

SPRING LAKE TOWNSHIP

COMMUNITY MEETING REPORT



SPRING LAKE TOWNSHIP ZONING ORDINANCE

November 2008

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INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW

The meeting included a visual preference exercise to stimulate discussion about zoning matters.

After the recent adoption of the Spring Lake Township Master Plan in the summer of 2008, the Township embarked upon a process to update the Township's Zoning Ordinance. The Master Plan is a broad policy document which sets forth a vision and goals and objectives for development and land use. The Zoning Ordinance helps to implement that vision by establishing development regulations for the built environment.

The Township sponsored a community zoning meeting on November 18, 2008 intended to gather input regarding local perspectives on housing choices, aesthetics, sustainability, natural resources and transportation/connectivity. Residents were provided an overview of the key priorities of the Master Plan and opportunities for zoning provisions to implement the objectives of the Master Plan. In addition, the meeting included a visual preference exercise to stimulate discussion about zoning matters.

The purpose of this report is to summarize the process of the meeting and its results. In addition, this report places the output from the community zoning meeting in the broader context of the Zoning Ordinance update process.

THE ACTIVITY

The process will assist the Re-Write Committee in verifying that new ordinance standards meet the desires of the community.

The community meeting was conducted over about two hours on November 18, 2008 at the Barber School. The objective of the activity was to develop a general consensus among the participants as to new provisions to be added to the Zoning Ordinance and determine resident's tolerance for requiring some level of sustainable design and development. In addition, the process will assist the Advisory Committee in verifying that new ordinance standards meet the desires of the community. The information garnered from these activities will be critically important to the later phases of the ordinance preparation process.

The Community Input Process. Over forty-five residents participated in the workshop under the guidance of the consulting team from Williams & Works. The atmosphere was open and informal, although the meeting followed an established format to assure a functional outcome. Planning professionals from the consulting team helped to facilitate the discussions that took place. The Township provided light refreshments and participants were encouraged to engage the process to provide the Township with the benefit of their expertise and perspectives.

1. Welcome and Overview

John Nash, Spring Lake Township Supervisor, welcomed participants and introduced the consulting team. The consultants from Williams & Works provided a brief introduction to the process and an overview explanation of the difference between planning and zoning, and how the results of the activity will be incorporated into the zoning ordinance update.

2. Zoning Images

In this activity, Lynée Wells of Williams & Works used an interactive PowerPoint slide presentation displaying 10 images of the built environment. Participants were asked to select a phrase that best described their impressions of the images. The images were meant to stimulate discussion and help participants learn how a zoning ordinance impacts the look, feel, and placement of development.



Bicyclist safety features and amenities should be required in new development.



This mixed-use building is a smart alternative to commercial sprawl, but proper placement is vital.



Participants expressed that solar panels should be permitted, but regulated for design compatibility.



Certain types of urban form can be more sustainable, but may be out of context in the Township.

The consulting team engaged participants in a discussion about the image represented. The primary purpose of this activity was to help the participants begin to think about the multiple dimensions of land use and zoning as a precursor for the facilitated round table discussions. This activity also helped to “break the ice” among participants.

Several issues were raised in the context of these images including the importance and challenges involved in affordable housing, preserving farmland, maintaining community character, and sustainable development trends.

The following notes present many of the conclusions drawn from participant responses. It must be understood, however, that while this information is useful to the Advisory Committee, these findings are limited to a simple poll of the participants at the community meeting and they should not be regarded as necessarily representative of the opinions of the larger community. The exercise handout sheet is provided in the Appendix.

