

Minutes: Russell Township Zoning Commission
Russell Fire-Rescue Station
March 27, 2013

Present: Richard E. Snyder, Chairman
Bruce Murphy
Donna Weiss Carson
Ben Kotowski (arrived at 7:11 p.m.)
Tom Warren
Diana Steffen, Secretary

Also in attendance: Ric Machnics, Zoning Inspector, and Trustees Jim Dickinson and Justin Madden.

Chairman Richard Snyder called the meeting to order at 7:05 p.m. The Secretary confirmed she had sent a Sunshine Notice to the newspapers announcing the cancellation of the February meeting and the earlier start time of tonight's meeting.

MINUTES OF JANUARY 23, 2013 – *Mr. Murphy moved to accept the minutes as submitted, Mr. Warren seconded and the motion passed unanimously by 4-0. (Mr. Kotowski arrived after the vote was taken.)*

GUIDE PLAN UPDATE – Preliminary Draft of Survey – CSU Consultants – Kathy Hexter and Molly Schnoke from Cleveland State University were in attendance. Ms. Hexter handed out a revised draft report of the residents' survey with the same date of March 21, 2013 as the first draft. Ms. Schnoke said 2208 surveys were mailed out using the mailing list provided by the Township, and 118 were returned as undeliverable. That list has been given to Mrs. Steffen to review. The return rate was 29.2% based on the total number of households with deliverable addresses, and 612 surveys were completed and returned to C.S.U. Although this is less than in 1994 it is still a high response rate for a mailed survey, and especially due to the number of questions and time required to complete it. Ms. Schnoke said the survey results have a 95% confidence level that the data is correct with a margin of error of approximately 3.3%.

Ms. Hexter discussed the draft report and asked the Commission to tell her of additional analysis they would like to see in the report. She discussed the demographics of survey respondents and explained that gender, age and income are the most important factors. The 1994 survey was unweighted so they did not weight this survey in order to have a good comparison, but could weight by gender if required. However, Ms. Hexter stressed they do not recommend weighting the data. The only question that stands out as far as gender was the question on oil and gas, with women being more concerned than men.

Ms. Hexter mentioned the top five responses about overall quality of life, which show people like the rural quality of life in Russell, and are satisfied with the lifestyle. Residents are more satisfied with parks and recreation now, which Mr. Snyder said can be attributed to the creation of The West Woods, Russell Uplands Preserve and expansion of ball fields at West Geauga Commons. They perceive the lifestyle in Russell to be better than in other communities in the County.

Ms. Schnoke said there has been a steady decline in response rates to surveys every year for some time, so it is not surprising that the response rate was lower with this survey than in 1994. Mr. Snyder said that there was a special committee last time and focus groups, which would have increased awareness of the survey. Ms. Schnoke said the 40% response rate in 1994 was phenomenal, but given the length of the 2012 survey the response rate was also excellent.

As far as land use issues, Ms. Hexter said residents want to continue the status quo, and are not looking for more housing options, affordable housing, shopping or services. They are neutral on housing options for seniors.

Ms. Hexter explained that in this survey she had broken out questions on green space from parks, which was not done in 1994. She found that residents strongly support the addition of more green space, but only moderately support additional parks and recreation areas.

Regarding the question on types of residential development desired, overwhelmingly residents still support only single family homes. There was 32% support for retirement communities, which was an increase of 40% from 1994. Residents also strongly support in-law suites, either within a residence (89%) or with a separate entrance (87%). Mr. Kotowski commented that it appears that the residents seem to want some type of housing for retirees but they don't want apartments or condos, so in-law suites seem to be the best alternative and least likely to change the character of Russell.

Ms. Hexter reviewed environmental questions, and said people are more satisfied with their water quality than water quantity, with the same percentage satisfied with water quality as in 1994. There is strong concern at the impact of oil and gas drilling on ground water, with the notable difference by gender, as mentioned earlier. A large majority favor return of local control over oil and gas regulations. There are no new issues regarding septic systems, but she will do further analysis on this topic. New questions were added to this survey regarding support for centralized sewers and water depending on how they would be paid for, but the answers cannot be compared to 1994 since a similar question was not asked. Regarding noise, one third of respondents are bothered by noise, and of those people half said it was due to neighbors and one third due to traffic. This is the reverse of 1994.

Action Item: The consultants will do further analysis as a result of this meeting, and then prepare a second draft report to circulate to the Commission by April 15th. Ms. Hexter will email to Mr. Snyder the additional cross tabulations they have already done, and he will circulate them to the rest of the Commission. Mrs. Steffen will copy the data from the 1994 survey for Ms. Schnoke.

The Commission decided there was no need for Ms. Hexter and Ms. Schnoke to attend the April meeting. Mr. Snyder recommended holding a public meeting to present the report to the residents in late May or early June. This will necessitate asking the Board of Trustees to extend CSU's contract to June 30th.

At this time the audience and Mr. Kotowski left the meeting.

Land Use Patterns – Mr. Murphy handed out his notes on how land uses were designated in the Township in the past, and asked for the Commission's thoughts on how to do so now. Mrs. Steffen said she and Mr. Kotowski have a list of buildable lots that she could give to Mr. Murphy. Ms. Weiss Carson suggested Mr. Murphy talk to David Dietrich regarding C.A.U.V. designation by the County.

There being no other business Mr. Murphy moved to adjourn, Mr. Warren seconded and the meeting adjourned at 9:54 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Diana Steffen
Secretary

Date

Richard E. Snyder
Chairman

Date