

**CHARTER TOWNSHIP OF OSHTEMO
TOWNSHIP BOARD
PLANNING COMMISSION
ZONING BOARD OF APPEALS
JOINT MEETING
February 21, 2012**

A joint meeting of the Township Board, Planning Commission and Zoning Board of Appeals was held at the Township Hall. Supervisor Libby Heiny-Cogswell called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m.

TOWNSHIP BOARD:

Supervisor Libby Heiny-Cogswell
Clerk Deb Everett
Treasurer Nancy Culp
Trustee Grace Borgfjord
Trustee Dave Bushouse
Trustee Scott Ernstes
Trustee Lee Larson

PLANNING COMMISSION:

Millard Loy
Carl Benson
Kitty Gelling
Fred Gould
Dick Skalski
Wiley Boulding

ZBA:

Jim Sterenberg
Neil Sikora
Cheri Bell

Also present were Township Attorney James Porter, and Planning Consultant Greg Milliken.

TREE PRESERVATION

Planning Consultant Greg Milliken led a discussion centered on the issue of tree preservation raised at the Planning Commission. He noted adoption of the Master Plan with its emphasis on open space and natural features preservation, the recent clearing of a 40 acre parcel on West Main has brought the issue of tree preservation to the forefront. He further advised some of the approaches discussed by the Planning Commission include using the City of Kalamazoo's ordinance as a model to require a permit for site clearing on parcels over a certain size, requiring street trees be planted along internal roads of new subdivisions and developing a community forestry plan to identify and prioritize roadways for tree planting and educate the public on the importance of tree planting and maintenance. It was noted if a community forestry plan were explored, grants from the Department of Natural Resources have been available for such programs and information available from the natural features inventory conducted by the Kalamazoo Nature Center could be used also.

Boards and Commission members' comments and concerns included recognizing and protecting property owners rights as well as protecting adjoining property values; the major issue is clear cutting of large parcels, some felt there is a need for a restoration plan in those instances to prevent soil erosion, loss of habitat and to help retain the rural character envisioned in the Master Plan. There was also discussion of directing any proposed permitting requirement to parcels over a certain size, yet to be determined. It was agreed any proposed ordinance must be reasonable and balanced, respecting property owners rights, and education would be critical. The Planning Commission will continue to explore this topic and possible means to address it.

There was no further business and the meeting adjourned at approximately 7:10 p.m.

DEBORAH L. EVERETT
Township Clerk

Attested: LIBBY HEINY-COGSWELL
Supervisor