- a. **Biking to Work.** The bulk of participants generally believed that Spring Lake Township is well-planned for bicycling and walking on trailways, but that more can be done to ensure safety. In addition, participants expressed that biking to work would be best achieved utilizing bike lanes integrated into the roadway. A complete, regional bike lane system is needed to offer connectivity from the home to the workplace. Requiring bike racks with redevelopment or new commercial development was favored.
- b. **Commercial Strip.** It appears that a consensus was reached in connection with conventional suburban commercial strip development. Participants noted that such development is unattractive and lacks character and identity. It should be avoided in Spring Lake Township.
- c. **Agricultural Land.** Viable agricultural land should be preserved wherever practicable, to maintain the open space areas in the community. However, some farmland may eventually become good development land in certain economic conditions.
- d. **Townhomes/Apartments/Condos.** Participants generally indicated that more attainable housing was needed to ensure a balanced and non-exclusive community, but that design

standards were needed. In addition, these land uses should not be concentrated in any one area of the Township.



While mixed-use commercial may be the preferred alternative to commercial sprawl, it must be appropriately sited and designed to compliment existing land uses in the Township and in the region.

- e. **Mixed-Use Commercial.** While mixed-use commercial may be the preferred alternative to commercial sprawl, it must be appropriately sited and designed to compliment existing land uses in the Township and in the region. For example, there appeared to be some belief that mixed-use commercial development would mimic the existing built environment in the Village of Spring Lake.
- f. **Residential Home with Solar Panels.** Participants agreed that renewable energy is the way of the future and specifically, that solar panels should be permitted with requirements for aesthetic compatibility.
- g. **Mixed Residential Development.** Participants appeared to share the opinion that multiple types of residential development formed in high density, walkable patterns can be more sustainable than the alternative, but that it may be out of context in portions of the Township.
- h. **Residential Wind Energy Conversion Systems.** Windmill facilities are viewed as appropriate for the community, even in residential neighborhoods as long as standards are applied to ensure proper placement and height.
- i. **Permeable Pavement.** Pervious forms of pavement are favorably viewed as contributing to the sustainability of Spring Lake Township, but this pavement type should be encouraged and not required.
- j. **Vegetated Roof.** Green roofs are thought of as attractive, environmentally-friendly facilities that should be encouraged, but not mandated.

3. Roundtable Discussion Exercise

After the discussion on the zoning images, the larger group of participants was divided into six smaller “breakout” groups of about six to nine persons to discuss five topics that a new zoning ordinance can address. Members of each group were asked to contemplate several questions associated with each broad topic. Input received is summarized in the section of this report titled Roundtable Output. The full list of questions and the raw output are presented in the Appendix.

4. Reports to Larger Group

At the completion of the roundtable discussion exercise, all the participants gathered together for a brief report of their activities. Each group was represented by the facilitator or a volunteer participant who summarized the work of his/her group and the issue that generated the greatest consensus.

ROUNDTABLE OUTPUT

The quality of the discussion and the energy contributed by all participants was exceptional. The roundtable discussions proceeded for approximately one hour and the following comments that can be applied in a new zoning ordinance were recorded. As stated in the previous section of this report, a compilation of the raw input exists in the Appendix.

The quality of the discussion and the energy contributed by all participants was exceptional.

Topic One: Walkability/Biking/Connectivity

- ◆ The ordinance should require 8-foot wide paths along the right-of-way in new development fronting on a major road, in lieu of sidewalks. In addition, bike lanes can also be required within the roadway, where appropriate. Bike lanes and paths must be required to include clear markings to ensure visibility and safety.
- ◆ Sidewalks should be required along residential streets.
- ◆ The Township should explore permitting certain non-residential uses, such as day care facilities and other personal services, as special land uses in residential districts to encourage walking by way of proximity.
- ◆ Standards should be added to the ordinance requiring consideration of ramped curb-cuts and pedestrian crossing devices.
- ◆ The ordinance should require that adjacent developments be connected via streets and sidewalks, and/or pedestrian trails.

Topic Two: Natural Features/Wetlands/Slopes

- ◆ The new wetland ordinance is sufficient with regard to the protection of wetlands.
- ◆ The new ordinance should require that natural features be generally identified up front as part of the site plan development process. A detailed natural features inventory, however, can be too costly and should only be required by the Planning Commission if deemed necessary. The current ordinance requires that every tree be counted; but only the features within the proposed building envelope should be considered for efficiency. A pre-application meeting with the Township Planner, including a walk of the site, can be required.

