

## RECORD OF PROCEEDINGS

*Minutes of*

**Greenfield Township Trustees**

*Special Meeting*

January 24, 2024 - Held 4:00 PM

The Greenfield Township Trustees met for a Special Meeting at the Firehouse. The purpose of the meeting is to discuss a comprehensive plan for the Township. Trustee Searle called the meeting to order and led those present in the Pledge of Allegiance. Dave Cotner and Kent Searle were present; Lonnie Kosch was absent.

ROLL CALL: Cotner: Yes      Searle: Yes      Kosch: Absent

Trustee Searle explained the purpose of the meeting as beginning the process of developing a comprehensive plan for Greenfield Township. He noted this is the first meeting. This is based on Fairfield County's plan to revise their 2018 comprehensive plan, which they had hoped to have completed last September. There was a lot of public input on the revision; therefore, the county extended their timeline until after the first of the year. It is unknown when they hope to get it completed. There is a current draft available. Trustee Searle noted this draft shows Greenfield Township changing from nearly all rural residential to more than 30% suburban residential, meaning multi-family housing and condensed housing. It also noted the possibility of potentially adding another 6,000 houses in the township, and another 6,000 over the next ten years. These would be primarily apartment buildings and condensed suburban housing. The condensed suburban houses would mean four houses per acre, or more. The township is not in agreement with this plan. The township has communicated their concerns to the Fairfield County Commissioners; however, the township still wishes to move forward with their own comprehensive plan. He also noted that Liberty Township had developed their own comprehensive plan as of December 18, 2023, and Trustee Searle noted he had a copy of the plan with him. He also noted the township had received quotes in the past six years up to the cost of \$80,000 to write a comprehensive plan. Liberty Township found an attorney to write their comprehensive plan at a cost of less than \$10,000.

Trustee Searle noted that all future meetings will be public, as the Board wants to hear the public's input.

He went on to explain that although the Commissioners state that the county is in a housing crisis, the Board has been opposed to multi-family housing in the past, and they are concerned about the way the Commissioners are presenting this. A few years ago, the Zoning Commission revised two sections of the zoning resolution in two sections: PUD - to allow apartments on a PUD – and an R3 – to allow apartments there. The restrictions were changed/increased, and on the PUD, it allows one unit per acre and a half. It was clarified that PUD means "Planned Unit Development", which is a way a parcel may be zoned. In order to build an apartment building in the township, an application for zoning request for rezoning to either PUD or R3 would need to be submitted, and then public hearings would be held, and a decision made by the Zoning Commission. Then, their recommendation would come to the Board of Trustees, and there would be another public hearing where a decision would be made. The Zoning

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Resolution would still need to be adhered to. When the revisions were made to the Zoning Resolution, measures were taken to keep high density, multi-family housing out of the township.

Trustee Searle also explained recent events that have occurred: The city of Lancaster had recently annexed a piece of property between Bob Boyd Kia and 84 Lumber – River Valley Highlands. It is believed the developer wants to put apartments there. Also, between Election House and the church, there are approximately 13 acres where a developer had wanted to build apartments; however, the township didn't allow it. They came back and proposed building an extended stay residential hotel. The B1 section of the zoning code allows for that, and the Board was caught off-guard by this. The permit was obtained; however, the housing has not been built yet. It is thought the developer actually wants to build apartments.

Trustee Searle also explained that the city of Lancaster cannot "spot" annex property around the township; the annexed property must be adjoining city property. Also, the property owner must apply to the city to tell them they want the land to be annexed. And – the property must be adjoined to the city of Lancaster property. The current property the developer holds is not adjoined to the city of Lancaster; however, there are nearby properties that could be annexed that could then be adjoined in order to move forward with the building.

All of this was explained in order for the residents to understand how the process works. He reiterated his understanding that the residents do not want multi-family apartments in the township; however, he noted that it cannot be entirely prevented due to the potential of annexation. Another downside to this is that the township loses the tax base on that property. The Board wants to hear what the residents have to say.

