

**Almont Township Planning Commission
Regular Meeting
October 11, 2023**

The regular meeting of the Almont Township Planning Commission was called to order at 7:00 p.m. by Planning Commission Chairperson, Andrea Bara, at the Almont Township Hall, 819 N. Main Street, Almont, Michigan. Pledge of Allegiance and invocation was recited. Roll call taken.

Members Present: Andrea Bara, Traci Pewinski, Dennis Sweers, and Kevin Vallelunga.

Members Absent: Steve Hoffa, Jeremy Yarbrough, and Rick Dodge.

Professional Services: Planner Alex Hritcu from ROWE Professional Services.

Guests Present: About 14 Almont High School students and Mr. Brian Blumline

Moved by Vallelunga and supported by Pewinski to approve the minutes from the September 13, 2023, as presented. Motion carried.

Correspondence: Presented

Public Comments: None

Late Agenda Items: None

Introductions: None

Public Hearings: None

New Business: None

Old Business:

1. Review/Update Master Plan

Discussion:

Chairperson Bara welcomed the students and provided an overview of the role and mission of the Planning Commission and explained the current effort of updating the Master Plan. Chairperson Bara asked for comments from the students with respect of what they liked about growing up in Almont and whether they planned to remain in Almont after graduation. Also, whether any of them were interested in pursuing a career in farming. There was little to no interest on the part of the students to remain in Almont and for sure no interest in farming as a career.

Chairperson Bara provided the survey summary as a handout for Commissioners to consider as we move forward in updating the Master Plan. She also commented on the successful response she received primarily during the Heritage Festival of Sep 15 – 17, 2023.

Mr. Alex Hritcu provided handouts as well as email documents ahead of the meeting on Natural Features, (Chapter 3 of the Master Plan), Visions and Strategies, Draft Existing Land Use Map, Land Use Map based on Tax Classification, Port Sanilac Draft Goals and Objectives, and a blank Community -Goals, Objectives, and Strategies.

Mr. Alex Hritcu discussed the land use map and how the Lapeer County Geographic Information System (GIS) was and remains unavailable for this exercise and therefore the use of tax classifications was used to develop the current map dated 10/11/2023. However, even this map may not be accurate and will need additional Township input for improved accuracy. Mr. Alex Hritcu requested each planner review and mark up for review at the next Township Planning Commission meeting. Almont Township has a lot more single-family residence now than at any time in the past.

Mr. Alex Hritcu presented and discussed Almont Township Vision and Strategies as currently stated in the Master Plan and that these needed to have a close review to focus on significant issues and be more specific with respect to establishing strategies to achieve the stated visions. Consideration should be given to reducing the number. The Port Sanilac draft goals, objectives and tasks was discussed relative to providing more specific strategies/tasks to achieve the visions/goals/objectives.

Mr. Alex Hritcu went on to discuss Almont Township's Natural Features and presented several new maps, photographs and narrative discussing the Township's natural features. The introduction discusses the current development pattern and the importance of protecting the natural features to ensure the Township continues to provide a productive and healthy environment. To ensure the protection of the natural features, some ordinance changes/additions may have to be addressed in the future.

Additions to the current Chapter 3, Natural Features presented included surface water map with the need to identify the small lakes currently within the Township specifically the small lake in the northwest corner of the map. Also included in the presentation was a flood plain map and text explaining how FEMA works with the Surface Water Division of the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality to establish the "100-year flood plain" and how the Michigan Building Codes come in to play in these flood plains. There are two areas of flood hazard in Almont Township as discussed within the text of this section proposed for the Master Plan.

Mr. Alex Hritcu presented and discussed wetlands map, suitable soils for agriculture noting the outstanding quality of ag land in the township, land coverage, septic suitability, and topography most of which are not currently covered by the current Master Plan.

A question was raised as to whether the material presented by Mr. Alex Hritcu was intended to replace what is currently in Chapter 3, Nature Features or compliment the current content. This needs further review and discussion by members of the Planning Commission given the review is being conducted independent of the Village as they chose to conduct their own 5-year review and generate a separate Master Plan. None the less it was noted the current Chapter 3, Nature Features contained some significant information on the Township's natural features.

Additional points discussed included the following.

Promote commercial/industrial development along Van Dyke (M53).

Port Sanilac's use of grant money to develop parks and other public activity areas such as exercise/walking accommodations. There seems to be significant grant money available.

Almont Township currently has no public land access such as State or Township Public land for outdoor activities.

Consideration may be given to designating property near the village for smaller lots and homes to address housing affordability.

Is there a need for senior housing and childcare facilities?

Potential to attract/establish high tech campuses to accommodate jobs for the new generation that do not commute long distances some of which choose not to have driver's licenses.

Summary of follow-on action items:

1. Review the survey results as a guide for discussion and changes as we move forward in updating our Master Plan.
2. Master Plan current Chapter 3, Natural Features; Mr. Alex Hritcu provided a lot of good material that is not in the current Master Plan. The Commissioners need to provide Mr. Alex Hritcu guidance on what we want to retain out of the current Chapter 3 in the revised Master Plan along with the material he provided.
3. Review our current Visions and Strategies, review Port Sanilac's Goals, Objectives and Tasks and fill out Community – Goals, Objectives and Strategies hand out.
4. Review the draft existing land use map based on tax classification and mark it up for corrections and discussion for our Nov PC meeting.

New Business: None

Reports:

Planner: Covered the Master Plan Update.

Engineer: No report provided as the engineer was not present.

Zoning Board of Appeals: N/A

Zoning & Building:

Efforts have been initiated to plan/design the self-storage facility recently re-zoned on the Northwest corner of Dryden Road and Van Dyke.

The Attica Planning & Zoning Administrator (Jerry) has requested a draft copy of the Almont Township Master Plan. Notices have been sent out by Rowe.

American Tree is considering doing some updates and maybe included on the Nov agenda.

Planning Commission General Comments: None

Mr. Blumline asked if he could provide some public comment regarding the survey and the Master Plan update. He was granted time by Chairperson Bara. Mr. Blumline's provided some background on his life and family and why he moved to Almont. His comments focused on the need to retain the small-town charm and safety of Township residents. He pointed out in the survey that the highest number of responses for what you value most about living in Almont were small town charm, safe environment, and open spaces.

Moved by Vallelunga supported by Pewinski to adjourn at 9:08 PM. Motion carried.

Submitted by Dennis Sweers Planning Commission Secretary.

Dennis Sweers