- ◆ A density bonus could be offered when sensitive natural features are protected and a density penalty could be imposed when those features are developed.
- ◆ The Township should require that trees removed during the development process must be replaced with new trees.

Topic Three: Alternative Energy/Wind/Solar

- ◆ Solar panels should be limited in size and freestanding panels should be prohibited in the front yard. Solar panels should be encouraged, but general and flexible restrictions should be enforced to guarantee that the panels do not overwhelm any property.
- ◆ Wood burners should only be allowed on larger parcels and with significant setbacks from adjacent dwellings. Only pellets should be burned and catalytic converters and tall chimneys should be mandated.
- ◆ Private residential windmills should be permitted, as long as height and setback standards are utilized to help prevent a facility from falling on a neighboring home. Also, anti-climbing devices should be required for child safety.
- ◆ A commercial wind farm should be a special use with specific standards addressing noise concerns.
- ◆ Community wind farm systems, where a whole neighborhood receives a portion of its power from windmills, may be permitted or even encouraged.

Topic Four: Housing Choices

- ◆ Finished daylight basements in single-family dwellings should be counted toward the calculation of minimum square footage so it is easier to meet the requirement.
- ◆ Architectural standards should be required so two-unit dwellings appear as single-family homes. In addition, greater front yard setbacks can be required to ensure adequate space for motor vehicle parking.
- ◆ The Township can require that a certain percentage of dwellings in a new development be market rate/affordable.
- ◆ Home-based businesses should be permitted, but with restrictions on vehicle and equipment storage.

- ◆ Traditional neighborhood development should be permitted and even required in certain areas, as long as public green spaces are provided to compensate for smaller lot sizes.
- ◆ Multiple-family development should be aesthetically similar to the row houses found in cities such as Washington and Chicago. Architectural regulations can be incorporated into the ordinance for these types of dwellings, but should not be used to regulate single-family homes.
- ◆ Accessory dwellings should be allowed, but only as an option for family members; rental accessory dwellings should not be permitted. These dwellings can be permitted by right in denser neighborhoods and by special use in more rural areas. Accessory dwellings should be attached to the principal dwelling to discourage excessive rental to strangers and to ensure compatibility in design between both dwellings.
- ◆ Multiple-unit and two-unit dwellings should be distributed throughout the Township and not concentrated in any one area. A “cap” could be enforced, which would limit multiple-unit and two-unit dwellings in any one area to a certain number.

Topic Five: Site Design/Landscaping/Lighting/Parking/Signage

- ◆ Greater building heights should be coordinated with the capabilities of the Township Fire Department and should not be out of scale with the surroundings. In addition, heights should be limited near Lake Michigan, Spring Lake and the Grand River.
- ◆ Greater building heights should be permitted in industrial areas to allow innovativeness and to avoid restrictiveness.
- ◆ Temporary signage provisions should be strengthened.
- ◆ Native and natural landscaping, except for invasive plantings, should be encouraged.
- ◆ Landscaping should not obscure the view of retail stores.
- ◆ Architectural standards should be required to avoid the “anyplace” look and feel that has spread throughout the nation.
- ◆ Adequate lighting should be required for businesses, but it should not be too decorative or expensive to install. Lighting should be less intense near residential uses.

NEXT STEPS

The completion of the community meeting begins to set the stage for the updating the zoning ordinance. The input provided, along with the information gathered from the stakeholder interviews and sustainable development round table, give the consultant team a valuable understanding of the tolerance of Township residents for cutting edge zoning provisions.

The input provided gives the consultant team a valuable understanding of the tolerance of Township residents for cutting edge zoning provisions.

Currently, Township staff is working on formatting the current ordinance to modify the order and placement of certain provisions. Williams & Works is preparing draft residential zoning districts. The Advisory Committee will continue to meet on a monthly basis to review new provisions of the zoning ordinance.

