

Planning Advisory Board Retreat
August 22, 2007
Meeting Notes

Present: Mary O'Hare, Brett Lenart, Pat Kelley, Steve Solowczuk, Patricia Denig, Charles Gray, Bill Lewis, Janis Bobrin, Anthony VanDerworp, Mandy Grewal, Karen Lovejoy Roe, Feliziana Meyer, Mona Walz

I. Welcome *Mandy Grewal*

II. Background/Charges & Duties

a. Overview: *Brett Lenart*

Presentations, master plan and resource paper reviews have been majority of PAB activities. The charges of the board as written by resolution were discussed. In re-examining the roles and duties of the PAB with a historical lens and in the light of the 2002 re-organization, what additional policy or action can be taken to further Comp Plan initiatives? What partnerships can we form? What can we do beyond state mandated operations? What should be modified or added to provide value to community?

1. Patricia Denig: These charges were written during the re-organization but can be redeveloped.
2. Mandy Grewal: The BOC is supportive of PAB re-examining their charge
3. Chuck Gray asked that the PAB receive advice from BOC members, and have Grewal, Lovejoy Roe, and Sizemore act as filters for the information going back to the BOC.

b. PAB Survey: Some members have yet to respond. Current results express PAB is on track to reach goals. Also, there is concern over the member make-up of the board. BOC members are supportive of PAB's effort to evolve.

III. Are we Achieving our Goals

a. As related to the Comp Plan: *Patricia Denig:*

- i. 130 of 182 goals have had action taken at this time - 3 years into the Comp Plan. Only 7 have been fully completed. An estimated ½ of 130 are ongoing goals such as brownfield redevelopment. A topic to discuss is how to prioritize projects in order to be more productive.
- ii. See handout for status on Plan items – *P.D. reviewed with PAB*

b. The PAB and Planning Department as Reactive vs. Proactive

c. Visions:

Mary O'Hare: Does not want to see development sprawling outward, making it more difficult to "get out of town".

Janis Bobrin: More community representatives, LUGs and local planning commissioners need to be sitting at the table. This structure will allow for more change/action to come from PAB discussions. She believes most people in the County don't want development outside of urban areas.

Pat Kelley: Local officials need to be at table to be aware of regional issues that require cooperation such as transportation. It is important to cooperate to exchange knowledge.

Mandy Grewal: People who straddle planning and elected office positions, such as those on Planning Commissions, are essential to include in discussions of the regional issues at hand. She also emphasized the importance of viewing Ann Arbor, Ypsilanti and Saline as regional “anchors” in the community to act as city centers when considering regional issues such as transportation and affordable housing.

Tony VanDerworp: would like to see two staff working in each regional group working on regional plans but does not have the resources.

Mona Walz: An existing barrier is that Townships are competing for tax base.

Tony VanDerworp: PAB should have a role as marketing regional cooperation and solutions such as infill, transit and preservation.

Steve Solowczuk: Prioritization should be placed on farmland preservation at regional scale, in order to focus preservation efforts on the best land. It is important to bridge the disconnect between BOC/County and LUG. One method may be to place the distribution of taxes on the County website to help people understand where their money is being spent.

Karen Lovejoy Roe: There is only so much a local official can do due to legislation. There is a need for regionalism, which can be addressed by pushing for changes at State level such as impact fees or other means to direct where development goes.

Mary O’Hare: How has this group lent itself to helping LUG to address land use and development issues?

Karen Lovejoy Roe: Before Tony was in his position, LUG were on their own.

Chuck Gray: The tax structure is set up to make local officials provincial; they all want to get new tax base. BOC needs to be an advocacy group to change the tax structure, however the board is not charged with advocacy.

Pat Kelley: Additional tax dollars is unwanted. Dexter Township has been supportive of the N-S commuter rail because it would take commuters from Livingston of Dexter Township roads.

Janis Bobrin: Gaining the support from the communities is a necessary first step in order to change the tax structure. Better to begin to sell idea locally as County legislation,

Patricia Denig: The County and PAB should strengthen its role as a resource for providing analysis and education to local communities on such issues.

Tony VanDerworp: SWWCOG is example of County being proactive in community

Steve Solowczuk: Comprehensive Plan as a working document that provides a big picture plan for the County

Mona Walls: Townships are attractive due to low taxes compared to cities; it will continue to be difficult to raise taxes to cover services in these areas. Further, much of this area is zoned as agriculture but 1-2ac encourages low density residential SFR which does not pay for it’s own services.

Pat Kelley: Next level needs to be for PAB to advocate for regional thinking. The most pressing issue is transportation.

Janis Bobrin: The method in which LUGs came together for the creation of the Comp Plan should serve as model for proactively bringing communities together.

Karen/Pat: LUG need to be part of discussion so decision reached is accepted as a win-win for everyone and can therefore gather more support. Perhaps finding some win-win issues such as open space, septic systems and transportation would encourage regional cooperation.

Mandy Grewal: The focus of the PAB needs to be on building relationships, including the County regaining trust of LUGs it is desired to make a community/County-wide impact.

Mona Walz: More regional effort with LUG to spread initiatives such as Public Health will help to meet goals set by the Comp Plan and PAB.

