

Minutes: Russell Township Zoning Commission  
Russell Fire-Rescue Station  
January 22, 2014

Present: Richard E. Snyder, Chairman  
Bruce Murphy  
Donna Weiss Carson  
Ben Kotowski  
Tom Warren  
Diana Steffen, Secretary

The Chairman called the meeting to order at 7:30 p.m., and stated he was amending the agenda after Item #5 by adding Regional Relationships – Donna Weiss Carson.

**ELECTION OF OFFICERS FOR 2014** – *Mr. Warren moved to open the floor for nominations, Mr. Murphy seconded.*

*Mr. Murphy nominated Mr. Snyder for Chairman, Mr. Kotowski seconded.*

*Mr. Warren nominated Mr. Murphy as Vice-Chairman, Mr. Kotowski seconded.*

*Mr. Kotowski moved to close nominations, Mr. Warren seconded and the motion passed unanimously.*

*Upon roll call the vote to re-elect Richard Snyder as Chairman for 2014 was Mr. Murphy – yes, Mr. Kotowski – yes, Ms. Weiss Carson – yes, Mr. Warren – yes, Mr. Snyder – yes, and the motion passed unanimously.*

*Upon roll call the vote to re-elect Bruce Murphy as Vice-Chairman for 2014 was Mr. Murphy – yes, Mr. Kotowski – yes, Ms. Weiss Carson – yes, Mr. Warren – yes, Mr. Snyder – yes, and the motion passed unanimously.*

Mr. Snyder and Mr. Murphy were re-elected as Chairman and Vice-Chairman for 2014.

**MINUTES OF DECEMBER 11, 2013** – *Mr. Murphy made the motion to accept the minutes as presented, Mr. Warren seconded and the motion passed unanimously.*

**GUIDE PLAN UPDATE: DEMOGRAPHICS** – Mr. Kotowski said he has produced ten graphs so far using information from relevant sources, and expects to have 20 graphs for the Commission to choose which to use. He posted them on Dropbox today. He is using information that was not available for the current Guide Plan. He is also using the American Community Survey which extrapolates information from a small group of people but has a 90% confidence level, including on income. He believes this information can be used with a disclaimer. However, Mr. Kotowski explained that there are issues with using A.C.S. figures since A.C.S. goes by zip code, which is not accurate for Russell, due to there being two zip codes and some addresses are not in Russell. Mr. Snyder commented that he had asked the Census Bureau for Russell Township's statistics to be broken out, but the Bureau worker was unable to locate the data, however she did provide several links which Mr. Snyder passed on to Mr. Kotowski. Mr. Snyder had submitted a second request through the worker to the next service level.

Mr. Kotowski and the Commission members discussed a number of issues and graphs. They agreed to include a graph to show the increase in the poverty rate. Mr. Kotowski said he will make up a new graph that shows 40 years of population trends. Mr. Snyder asked him to alter the graph of the population pyramid to go from youngest age group on the bottom to oldest age group on top instead of vice-versa. Mr. Snyder asked that a source and definition be added to the Industry of Occupation graph. Mr. Kotowski said he will add definitions to that graph and to the one titled Occupation, so that people can understand the difference between the two graphs. He will add percentages to the Occupation graph. He will add a definition and source to the graph Russell Township Population and Number of Housing

Units Change over Time; this graph is interesting as it shows an increase in housing units while at the same time it shows a decrease in population. He will add percentages to Owner Occupants and Renters, Units Occupied.

Mr. Kotowski noted that he used housing and age statistics from census figures provided by NOACA, but he needs to find where NOACA found the information, since he had found that much of the information was only available in the A.C.S., and not in the Census Bureau information.

Mr. Kotowski said he will work on producing more graphs and send them to the Commission, but Mr. Snyder said that Demographics has become more work than anticipated, and he suggested Mr. Kotowski split up the work and ask other Commission members for assistance. Until all the information is available the Commission cannot decide what is relevant or how to organize it. Mr. Kotowski said that he gathers a lot of information and then goes through it to make it into a manageable amount. Mr. Murphy suggested that Mr. Kotowski make a list of other information that is available that may be worth using, so the Commission can determine which to use, and it can then be made into graphs. Mr. Snyder told Mr. Kotowski that he and Mr. Warren are both available to help him; Mr. Kotowski agreed to ask them for assistance. Mr. Snyder said that there are 5 weeks until the next meeting, and he would like the information to be available on the Surface sky drive within 4 weeks. He will set up a sky drive on Mrs. Steffen's tablet and everyone can then put their work on it.

Mr. Snyder handed out excerpts from the "Growth Study of Senior Housing Needs in Geauga County" report that show senior population changes. He included the total county figures and those for Russell Township. He would like to use these figures in the Guide Plan, but the pie graph is not easy to understand. Mr. Warren suggested using the bar graphs and adding percentages to them.