He went on to outline what the county comprehensive plan proposes. He showed a line on a map from Coonpath Road up to the edge of the township. He noted this would actually likely be more like 40% of suburban residential area. In order to have some areas for growth, the township needs to create their own plan.

The township zoning map presented was explained as follows: green represents R1 - Rural Residential; blue represents B1 - Local Business; purple represents industrial; red represents churches and schools. The green represents farmland and single family residences. There may be some additional businesses that would be approved along Route 33 in the future. Trustee Cotner noted the map also showed Pleasantville Rd. over to Stringtown Rd., down to Ety Rd., Collins Rd., and Lithopolis Rd. He also explained where the developer is attempting to build the extended stay hotel behind the church, but they are running into an issue with the county due to the road, parking and entrance coming off of Election House Rd.

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Discussion continued regarding the referendum on the ballot for March 19, 2024 regarding expanded development. It was explained that only residents of Carroll will be able to vote on the referendum - 500 potential voters, with 150 voters anticipated to show up.

A resident asked how the first responders would be impacted. It was explained that if the city of Lancaster annexes the property, it will take funding away from the Greenfield Township Fire Department. The township residents would be paying more taxes since it would be based on Lancaster property. Chief Smith pointed out that Violet Township is running a levy to build a fourth station, and they have run out of land; so it appears they will be encroaching on the west, and Lancaster is coming in from the east.

Discussion continued with the subject of annexation and how it works. A resident asked if there was any way to stop the annexation of township land by Lancaster? It was explained that the statutory requirements to annex land are minimal; it needs to be contiguous land owned by a single owner. The example of Canal Winchester and multi-family housing/apartments vs. warehouses being built was presented. This has resulted in Canal Winchester having a great number of warehouses being built. It was reiterated that the land owner has to request to be annexed in order for his property to be annexed. Additional explanation was given for how and why it is important for the township to have a comprehensive plan. The county's comprehensive plan does not have a legal basis to tell Greenfield Township what to do and how to do it regarding their zoning, as long as Greenfield Township has their own comprehensive plan. However, having a comprehensive plan doesn't stop township land from being annexed.

Another participant asked about Greenfield Township using JEDD's, open space property and conservation easements to help prevent their land from being annexed. Trustee Cotner acknowledged those items, and stated the township would be talking to Rick Ricketts from Violet Township, as he is quite well-versed in the knowledge of these things. A participant also suggested using agricultural exemptions, as well increasing the minimum lot size in the comprehensive plan in order to dissuade developers. It was suggested increasing the minimum lot size throughout the township to at least two acres per lot would be helpful.

It was noted that the Liberty Township Comprehensive Plan is on their website for anyone wishing to view it. It was also noted that their plan has been submitted to the Fairfield County Commissioners.

The Board stated there will be additional meetings scheduled, and some will be held at a later time, probably 6 p.m., in order for more people to be able to attend. The current meeting was scheduled at 4 p.m. in order for all three trustees to be present, and for it to precede the regularly scheduled trustee meeting. Trustee Searle went on to reiterate that the township needs to speak with legal counsel in order to guide them in what and how to develop the comprehensive plan. He also stated he did not want multi-family

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housing in the township, and he stated he feels like most residents of the township agree with that. If there is any multi-family housing allowed in the comprehensive plan, it needs to be done carefully. The same is true for allowing any business to come in on the 33 corridor. He has concerns about not being overrun with warehouses, like Violet Township and Canal Winchester. The zoning resolution and the comprehensive plan have to be revised and written very carefully.

Chief Smith explained that the map that had been developed shows where the industrial, residential and rural residential areas are proposed to be. He also explained that the county needed to have an idea from the township as to what they plan to do/where they plan to allow building and what type of building so they know how the infrastructure will be set up - infrastructure meaning water and sewer services. Then, the county water department can make their plans around the township's plan. The best plan for the township with the infrastructure will be going down Coonpath Road, to Carroll Southern Road, back down to Lithopolis Road. The infrastructure will come from the county. The current county water goes clear through Carroll. The county facility is at Lockville.

