

**St. Clair Township  
Planning Advisory Committee  
July 28, 2008  
Summary of Discussion**

**ATTENDED BY:**

Marjorie Angst  
Gary Couch  
Jerry Lanich  
Rich Santefort  
Ray Williams

Steve Bartels  
Doug Dirksing  
Tim McLelland  
Joe Schmidt

Don Berry  
Bonnie Hobbs  
Bobby Rice  
Ron Sunderhaus

Staff: Bill Miller, Tom Smith and Jane Wittke, OKI ; Mike Ekberg, Miami Conservancy District

**The meeting discussion focused on draft goals, objectives and policies regarding Capital Improvements and Land Use for the St. Clair Township Comprehensive Plan in progress. After the discussion, the group looked over an initial draft of the future land use map and jotted down questions and comments on an over-sized copy of it.**

**To understand the following summary, it may help to know that the draft goals were presented with a letter abbreviation, the related draft objectives with the same letter and a number in sequence, and the related draft policies with the same letter and number, a period and a number in sequence, for example CI = goal, CI1 = objective, and CI1.1 = policy. Those attending responded with the following points and issues:**

**Capital Improvements**

- It may be necessary to market the township's assets—such as our excellent water supplies, three gas lines, two major railroad lines, and State Route 127--to get private sector investment for capital improvements, given the limitations of the township's budget.
- The State Route 63 extension becomes ever more important to the township to provide good east-west access, but promises of funding from higher levels of government haven't come through, so maybe local funding sources or public-private partnerships should be explored for it.
- Policy CI2.6 will be important to link planning and funding so that higher level government agencies will be more willing to back and fund local plans.
- How can we keep businesses in the township until we get sewers and water lines?
- When new businesses come in or expand, they usually want access to sewer and water lines, which is the single biggest issue driving annexation into Hamilton or Trenton.
- In other parts of the state, TIFs (Tax Increment Financing Districts) and JEDDs (Joint Economic Development Districts) have been formed between townships and municipalities to keep part of the revenue stream of new businesses in township areas, whether or not those businesses are eventually annexed.

**Land Use**

- It's worth remembering that the end use of the land use categories is for the township and the Butler County Department of Development to evaluate development and redevelopment proposals for potential zone changes.
- In identifying agricultural land, a Current Agricultural Use Value or CAUV designation means that at least 10 acres are in agricultural production with an additional acre or more for a house or dwelling unit, or if the property is less than 10 acres, it must have produced and sold at least \$2500 in a year of agricultural product.

**St. Clair Township  
Planning Advisory Committee  
July 28, 2008  
Summary of Discussion**

**Land Use – cont.**

- A density of one residential unit per 20 acres proposed for the Agricultural Use category in LU7.1 doesn't account for the fact that twenty acres is not enough agricultural land to make a living from—it's a hobby farm.
- Yes, especially in tight economic times who's going to buy a 20-acre property and what will it be used for and how will it be maintained?
- If acreages are too small, homes may be built on the first acre, and prime agricultural land in the rest of the property could be wasted to weeds and grass.
- Twenty acres in the agricultural use category is worse than requiring a density of only one residential unit per 5 acres because it's a waste of land and a loss to the tax base.
- What would be enough of a residence-to-acreage requirement to maintain the township's rural character? 5 acres? 10 acres? 40 acres?
- Much local agricultural land in the township is in floodplain areas, so could this land really be developed for anything else?
- Could a PUD (Planned Unit Development) classification be used to allow agricultural uses in conjunction with residential uses? As in placing homes along the edges of properties near roadways, and using the area behind the homes to continue agricultural uses? That might also reduce the amount of land being used for gravel mining.
- The market will dictate where gravel mining is located, because companies only want to go where it's profitable to mine, and a geologist could tell us where in the township that would be.
- If we stopped allowing splits of agricultural land (carving off smaller pieces primarily for housing) by using regulations similar to subdivision review, that would help to slow down the conversion of agricultural land to low density development.
- State law exempts subdivisions with lots 5 acres or greater from subdivision review.
- True, but the remainder of the farm after a split should have a plan for how it will be used.
- Planned conservation development is already permitted in county-level zoning, and it works to cluster development and to preserve open space, whether agricultural, wooded, etc, and to connect it to neighboring open spaces and agricultural areas.
- What would prevent a developer from simply choosing the worst parts of a property to meet the open space requirement for conservation developments?
- There's site plan review for conservation development and a provision for a homeowner's association which will have a vested interest in common spaces.
- Since we don't know much about this topic, let's park it and come back to it at a future meeting when we can have more information presented about it.
- Do we have any idea of the scale of current agricultural land use in the county?
- There are around 70 farm operators in the county (who sell \$100,000 worth of product or more annually) and about 1700 properties with CAUV status, of which 80-85% have 100 acres or less.
- About 600 properties in the county are in agricultural districts, and about 15 farms in land trusts.
- About five farms have sold the rights to develop their property to a public (PDR or Purchase of Development Rights) program that will keep them in agricultural use, and more farms are interested, but the PDR program has limited funds.
- What kind of zoning will allow for smaller lots (for example, 1.5 acres) to use their property for farm animals? (The current township code allows one farm animal per acre on lots greater than 2 acres.)
- Include a reference to the Butler Soil and Water Conservation District in LU13.1.