Action Item: Mr. Kotowski will make new graphs regarding the poverty rate and 40 years of population trends. He will redo the Population Pyramid, add sources and definitions to Industry of Occupation, Occupation and Russell Township Population and Number of Housing Units Change over Time graphs, add percentages to the Occupation graph and Owner Occupants and Renters, Units Occupied graph. He will draw up bar graphs for Russell Township Ages 60+ Populations and Geauga County Ages 60+ Populations and add percentages to those graphs. He will make a list of statistical information that may be worth using and send it to the Commission. He will email the American Community Survey to the Commission. He will put all information on the Surface sky drive by February 19, one week prior to the February 26 meeting.

**GUIDE PLAN UPDATE: LAND USE PATTERNS** – Mr. Murphy said that today he put some Excel files on Dropbox. Using a master list from the County Auditor's website of all the parcels in Russell Township he isolated out the smaller land use classes: Municipal Religious and Such, Russell Commercial/Industrial, Russell Developed Open Space, Russell Agricultural, and Russell not sure. Mrs. Steffen has reviewed the lists and they both made changes based on further review using the website and personal knowledge. The lists show the zoning, acreage, values and whether there are conservation easements or not. He said he will remove all of these parcels from the master list so that only residential and vacant parcels will remain. He can separate those by looking at the value of the improvement on each parcel. If there is a residence and it is in the R-3 zone he will deduct 3 acres for the residence and consider the rest to be undeveloped open space. If it is in the R-5 zone he will deduct 5 acres for the residence and consider the rest to be undeveloped open space.

Mr. Snyder recommended checking with David Dietrich regarding this methodology and asking him if he would support it. He spoke to him today and Mr. Dietrich said he needs to see the justification for this approach, since the usual approach is to consider an entire lot to be residential if it has a residence, even if it has more acreage than the zoning minimum required. Mr. Murphy explained that he wants to illustrate how much open, undeveloped space there is in the Township. He suggested that to treat a 60-acre lot with a residence the same as a 1.5-acre lot with a residence will not provide a true idea of how much land is open space.

The Commission discussed this methodology. Mr. Warren suggested that if impervious surface is the criteria then the small one and one-and-a-half acre lots are the opposite of the 3 and 5-acre lots and the inverse of what Mr. Murphy is attempting to show. He suggested that by taking the number of residences and the number of acres and figuring the average, it would then be possible to figure out how much open space there is left.

Discussion of Land Use Patterns will continue at the next meeting.

Mr. Snyder asked Mrs. Steffen to explain a map he asked her to create to try to determine parcels that could be developed as subdivisions, and out of those the ones that could be developed as planned residential developments (PRD). Mrs. Steffen explained her methodology; using the Buildable Lots list she and Mr. Kotowski had created as part of the Demographics topic, she identified parcels that could be developed as a subdivision. From those she identified those that consist of 20 acres or more and could therefore be developed as planned residential developments. Out of those she highlighted those lots that are mostly vacant and are most likely to be developed. There were six lots, and Mrs. Steffen emphasized that she chose these lots based on her personal knowledge of the Township and the owners. She also highlighted several lots that, if combined under one ownership, could be developed as a PRD.

Mr. Snyder recommended that the Commission consider whether to change the zoning, whereby PRD's become a permitted use and the conventional zoning becomes a conditional use for new subdivision development. He said it may be worth changing the zoning since there are over 20 potential lots that could be developed into subdivisions and one of the goals of the Land Use Guide Plan 2015, which was completed in 1996, was to promote PRD's.

Action Item: Mr. Snyder to send an email to the B.Z.A. to ask for input on this concept.

**GUIDE PLAN UPDATE: Regional Relationships** – Ms. Weiss Carson said she talked to Kathy Sarli, Director of Planning at NOACA., to ask the status of their work on updating their paragraphs and maps in this chapter in the Guide Plan. She received back a large amount of information but nothing regarding an update. Ms. Weiss Carson said she will need to go to Ms. Sarli again and ask her to review the Guide Plan chapter and update it according to what NOACA is doing for this area and how it will fit in. She would like to see its work on commuting, transportation, air and water represented in the Guide Plan, and will advise her that the Zoning Commission is looking for an overview only. She will tell NOACA that the audience is residents and proposed residents, so she does not need detailed documents, but does need something that explains what NOACA is contributing to Russell Township and Northeast Ohio.

Action Item: Ms. Weiss Carson will talk to the Director at NOACA again to explain that she only needs a few paragraphs with a broad overview. As recommended by Mr. Snyder, she will then summarize her conversation in an email that she will also copy to County Commissioner Mary Samide, who is also President of the board of NOACA this year.

There being no other business Mr. Kotowski moved to adjourn, Mr. Warren seconded and the meeting adjourned at 9:28 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

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Diana Steffen  
Secretary

Date

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Richard E. Snyder  
Chairman

Date