

Joint Planning Commission/Board of Zoning Appeals Meeting

Thursday, January 19, 2017

Mayor Koster called the meeting to order at 7:04 P.M.

Roll Call:

Planning Commission: Jim Koster – yes; Tom Blair – yes; Sue Fisher – yes; Curt Johnson – yes; Karolyn Squire – yes.

Board of Zoning Appeals: Paul Emch – yes; Judy Beaumier – yes; AJ Bissell – yes; Sharon Moster – yes; Al Tolchinsky – not present

Visitors: Dave Dietrich, Joe Hernandez, Christopher Paquette, Lisa Hernandez

Pledge of Allegiance

The Mayor opened the meeting by introducing Mr. Dietrich, and asked everyone present to share a bit about themselves. Mayor Koster advised all present that everyone had been given a hard copy of the Table of Contents from the last strategic plan done in Burton Village, and that if anyone wished to have a copy of the entire Plan, it would be made available to them as an electronic document. Mayor Koster stated that he felt the committee needed to redefine their roles, and look forward to the future, noting that Burton Village has an aging housing stock and an abundance of rental properties. Mayor Koster suggested that regulations need to be enforced.

Mr. Dietrich began by stating that the Village of Burton is overdue for an update to its Strategic Plan; that the process would take years; and reminded those present how important a good foundation is when constructing this plan. Mr. Dietrich felt that the size of the group represented before him (approximately 10) was a good size for a Strategic Plan committee. Mr. Dietrich encouraged the group include the following areas in the Plan: the history of Burton; demographics; Burton's heritage; housing stock; infrastructure; transportation; streets and sidewalks. Mr. Dietrich felt that Burton's sewer and water services are a major asset that nearby townships cannot provide.

Ms. Moster asked if our current water treatment plant could handle any extra customers, and stated that by providing services to those outside the Village, we are restricting the Village from growing.

Ms. Beaumier felt that there were about 200 empty lots available in the Village for potential customers.

Mr. Dietrich informed the group that there were other tools at their disposal to find funding, including a revolving loan from the County. Mr. Dietrich advised the group to contact Anita with Geauga County.

Mr. Dietrich further advised that the Village needs to have "shovel ready" sites available, and that this is a problem throughout the County. Mr. Dietrich emphasized the importance of taking an inventory of what the Village has – map out existing sites, use land-use categories. Mr. Dietrich suggested that the committee compile a list of goals, objectives and recommendations, and consider consolidating the Planning Commission and Board of Zoning Appeals. Mayor Koster stated that Chardon did that. Ms. Moster was not in favor of combining the two groups, because she felt that the Board of Zoning Appeals is the objective part of the equation.

Mayor Koster asked Mr. Dietrich what latitude the Board of Zoning Appeals should have. Mr. Dietrich stated that they should be looking closely at variance criteria, and added that combining the two groups would reduce the need to go to several different meetings for one issue, and that communities that have combined the two groups feel that it streamlines the process. Ms. Moster expressed concern that then the BZA would lose its autonomy. Mr. Johnson expressed his concern that the Historic District Architectural Review Board also added an extra “layer” of work.

Mr. Dietrich suggested that the committee should make a land use plan, which should be in line with a strategic plan, because it’s a good way to define who you are, and where you want to go. Mayor Koster asked Mr. Dietrich if there were companies or individuals locally who could help with such an endeavor. Mr. Dietrich affirmed that there were, and that the committee should include in such a plan a Request for Proposal, an outline of what the scope of the work entails, what the expected deliverables should be, and ensure that the work would remain the property of Burton Village; Mr. Dietrich also stressed that he felt that the committee would need professional help to accomplish this. Ms. Moster suggested using an intern from, and/or the College of, Urban Development. Mr. Dietrich cautioned that “you get what you get” when you take the route of utilizing a no-cost or low cost consultant. Ms. Fisher stated that the Village needs to spend the money to get the job done correctly. Ms. Fisher then asked Mr. Dietrich what his views were on combining the two groups. Mr. Dietrich said that combining the two groups seems to work well in Geauga County, and suggested speaking with Ben Garlich, mayor of Middlefield.

Ms. Moster and Ms. Beaumeier both asked where the funds would come from for a land-use plan. Mayor Koster said that at this point, the committee was just making plans.

