



WASHTENAW COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

WORKING SESSION

February 8, 2007

The meeting was called to order by Chair Sizemore at 6:30 p.m. in the Board Room, Administration Building, 220 North Main Street, Ann Arbor, Michigan.

MEMBERS PRESENT: Comms. Bergman, Grewal, Gunn, Ping Mills, Lovejoy Roe, Schwartz, Sizemore

MEMBERS ABSENT: Comms. Irwin, Ouimet, Peterson, and Smith

OTHERS PRESENT: David Behen, Verna McDaniel, Deputy County Administrators; Mike Score, County Extension; Janis Bobrin, Drain Commissioner; Ken Schrader, Dale Vanderford, Information Technology; Anthony VanDerworp, Patricia Denig, Planning and Environment; Kerry Sheldon; Administration, Jason Brooks, Clerk's Office; various citizens; and members of the press.

Roll Call

Citizen Participation

None

Commissioner Follow-Up to Citizen Participation

None

Discussion Items

Comprehensive Plan Update – Land Use & Infrastructure

Anthony VanDerworp and Patricia Denig gave a presentation to the Board of Commissioners. (Presentation on file in County Clerk's Office)

Comm. Bergman asked how walking to school and public health issues are looked at. VanDerworp responded that everything is related to growth and land use. He added that public health issues are directly related. VanDerworp stated that Denig has been interfacing with Public Health on projects of community interest.

Comm. Sizemore asked Mike Score to explain the food program for the benefit of members new to the Board. Score stated that he was hired to be the agricultural agent for the County. He added that most farms did not produce goods used by the urban population. He stated that there is great potential for economic development in agriculture. Score communicated that collaborative agricultural groups had come to the conclusion that it was important for the Washtenaw County to coordinate efforts with other counties. This led to a food system partnership and a five County cluster. He stated that major stakeholders were pulled together to develop a comprehensive plan to make food services better. He added that this is important because it will provide consumers with safe food, strengthen farm business, and address the issue of balance development. He invited all to view the website at www.fsepmichigan.org. Score also discussed the pamphlet distributed (on file in County Clerk's office). He stated that he is open to questions at any time, and that he is an employee of the MSU extension.

Comm. Gunn stated that this has been a remarkable journey. She added that locally grown products can be found at some markets. He stated that he is proud to serve in his capacity.

Comm. Grewal thanked VanDerworp, Denig, and Score for the presentation. She added that she has been impressed with the work done at the Planning Dept. She appreciates that the department does not only plan for development but for conservation also. She asked about the recommendations that have not been followed up on in the comprehensive plan. VanDerworp stated that he has been meeting to gain funds for a full evaluation of the process. He listed projects that are not being worked on as of yet, but pointed out that all of these issues could use focus.

Comm. Grewal asked if the SEMCOG proposal is mapped into the County regional plan. VanDerworp stated that the plan would have to be worked on further. He added that work is internally being done on the US 23 corridor.

Comm. Grewal stated that planning is a two way street, and localities need to play a large role in the process also. VanDerworp stated that this is an important point.

Comm. Grewal asked if Planning has partnered with SEMCOG. Denig responded that they had on census information. Comm. Grewal pointed out that it may be helpful to reach out to different schools as well.

Comm. Ping Mills asked that if the local governments follow the regional plan, will the County be there in the event of a lawsuit. VanDerworp stated that there is support in fact finding, and that he is an expert witness. He added that he advocates setting up a fund to deal with these lawsuits.

Comm. Bergman asked if there was a way of approaching the tough issue of in fill considering the issue of global warming. VanDerworp stated that this is a good tie in and that a wind farm would be worked on first. He added that it may be possible in the future to add an energy chapter to the plan.

Comm. Bergman added that she is delighted when she sees Michigan produce available on the market. She added that education is needed about fruit, nutrition and reality.

Comm. Schwartz thanked VanDerworp, Denig, and Score for the presentation. He stated that one of his concerns is attorneys pursuing damages and Townships not having defense. He stated that looking a fund to defend against these lawsuits. He stated that there appears to be a lack of checks and balances in the land use system. He added that outreach is necessary.

Comm. Schwartz asked about the runoff of pesticides and possible water pollution associated with the production of energy, and whether it produced a net gain for the community. Score stated that when farmers came out with ethanol, they worked with agencies to improve the way farm businesses are managed. He added that an increase in crop production will not be seen. He stated that corn previously sold at below cost will be sold above cost. He added that now that grain and corn prices have increased farmers may see growth in their business.

