Meeting Minutes

April 25, 2024

Members present:

Audie Wykle

John Fuller

Jim Kilbarger

Rob Beiter

Stacey Howe

Steve Buckley

Michael Linton, Interim Hocking County Commissioner

**Minutes**

* Mr. Wykle stated that Ms. Ogle, Hocking County Commissioner, had a meeting conflict so she is absent. Mr. Ebert is also absent from the meeting. Mr. Wykle asked for a motion to excuse both Mr. Ebert and Ms. Ogle. Mr. Fuller made the motion, Mr. Kilbarger 2nd. All in favor, motion carries.
* Mr. Fuller made a motion to approve the agenda, Mr. Beiter 2nd. All in favor, motion carries.
* Mr. Wykle stated that he sent the March 2024 meeting minutes to the group through email. Mr. Kilbarger made the motion, Mr. Buckley 2nd. All in favor, motion carries.
* Mr. Wykle provided an update on the zoning survey. The work session went very well editing the questions for the survey. Mr. Wykle created a survey through Survey Monkey, but some of the questions that the group wanted an option for respondents to fill in or have a blank space for additional information was not an option on the free version of Survey Monkey. After working with the IT department, the decision was made to go with a Google document-type survey. That will be completed at the first of next week.
* There is also a link on the Planning Commission website for the webpage for the zoning commission. That website will have the survey link for county residents to complete.
* Mr. Wykle explained that it is important to relay to the public that the goal of establishing a zoning ordinance is to protect what we have. There will be data collected from the surveys to hopefully assist in the next steps.
* Mr. Linton asked what the intent is with getting the survey out, because putting it on the website means that individuals have to go to the website. He asked if there will be social media campaigns or another way of advertising to encourage people to complete the survey. He also asked what the objective of the survey is. Mr. Wykle explained that the survey in place so that once the consultant is chosen, public meetings will be set up. At those meetings, a paper copy of the survey will be available but to also be able to direct the public to the website. The intent with the survey is to gather public input that can then be reviewed for when the ordinance is written.
* Mr. Fuller suggested a QR code so that anyone who has a phone can pull up the website just by scanning the code. Ms. Howe also said that there can be designated areas set up for where the paper surveys are available. Mr. Wykle explained when the comprehensive plan was being revised, paper copies were available at the libraries throughout the county, so those areas could be utilized again as well as a place in the Planning Commission’s office, grocery stores, etc. Ms. Howe asked if the Google survey can record the data, and Mr. Wykle said that it can. Results from the paper surveys would need to be tallied by hand.
* There was a delay in the approval of the consultant timeline from the Prosecutor’s Office, so we are a little behind but still moving forward from where we were. Mr. Wykle has spoken to Jonathan at MORPC, and they have had some questions from consultants but no proposals yet. He (Jonathan) was not surprised by that at all, as the last RFP MORPC sent out, they received proposals on the deadline date. There are no “bonus points” for submitting early, so the consultants will probably wait until the end date to submit a proposal. Jonathan also stated that the questions they received revolved around funding and concern from consultants on being able to submit a proposal which fulfills all the county’s goals in a quality way for the amount of money that’s been set aside of $50,000. Mostly that originates from the public engagement activities as those can be time consuming and because we made that a major piece of the consultant’s work.
* Mr. Wykle explained that we need a consultant who is well versed in ORC and can be there at the public meetings and answer questions. The deadline date for submissions of the proposals is now May 8, 2024. Due to that date being pushed back, it then pushes the final contract date to the first or second week of July instead of in June. Mr. Wykle stated that we want to be flexible enough to get the right product at the end, so it may mean spending more time or looking for more funding.
* Mr. Linton asked if MORPC gave any indication on how many consultants they are anticipating to respond. Mr. Wykle explained that in the past MORPC has had around a dozen consultants respond, however those were for different type of areas than Hocking County so that number is just an estimate. Mr. Fuller stated it is interesting that the first questions from the consultants were about funding, and Mr. Wykle explained that in the RFP that was written, we did not make the $50,000 a steadfast number so there is a possibility for adjustment but it may take longer to find additional fundings.
* Ms. Howe asked if we have any grants pending; Mr. Wykle stated that we do not. We did not get the grant through HUD, which is understandable because a component of that funding was for affordable housing. He is looking for other funding options: there is a grant through the railroads right now that could be a possibility. He asked if the anyone comes across any other funding opportunities to please let the group know. Mr. Wykle also stated that once a consultant is selected, they may have ideas on funding avenues for certain portions that would need to be worked on, such as more mapping, etc.
* Mr. Wykle asked Mr. Larry Gerstner, who was in the gallery, if there are any results of the tourism association’s polling. Mr. Gerstner said that the report has been sent back to tourism, and it has been sent out to the tourism members who are commenting back. Tourism is going to set up 4 public meetings: the first 2 so that the public has the option to attend one or the other, and then another set of meetings. The second set of meetings is to tie together the comments collected from the public meetings. Mr. Gerstner said it then the report may need to go back to have it finalized, but it is getting fairly close. Mr. Wykle asked Mr. Gerstner’s opinion on contacting Karen Raymore, because he does not want to request information that he may not be privy to but it would be very beneficial information to have. Mr. Gerstner said that he should be privy to it, at the very least knowing when the public meetings will be because that information is important.
* Mr. Linton asked Mr. Gerstner what is the purpose of those public meetings. Mr. Gerstner stated it is to discuss the report that tourism had done through their survey, as they hired a firm that interviewed people and sent out the survey. Ms. Howe stated that she wasn’t aware there was a survey being completed, and asked Mr. Gerstner if he knew how many surveys or interviews were conducted. He said he did not know, but that they were able to get enough responses to have a good sample.
* Group members have been out in the community and trying to get the word out. Mr. Wykle explained that he is eager to get the survey out so that we can start receiving responses and input. Ms. Howe said that she has spoken to one of the Sheriff’s deputies and asked what they had heard about zoning, and their short answer was that they had heard we were trying to “shut down tourism”. Ms. Howe explained to them, no, that is not what the goal of this process is and was able to engage in a conversation with that individual and explain.
* Mr. Linton stated that in his short time as interim county commissioner he has had at least 20 people come to him with questions about the tourism association and what the commissioners can do. The majority of those individuals coming to him were asking when are we going to get zoning. Mr. Wykle stated that the individuals in this group were selected because of their interest in protecting Hocking County, and not slanted in their decision or preference one way or another on the issue. The topography of the county and lack of infrastructure in certain areas of the county do make development challenging, but not impossible if there is enough interest and funds. This is why it is important to put in place something to protect what is here, including the natural features that draw the public into the county.
* Mr. Wykle asked the group their opinion on holding future work sessions, and if the group would prefer to wait on MORPC to have information back. Mr. Beiter agreed that it would be better to wait because right now we aren’t able to move forward. Mr. Wykle said that once the survey is up, there may be things we want to add or change and can get together and work on that but at this point there will not be a work session scheduled.
* Mr. Buckley made a motion to adjourn the meeting, 2nd by Ms. Howe.

**Upcoming Meetings**

* May 30 @ 2:00 PM.

*Minutes respectfully submitted by Hannah Montgomery, BSH, REHS*