed to come back to the PC. The biggest issue that Zander is having right now is the awnings that the PC required him to install. They need anchor points. This building is a whole steel framed and spanned structure without such anchor points. It is one piece, unlike a traditional stick building. Zander's concern is that the anchoring of these awnings might compromise some of the structure of the building since it is just sheet metal.

Chair Muck said that if he can't be complaint with the awnings then he would need to come back to the PC. Commissioner Hamlin said he is also non-compliant with their lighting ordinance requirements. David said the lights do point down. The lights are just higher on the building to meet the photometric study and plan which does meet the PC and the zoning requirements. I don't have a mechanism to force him to lower these building lights. David said he can ask Zander to lower these lights. Zander is concerned that if he reduces the light in the parking lot, the parking lot might become dangerous for his tenants. His tenants need a well-lit parking lot. David stated that he has only received two complaints regarding the lighting of this Zander building since it was built and that is it. At a certain point we can't make unfair demands on him. He is complying with the site and lighting plan that was approved by the PC. David said the PC put him in a difficult position since he had not been involved in this development plan review. David said that he doesn't have legal authority to make Zander change those lights if they are not clearly violating our lighting ordinance. Commissioner Muir asked if the lighting plan was approved. Commissioner Hamlin said it was approved as a condition. David said when you are looking at a lighting plan, it is hard to understand such drawings unless you are a lighting expert that has done hundreds of these developments. What influences the lightning glare is not so much the light intensity or volume, but the height of the light. A higher light is required to cover the distance. This is something that we need to be more aware of when the next lighting plan comes before the PC for any new development. The way to avoid this is to direct the parking and perimeter lighting. Hamlin said that Zander stated that several other sites have bright lighting. Some of those lights were installed since our lighting ordinance was created. Some of these sites did not have any township review or approval. These sites are non-compliant. Hamlin asked how we deal with that. The carpet place was approved by the PC, and their lighting is non-complaint. When Zander points out these sites, he's got good points. All the PC members agreed. David said that we can do something about that with code enforcement when it is based on a formal complaint. If we do get formal complaints about excessive brightness or safety issues with the traffic, then that is when we reach out and contact such sites. David said that he didn't feel like the PC was inclined to have our staff go out and find ordinance violations or start enforcing such issues. That can become a slippery slope for our small township. Hamlin said it was just a question but that the PC should make sure to make new buildings comply. Chair Muck said we should probably take off the lighting since there isn't much that we can do.

What about the awning facades changes? When David emailed Victor earlier that day, he asked David to ask what the PC group thought about this issue. David said he could ask Zander to come before the PC for the awning structures modifications, if that is what the PC wanted done. David said he would rather have Zander comply with what was approved. The awning is a sticky point because there are big garage

doors. Chair Muck said he would like Zander to come before the PC Board, if he wants to make any changes to the garage doors and awnings. David said he will communicate this to Zander and have him put together his proposals.

Trustee Hughes asked David if Zander had his Certificate of Occupancy? David said no, he has not received his final inspection yet. Hughes continued. Will each tenant have to come to the Planning Dept to get approval to move in? David said yes, each tenant will need to come in for a "Commercial -Change of Use" since it is a new use. It is currently a white box right now. Each unit will get built out per tenant's individual needs. Finally, she asked what kind of tenants would be attracted to such large garage door units. Zander said no one wants office space anymore. She said she won't argue with that. It will be interesting to see what tenants he will attract. If they become warehouse tenants, I don't think warehouses are permitted in this area. David agreed that this use is not permitted in the Village Center. David said with all the money spent on building this site, he didn't feel that it would become a warehouse. Commissioner Mariani asked why Zander didn't mention that the awnings would be a problem with the type of steel structure that he was planning to build. David said he probably ordered a different building 3 years ago and it changed over time due to the supply availability. It became different than the building that they envisioned. A lot of this stuff is unknown until the actual building is built. Chair Muck said that awnings could be tricky depending on snow and windy weather. The PC agreed that they want to see what Zander is proposing as a group.

There will be no August PC Meeting. David is expecting a September PC Meeting for a non-controversial rezoning for the park right behind the Township Hall. Twenty years ago, this park was rezoned as a Public Park and Recreation, but it just didn't happen. We just put the park land through a boundary adjustment this week. David said that he will be seeking the PC recommendation for this rezoning to the Board prior to going to Livingston County Planning Dept. This rezoning is needed for the Township to receive grants again.

ADJOURNMENT

Approval motion was made by Trustee Hughes, seconded by Commissioner Hamlin to adjourn at 7:51 pm.

Voice Vote: Ayes: (6) Absent: (1) Leabu

VOTE: MOTION CARRIED

Respectfully submitted,

Lisa Perschke

Planning/Zoning Coordinator & Recording Secretary

David Rohr

Planning & Zoning Director

The minutes were approved as presented/corrected: _____

Commissioner **Jeff Muck**, Chairperson