

**St. Clair Township
Planning Advisory Committee
September 22, 2008
Summary of Discussion**

ATTENDED BY:

Steve Bartels	Gary Couch	Doug Dirksing
Pearl Hicks	Bonnie Hobbs	Jerry Lanich
Eric Pottenger	Bobby Rice	Rich Santefort
Joe Schmidt	Ron Sunderhaus	Ray Williams

Staff: Bill Miller, Larisa Sims and Jane Wittke, OKI ; Mike Ekberg, Miami Conservancy District

The first meeting presentation by Joe Schmidt of the Butler County Planning Commission focused on conservation development and its potential use in the township. The presentation was interspersed with questions and comments from the committee which are summarized below along with clarifications offered by the presenter.

Conservation Development

--Conservation subdivisions conserve natural features like streams and woods, help to protect sensitive environmental features such as aquifers used for drinking water, and help to preserve rural character by clustering houses and saving larger open spaces.

--The design of conservation subdivisions means less yard to mow for each resident, but greater open space for all residents.

--Developers can benefit from reduced costs and increased monetary value in conservation developments because less clearing and earth-moving is needed, more lots may be possible than with a conventional subdivision, and property owners are often willing to pay more for such amenities as increased open space, trails, and natural surroundings.

--The open spaces in conservation subdivisions can be used for community gardens, active recreation such as ball fields or trails, and passive recreation like bird-watching or photography.

--Sanitary systems in conservation developments are typically designated to a certain part of the open space.

--Does that mean that mound systems would be used to serve several homes instead of each home having an individual septic tank system?

--At this point, the Butler County Health Department still wants to see individual systems, but things like mound systems are still under discussion.

--Conservation developments would also have to be designed to enable adequate fire protection.

--Who maintains the open space in a conservation development?

--A Home Owners Association (HOA) typically maintains the open space in a conservation development; if they run into financial problems then the responsibility reverts to the property owners.

--Have any HOAs gone belly-up in the area?

--About four HOAs have defaulted this year because of foreclosures, especially in the southwest corner of Butler County.

--When the open space in conservation developments is leased for farming, eligibility for the tax advantage under CAUV (Current Agricultural Use Value) can be maintained if thresholds for agricultural production are met (11 acres or more in agricultural use or \$2500 per year of product generated by less than 11 acres in agricultural use).

--What if the HOA decided later to develop the open space portion of a conservation subdivision?

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--An HOA proposal to develop the open space portion would then require a zoning change and a change to subdivision regulations enabling conservation development; it would not be automatic.

--HOAs have some of the same limitations as deed restrictions in that a small group has responsibility for enforcement.

--In order for conservation development to be possible, three pieces have to be in place: the comprehensive plan needs to indicate the community's willingness; the zoning ordinance must allow for conservation subdivisions and create incentives for it; and county subdivision regulations must allow for conservation subdivisions and create incentives.

--In Butler County, the option for conservation development exists right now through Butler County Subdivision Regulations and the Butler County Rural Zoning Resolution.

--If St. Clair Township is interested in having its zoning allow for conservation development, it could be considered for the areas of the township that are identified for agricultural or residential use as a conditional use.

--In terms of incentives, many developers already realize the benefits of conservation amenities whether they're in conservation developments or more conventional developments. For example, a recent study in the Philadelphia area indicated that 4 out of 5 house-buyers in two golf course communities have little or no interest in playing golf, but chose their homes because they preferred the park-like setting.

Policy Implementation

After the discussion of conservation development, the committee turned to considering implementation and prioritization of the policies drafted to date, which have been posted on the Butler County Department of Development website.

OKI staff provided a draft matrix showing each policy by identification letter and number, an abbreviated description of action that would be needed, the timing and frequency associated with implementing the policy, and the party or parties responsible for implementing the policy. This matrix was sorted in three different ways to make it possible for the group to see types of policies grouped together, or policies grouped by the timing and frequency of implementation, or policies grouped by responsible party or parties.

The ensuing discussion primarily focused on how to simplify evaluating the policies and sorting them to consider resource constraints, priority-setting, and whether deletions are needed.

--With more than 200 policies overall drafted to date, looking at so many all at once seems overwhelming.

--A lot of the policies would have to be headed by County departments or agencies because they have the responsibility, resources and expertise.

--Regarding Draft Policy LU12.3 to align new development with capital improvements capacity, it isn't always clear what that capacity at the county and township level is going to be, so even getting it done in the mid-term, 5-10 years down the road, is a question.

--Well, the intent is to work toward making sure that new development is supported by adequate public facilities, which means not outstripping capital improvements capacity.

--Regarding Draft Policy C12.6 to integrate planning and budgeting processes to pay for capital improvements, township trustees and facility providers will have to take the lead. The township zoning administrator doesn't necessarily have the power to get this done.

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- This is an example of how many of the township's needs for administration are beyond the workload of the zoning administrator.
- Yes, it seems like the township would need a township administrator (besides the zoning administrator) to implement some of the policies.
- In cases where we haven't decided exactly who in the township can follow through with implementation, we should include the township administrative assistant in the list of responsible parties, because she helps the trustees.
- Do we know the actual amount of time in person-hours that it would take to accomplish each of the policies?
- At this point, two things are listed on the matrix to indicate relative time involved: initiating the policy is listed as short term (to be started within 5 years), mid-term (to be started within 5-10 years), or long term (to be started after 10 years or more). The frequency with which a policy requires effort is listed as time-limited (can be accomplished and completed with one-time effort), periodic (once a year or less often), or on-going (multiple times a year such as quarterly or monthly).
- We need to identify the items that are currently underway and/or ongoing.
- Who initiates the work to be done?
- There's a column on the matrix listing the responsible party or parties, and the first name in that column is proposed as the lead for that item.
- We could probably eliminate Policy I2.5, to identify sites where additional trash receptacles and trash collection are needed.
- In some cases we may need to clarify or define terms in the policies such as "consider," "perform," "provide" or "work with."
- Why don't we think about grouping the policies differently to make it easier to prioritize them and plan for follow-through?
- We could start by identifying things that are already being done all the time.
- We should identify things we think we can accomplish.
- We should also identify things the township doesn't have money for or needs help with.
- We should identify things that other organizations are doing that implement the policies; for example, cases where county-wide groups are working on an issue and need a representative from our township.
- If everyone in the group spends some time with the policy matrix after the meeting, we can help identify current efforts in the township and the county that address the policies and when the township needs to be represented in others' efforts.
- Yes, and some of these policies will take action not only by the township and county but also by the state and federal government.
- OKI staff requests that everyone in the group relay their knowledge about current and ongoing efforts in the township that are related to the policies within the next 10 days. (Please send feedback via email to Jane Wittke at jwittke@oki.org or reach her by telephone at 513-621-6300.)