Meeting Minutes

June 27, 2024

**Members present**

Audie Wykle

John Fuller

Bruce Ebert

Rob Beiter

Jim Kilbarger

Steve Buckley

Sandy Ogle Hocking County Commissioner

**Minutes**

* Mr. Wykle asked for a motion to approve the May 2024 meeting minutes. Ms. Ogle made the motion, Mr. Fuller second. All vote in favor, motion passes.
* Mr. Wykle asked for a motion to approve the agenda for today’s meeting as submitted. Mr. Fuller made the motion, Mr. Ebert second. All vote in favor, motion passes.
* The commission has made a recommendation to the Hocking County Commissioners to approve American Structure Point as the consultant for the project. Mr. Wykle took that information to a County Commissioner’s meeting, and it has been approved.
* At the last couple meetings, both the public meeting and the work session meetings, several people have requested paper copies of the survey. Mr. Wykle has been able to work with a company in Lancaster that the county uses and was able to get 500 copies. Mr. Wykle will be providing some to Mr. Ebert to take to the post office in Laurelville, as he volunteered for that. There is not currently a deadline set for the surveys to be returned. Ms. Ogle will be taking some to the senior center, Murray City and Washington Township for various meetings that she will be attending.
* There has been some additional participation from the online survey with percentages of question answered, but not a big change from what was reported at the May 2024 meeting, so Mr. Wykle will provide an update at the next meeting.
* First week of June American Structure Point came in for a presentation. The following week, the presentation was discussed as well as the other consultants that had showed some interest. At the end of the discussion, the group was pleased with American Structure Point and moving forward with selecting them as the consultant.
* Since we are a member, Mid-Ohio Regional Planning Commission will be assisting with this project, including with the mapping and the public input components. They also are going to send individuals out to help with the public meetings and collecting input at those meetings.
* Mr. Wykle had a scoping meeting earlier today that Mr. Buckley attended with him with MORPC and American Structure Point. The purpose of the meeting was talking about them preparing a contract (the contract has not been signed yet, that will be forthcoming) based on their RFP and that is based on their final deliverables. At the end of this, there will be a finalized zoning ordinance that will be put on the ballot for public vote if approved by the Hocking County Commissioners. It was also discussed at this meeting that the zoning ordinance needs to be simple, easy to understand and easy to use. The zoning ordinance wouldn’t be a 1-page document, because the simplest zoning ordinance is to rule something out completely. So, it will be a multi-page document.
* The goal is for county-wide zoning, but there may be different zones depending on the township needs, whether more restrictive or less restrictive. For example, Murray City in Ward Township you may have zoning districts that are very broad that includes agriculture, housing etc. broad uses all under 1 zoning district. In an area where there’s water and sewer available there may be more restrictions in that zoning district.
* Mr. Wykle had also explained to American Structure Point during this meeting that ideally the group is looking for performance-based/flexible zoning. Performance-based zoning is based on the land use and allowing for example a business inside the residential district if they can meet certain parameters that would allow that. The idea with performance-based is that there is no used prohibited in any district as long as it’s legal use, but you may have to plant trees for screening or having lower height of commercial signage for example.
* Form-based, which is what Mr. Wykle feels we do not want to go with, requires specific architectural design. For example, what color a fence or house can be painted. An example that American Structure Point gave was in Austin, Texas, who spent $1 million on writing a form-based zoning ordinance that then was turned down at the ballot box. The consultant also did not feel that form-based zoning is not something that Hocking County is looking for.
* American Structure Point also explained that under the Ohio Revised Code, there is already a lot of protections for agricultural use, so there would be no need to replicate that in the new zoning ordinance.
* Once the contract is signed, American Structure Point wants to spend some time collecting demographic information before they get started. They want the Zoning Commission to be the up-front group/sounding board. Great care has been taken in selecting members for the zoning commission that provide a diverse background.
* Zoning is a protection for county residents and individuals that live here to have a say in what is being done.
* A question was asked in the gallery regarding how the zoning ordinance could be fixed in the future once passed if there were issues. Ms. Morgan is concerned if the zoning ordinance is county-wide, but is based on the needs of different townships, wouldn’t the township trustees have more knowledge about their individual townships and would need to be consulted? What happens in the future if the ordinance is passed and a township needs to make adjustments, who would make that decision?
  + Mr. Wykle explained that the zoning commission now would become a zoning board or something similar, if the zoning ordinance passes. The matter/change would be brought to the zoning board for consideration, then there would be public hearings and the matter taken to the Hocking County Commissioners to review and then make changes if they so choose.
  + Mr. Wykle also explained that at this time the group does not know what the zoning ordinance will look like, so it is hard to say how the zoning districts would be set up or affect different townships.
  + Mr. Kilbarger and Ms. Ogle both stated and asked if there can be a mechanism in the ordinance that in the future if any changes are needed that it goes before the people to vote instead of only going before the County Commissioners.
* Mr. Buckley asked the group if the residents who live in the City of Logan would be able to vote on the first zoning ordinance. Mr. Wykle explained that yes they would, as that is required in the Ohio Revised Code.
* If in the future there would need to be any changes to the ordinance, it would be brought to the zoning board, the board make a recommendation to the county commissioners, then hold public hearings on it. This process would be confirmed with the consultant.
* Another individual in the gallery voiced their concerns about why this process has taken so long. He appreciates that this is being done now, but thinks it should have been done ~10 years ago.
  + Ms. Ogle stated that the reason this is happening now is because the County Commissioners have decided to act on it. There has been a problem here, but the Commissioners would not take it on as a responsibility to move forward with it. It is with Mr. Wykle’s help and assistance to get this started.
  + Mr. Wykle explained that the first step once the Commissioner’s decided to act was to appoint a zoning commission, which they have. Then find funding for a consultant. There have been at least 5 efforts in the past to establish zoning that have not succeeded. Each of those were township by township ordinances, and each time it did not get further than the writing of an ordinance because the township couldn’t agree on what to go in it.
* Mr. Fuller made a motion to adjourn, Mr. Ebert second.

**Upcoming Meetings**

* Work session: July 16, 2024 @ 3:00 PM at the Planning Commission office

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