APPENDIX:

VISUAL PREFERENCE SURVEY
ROUNDTABLE DISCUSSION QUESTIONS
ROUNDTABLE GROUP NOTES

Spring Lake Township Visual Preference Survey

Check the box that corresponds to your impressions of the images that are shown or write in your own impressions if you don't like any of the suggested responses. Please be honest, there is no "right or wrong" and you don't have to put your name on this form. You can select more than one answer.

1. Biking to Work.

Which phrase/word best applies?

- There should be more bike lanes
- New offices should have showers for bikers
- We need more bike racks
- _____



2. Commercial strip.

Which phrase/word best applies?

- Unattractive development
- Good tax base
- Lacks character and identity
- _____



3. Agricultural Land.

Which phrase/word best applies?

- Preserve and protect it
- Important food source
- Good development potential
- _____



4. Townhomes/Apartments/Condos.

Which phrase/word best applies?

- Ok, so long as there are design standards
- Doesn't belong in the Township
- We need more housing options like this in the Township
- _____



5. Mixed Use Commercial.

Which phrase/word best applies?

- Good mix of uses
- Would like to see more of this in the Township
- Out of scale
- _____



Spring Lake Township Visual Preference Survey

6. Residential Home with Solar Panels.

Which phrase/word best applies?

- Ok, but needs to be regulated
- Not in my backyard
- The way of the future
- _____



7. Mixed Residential Development.

Which phrase/word best applies?

- Walkable and attractive
- Too dense
- A good mix of housing type
- _____



8. Residential Wind Energy Conversion Systems.

Which phrase/word best applies?

- Appropriate in residential neighborhoods
- Need to be regulated but not prohibited
- Appropriate given our proximity to the lake
- _____



9. Permeable Pavement.

Which phrase/word best applies?

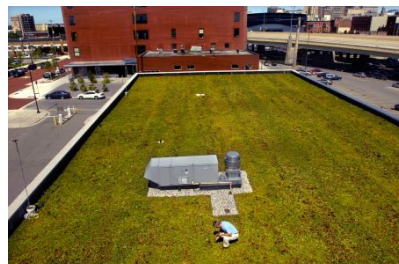
- Difficult to maintain
- Reduces run-off
- Asphalt is preferred
- _____



10. Vegetated Roof.

Which phrase/word best applies?

- Encourage in new development
- Reduces run-off
- Maintenance concerns
- _____



**Spring Lake Township
Zoning Ordinance Update
Community Meeting
November 18, 2008**

Roundtable Discussion Questions

Your input is valuable. Please discuss the following topics as a group. It is important to the rewrite process that the consultant has guidance on each topic. Therefore, devote not more than fifteen minutes to each topic, if possible.

TOPIC ONE: Walkability/Biking/Connectivity

- a. How can Spring Lake Township improve resident's ability to walk and bike from home to retail areas, employment areas or places to shop?
- b. How can businesses better encourage walking and biking? Is there a design feature missing?
- c. Where are new trails or bike lanes needed?
- d. What should the Township request of new residential development in terms of sidewalks, paths, or trails? What if there is a cul-de-sac?

TOPIC TWO: Natural Features/Wetlands/Slopes

- a. What considerations should be given to a Natural Features Inventory completed on properties going through a development process?
- b. Where are any steep slopes or natural areas that should be protected?
- c. How should development impact natural resources, such as steep slopes, wetlands, rivers, large stands of trees, etc.?

TOPIC THREE: Alternative Energy/Wind/Solar

- a. How do you feel about a neighbor installing solar panels on their home or in their yard?
- b. Describe how exterior wood/pellet burning stoves should be located/built to be compatible in a residential neighborhood.
- c. How do you feel about a neighbor installing a residential-sized windmill on their property? If you have concerns, describe them.

- d. How should the Township regulate wind and solar technologies given the increase costs of energy (natural gas, electric, petroleum)?