How have we done as far as bringing people together? We could work with blueprint on aging, energy and economic development.

Also, it may be helpful for staff to provide a report of what is going on in the County at regional meetings.

IV. PAB Leadership Role:

a. Tony VanDerworp: Changes:

- i. **Transportation** – Development agreements will be harder to accomplish because the money on the public end to contribute isn't available. There is a lack of funding for local roads and interchange improvements, it has become more difficult to leverage funding for road and subdivision development, which leads to development along underserved roads which do not have the capacity to accommodate the development.
- ii. **Energy:** Increasing energy costs will encourage people to live closer to work, which increases the importance of planning for infill development as well as community discussion on commuter rail.
- iii. **Economic development:** Unemployment rates are up, resulting a need to get serious about considering culture, diversity, talent centers, city anchors, land use as way to support economic development and community values.
- iv. Need to address **preferences**, especially for generation Y, for where to live and how to get around, transit, local foods (FSEP), vibrant communities.

b. How well is the PAB achieving their goals?

- i. How well has PAB given LUG tools to do what they need?
- ii. More support has been given to LUG in the recent past
- iii. Opportunity to provide more information and education for LUG
- iv. Coordinate a comprehensive response to community needs regarding private waste-water systems
- v. We would better achieve our goals if we worked with LUGs to make local legislative changes

c. Missed Opportunities/What can we do?:

- i. **Karen Lovejoy Roe:** Best practices and ordinances have not been adopted by all LUG, so communities are not all on the same page.
- ii. **Mona Walz:** More frequent outreach and educational meetings for LUGs so County and PAB is viewed as a valuable resource.
- iii. **Pat Kelley:** PAB and County needs to be better marketed as a resource to LUG. The County could listen more to what communities need so we know specifically what assistance to offer. If one LUG shows a need, provide assistance to the rest to market and offer resource to any others needing assistance.
- iv. **Steve Solowczuk:** Consistency is needed across the County. Create criteria for what PAB looks for when people bring something to the Board in order to foster consistency between and among planning boards.
- v. **Josh Long:** LUGs are unaware of resources available to them
- vi. **Pat Kelley:** County staff should provide reports on regional groups updates to let other communities know what is going on in the County.
- vii. **Tony VanDerworp:** Funding affects the level of staff resources we can commit. We should leverage resources of other agencies, e.g. regional open space programs and parks, transit plans
- viii. **Mandy Grewal:** Should more systematically enlist help from other agencies, perhaps sub-committees/focus-groups within the PAB. Also, PAB membership on the regional groups should increase.
- ix. **Mary O'Hare:** Leadership is using influence, expertise and resources to get people who are in control together in order to further issues. As PAB can effectively address issues within their control, they will gain more influence, and develop a reputation that encourages those in the community to come to the County for service.
- x. **Mona Walz:** We have influence with BOC and can be leaders in this area. Additionally, we can have an influence with planning consultants (ex, consultants going to regional group meetings).
- xi. **Steve Solowczuk:** We should have the ability to influence local units & municipalities
- xii. **Tony VanDerworp:** Technical expertise is an area in which we have strong influence. We should have more influence with other agencies.
- xiii. **Feliziana Meyer:** Importance of improving communication and dialogue; PAB as a community forum to bring parties together.
- xiv. **Chuck Gray:** LUGs should consider contracting with County for services in order to gain the benefits of regionalism.
- xv. **Mona Walz:** Opportunity to build on the need for an overriding authority on transportation
- xvi. **Josh Long:** LUG and County are experiencing financial hardships; this provides an opportunity for the County to provide assistance and resources, such as websites. Budget is just one precipitating factor that can lead to better cooperation.
- xvii. **Mandy Grewal:** Tag on to One Washtenaw (?) to built trust and relationships to encourage people to look at PAB and

County as friendly resource. We should also do more aggressive lobbying work at the State level. What can we do to build influence at the State level?

- d. Transportation:
 - i. North-south connections
 - ii. Bridges
 - iii. Regional effort: Barrier is that no one is in charge of regional transportation, but everyone is affected by it.
 - iv. Road Commission funding
 - v. Dead trees along routes raising safety issues
 - vi. Promote non-construction options
- e. Parks and Recreation:
- f. Housing:
 - i. Workforce housing, affordable housing
 - ii. Our role in housing programs?

V. PAB Membership Make-up

- a. Models of membership:
 - i. How many Commissioners do we need? One?
 - ii. Importance of PAB members sitting on other boards
 - iii. How many members?
 - 1. More members might still be effective while better representing the residents of County
 - iv. Who else do we need to have at the table?
 - 1. transportation representation (WCRC, WATS, AATA?)
 - 2. agriculture, open space, parks and recreation
 - 3. public works
 - 4. more local officials to represent people of the County and to help prioritize community issues (this will also help establish regional view of issues)
 - 5. diversity
 - 6. infrastructure
 - 7. economic
 - 8. invite planning staff to witness and facilitate communication
 - 9. Need people with influence and connections to bring message back to community
 - 10. Representation/Appointee from regional groups
 - a. Can we change the appointment process by encouraging people from regional groups to submit application

VI. Conclusion/Next Steps