

Minutes: Russell Township Zoning Commission
Russell Fire-Rescue Station
December 9, 2015

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 7:48 p.m. The Secretary said she had sent an emergency Sunshine Notice to three newspapers to cancel the November meeting on the day of the meeting due to two members being unable to attend. The notice was posted at the Administration Building and on the door of the Fire-Rescue Station.

2016 Meeting Schedule – The Commission discussed the schedule prepared by Mrs. Steffen, and agreed to change the January date to the 13th due to Mrs. Steffen's absence on the regular meeting date of January 20th. Ms. Weiss Carson will not be able to attend. The December meeting was changed to December 14th, the second Wednesday.

Mr. Kotowski made the motion to accept the meeting schedule as amended, Mr. Warren seconded and the motion passed unanimously.

Land Use Guide Plan Update:

a) Review of Environmental Chapter – Mr. Warren explained that he updated this chapter by analyzing the items completed since the 1995 Guide Plan and noting the recommendations in the A.C.R.T. report that have not yet been accomplished. He would like the Commission to consider whether those recommendations should become a goal for the future.

Mr. Warren reviewed the chapter and explained how he had changed its structure since his October 28th draft. He broke out the 1975 Guide Plan into a separate section, mentioned Dr. Eckstein's study which, as part of the 1995 Guide Plan, recommended large lot zoning, and included the 1996 A.C.R.T. report with its environmental recommendations as another section. Those recommendations he then broke out into separate paragraphs to explain each in detail, and what has been done over the last 20 years to accomplish them. He noted that the Chagrin River Watershed Partners (CRWP) was asked to create maps that update those included in the A.C.R.T. report. There is some inconsistent data from multiple sources, and the Commission must decide which maps to use. He suggested which CRWP maps to use under each of these environmental recommendations as a basis for discussion.

In review, Mr. Warren said the structure of the chapter is now a description of the ACRT recommendations, description of what has been accomplished, the maps, the current situation, description of the information gained from the residents' survey in 2012, and items for the Township potentially to consider for the future. He asked the Commission to discuss whether everyone agrees with the potential additional recommendations for the future, to look at the maps and decide which are worth including, and to comment on the sections as he has written them. He said he will work with Mrs. Steffen to add some narrative on the riparian setback regulation and the 208 Plan. He asked the Commission to read the chapter and provide feedback.

As far as groundwater, Mr. Warren noted that some of ACRT's recommendations have not been done yet, such as an underground storage tank management program. Mrs. Steffen will ask the fire chief about this, and Mr. Snyder volunteered to ask Bob Weisdack of the Geauga County Health District if he has any concerns. A pollution source inventory was conducted by Mrs. Steffen about 5 years ago and it is now up to the County to indicate when, or if, the Township should conduct either follow-up inspections or an updated inventory. There are also several water wells throughout the Township being tested but it

is not known for what chemicals. The Commission agreed that one recommendation for the future should be a baseline testing of water wells due to oil and gas drilling taking place in the Township, although there would need to be funding to do this testing.

With regard to surface water, it was agreed to add the 208 Plan map, and to recommend surface water protection measures, including stormwater pollution protection measures, and educational programs for the residents on these. Winter snow management will be recommended but as "winter road treatment chemical management." A definition of riparian setbacks is required, and Mrs. Steffen suggested using the purpose written at the beginning of the regulation. An environmental overlay district was discussed, and whether that would be meaningful for the Board of Zoning Appeals to use.

The paragraphs on wetlands are informational and there are general recommendations for tree canopy and vegetation and for wildlife habitat. Mr. Snyder mentioned that the Township has worked to provide corridors for wildlife by zoning properties for passive park, the acquisition of park lands by the Russell Park Commission and coordination with WRLC which holds conservation easements on many private properties.

Mr. Snyder said this chapter will be an excellent reference for anyone to use. The survey had shown that residents are concerned about environmental issues, and the chapter demonstrates the efforts being made by the Township to address those concerns. He suggested asking CRWP, as the Township's consultant on environmental issues, to review the chapter. The Commission agreed. He asked Mr. Warren to mention ditches being part of the stormwater control system. He also asked for a map and a bar graph showing the increase in acreage of passive parks since the last Guide Plan, with both on the same page.

Action Items: Mr. Warren and Mrs. Steffen to work on narrative for riparian setbacks and the 208 Plan. Mr. Warren to change winter snow management wording; include a definition of the riparian setbacks regulation; add a mention of ditches being part of the stormwater control system; create a map and bar graph showing the increase in passive park acreage, both on one page.

Mr. Snyder to call Bob Weisdack about underground storage tanks.

Mrs. Steffen to talk to the fire chief about underground storage tanks, and to David Dietrich regarding an environmental overlay district.

All ZC to read the revised chapter and provide feedback; consider whether the potential additional recommendations should be included; review the CRWP maps and decide which should be included.

b) Regional Relationships – Ms. Weiss Carson had made some changes to this chapter, and the revised chapter is on Dropbox. She has removed the old commuting map and replaced it with a newer one from NOACA. She explained that she became aware of a Census Bureau website application called "On The Map" that has a number of maps the Commission could use. She recommended using the one titled, "Counts of All Jobs from Home Selection Area to Work County Subdivisions in 2013," along with the related bar graph. The Commission agreed that they should be included, although Mr. Snyder said the maps are difficult to understand because of many similar colors used in each one. Mr. Kotowski volunteered to work on the map to make it clearer to understand, to add it and the bar graph to the chapter, to replace the Balanced Growth map with the map that shows lot lines, and to replace the WRLC map with the final map.

Action Items: Mr. Kotowski to improve two "On The Map" maps and insert into chapter; replace Balanced Growth map and WRLC map.

c) Demographics – Mr. Kotowski had posted a revision of this chapter's narrative today on Dropbox. Ms. Weiss Carson suggested there are reasons for the lack in population growth in the Township other than the fact that some residents are aging in place. Mr. Kotowski agreed to include other factors such as the Township's land use choices, information on the regional population loss, families not having as many children, and zoning. Mr. Snyder asked the Commission if it would like a consultant familiar with the area to conduct a study that would provide more accuracy on the reason for Russell having a stable or declining population. No decision was made.