TOPIC FOUR: Housing Choices

- a. When you think about other communities and the homes you have seen in your travels, are any types of homes or living arrangements missing in the Township? If so, please describe them.
- b. Assuming gas prices and utility costs will continue to increase, what types of homes may become more desirable?
- c. Describe how your neighborhood could accommodate accessory dwelling units or “granny flats.”
- d. How should duplexes be developed in the Township in the future? Should they continue to be permitted in the R-2 and R-3 districts?
- e. For people of fixed or limited incomes, what type of housing do you feel will be most important?
- f. When would a home-based business become too disruptive in a residential neighborhood? Think in terms of number of employees, signage, traffic, deliveries, etc.

TOPIC FIVE: Site Design/Landscaping/Lighting/Parking/Signage

- a. How can landscaping requirements help to green and beautify the Township? Where would you like to see more landscaping and what would it look like?
- b. When visiting a commercial business, what are the most important physical features of the site?
- c. How do you feel about tall buildings? Would you prefer a tall building with lots of public open space around it or a spread out development with minimal open space?

**Spring Lake Township
Zoning Ordinance Community Meeting
11.18.08**

Ryan's Group

Topic One

a.

- ◆ A Master Plan for bike trails has been created although has not been entirely implemented. Completing the recommendations of the plan would be nice.
- ◆ Many people in Twp use bicycles as a form of recreation, not transportation. Suburban nature of community makes biking to work an unreasonable expectation.
- ◆ Two types of bikers: those who are serious and those who are leisurely. Providing options for both is important. Include both bike lanes and sidewalks.

b.

- ◆ New businesses should be required to provide sidewalks along road frontages.

c.

- ◆ Complete the trails master plan.

d.

- ◆ All new developments should provide sidewalks along arterial roads but requiring sidewalks within the development may be overkill.
- ◆ New developments should be connected in some way to adjacent developments.
- ◆ Development which is closer to schools and existing services should be more walkable, grid pattern and always include sidewalks.
- ◆ Twp should be as connected as possible.

Topic Two

a.

- ◆ A natural features inventory should be an optional requirement that the PC may impose. In some cases it is too expensive or unnecessary.
- ◆ It is important for the application process to be open and transparent. Developers should be required to have a preliminary meeting with the Township Planner and walk the site to determine which features may be important.
- ◆ Preservation of natural features within areas of development can cause conflicts between man & nature. Many suburban residents living near "wild" areas complain about the overabundance of deer and the destruction of landscaping.
- ◆ Planning Commission should always walk the site.

c.

- ◆ The new wetland ordinance is very good; we should keep it.
- ◆ A tree ordinance is also in place.

Topic Three

- ◆ Solar is important. The Township should be flexible.
- ◆ Significant effort should be made to allow alternative energy sources wherever possible. Restrictions should be limited to promoting public health, safety and welfare.

Topic Four

a.

- ◆ Want to see traditional neighborhoods with porches in the front and garages in the back with alleys and sidewalks. These neighborhoods should include public green spaces and smaller lot sizes.
- ◆ Township should provide more opportunity for “starter” homes.
- ◆ Affordable housing starts with affordable land. If the required lot sizes are too large, the cost of housing automatically increases to cover the cost of land.
- ◆ Just make them fit in and not be obvious.
- ◆ Row houses can be very attractive if done right. Township should promote attached single family homes with standards to promote Georgetown or Chicago style row housing.
- ◆ Some architectural standards should be included to address issues such as transparency and elimination of unarticulated frontages. Do not regulate architectural style.
- ◆ Greater density near existing urban areas is important. The target demographic may not be interested in lots of open space.

c.

- ◆ Accessory units should be allowed for family members only. Maybe make them available so long as owner does not receive rental income.
- ◆ Accessory units should be allowed by right in denser neighborhoods and SLU in more rural areas.
- ◆ Maybe require accessory units to be attached to the principal structure with access to principal dwelling. This may prohibit excessive rental to strangers.

- ◆ Accessory dwellings above garages can be cool but need to limit the appearance of building “clutter” on the lot.
- ◆ Accessory structures should match the character and style of the principal structure.
No two-story accessory structures on a lot with a ranch-style home.

