

Minutes: Russell Township Zoning Commission
Russell Fire-Rescue Station
March 26, 2014

Present: Richard E. Snyder, Chairman
Bruce Murphy
Donna Weiss Carson
Ben Kotowski (arrived at 8:30 p.m.)
Diana Steffen, Secretary

Tom Warren was absent with apologies.

The Chairman called the meeting to order at 7:50 p.m., and noted that there were three members in attendance resulting in a quorum. He noted that Daniel Button, an undergraduate from Cleveland State University, was in attendance; he has been asked by the Chagrin River Watershed Partners to work on Russell's project comparing developed and undeveloped land between the 1970's and today.

MINUTES OF FEBRUARY 26, 2014 – *Mr. Murphy made the motion to accept the minutes as presented, Ms. Weiss Carson seconded and the motion passed unanimously by 3-0.*

GUIDE PLAN UPDATE: NOACA Contact – Ms. Weiss Carson reported she met with NOACA Director of Planning, Kathy Sarli, and reviewed the Regional Relationships chapter of the Guide Plan. Ms. Sarli will update the maps and graphs but NOACA no longer has historical data beyond 2000. She can provide an update on the Clean Water Act, with a paragraph on water quality and air quality. This can be focused on Russell Township and the watersheds, if required. Ms. Weiss Carson asked the Commission to decide the information it would like from NOACA. Mr. Snyder asked for water quality standards. He also asked for information regarding trends that are happening outside of the Township, such as out-migration, that may affect Russell.

Mr. Murphy asked if there are changes in the rate of development of the infrastructure of the region. He asked what plans NOACA had in the past that would tie in with Russell. At one time this area was considered for high-density suburbia and it did not happen, and so how will future plans address issues differently. Originally there were plans for sewers and public water, but the Township did not want this and prevented it happening, which is a reflection of the residents' desires and resulting planning.

On another topic, Mr. Snyder said he felt it is important to gauge the effectiveness of the three- and five-acre zoning. Much of the Township is now developed, but in the 1970's the Township changed to large lot zoning to keep it rural, to keep open spaces to recharge the aquifers, and open land for septic systems. Mr. Snyder discussed this with the Chagrin River Watershed Partners who then developed a problem statement suggesting comparing aerial photographs from the 1970's with up-to-date aerials. The statement noted that if large lot zoning has been effective the amount of natural land cover will have increased. However, Mr. Snyder said that since there has been considerable development since the 1970's he would expect there to be less land cover in which case the problem statement was flawed. He suggested another method to gauge the effectiveness of the large lot zoning. He recommended reviewing 1.5-acre developments by setting up a standard method to figure out the amount of developed land in a development by counting buildings, driveways, patios, possibly lawns too. Once it is decided exactly what to count the 1.5-acre developments can be reviewed, and then the same exercise done for 3-acre developments and for 5-acre developments. By figuring the percentage of developed land from the total area of a development under each type of zoning, one can see if the percentage of natural land cover is more with 3- or 5-acre zoning than with 1.5-acre zoning. This would be a legally defensible means to justify that the initial goals of large lot zoning did indeed produce the desired results some 40 years later. A discussion followed. Mr. Murphy suggested looking at the rate of change from farmland to wooded land to developed land. Mr. Snyder said that could be phase two of the project, once everything is defined they can use the information to do other studies.

Mr. Kotowski arrived at this time.

Demographics – Ben Kotowski – Mr. Kotowski said he has been in contact with the writer of the New Geography article that stated a loss of 14% of youth under age 15 in Cleveland. He is hoping to talk to the person who did the analysis. Mr. Snyder said that on comparing the 2000 and 2010 Census data he found it was down 11.7%. He also mentioned that a chart from NOACA of the five-county region shows incorrect numbers as far as age distribution of the population.

Mr. Kotowski said he is researching the number of elder care facilities in Cuyahoga County and Lake County, since the Geauga County Department of Aging's study only mentions facilities in Geauga County. It is possible that some Russell residents move to facilities outside of Geauga County.

Mr. Murphy said that on looking at potential demographic changes he has been reviewing Census records, and he wondered if they could gain an idea of what might happen in Russell in the future by looking at the demographic of buyers of homes. Knowing the size of families coming into the Township would provide information on a trend. The Commission discussed the reasons why it appears that families with children are not moving to Russell in the same numbers as in the past.

OTHER BUSINESS – Mr. Murphy discussed land use classifications, and said that as he looked in depth on what other communities have done he found more support for what he would like to do. The Geauga County Planning Commission has done land use classifications for most of the townships, and not one show large lots as entirely residential. He looked at land use plans and maps and then listed a number of residential parcels for that township, limiting it to large parcels. He then looked at those parcels on Access Geauga, but could find no consistency in the land use classification. He did this with all the townships that have guide plans on the Planning Commission website. He said there is no methodology, it appears to be arbitrary and not repeatable. The way he would like to classify parcels would be repeatable in the future. His method would be to take the acreage of a lot that is over the amount required by the zoning district and classifying it as other than residential use. Mr. Murphy said he has put his notes on Dropbox and suggested the Commission read them over to understand his reasoning.

Mr. Snyder recommended discussing this at the next meeting after the Commission has had a chance to read Mr. Murphy's notes.

Action Item: Mr. Snyder will talk to David Dietrich regarding the methodology the Planning Commission used to produce land use maps for other townships.

There being no other business, Ms. Weiss Carson moved to adjourn, Mr. Kotowski seconded and the meeting adjourned at 9:55 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Diana Steffen
Secretary

Date

Richard E. Snyder
Chairman

Date

zc minutes 03-26-14