

RECORD OF PROCEEDINGS

Minutes of **Greenfield Township Trustees** *Special Meeting*

May 15, 2024 - Held 6:00 PM

The Greenfield Township Trustees met in special session at the Firehouse. Trustee Searle called the meeting to order and led those present in the Pledge of Allegiance. Dave Cotner, Lonnie Kosch and Kent Searle were present.

Trustee Searle opened the meeting by explaining the purpose of the meeting. The Township is in the process of working on a Comprehensive Land Use plan. Fairfield County had approved a county-wide comprehensive plan earlier this year, which was a long process. This plan had a lot of land use that the Township was not happy with, so the Board decided they would develop their own Land Use Plan. He noted the final Plan that Fairfield County approved looked better for the Township; however, the Township had already started on their own plan, so they want to continue to develop it according to how they would like to see the Township develop in the future. This process has been ongoing for four to five meetings, and there is a draft map available as to what has been developed thus far. He pointed out the green area which is considered R1; this requires 1.5 acres and can only have one home on it; it requires 150 feet of road frontage. This is likely where most residents live at the present time. The R2 area is more compact and would be more for developments; it requires 20,000 square feet with one home on it, so more homes can be packed in per acre; however, the R2's do require water and sewage services; they cannot be on wells.

One of the big goals of the Township is to keep Lancaster from annexing the Township. They have annexed various areas of the Township up to this date. The area down into Ety Road used to be Township property. The area which is now River Valley Highlands was originally Township property, which is an example where Lancaster has annexed parts of the Township. With all of the development going on in central Ohio, and Intel coming in, there is a housing shortage statewide, particularly in central Ohio. With all of this development comes growth. The Township wants to get ahead of this, and to lay out how they want to see things happen, and to keep Lancaster from gobbling up the Township. By proposing where the Township wants to see development, they will work with the county to get water and sewer structure into the areas.

The two main reasons properties would annex into Lancaster is: 1. infrastructure, i.e. water and sewer, which the Township cannot provide; it either needs to come from the city of Lancaster or Fairfield county; 2. zoning; if a property owner cannot get the zoning they want from the Township, they may go to the city of Lancaster, if they will provide the zoning they want. One of the biggest challenges is high density multi-family housing, which is currently not allowed in the Township. If there is a developer who wants to put in one of those developments, and if he is close enough to Lancaster, he can ask to be annexed there.

Part of what the Township has done thus far in laying out the comprehensive plan is to show development that would encourage the county to bring water and sewer into the Township, to get ahead of the city. If the infrastructure is already in place, this would eliminate a reason for a landowner or developer to want to annex into Lancaster.

Trustee Searle stated the Township has a map from Fairfield County which shows where the water and sewer services can be brought into the Township; however, they won't bring those services in for single family homes. They would need industry, business, or high density

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housing. He went on to state that he wants to see the Township stay the way it is, but they have to develop this plan and map, and be ready for what is coming. He stated he has concerns about the current map as it stands, and that the Board wants to hear from the residents as to their issues and concerns.

Trustee Kosch went on to explain that Fairfield County stated they have the money to bring the water and sewer lines/service into the Township (the Township cannot afford to do this) but they will not do so until they know the county has finalized their comprehensive plan and they can see where to bring the lines.

The group reviewed the proposed map from the Greenfield Township website, and what has changed to this point. The industrial areas are in purple, and the special uses are in orange - churches (specifically looking at the north side of Coonpath). Various areas were pointed out where industrial and local business had been added, including up Coonpath. Trustee Searle pointed out if the Township needed to grow industrially, going up Coonpath would make sense since it has great access to Route 33. The yellow on the map is R2, which is 20,000 square feet per house, roughly two houses per acre.