**Spring Lake Township
Zoning Ordinance Community Meeting
11.18.08**

Luke's Group

Topic One

- a. Make the bike path more connected and look for potential connections when considering new development, however requiring bike paths is not necessary in all cases.
- b. There seems to be a lack of proper signage on the bike paths.
- c. There wasn't strong support for bike lanes, however it was recognized that some folks prefer to ride on the street to avoid obstacles and maintain greater speeds. Extended shoulders could be consideration when a bike path is not feasible or when there is a desired connection to a bike path nearby. Proposed bike paths have been designated by the Recreation Committee.
- d. Neighborhoods should be connected with bike paths or sidewalks. Low density development shouldn't be required to install sidewalks in all cases. The completion of sidewalks can be erratic when each section is completed with a new home.

Topic Two

- a. Reduce loss of high quality habitat and identify it.
- b. Protect natural slopes and "viewsheds."
- c. Do not allow clear cutting. Use storm water controls to improve water quality, like rain gardens and LIDs. Encourage connections to sewer where available.

Topic Three

- a. NO INPUT

Topic Four

- a. There is going to be a strong need for senior housing in the future and it should be located in areas that have utilities and medical facilities. They should be located in places where they "fit" into a community (i.e. up instead of out where appropriate).
- b. Density is the answer to sustainability.
- c. NA
- d. NA
- e. NA
- f. NA

Topic Five

- a. Way-finding signs could be used in the Township
- b. Improve appearance of main corridors including 174th and M104
- c. Create a gateway feel on M104

OTHER

- a. Combination of municipal services is a sustainable!

**Spring Lake Township
Zoning Ordinance Community Meeting
11.18.08**

Lynee's Group

Topic One

a.

- ◆ Any new curb cut should be ramped according to ADA guidelines. There should be push button controls at all traffic control devices.

d.

- ◆ The current practice of requiring a utility easement at the end of a cul-de-sac or a stub road requirement would work. Sidewalks should not be required unless within a certain proximity to schools. If there is a marked and dedicated bike lane/path in a roadway, a sidewalk would not be needed.

Topic Two

a.

- ◆ Keep picking the approvals apart.
- ◆ Flip the process. Require identification of natural features up front. While it might be seen as costly, the PC would eventually require it, so in a sense, it saves time and is more cost effective.
- ◆ Develop a density bonus and a density penalty for developing in natural areas. A density bonus would be given when a developer protects the natural areas while a density penalty would be issued for developing in a natural area.

b.

- ◆ All steep slopes and natural areas should be protected.

c.

- ◆ There shouldn't be an impact on natural features.
- ◆ There should be tree protection standards and a "plant back" program.

Topic Three

a.

- ◆ There should be regulations, but don't prohibit. Safety concerns are valid.

b.

- ◆ The installation should be certified.
- ◆ These are similar to fireplaces. So they should be allowed.

- ◆ We need to verify the type of material being burned. If only pellets are burned, the smoke should not be a problem.
- ◆ Require catalytic converters, smoke stacks and limit what can be burned.

c. and d.

- ◆ Community systems will be the way of the future. There could be one in each site condo powering the lights and irrigation systems.
- ◆ They should be permitted, without any special land use process.
- ◆ A commercial wind farm should be a special land use.

Topic Four

a/b.

- ◆ Homes get dated so fast. But you also don't want homes to all look the same by requiring a certain design.
- ◆ Senior housing, assisted living, apartments, condos, rental units, they are all needed in the Township.
- ◆ It would be nice to require that a certain percent of new homes in a project are affordable.

c.

- ◆ It is hard to not allow them if we allow duplexes.

d.

- ◆ Keep as is. Having duplexes permitted is fine.
- ◆ This is more of an enforcement issue.
- ◆ We should insist on high quality construction.
- ◆ Greater front yard setbacks are appropriate, otherwise there will be cars parked on the front lawn.

e.

- ◆ Having a variety of housing choices is what matters.

f.

