

**LOWELL CHARTER TOWNSHIP PLANNING COMMISSION  
REGULAR MEETING  
October 8, 2007**

**PRESENT:** Batchelor, Simmonds, Clements and Sanford

**DELAYED ARRIVAL:** Blough

**TOWNSHIP PLANNER:** Tim Johnson

**CITIZENS IN ATTENDANCE:** 7

**REGULAR MEETING**

The regular meeting of the Lowell Charter Township Planning Commission was called to order by Chairperson Simmonds at 7:01 pm.

**APPROVAL OF AGENDA:**

Mr. Batchelor moved that the Agenda be approved as presented. Motion seconded by Mr. Sanford. All in favor and the Agenda was approved.

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES:**

The Minutes of the Public Hearing and Regular Meeting of September 10, 2007 were presented for approval. Mr. Sanford moved to approve the Minutes as presented. Seconded by Mr. Batchelor. All in favor and the Minutes were approved.

**DISCUSSION OF BLOUGH FARMS SPECIAL USE PERMIT REVIEW:**

Mr. Simmonds reviewed the appearance on behalf of Blough Farms in April 2007, and the Planning Commission's request for further information on the prior year's operations and plans for 2007. It appears that sales of farm related products to neighbors had dropped off and were less important now to the holders of the Special Use Permit. Mr. Sanford questioned the need to continue the Special Use Permit; Mr. Batchelor agreed. Tim Johnson indicated a Special Use Permit could only be cancelled if the holder of the Permit failed to comply with it's conditions. He also noted that the Permit goes with the land and not with the owner of the land at the time the Permit was granted, and that it is the responsibility of the Building Inspector to initiate revocation of a Special Use Permit. Mr. Simmonds questioned the need for annual review as a condition of the Special Use Permit if no sales were occurring.

After further discussion, Mr. Sanford moved that the Lowell Charter Township Planning Commission write to Blough Farms advising them that an annual review of their Special Use Permit would no longer be required until they resume public sale of fertilizer or chemicals. Motion seconded by Mr. Batchelor. All in favor and the motion was approved.

Mr. Blough joined the other members of the Planning Commission at 7:15 pm.

**MASTER PLAN DISCUSSION:**

Tim Johnson reviewed his Memorandum of October 4, 2007 regarding Considerations for Ag-1 Zone Regulations and Other Master Plan Topics. Mr. Clements asked for clarification in the Master Plan of

priorities with respect to preserving farmland, helping farmers and preserving a rural atmosphere, which in some ways are conflicting goals. He also asked that discussions make clear which changes belong in the Master Plan and which were more suited to inclusion in the Zoning Ordinance. Mr. Blough expressed his concerns about the Ag-1 zoning district and the plight of farmers.

Tim Johnson introduced discussion of the farm dwelling versus non-farm dwelling language in the current Ordinance and it's focus on the owner rather than the land itself. Mr. Simmonds and Mr. Blough expressed agreement with a focus on the land, and Mr. Blough further suggested that the Planning Commission consider moving home building to land less valuable for farming.

Mr. Batchelor expressed concern about increasing the number of splits allowed per quarter section, as this would create a race to split between competing landowners. There was general agreement that the current non-farm house test for land splits needed to be changed.

Mr. Clements did not like the idea of allowing more splits of small parcels, and would prefer to see a larger minimum lot size approach, along with use of an Agricultural PUD where higher housing density is desired by a landowner.

Mr. Simmonds and Mr. Clements did not want to have the details of Ag-1 use locked into the Master Plan where they wouldn't be addressed again for five years.

Tim Johnson then asked about a questionnaire to be sent to owners of land in the Ag-1 zone. Mr. Batchelor and Mr. Clements both expressed a desire for a simpler survey which addressed possible changes more broadly without getting into too much detail. Mr. Simmonds agreed, and directed that the survey be simplified and sent out. Tim Johnson will email the revised survey to Planning Commission members for their review, and will check on the option of including a self-addressed stamped envelope with the surveys mailed out.

Mr. Sanford suggested a date be set for Ag-1 landowners to meet with the Planning Commission. After discussion, it was determined this would occur on November 12, 2007 at 5:00 pm, and would conclude prior to the Regular Meeting on that date.

Tim Johnson asked if Ag-1 boundary lines needed to be changed. Mr. Simmonds felt the lines should continue to be based on soil type. Mr. Sanford felt some adjustment could be made to reflect small parcels existing in Ag-1. Mr. Blough offered to work up a list of suggested line changes and the reasons for those changes, for review by the Planning Commission.

With respect to lands North of the river, it was determined that the special plans for development in Section 4 might be extended further North to include the former shooting club lands. It was also determined that Commercial zoning could extend West to include former Manor property now zoned Commercial. No further extension to the West will be considered until existing undeveloped land zoned Commercial is developed.

It was determined that future possible additions to the North Country Trail, including a railroad right-of-way, a river crossing, and along the west side of Cumberland Ave, be shown on the Master Plan map.

There is no need to show future roads on the map, as none are currently in the active planning stage.

Mr. Clements repeated a prior suggestion that the Master Plan contain a statement of intent that agriculture-compatible activities be permitted in the Ag-1 zone when they are in connection with, but substantially subordinate to, on-going agricultural activities on the same property.

**PUBLIC COMMENT FOR ITEMS NOT ON THE AGENDA:**

Public comment began at 8:29 pm. No one spoke. Public comment closed at 8:30 pm.

**COMMISSIONER COMMENTS:**

Mr. Blough noted two errors in the September 10, 2007 Minutes previously approved, and moved that the Minutes be amended, and approved as amended. Seconded by Mr. Sanford. All in favor and the Minutes of September 10, 2007 as amended were approved.

It was determined that a Special Meeting on October 22nd would not be required.

Mr. Sanford updated the Planning Commission on the joint sign ordinance discussions with the City of Lowell, noting that his contact with the City of Lowell Planning Commission was no longer on that Commission, and that the remaining members had since amended their own ordinance unilaterally. Mr. Sanford will follow up to determine if a joint sign ordinance is no longer of interest to the City of Lowell.

Mr. Blough reported on his attendance at a Michigan Townships Association meeting and the pending requirement that townships make a five year infrastructure plan.

**.ADJOURNMENT:**

Mr. Batchelor moved to adjourn. Seconded by Mr. Sanford. All in favor and the regular meeting of the Lowell Charter Township Planning Commission was adjourned at 8:38 p.m.

Submitted \_\_\_\_\_ Secretary  
Timothy Clements

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Approved \_\_\_\_\_