

**OSHEMO CHARTER TOWNSHIP  
PLANNING COMMISSION**

**MINUTES OF A VIRTUAL MEETING HELD FEBRUARY 24, 2022**

---

**Agenda**

**ELECTION OF 2022 OFFICERS – CHAIR AND VICE CHAIR**

**PLANNING DEPARTMENT ANNUAL REPORT – 2021**

**STEERING COMMITTEE: OSHEMO HOUSING STUDY INITIAL DISCUSSION**

---

A meeting of the Oshtemo Charter Township Planning Commission was held Thursday, February 24, 2022, commencing at approximately 6:05 p.m.

MEMBERS PRESENT:                Bruce VanderWeele, Chair  
    Deb Everett  
    Anna Versalle  
    Chetan Vyas

ABSENT:                                Kizzy Bradford  
    Micki Maxwell, Vice Chair  
    Alistair Smith

Also present were Iris Lubbert, Planning Director, James Porter, Township Attorney, and Martha Coash, Recording Secretary. In addition, five guests were present.

**Call to Order and Pledge of Allegiance**

Chairperson VanderWeele called the meeting to order at approximately 6:05 p.m. and invited those in attendance to join in reciting the Pledge of Allegiance.

**Approval of Agenda**

Ms. Lubbert noted the addition of appointment of Recording Secretary for 2022 to item number six. Chairperson VanderWeele let the agenda stand as published with the one addition as noted.

**Public Comments on Non-Agenda Items**

Mr. Thomas Allen, 4373 Kettle Moraine Drive, introduced himself, noted he was not a resident of Oshtemo Township and told Commissioners he was running for judge and felt he was the candidate best qualified for the position.

Chairperson VanderWeele thanked Mr. Allen for his comments and moved to the next agenda item.

### **Approval of the Minutes of the Meeting of December 16, 2021**

The Chair asked if there were additions, deletions, or corrections to the Minutes of the Meeting of December 16, 2021. Hearing none, he asked for a motion.

Mr. Vyas **made a motion** to approve the Minutes of the Meeting of December 16, 2021, as presented. Ms. VerSalle **seconded the motion**. The **motion was approved** unanimously.

Chairperson VanderWeele moved to the next agenda item.

### **COMMISSION ELECTIONS (CHAIR, VICE CHAIR, ZONING BOARD LIAISON) AND APPOINTMENT OF RECORDING SECRETARY**

Chairperson VanderWeele indicated 2022 appointments were needed for Chairperson, Vice Chair, Liaison to the Zoning Board authority, and Recording Secretary.

The group voted unanimously to appoint Ms. Martha Coash to continue in the position of Recording Secretary for 2022.

Ms. Lubbert indicated that Ms. Maxwell had indicated she was willing to continue in the positions of Vice Chair and Liaison to the Zoning Board Authority for 2022.

Ms. Everett **made a motion** to elect Ms. Maxwell to the positions of Vice Chair and Liaison to the ZBA for 2022. Ms. VerSalle **seconded the motion**. The **motion was approved** unanimously.

Mr. VanderWeele indicated he was willing to continue as Chair for 2022.

Ms. VerSalle **made a motion** to elect Mr. VanderWeele to the position of Chair for 2022. Ms. Everett **seconded the motion**. The **motion was approved** unanimously.

Chairperson VanderWeele moved to the next item and asked Ms. Lubbert for her presentation.

### **PLANNING DEPARTMENT ANNUAL REPORT 2021**

Ms. Lubbert explained that every year the Planning Department produces a report to satisfy the requirements of Section 308 of the Michigan Zoning Enabling Act (Public Act 110 of 2006, as amended), which states a Planning Commission must prepare an annual report documenting the administration of their municipality's Zoning Ordinance and outline possible future amendments to the Ordinance. She provided a

report that fulfills that obligation for 2021 and provides updates on the activities and projects planned for 2022.

She noted the Planning Department expanded the scope of the report to further document the activities of the Zoning Board of Appeals and the administrative activities of the Planning Department staff to provide a more complete picture of Planning and Zoning activities within the Township. The report is intended to not only document past and ongoing activities but to also help the Township Board develop its own work plans and budgets for the coming year.

She provided a draft of the 2021 Planning Department Annual Report and asked Commissioners to review it and provide feedback.

Chairperson VanderWeele commented the report looked great and is nice to see.

Ms. Everett said she appreciated seeing all the information together in an easy to digest format.

Ms. Lubbert asked that if Commissioners had any further comments or suggested changes that they submit them by March 2.

### **STEERING COMMITTEE: OSHTEMO HOUSING STUDY INITIAL DISCUSSION**

Ms. Lubbert told Commissioners that Representatives from the W. E. Upjohn Institute for Employment Research were present for an initial discussion about the Housing Study, to share some of the housing assessment data collected, and to have a discussion on the data and plan.

Mr. Lee Adams, Director of Community Development, said the Institute is working on a housing survey for Kalamazoo County which will help inform their work for Oshtemo Township. They see the situation as broader than one municipality, though specific data for the Township will be gathered for analysis.

