

# FREMONT AREA JOINT PLANNING COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES

Monday, August 8, 2005  
5:00 PM – 6:30 PM  
Fremont City Hall  
Council Chambers

**Members Present:** Dayton Township: Chuck Witteveen, Planning Commissioner  
Dayton Township: Shirley Hooker, Township Supervisor

**Members Absent:** City of Fremont: Robert Goscicki, Planning Commissioner  
City of Fremont: Chuck Whitman, Planning Commissioner  
Sheridan Township: Sandy Vandenberg, Planning Commissioner  
Sheridan Township: Jack Taylor, Planning Commissioner

**Other Officials Present:** James Breinling Fremont Mayor Pro Tem, Acting Chairman  
Joan Obits Sherman Township Supervisor  
David J. Lue Sheridan Charter Township Supervisor  
Peter Lance Sheridan/Dayton Township Zoning Administrator  
Ryan Coffey Land Use Educator, MSU Extension Office  
Chris Yonker Fremont City Manager  
Richard Rought Fremont Zoning Administrator  
Michele Ribant Fremont Director of Neighborhood & Economic Development

**Consultants Present:** Joe VanderMeulen Executive Director, Land Information Access Association  
Harry A. Burkholder Community Planner, Land Information Access Association

## I. Call to Order

Chairman Witteveen called the meeting to order at 5:06 PM.

## II. Greetings & Introductions

Chairman Witteveen informed the Committee that Joe VanderMeulen from the Land Information Access Association will be reviewing the parameters of the grant that the Committee was awarded through the *Partnership for Change* Program. Each person present introduced themselves to the group.

Chairman Witteveen announced that the Fremont Design Charrette Follow-up meeting would take place on Tuesday, August 23, 2005 from 7:00 PM – 9:00 PM in the Council Chambers at City Hall. He indicated that the consultants, Ferrell Madden Associates and LSL Planning, were returning to Fremont to present their conceptual ideas regarding neighborhood development and to verify the preferences conveyed to them by citizens during the Design Charrette in June. He encouraged everyone's attendance at the follow-up meeting.

## III. Review Proposal Submitted to Partnerships for Change Program

Joe VanderMeulen briefly summarized that the *Partnerships for Change* Program. He indicated that it is a multi-jurisdictional planning assistance program developed by the Land Information Access Association (LIAA), Michigan Municipal League (MML), Michigan Townships Association (MTA), Michigan State University (MSUE) and the Michigan Society of Planning (MSP). Mr. VanderMeulen went on to recognize the funding sources of the *Partnership for Change* Program, which included the Americana Foundation, C.S. Mott Foundation, Frey Foundation, W.K. Kellogg Foundation, Fremont Area Community Foundation, Department of Environmental Quality's Coastal Management Program, MML and MTA. He

indicated that LIAA was appreciative of their support, and he indicated that if we had an opportunity to thank any of these sources, that he would encourage it.

Joe VanderMeulen congratulated the Fremont Area Joint Planning Commission on being awarded a competitive grant during the second grant round for the *Partnership for Change* Program. He indicated the grant was awarded so that officials in the Fremont community could work together to create a multi-jurisdictional agreement that will establish a Fremont Area Joint Planning Commission. Mr. VanderMeulen indicated that today he hoped to find out what kind of assistance the Committee will need from LIAA in order to accomplish the goals delineated in the grant proposal. Mr. VanderMeulen indicated that the grant service period spans nine months and that this meeting served as the official beginning of that nine month period. Chairman Witteveen commented that that would mean the project should be completed on or around April 15, 2006. Mr. VanderMeulen then asked Michele Ribant to review the grant proposal for the Committee.

Ms. Ribant reiterated that the purpose of the grant was to work with LIAA to create a multi-jurisdictional agreement that will establish a Fremont Area Joint Planning Commission. She indicated that the current joint planning group in the Fremont community, the Fremont Area Joint Planning Committee, has advisory authority over issues under its purview. She said that if a Commission is established, the thought is that it will have binding authority over issues under its purview. She indicated that the City of Fremont, Sherman, Dayton and Sheridan Charter Townships are the governmental units participating in the grant project and that Garfield Township chose not to participate. Ms. Ribant indicated that Garfield Township was still welcome to participate in the project at this time.