The group continued reviewing the rough draft map, and Trustee Searle pointed out the yellow areas, which he felt were too large. The county will not run sewer and water services up where there are single family homes on the map; however, they will bring the lines up to the area where it would keep Lancaster from coming in that area. The challenge is having enough proposed R2 area to have the county come in with the services lines, but not more than what the Township wants to see. The group reviewed the larger parcels that are farmer owner or investor owned. The common boundary of the yellow properties is Carroll Southern Road.

Trustee Searle expressed his concern with having too much R2 property designated on the map, and having a developer wanting to buy a whole parcel and put a housing development on it. He feels the Township would be unable to fight it once it is on the comprehensive plan. The Board asked Rick Ricketts to weigh in on this idea, and he agreed with Trustee Searle. It is better to limit, and expand in the future, rather than try to take away. If things develop as the Township wants to see, it can be expanded. The comprehensive plan is not ironclad. It was also noted the plan can be changed in the future. Trustee Cotner pointed out the area on the map where it was thought that Lancaster would be trying to annex, and stated a fence needs to be built in those areas to stop them. He noted the same needs to happen on Coonpath to stop them. He reiterated that was why it was so important to have the community in attendance and giving their input, rather than the Board making the decisions on their own. A participant asked if making a property R2 would keep it from becoming industrial. This is not necessarily the case. If a developer buys it and wants to make it industrial, they can apply to have the zoning changed and go through the appropriate channels, i.e. a Zoning Commission public hearing, with their recommendation coming to the Board; and then a Board of Trustees public hearing to make a determination. However, having the comprehensive plan finalized and in place gives the Township something to stand on if a developer wants to challenge the zoning.

A participant asked if the Township has control over what industry would be allowed in the industrial zoned areas. The Zoning Resolution spells out what is allowed in terms of industry and it also spells out what can be a conditional use. It also opens the door in terms of a property that is rezoned; the owner can then put anything on that property that qualifies.

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Discussion continued as to zoning districts and what is allowed. Industrial zoning does not allow any type of housing on it at all. The B1 business zoning - local business - is no longer being used, although there are several properties that have that zoning currently. It would now be industrial or local business or highway business. The industrial zoning would allow for warehouses, which is a concern. The zoning district would need to be amended by the zoning commission, and as the comprehensive plan is developed, that may need to be something that they do. The zoning resolution was recently amended to prohibit solar farms and wind farms to less than 50 megawatts. The county has control over anything larger than 50 megawatts.

A participant asked about the industrially zoned area on Plum Road and how the Board had made that decision. Trustee Cotner explained the Board had spoken with the primary land owners in the Township, and the particular areas in discussion were owned by Lloyd Helber and Steve Eversole. Those two gentlemen expressed that they wanted to have that land zoned as industrial on the comprehensive plan. It is currently zoned R1 and being farmed. It was reiterated that the comprehensive plan does not change the current zoning. The landowner would still need to go through the process to try to change the zoning, if that is what they wish to do.

At this point, Attorney Rick Ricketts explained the situation that had occurred with Violet Township and the city of Pickerington, and how the situation played out. Essentially, there was not good planning, and he doesn't want to see that happen to Greenfield Township. He noted every Township is different and will decide what they want to do. With the municipalities that are around Greenfield Township, there are two ways to keep Lancaster from overrunning it: 1. have an agreement with them; or 2. build a fence around the Township and try to put themselves in a position so that Lancaster no longer has contiguity to block Lancaster from coming in. He referred to the draft map and talked about the possibility of Lancaster bringing in multi-family housing because of the tax production. He went on to suggest that the city, township and municipalities surrounding those areas could work together to create a master plan to keep the developers from running over them. This would include considering how the school districts would work, and what tax dollars will work, rather than being at war with each other and being run over by developers. He noted he is also a developer, and he knows how things work. He stated the developers will go for the dollars. He suggested the Township may want to reexamine the multi-family scenario more closely as it relates to their plan, and the strategy for keeping Lancaster out. He also suggested that the Township look at the highest and best use of their ground, which Pickerington and Violet Township did not do, so they have the best tax base they can have. He suggested the two main things the Township should consider in their plan: 1. get utilities where they are needed so Lancaster can't beat them to the punch; 2. try to provide a marketable product for developers who want to come in. In looking at multi-family vs. warehouses, the tax base for the community needs to be considered. This includes working with the primary landowners in the Township in order to build the fence.

Trustee Searle explained the fence concept in more detail. One of the requirements for a property to annex to Lancaster is that the property is touching the city boundary - so any areas that could provide water and sewer and want to develop - and are happy to stay in the Township. If there are a group of properties like that, it would essentially build a wall to Lancaster.

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A participant expressed their concern about having industrial business coming up to Plum Road which would bring semis through town, and past the school and through the rural residential areas. The Board explained that the landowners who were contacted preferred to have this area noted on the proposed map as industrial, and again stated that this map was a “wish list”. The zoning would not be changed based on the map; the land owners would still need to apply to have it changed. The Board also pointed out that the green areas were R1 - single residential AND farm ground; there’s no separate agricultural designation. The participants suggested changing the purple area to green. Trustee Kosch pointed out the Village of Carroll would also be part of the concern for potentially being annexed and/or having zoning changed. Discussion continued about the primary property owners in that area, and whether they had been consulted on what their plans are in the future for the properties along Plum Road. The land is currently being farmed and will remain as green on the draft map at this time. It was suggested that if the property owners change the zoning in the future to industrial, they would likely have a road out to Coonpath Road rather than to Plum Road for the truck traffic.

The group continued to discuss and review the current Township zoning map vs. the proposed Comprehensive Land Use Plan map. It was pointed out again that the Comprehensive Land Use Plan map was needed in order to work with Fairfield County to bring in the needed water and sewer services. The county wants to potentially put in a lift station at Coonpath and run the sewage up to Lockville. This will also help the county, as they currently pay the city of Lancaster to use their water and sewer system to bring sewage to them. Chief Smith pointed out that the improved infrastructure would help the Fire Department and the community; twelve percent of the Township is covered with hydrants, which is not a lot.

A participant asked Mr. Ricketts for his experience in Violet Township concerning property values when industrial business is built - will it affect the value positively or negatively. He stated there are several factors to be considered, and explained he had been in a recent meeting where some property owners who were adjacent to an industrial building were planning to go together to sell their property as industrial, which would increase their value. However, based on the current situation, the value of their house is going in the other direction.

A participant asked about an area of land along Route 33 and what was happening with it. Trustee Kosch explained that Lloyd Helber owns that land, and he has taken the trees out in relation to agriculture. It is unknown as to what he may be planning to do with the land in the future; it could be industrial or multi-family. It was noted the land goes all the way up to Plum Road.

A participant asked about the difference between Local Business and Industrial. The Board explained Local Business is a scaled back area and would include areas where there might be a pizza place, Dollar General, offices, etc. - like strip mall type businesses. Also, Local Business could be operated on Industrial property, but Industrial business could not be operated on Local Business property.

Trustee Cotner asked Mr. Ricketts to explain the business of the Township having an NCA - New Community Authority - agreement with Lancaster. Mr. Ricketts explained an NCA is more desirable than building a fence, because it is better for the Township, and it means the entities have come to an agreement; it keeps the developers from running over the Township. It allows the Township to retain their property, and gain some tax dollars. He explained an NCA allows

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Townships to charge an income tax, as well as additional millage, on top of the base millage. This is done through an agreement with a developer. The NCA does not affect the existing taxpayers; it is an additional tax on new development by an agreement with a developer. He gave the following example from some Violet Township numbers, so they are skewed somewhat: If you were charging a two percent income tax and charging five mills, and you assumed that you would have 20 homes built, for a total of 560 homes (which would not be a large number over 30 years) that would generate an additional tax revenue of approximately 17 million dollars; no industrial, no multi-family. This would continue on and generate revenue for schools, the fire department, etc.

He went on to explain that New Albany has been the biggest user of NCA's and had used it to build additional buildings, firehouses, hook & ladders, schools, etc. It does take about a 20 year period of time to get things rolling but it is a never-ending source of tax revenue. This is the scenario that Mr. Ricketts has been recommending to Townships. For an industrial property, it does get complicated, and he gave a separate scenario for that situation involving New Albany Co. He will also be gathering information and making a presentation in the Township meetings with Lancaster which involve an industrial base and would show what the NCA dollars would mean after the tax abatement, especially after a 15-year period. Mr. Ricketts reiterated that each situation needs to be looked at separately to make sure the community is winning.

Discussion continued regarding the meetings that have already taken place with the city of Lancaster and included both the outgoing and incoming mayors, Fairfield County, and the Township, which the Trustees have taken turns attending. Over the course of the meetings, some additional issues have arisen, but it was felt the next meeting will provide more insight.

At this time, Trustee Searle introduced all the participants of the Township and included Rick Ricketts, attorney, who was in attendance to provide information and his insight into the process and how it works.

A participant asked Chief Smith if he was in favor of the lift station. He explained the Fairfield County Water - Tony - needs to know what the Township is planning in terms of development so he can determine where, how and what size(s) the water and sewer services will be brought in. This will also allow the services to grow as the community grows, and allow more fire hydrants to be placed in the community, which are needed.

The question was asked and the Board reiterated that the more R2, Industrial and LB that was placed on the map, the more water and sewer services would be brought in by the county. Trustee Cotner also pointed out that the sooner the county has the plan from the Township, the sooner they can get started and get ahead of what Lancaster is attempting to do.

A participant asked for clarification about her own property and how and when it might be annexed into Lancaster; however, after examining the map more closely, it was determined that her property was not adjacent to Lancaster so this would not be the case.

Another participant then asked for an explanation about what was happening with the church and the new apartments being built. Trustee Searle explained that the Trustees believe that Metro Development had bought the properties around the church and the pain management clinic (near/around Waffle House), and wanted to build apartments. He pointed out a 150 foot

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border, approximately where they did not touch the city of Lancaster. The Township denied the request to build the apartments. The company then found a loophole regarding an extended stay residential hotel in the law, which are basically apartments, and they then asked the Township for a zoning permit to do that. Because hotels are allowed on a business property, they were granted the permit. However, as time went on, we believe they changed their mind and wanted to build apartments. We believe they then went to the city, and then went to a property which he indicated on the map, and had that property apply for annexation. This would give them the border to Lancaster they need so they could apply to Lancaster and be annexed into the city. He noted this was not shown on the Township comprehensive plan map as yet. It was clarified that each time property is annexed into the city of Lancaster, the Township border changes. Because of the type of annexation, the base tax rate will be retained for the Township, but will not increase if the property is developed. He also reiterated that Lancaster does not ask or tell the Township when they are annexing property; the Township has no say in the process.

The remainder of the meeting was spent on clarifying sections of the map to be changed, as well as discussion about condos and the various restraints or requirements on getting those built. Mr. Ricketts pointed out that they are typically allowed in zoning under a PUD.

It was confirmed that Fiscal Officer Kull will update the map with the changes discussed at the meeting and it will be posted on the Township website, as well as on the Savvy Citizen site. Trustee Searle encouraged everyone to get that app if they didn't already have it so they wouldn't miss any updates.

After discussion, the next meeting was scheduled for Tuesday, June 18, 2024, 6:00 p.m., at the Greenfield Township Firehouse.

With no further business to come before the Board, Trustee Kosch made a motion to adjourn; Trustee Cotner seconded the motion.

ROLL CALL: Searle: Yes Kosch: Yes Cotner: Yes Motion Passed 3-0

Meeting adjourned at 8:17 p.m.