Along that line, Mayor Koster asked Mr. Dietrich if the Committee could develop a TIF (Tax Increment Financing). Mr. Dietrich agreed that the Committee could set that up, or a JEDD, although Mr. Dietrich also felt that there was a lot that could be accomplished with development agreements, and that such agreements are a lot less complicated. Mr. Dietrich used the agreement between Middlefield Village and Middlefield Township as an example. Mr. Dietrich felt that there were many areas within the Village that need to be re-developed. Mr. Dietrich further said that the land to the north and east of the Village will need the infrastructure that Burton Village can provide, especially since the water treatment center to the east, located in the Berkshire Industrial Park, was at or near capacity.

Mr. Bissell asked if Kent State would need to be tied into our sewer system if the land was annexed. Mayor Koster told him it was already tied in.

Mr. Dietrich stated that the plan should address all of these things, and then stated the importance of keeping communication open, especially with Burton Township, because this could be a win-win situation for everyone.

Ms. Beaumier stated that the Township is adamant that they’ve lost a lot already through the parks and the City of Akron bordering their property. Mr. Dietrich stated that Middlefield Village is also surrounded City of Akron property. Mr. Dietrich then gave everyone a copy of the Village of Middlefield’s Economic Development Plan, and noted to pay particular attention to Page 2, which lists a Statement of Goals and Objectives, for guidance. Mr. Emch noted that Middlefield Village has a lot of benefits we don’t. Mr. Emch asked what type of economic developments would work for Burton Village.

Mr. Dietrich advised that the Committee should be building on Burton's cultural heritage and should look at other areas as well, including the service industry; food and beverage; making Burton Village a destination location; interviews with local business people; discussing property management trends; and speaking with builders and developers.

Mr. Johnson stated that the demographics of our community are changing; that young people aren't staying here. Mr. Dietrich noted that the age group of 55+ is the fastest growing segment.

The discussion then turned to the role of amenities in a community. Mr. Bissell noted that there were not many recreational things for youth to do in the County. Ms. Squire added that the Village didn't currently offer any recreational amenities for children. Mr. Dietrich stated that the Geauga Park District is adding recreation to some of their parks, and that a municipal recreation complex would be hard to maintain.

Ms. Squire asked how many businesses we can support. Mr. Dietrich noted that these are the type of facts a consultant would be able to tell a client. Mayor Koster felt that the Committee needed to embark on this strategic plan for Burton Village's future, and further, that the trustees of Burton Township are interested in working with Burton Village. Mr. Dietrich agreed that they would be interested in potential tax abatements – that your income tax sustains you, and that Burton Village needs to find a way to grow its income base.

Mr. Emch asked Mr. Dietrich what his opinion was on community reinvestment. Mr. Dietrich felt that it needed to be "put on the table", and the local school superintendents were not opposed to it – nothing that by Ohio law, school board approval is necessary. Mr. Dietrich then raised the question, "What are you getting from your vacant land?"

Ms. Moster stated that she felt that Burton Village had a great opportunity to stay the same, while moving up to the current century.

Mayor Koster cautioned that the Committee needs to ensure that any plans made appeal to a wide variety of people, including homeowners and renters, young and old, etc. Ms. Squire also thought it was important that the committee consider the Berkshire School District and the Township's future plans when the Village's strategic plan is developed.

The discussion then turned to vacant buildings in the Village which were in a state of disrepair and potentially dangerous. Ms. Moster asked what was stopping the Village from tearing those buildings down; Mr. Dietrich said that ownership status took precedence.

The group then moved on to other business. Mayor Koster asked the group to approve the minutes from the December 15, 2016 meeting. It was noted that the date and year of the joint minutes were incorrect. Ms. Hernandez will change the date to reflect the correct date of December 15, 2016. For the Board of Zoning Appeals, Ms. Moster moved to approve the minutes as amended; Mr. Emch seconded. By voice vote, the motion passed. For the Planning Commission, Mr. Johnson moved to approve the minutes as amended; Mr. Blair seconded the motion. By voice vote, the motion passed.

The group was reminded that their next meeting was the following Thursday, January 26, at 7 pm, at the Berkshire Jr./Sr. High School Library.

A motion was made to adjourn by Ms. Beaumier at 8:45 pm; seconded by Ms. Fisher. By voice vote, the meeting was adjourned.

Mayor

BZA President

Clerk