Michele Ribant acknowledged that the Committee was fortunate to be able to work with LIAA on this project because the Committee can benefit from LIAA's expertise in many areas, one area being their knowledge of the new Joint Planning Act. Michele Ribant said that LIAA will serve in the role of process facilitator, which will be a great service. She indicated that the reason establishing a joint planning commission is so important is so that the Commission will be able to develop land use policies that will benefit the entire Fremont area. Ms. Ribant indicated it appears each governmental unit wants the same thing, which is to promote Smart Growth Principles in order to preserve our community resources. Chuck Witteveen joined in and indicated that the Fremont Area's valued community resources include the Fremont central business district, the parks, the body of waters and the prime farmland in the community.

Joe VanderMeulen indicated that the agreement letter that must be signed by the Supervisor/Mayor of each governmental unit makes it clear that the goals and objectives of the *Partnership for Change* Program, as described in the program description and the proposal the Committee submitted on behalf of the Fremont community, must be supported by the Committee. He inquired whether anyone wanted to propose changes to the Agreement. Since no one had changes, he asked each governmental unit to have the appropriate official sign the agreement letter and that it then be forwarded to LIAA. Mr. VanderMeulen informed the Committee that various grants fund the *Partnership for Change* Program, and these grants help defray the cost of LIAA's staff time. He also said the project is estimated to require about 350 – 400 hours and that the cost of the grant will be from \$17,500 - \$25,000 with the four participating communities being required to pay 20% of the cost and that the 20% would be due in October. Mr. VanderMeulen mentioned that if legal advice is required, the cost of the project may be increased. Michele Ribant indicated she would invoice the governmental units for the appropriate amount owed by each.

#### **IV. Review of the Joint Municipal Planning Act (PA 226 of 2003; MCL 125.131, et seq.)**

Joe VanderMeulen started out by saying that this is an organizational meeting and that he had homework for the group. He asked each person to read the article entitled "*Joint Planning Act – Are Michigan's Local Governments Ready for Cooperative Land Use Planning?*" that was published in the "Planning & Zoning News". He then referred to another handout entitled "Developing an Agreement/Ordinance for Joint Planning – Key Questions to Answer". He said that the questions outlined in this handout are ones that we as a group need to answer together in order to establish a Joint Planning Agreement. He then reviewed a number of the questions and offered possible ways to answer the questions.

Mr. VanderMeulen referred the group to a handout provided by City staff on the new Joint Municipal Planning Act only to discover that the Committee needed the amendment to the Act as well. Michele Ribant is to obtain copies of the amendment and to provide it to anyone that needed it. Mr. VanderMeulen asked each Committee member to become familiar with the new act before the next meeting and to review the questions outlined in the handout and come prepared to discuss how we should structure the joint planning agreement.

## V. Issues & Concerns for Project Success

### Reconstituting the Fremont Area Joint Planning Committee

It was decided that the Fremont Area Joint Planning Committee should be reconstituted and that the Committee itself should be the group that works with LIAA to create the joint planning agreement rather than to have an adhoc group work with LIAA. The Committee decided that the Committee should consist of 2 Planning Commissioners and 2 Board/Council members from each participating governmental unit party to the grant agreement. A suggestion was made that zoning administrators also be included in the composition, and the Committee agreed.

### Concern that Garfield is not participating in the project

Jim Breinling indicated that he thought it was unfortunate that Garfield Township was not participating in the project. It was suggested that Chuck Witteveen compose a letter to Garfield Township officials and ask them once again for their participation in the project. Chuck indicated that he would do that and that he would also make arrangements to attend their next meeting on September 2, 2005.

### Concern about a time constraint of nine (9) months for the project

A concern was raised that we have a lot to do for this project in nine months. After some discussion, it was concluded that since the project is starting after summer and will extend over the fall and winter months, people will be in work mode and the thought was that we could get the project completed in nine months.

### Concern about educating people that are not supportive of the project

Chuck Witteveen indicated that he thought that we need to spend some time educating people on the value of having a joint planning commission. Mr. VanderMeulen posed the question to the group, "Who are the people that we need to educate?" Shirley Hooker indicated that we need to start with the education of our planning commissions and boards. It was also suggested that we need to educate the community at large. One member indicated that the Committee must decide what it wants in terms of an agreement before we start educating others on it. It was also suggested that we start out by educating people as to why we are entering into the project. The Committee agreed that we could start communicating the purpose for establishing a joint planning commission with each governmental unit's Board/Council.