Comm. Schwartz asked about the type of corn used in ethanol. Score stated that it is a different type of corn than sweet corn, and that no decrease in regular corn crops is seen.

Comm. Schwartz asked if there is a legal authority to back up planners. VanDerworp stated that currently it is whatever the court says.

Comm. Schwartz stated that the answers come from the legislature and the Supreme Courts. VanDerworp stated that absent state growth management, it may be possible to ask if Washtenaw County can do this.

Comm. Gunn stated that the jurisdiction for planning and land use remains in local government. She added that the County Planning Department does an excellent job in advice and outreach.

Comm. Bergman asked about the widening of Geddes Road and about the effect on the local community. VanDerworp stated that this is not a widening project, but an investigation into alternatives.

Comm. Lovejoy Roe stated that it is exciting to see the work Score is doing coming to fruition. She added that she would like to see a food program in local schools. Score stated that he is currently working with Denig to pilot a school food program.

Comm. Lovejoy Roe communicated that everyone has local control, but that it is imperative for communities to come together on the issue of on site sewer systems. She stated that land is cheaper in certain areas. She added that she thinks most Townships and Villages have a good master plan, but that does not stop developers from suing. She stated that at a recent meeting, she found that many Townships involved in lawsuits with developers. She would like to see a legal team put together a resource for local municipalities. She stated that treatment facilities were funded by federal funds, and that there is the potential to double capacity. Comm. Lovejoy Roe stated that there is no reason anyone in Washtenaw County should be a part of an on site sewer system. She stated that if the resources can be put together, perhaps the legislature could be talked to.

Comm. Bergman stated that she would like to see large plans coming up for sewers. She added that a lot of legal fees have been spent and does not know where more money will come from.

Comm. Gunn stated that it is worth getting a plan together for Washtenaw County if it can not be done for the entire state.

Comm. Schwartz stated that in the mean time the County can start compiling background information the can be used in a court case. He added that preservation of historic bridges should also be investigated.

Comm. Sizemore asked Janice Bobrin if there is still work being done on the Lower Ridge and Rouge River areas. Bobrin stated this is still under federal jurisdiction. She commented that updates would be coming soon in a Working Session meeting. She added that many people are being worked with on fertilizer use, etc. Comm. Sizemore stated that her staff is doing a good job.

Comm. Lovejoy Roe stated that this is a global issue. She stated that Townships do not necessarily want traffic coming in. She stated that this is not good planning. She stated that once people know that the County is there, confidence will be developed. She added that this will be money well spent.

Comm. Sizemore thanked VanDerworp.

County Administrator Report

Items for Current/Future Discussion

Comm. Schwartz stated that he sent an e-mail, but does not know where the sheriff stands on the issue of Section 7. He stated that it may be time to take further action.

Comm. Bergman stated that the Steering Committee plan to discuss this.

Comm. Sizemore stated that he is going to request that state reps. come in to discuss issues that were presented tonight. He stated that he would like to do this around June.

Comm. Bergman stated that she heard that the Governor wanted to release more people from prisons to jails. He gave out his contact information.

Comm. Lovejoy Roe stated that she would like to review the jail expansion policy. She stated that the prior board gave a five member body their responsibilities, and that she feels strongly that the Board should have a seven day review period for contracts.

Comm. Sizemore stated that he is willing to discuss the issue, but that he has talked to the Chair and Administrator, and that oversight is not a problem.

Comm. Lovejoy Roe asked if the commissioners would get an informal seven day review.

Comm. Sizemore stated he would review the request.

Comm. Schwartz stated that it may be worth a briefing from Administration. He asked if the land for the Saline Court has been closed. David Behen reported that the land had not yet been closed, but that a date has been set.

Comm. Lovejoy Roe stated that the local architect that was second in line for the job was not selected. She discussed the firms that were selected, and stated that a different choice may have been made if more discussion took place on the issue.

Pending

- Feb. 22 Orientation to County – History & Successes of BIP
- March 8 Wireless Washtenaw Update
- Comprehensive Plan – Natural Resources & Environment
- March 22 Community Collaborative Update

Status of Annual Activities/Goals

No report

Citizen Participation

None

Commissioners Follow-up to Citizen Participation

None

Adjournment

Comm. Gunn seconded by Comm. Grewal moved to adjourn until Wednesday February 22nd, 2007, at 6:30 p.m. in the Board Room, Washtenaw County Administration Building. Motion carried.

The meeting adjourned at 8:07 p.m.

Rolland Sizemore, Chair

Lawrence Kestenbaum, Clerk/Register
By: Jason Brooks, Deputy Clerk

APPROVED: