



# Dexter Township

## planning commission

6880 Dexter-Pinckney Road  
Dexter, MI 48130

Telephone: 734-426-3767  
Fax: 734-426-3833

[www.twp-dexter.org](http://www.twp-dexter.org)

John Shea,  
Chair  
Ken Tappe,  
Vice Chair  
Vickie Kooyers  
Twp. Brd. rep.  
Mary Adams  
Secretary  
James Korcek  
Molly Wade  
Tom Lewis  
Commissioners  
Kim Jordan,  
Recording Secretary

### SPECIAL MEETING OF THE PLANNING COMMISSION Thursday, February 5, 2009 7:00 PM

Present: John Shea, Chair; Ken Tappe, Vice Chair; Mary Adams, Secretary; Vickie Kooyers, Township Board Representative; Molly Wade; Tom Lewis and James Korcek.

Also present: Patrick Sloan, Director of Planning and Zoning, and Pat Kelly, Supervisor.

Absent: None

The meeting was called to order at 7:05 PM.

**I. Approval of Agenda** – Special Meeting. No action taken.

**II. Approval of the Meeting Minutes** – None

**III. Public Comment** - None

**IV. Action Items** –

**1) Master Plan Public Advisory Meeting to discuss future development policies in the Rural Residential and Commercial Districts of Dexter Township-**

Shea welcome everyone and said that the Planning Commission is looking for input from the public on the future development policies in the Rural Residential and Commercial Districts of Dexter Township. He stated that growth will eventually pick up again at some point and that Dexter Township needs to plan on how it will manage that growth. He said that Sloan will give a presentation and then the floor will be open for questions and comments.

Patrick Sloan, Director of Planning and Zoning, gave a thorough PowerPoint presentation. A copy of his presentation can be obtained at the Township Hall and/or the Township web site and will be part of the approved meeting minutes.

Shea opened the floor for public comment.

**Caroline Altomare, 11474 Castleton Court, Dexter** – said she lives off Dexter Townhall Road and looks back at Copper Meadows. She is concerned about future proposed developments coming in to the Township. She asked what the status was with future developments that are already in the works along Dexter Townhall Road.

Shea said Hartman Farms preliminary site plan has been approved for 70 units/homes. Lindemann Farms, an Open Space community, has final approval for 54 units which is conditional on getting approval from the Department of Environmental Quality Health (DEQ) for community septic.

**Nancy Possley, 6805 Dexter Pinckney Road, Dexter-** asked how the Planning Commission defines “visitors” as mentioned in the C-1 intent during the presentation.

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Shea said that he would interpret “visitors” to be people passing through such as golfers, people visiting the parks and lakes. And also the people traveling back n forth to work. He asked Possley if her concern was that she didn’t want the Township to be a destination point for visitors.

Possley replied, yes.

**Cathy Hunter 5360 Madden Road, Dexter-** asked if we remember what we went through with “Panda” several years ago and questioned what we had in place to protect us from that happening again.

Shea said that the Township does have stronger environmental and development standards in place today.

**Karen Chalmer, 5280 Westbury Road, Dexter-** she said the more lakes development we have, the bigger the draw we become. She doesn’t want to draw more people in and would discourage future development around the lakes, especially commercial development.

**Mark Bakula, 12694 Oak Hill Dr., Dexter-** asked why the power station (ITC) property is zoned Rural Residential.

Shea said that it is in the Rural Residential district but it is a special land use that requires Planning Commission approval. Special land uses typically have to meet heightened standards before they can be approved. Although the ITC use is needed, the Planning Commission reviews and investigates all impacts of any use that it considers.

**Rick Monier, 13511 Island Lake Road, Dexter-** what ever happen to the Dexter Townhall Road freeway extension connecting Lindemann Farms to I-94?

Shea said that the Washtenaw County Road Commission (WCRC) proposed the extension and the Township believed it to be a good concept. It also allowed the Township some leverage in getting the existing road up-graded, keeping the extension as a future possibility. Currently there are no immediate plans to extend; however, there may be a need for another North South Road in the Township ~~to~~ in the next 10 to 20 years.

Caroline Altomare asked if commercial property (C-1) can be re-zoned if deemed not commercially viable. She cited the currently boarded-up building at the southeast corner of N. Territorial Rd. and Dexter Townhall Rd. (a.k.a. the Countryside building)

Shea stated, yes, if the owner or Township wanted to pursue the re-zoning and the Township Board were to approve it.

**Gregg Magnuson, 9640 Stinchfield Woods Road, Dexter-** asked what the owner of the Countryside property plans on doing with that piece of property. Can C-1 zoning be used for other uses such as the development of residential homes? He hopes not.

Pat Kelly responded that the Township had wanted to purchase the property for the purpose of a fire station; however, we were out bid. The current owner purchased it as an investment. But given the current state of our economy, it is still sitting vacant. She said that she has been in verbal contact with the owner and he is aware that the Township might still be interested in purchasing the property.

Gregg Magnuson stated that the Planning Commission has approved site plan developments and they are sitting out there waiting for the economy to turn around. Are we going to let these developments ~~to~~ build all at once when the economy does turn around? Site plans need to expire at some point if they are not developed. The Township is not maintaining its rural character and keeping with the good health and welfare of the community.

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Shea said that Magnuson made a good point and that the Planning Commission is currently working on proposing language to the Zoning Ordinance that would allow approved site plans to eventually expire. He suggests Mr. Magnuson attend a Township Board meeting and voice his position to members of the Township Board. Given the current state of the economy, this is the first time that developers have asked for extensions. In the past, they wanted the approval process to move along faster.

Magnuson reiterated that it is the duty of the PC to hold and implement these standards, and that they are the last line of defense against over\_development.

Shea stated that the Planning Commission is responsible for ensuring that the protections of the Zoning Ordinance are appropriately applied. He also stated that the Planning Commissioners are appointed by the Township Board to serve.

Caroline Altomare stated that she was concerned about the scenario of pending developments that could possibly begin building all at once. The housing could outpace the infrastructure in place. Schools would become overcrowded and the streets and roads would be stressed, etc.

Shea said that the Planning Commission has standards set in place that address the infrastructure. We have a Township Engineer who reviews and informs us if any infrastructure cannot support something. Additionally, we require traffic and environmental studies to help guide and direct us. He said that most of the developments in Dexter Township are 25 to 50 units/houses and are not extremely large in size.

Magnuson complained that the traffic on Stinchfield Woods Road is fast. He would like to see speed limit signs posted for 25 miles an hour. The current speed limit of 55 miles per hour on Stinchfield Woods Road is too fast. He doesn't want to make Dexter Township a destination for anyone.

**Jennifer Bensinger, 6970 Dexter-Pinckney Road, Dexter-** suggested that we tighten up on site plan expiration deadlines.

**Robert Nester, 9909 Dexter Townhall Road, Dexter-**asked if adjacent Townships get together and discuss issues and concerns that might impact one another. For example, if a factory were to open up in a neighboring Township and the corridor goes through Dexter Township, how can we stop it?

Shea said that we cannot stop our neighbors from [appealing their zoning](#). We do have a regional planning team, CAPT/DART, in place which meets monthly to discuss these types of issues.

**Robin Warner, 4222 Dexter Townhall Road, Dexter-** asked how close is Dexter Township willing to be opposed, where possible [to, in discouraging](#) further development.

Shea replied that Dexter Township is moderate. Rural character is supported. We strive for a balance; however, state and local standards, regulations, and laws apply.

**Bob Wilkins, 9672 Daisy Lane, Dexter** –said he was a resident in Novi, Michigan when it was a small town of 4,000 people back in the 1960's. He served on the school board when Novi had less than 10,000 people and watched it grow to 80,000 plus. Dexter Township is not as affected by development because there is no expressway here. However, Dexter Township needs to look ahead and plan carefully. Novi lost a lot of farmland and development enriched land. The schools ran into many problems as the population ballooned. He could see the same similar situation happening to Dexter Township and applauds our efforts for looking forward.

Gregg Magnuson said he moved here from Connecticut in 1984. Farmland was very prevalent until the town quickly developed and built-out. He sees a similar situation in Dexter Township. He would like to see Dexter Township stay the way it currently is. The Planning Commission is our only line of defense. Stop the development now until we know what is going to happen in the near future with these pending developments.

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Shea replied that Dexter Township must follow the law and ordinances. Development, as a whole, cannot be stopped because of the property rights of owners.

Caroline Altomare asked if farmers could sell their land to anyone they wanted.

Shea said, yes. A farmer or a developer could buy it; however, the zoning would still apply. The Township ~~has tools it can preserve farmland use to stop development~~ but it needs tax dollars and support. The ~~farmer could taxpayer could~~ buy land through a Purchase of Development Rights (PDR) program.

Pat Kelly cited the property near West Lake Hills where Washtenaw County purchased it as a nature preserve. Dexter Township has a PDR ordinance, but it is not funded. At some point, the electorate might support a millage.

Magnuson said even if people elect not to pay for development rights and do nothing, we still would end up paying more in taxes when the development picks up and our infrastructure is stressed from overdevelopment.

**Erick Walton, 11350 Castleton Court, Dexter-** asked how many dwelling units have received final site plan approval.

Sloan replied, 193 have received final site plan approval and an additional 70 have received preliminary site plan approval.

**Charlotte Schiller, 8789 McGregor Road, Dexter-** said she operates Klave's Marina and owns a smaller marina on Dexter-Pinckney Road. The 3 ½ acres on McGregor Road is partially zoned Rural Residential and Lakes Residential. She wanted to know if there were any plans of changing the setback standards along Dexter-Pinckney Road.

Shea said not in the Master Plan. Zoning and setbacks are Zoning Ordinance issues. The intent of the Master Plan is to guide for development and land use. However, it can recommend more flexible setbacks and the Zoning Ordinance can eventually be amended.

**Mike Bradish, 10807 Quigley Road, Dexter-** asked if we had any changes for Agriculture district in the future and/or any provisions for Concentrated Animal Feeding Operations (CAFOs).

Sloan replied that the Michigan Right to Farm Act and the accompanying Generally Accepted Agricultural and Management Practices (GAAMPs) supersedes the Township's local regulations if agriculture is a permitted principal use of a zoning district.

Wade added that the State has guidelines that the Planning Commission has been looking at. She said that we have no local control and that our policies cannot exceed the State's. She did mention that discharge permit applications for CAFOs require a public hearing.

Robert Nester noted that his commercial property on Dexter-Pinckney Road existed before zoning setbacks were in place and they now require a variance. Why adopt zoning setbacks that preclude compliance?

Shea said that the Master Plan is not specific to lots. However, the lot in question is most likely a legal nonconforming lot. After the Master Plan has been adopted, the Township will work on implementing its policies. One of the goals will be to limit the number of variance applications.

Charlotte Schiller said that her property next to Nesters is zoned Rural Residential (RR). She said it would make more sense for both properties to be planned and zoned as Lakes Residential.

Erick Walton asked if the Michigan Department of Agriculture count planned residences within its radius review for CAFOs or if it only counts existing dwellings.

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Sloan thought that only existing dwellings are counted, but he would check with the Michigan Department of Agriculture.

Gajewski stated that he disagrees with the findings of the recent gravel road capacity analysis. He said that 55 miles per hour is not an appropriate speed limit on gravel roads. The purpose of zoning is to protect health, safety and welfare, that means we do not want 55mph speeding cars in residential neighborhoods. Potholes and washboarding on gravel roads act as traffic calming devices, like speed bumps which slow the traffic right down for the majority of the summer months when our kids are playing outside and riding their bikes. A single car going 55 miles per hour down a gravel road can create a large amount of dust. Down zoning gravel road properties to higher minimum lot sizes will only encourage more sprawl. One of the road commission contributors to this ordinance had reservations about ever using it. He said "Strict capacity of a gravel road has nothing to do with the surface of the road and a judge could easily rule that way. "We'll definitely be sued if we adopt this policy in our master plan". Gajewski disagrees with using a gravel road capacity analysis as an ordinance.

Magnuson said that a speed limit of 25 miles per hour is appropriate on a gravel road. He also said that he would not like to see any of the gravel roads paved.

**Margaret Lobello, 13718 Orchard Ridge Road, Dexter-** said she lived outside of Buffalo, New York in a rural farming community where farmers were wealthier and their lobby was more powerful than the developers'. We need to show why farming is viable and support agricultural activity.

**Dianne Monier, 13511 Island Lake Road, Chelsea-** said that since they bought their property in 1962 their taxes have increased a thousand fold. She asked if there was any tax relief for farmers.

Shea said that the State of Michigan has its own set of assessment regulations and that farm land ers is taxed at the highest and best use. Perhaps the State of Michigan could encourage the continuation of farming if it changed the way farms are taxed. He also noted to Ms. Lobello that agricultural policies in Dexter Township are supportive of agriculture.

No further discussion.

**V. Township Board Up-Date** – None

**VI. Concerns of Commission Members, Director of Planning and Zoning, Supervisor, and Recording Secretary-** None

**VII. Public Comment** – None

**VIII. Future Agenda Items** –

Tuesday, February 24, 2009

1) John Kelly Landscaping, Preliminary Site Plan

**IX. Adjournment** – Shea, Chair, declared meeting adjourned at 8:57 PM

**Respectfully submitted,**

**Kimberly Jordan, Recording Secretary**

**Mary Adams, Secretary**