## VI. Working Up a Work Plan

Joe VanderMeulen indicated that before the next meeting LIAA would develop a work plan and that he needed input as to what issues needed to be included in the work plan. The committee identified the following issues:

### Review existing master plan

The Committee decided that they need to review the two master plans that are relevant to the project. The master plans include the *Joint Comprehensive Development and Growth Management Plan* for the City of Fremont, Sheridan Charter and Dayton Townships and the Master Plan for Sherman Township. Chris

Yonker indicated the *Joint Comprehensive Development and Growth Management Plan* was on the Fremont City's website and that the City would make sure that it was the updated, reformatted version.

Consider the geographic area in which the proposed Joint Planning Commission would have jurisdiction

Many different views were expressed as to which area in the Fremont community should be included under the jurisdiction of the joint planning commission. Chuck Witteveen indicated that he did not see the need to have the entire township of Dayton included in the planning area. It was expressed that the townships would most likely be very reluctant to include their entire township in the planning area. Chris Yonker indicated that the City may very well include the entire City in the planning area. Joe VanderMeulen said that would be a big step toward establishing cooperation in the Fremont community. It was suggested that the newly created Joint Planning Commission could have binding authority over planning issues in the area identified by the Committee during the project process and that for areas that are outside the Commission's purview but still within the participating township's jurisdictions, the Commission could possibly have advisory authority. Joe VanderMeulen indicated that a separate agreement could be established to accomplish this, if desired.

Analyze the Economics of the Joint Plan

Dave Lue indicated that if the governmental units who are party to the joint agreement were to sunset their planning commissions and have all planning issues considered by the joint planning commission, there would be economic advantages. He gave the example that we could rely on one zoning administrator rather than multiple ones. Chris Yonker said there would be more consistency in how the policies and regulations were administered if there was just one planning commission. The Committee agreed that this subject needed to be addressed in more detail.

Representation on the Commission

It was decided that the work plan should include time to discuss how each governmental unit should be represented on the commission. It was also discussed that the Committee needed to make sure that they decided how a governmental unit could be added (e.g., Garfield Township) and how one could be withdrawn from the agreement.

Define the Authority of all planning commissions of all participating governmental units

The Committee decided that at the outset of this project, it is important that they understand the authority of each planning commission in each of the participating governmental units.

Describe the benefits of Joint Planning

The Committee acknowledged that they had to promote with their boards/council and the community the benefits of establishing a joint planning commission rather than focusing on the obstacles.

Educating people on the value of Joint Planning

The Committee agreed that educating people of the value of having a joint planning commission was essential to the success of the project and that the Committee needed to start with the boards and commissions. It was suggested that we have some kind of community town hall meeting to educate the boards and commissions and that the public should also be encouraged to attend these meetings. It was recommended that there be four different town hall meetings rather than one large meeting. The reason expressed for this is that it was felt that the townships might not feel free to express their thoughts if City officials were present. After some discussion, the Committee agreed they need to start promoting the work the Committee.

### Meetings

The Committee agreed that the next meeting would take place on Monday, September 12 from 5:00 PM – 6:30 PM in the Council Chamber at Fremont City Hall. It was decided that the Committee would meet on a regular basis on the second Monday of each month. The Committee agreed that the location of the meetings would rotate amongst the various governmental units who are participating in the project.

Joe VanderMeulen indicated that LIAA would develop a work plan to be presented at the next meeting and that the work plan would include milestones, key objectives and tasks the committee needs to accomplish.

Mr. VanderMeulen mentioned that representatives from NOVA may be calling members of the Committee to ask their opinion as to the value of the work LIAA is doing with regard to this project. Mr. VanderMeulen encouraged the group to be open and honest with them.

Mr. VanderMeulen, Harry Burkholder, and Chris Yonker departed from the meeting at 6:34 PM.

The Committee revisited a couple of issues.

A motion was made and carried to approve the following:

“That the composition of the Fremont Area Joint Planning Committee be revised to include representation from the City of Fremont, Dayton Township, Sherman Township and Sheridan Charter Township and that the composition would consist of 2 Board/Council members and 2 Planning Commission members from each governmental unit and the zoning administrator from each governmental unit”.

The Committee asked Michele Ribant to provide each governmental unit who is participating in the project with copies of the *Joint Comprehensive Development and Growth Management Plan*. She was asked to provide enough copies for their boards/Council and Planning Commissions.

### **VII. Adjournment**

The Committee adjourned at 6:44 PM.