He provided statistics for housing conditions for the U.S., Michigan, Kalamazoo County, and Oshtemo Township for comparison. He noted the age of houses in Oshtemo built before 1940 were lower than in the State and costs were higher. Rents are on a par with the county and the State and there is a significant percent of rentals in the Township. Owner and rental vacancy rates are both close, within ½%.

He noted that as far as home values by price categories go, the biggest chunk of houses in Oshtemo are between \$200,000 and \$300,000. Few are less than \$150,000.

Wages have not kept pace since 2011, but housing prices have risen, largely due to the fact that not enough homes are being built fast enough to meet market demand.

He said 58% of renters in Oshtemo pay at least 25% of their income for housing. 29% of homeowners pay more than 25% of their income for housing; 71% pay less than 25%.

Very few people, about 7%, both live and work in the Township. The biggest number come to work in the Township from Kalamazoo, then Portage. The significance of that is questionable because so many people work from home now and there is incomplete data for long term.

In response to a question from Attorney Porter, he said the figures are based on net income for the rental figure, or available spendable income.

Responding to questions from Commissioners, he said they have not done an analysis of the turnover of rental units, but turnovers tend to raise rent significantly. The rental figures cited include student housing, and the survey is updated every year. They do not have real time occupancy data. The general sense is that one bedroom apartments cost between \$700 – 800 and two bedrooms between \$800 – 1000. A few years ago one bedroom cost was between \$500 - 550.

He said a large portion of rental properties and homes do not meet the needs of seniors. They do not want to do yard work and want smaller units. There are not a lot of condos in the Township, so seniors are not leaving the houses they are in, partially resulting in the market being seized up. He was not sure how much the national trend of companies buying up rentals is occurring in the Township but that can be looked at.

He said part of the study will look at affordable housing stock and how the shortage can be remedied, noting that with every 100 units of high end housing built, 20-30 units of low end affordable housing opens up.

Emily Petz, Community Development Coordinator, said they hope to have a survey ready on housing next week to begin to mail to county residents and will partner with local units of government to get it distributed as widely as possible. Outreach will include online surveys, postcards, advertising, Facebook, posters, any avenue that is available.

She posed three questions to understand what Commissioners felt were priorities for the Oshtemo Housing Study:

1. She asked what Commissioners think of the data described so far.

Ms. VerSalle said she felt the trending is generally what she expected.

Chairperson VanderWeele was concerned student housing may affect the rental side and would like to see that broken out. He wondered if older residents in retirement homes affect the data.

Ms. Petz said they can be targeted through survey.

2. Ms. Petz asked if they could create the most ideal housing ecosystem, what it would look like.

Ms. VerSalle said she'd like to see more variety in single unit and larger units, and more condos.

The Chair was interested in a walkable community in or near the village center.

Ms. Everett was interested in adding tiny houses.

Mr. Vyas mentioned subsidized housing expansion.

Ms. Petz said there would be a separate survey for the homeless population but that it is often hard to reach them

Attorney Porter said a large homeless population was identified in Oshtemo last year and suggested a way to contact them might be through the Ordinance Enforcement Officers.

Chairperson VanderWeele said infrastructure would require water and sewer for any area that doesn't already have access.

Mr. Adams said they hear from developers that they want water, sewers and roads already in place before committing to a building project.

Ms. Lubbert said she was interested in aging in place, exploring affordable housing options through density bonuses, and a healthy mix of housing types.

Attorney Porter asked if they would be looking at changes to zoning. New zoning language to increase density where sewer and water is available would need to be in place for mini lots/houses in order to bring the price point down.

Ms. Lubbert indicated the overall Township plans would need to be looked to determine long term implications.

3. Ms. Petz asked for ideas of strategies, besides zoning, to move to an ideal state?

Mr. Adams noted water and sewer additions would be difficult and asked about public relations.

Ms. VerSalle felt the non-motorized plan is key.

Ms. Everett noted community surveys have been in favor of retaining the rural character of the Township. She felt the area east of 131 was where development should be concentrated.

Chairperson VanderWeele felt it would be difficult trying to add utilities to developed areas; maybe that means going to undeveloped areas.

Ms. Lubbert felt there might be ways to permit higher density areas, but still retain rural characteristics.

Ms. VerSalle said public transportation could expand to rural parts of the Township to make areas more accessible and affordable.

The Chair asked what the timeline is for completion of the County plan.

Mr. Adams said the target is May of this year.

Chairperson VanderWeele thanked Mr. Adams and Ms. Petz for their presentation and discussion and moved to the next agenda item.

### **OTHER UPDATES AND BUSINESS**

Ms. Lubbert noted it is still the goal and staff is looking into the possibility of how to provide a hybrid meeting format to allow members of the public to attend virtually.

She also said the Zoning Board of Appeals has two openings and asked that if Commissioners had suggestions or know of interested applicants that they contact the Township Supervisor.

### **ADJOURNMENT**

With there being no further business to consider, Chairperson VanderWeele adjourned the meeting at approximately 7:06 p.m.

Minutes prepared:  
February 25, 2022

Minutes approved:  
March 24, 2022