A participant asked what is happening at Pickerington Rd. and Route 33. Trustee Cotner responded that the county does not know what they are doing there yet. Trustee Searle explained the county has a TID - Transportation Improvement District - and they hold a meeting once per month. This meeting is open to the public, and can be attended in person, by Zoom, or just by dialing in.

Discussion continued as to how the Board sees the layout of the township for their comprehensive plan. Trustee Cotner explained his view of keeping the industry and businesses along Route 33. He was suggesting that each trustee draw on the map and outline their proposed zoning ideas prior to the township's next comprehensive plan meeting, so it can be shared with the public. Chief Smith explained the initial line up Route 33 was to keep a controlled growth pattern so the township can control it; then once developers come in, they can propose urban residential if that's what they are looking toward. It was pointed out that the map being shared was what the township is proposing and hoping for; the property owners each have their own say in how their property gets handled and developed. Also, in reviewing Liberty Township's comprehensive plan, which they called a "land use plan", it follows parcel lines. The Board agreed that ultimately, that is likely the best way to make their plan for the township, and they will be talking to major property owners to get their input.

Another question was asked concerning any property in the township that is not in the Bloom Carroll School District. The response included the property behind Waffle House where the extended stay hotel is being discussed. This all falls in the Lancaster City School District. It was pointed out that townships cannot consider school districts when conducting their planning; a school district is a completely separate entity.

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A participant asked if future meetings regarding the comprehensive planning could be livestreamed in order to bring it to more community members. Chief Smith responded that the meetings could be shared through a Google Meet link, or Facebook live, as well as being sharing the link on the Savvy Citizen app, for residents to be able to watch and listen, or review at their convenience. It was suggested that it would not be a question and answer forum, but rather a way for people to access the meeting information, and they could choose to attend the next meeting in person if they wished to do so.

Lengthy discussion continued as to the size of residential parcels that should be included in the comprehensive plan, and this included one and a half to two acre lots, vs. changing the parcels to five acre lots and including the agricultural exemption. It was pointed out that by keeping in line with other townships in the county, and especially local townships like Liberty, that would be more desirable, i.e. two acre lots. If lots were changed to require five acres, which would have to be an agricultural zone, it is likely that it would be challenged in court, and the township would lose.

Discussion continued regarding what types of businesses could or should be brought into the Route 33 corridor in order to provide more tax revenue for the township. It was agreed that the residents didn't want warehouses to come in; however, it was also noted that small local businesses are not going to provide very much tax revenue. Trustee Cotner also pointed out the wetlands areas on the map where nothing could be built, to make everyone aware of those areas.

At this time, Trustee Seale asked for any additional questions or input from the group. He noted that legal counsel will likely be in attendance at the next meeting, as the Board needs that guidance, and he encouraged everyone to attend any of the meetings in the future, as well as continuing to give their input and ask questions.

Additional discussion was held concerning the Village of Carroll and the referendum on the ballot. If it passes, it will revert the zoning back to only allowing a very small number of houses on the 76 acre parcel. However, it was explained that this voting could start again by the village counsel, and the citizens could gather another referendum, etc. in order for both sides to attempt to get what they want. With the numbers on the petition, it may help to dissuade the developers from coming back due to outlay of money done by their original studies, etc.

Trustee Searle provided the information for the Savvy Citizen app that the township is using, and encouraged everyone to sign up so they can keep informed about future meetings and township business. The next township comprehensive plan meeting will be scheduled for sometime in February. Trustee Cotner noted the township meeting with the mayor of Lancaster is scheduled for February 13, 2024, so the next comprehensive plan meeting may be scheduled for later that week. It was also noted that the mayor may attend some of the township meetings. The Board hopes to have an open dialogue with the city about what their plans are and what they are trying to do.

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Trustee Searle explained there are two different types of annexations: Type 1 and Type 2. With a Type 1, the city receives all the property taxes, and the township gets nothing. A Type 2 annexation is accelerated, but the township will maintain a portion of the property taxes.

Trustee Cotner made a motion to adjourn; Trustee Searle seconded the motion.

ROLL CALL: Cotner: Yes   Kosch: Abstain   Searle: Yes   Motion Passed 2-0

Meeting adjourned at 5:21 p.m.