- ◆ We need to continue to allow home based businesses. They are the way of the future.
- ◆ A home based construction business should not be permitted. There are too many vehicles.

- ◆ Regulating equipment storage is important. Adequate fencing is necessary.

Topic Five

a.

- ◆ The landscaping provisions are adequate.
- ◆ Allowing/requiring native landscaping is a good idea so long as it is not invasive. Dune grass is appropriate.
- ◆ We need stronger regulations for temporary signs.

Skipped b.

c.

- ◆ Tall buildings with step backs is ok.
- ◆ I'm not in favor of taller buildings.

**Spring Lake Township
Zoning Ordinance Community Meeting
11.18.08**

Dave's Group

Topic One

- a.
 - ◆ We can require sidewalks to connect to bike paths and lanes as new development occurs.
- b.
 - ◆ There is no design feature missing at this time. When people need to walk or bike, they will do so based on the laws of supply and demand.
- c.
 - ◆ Construct new bike lanes and paths in areas that are currently identified as dangerous, as economic conditions allow.
- d.
 - ◆ Density should be a factor in determining where sidewalks are needed.

Topic Two

- a.
 - ◆ Use a common-sense approach with less DEQ involvement.
- b.
 - ◆ We should be ensuring the preservation of low wetlands and dunes.
- c.
 - ◆ There should be minimal impact.

Topic Three

- a.
 - ◆ Solar panels are acceptable and encouraged, as long as there are concise, easy-to-understand regulations that guide property owners.
- b.
 - ◆ The smoke issue should be considered. These facilities should not be allowed in residential areas and there should be a minimum acreage requirement.
- c.
 - ◆ Windmills are good as long as there are regulations.

d.

- ◆ These facilities should be regulated based on the size of the neighborhood, and the amount of homes or dwellings. The size of windmills should be based on the size of the structure and noise should be a consideration.

Topic Four

a/b.

- ◆ We need more affordable housing. We should permit smaller lots with less lot frontage and promote more of an assortment of homes.

c.

- ◆ Accessory dwellings are okay as long as they are regulated.

(d, e, and f. were skipped)

Topic Five

a.

- ◆ There should be minimum landscaping requirements, but the buildings must be visible; landscaping should be obscure the view of the stores.

b.

- ◆ Commercial buildings must have character and curb appeal; buildings should not all look the same. Accessibility and visibility is also important.

(c. was skipped)

**Spring Lake Township
Zoning Ordinance Community Meeting
11.18.08**

Brian's Group

Topic One

a.

- ◆ The bike paths are dangerous in areas where they cross major roads. They are easy to get to, but many hazards and blind spots exist near intersections.
- ◆ The bike lanes can also be dangerous, because of motorists backing out of driveways who do not see oncoming bicyclists. However, bike lanes are preferred because they are deemed safer: paths and trails curve too much.
- ◆ We need to require bike lanes or require developers to pay for them. In addition, we should require safety features.

b.

- ◆ "The Township is well-planned for bike travel."
- ◆ There are locations where connections are missing; paths and lanes are missing. (My group did not have a map, which would have enabled us to be more specific.)
- ◆ We should require bike racks in all new non-residential development.

c.

- ◆ We really needed a map. One comment was to avoid curving paths and to ensure connectivity. Where bicyclists are forced to travel on the road, make sure there is a designated lane.

d.

- ◆ Sidewalks should always be required in residential neighborhoods, to encourage neighborliness and to foster safety.

Topic Two

a.

- ◆ Be green.
- ◆ A developer noted that Lukas made her count every tree on her property, even though her building envelope was very limited in area and most of the trees would not have been touched. This is a waste of time and resources and discourages development. The current ordinance needs revision.
- ◆ Only count the trees and features within the proposed building envelope; the undeveloped portions of the lot are not important because those features will remain.

b.

- ◆ Go through all the ordinances and review them for consistency. Consolidate the requirements and streamline the process.
- ◆ Use the Master Plan to identify critical features worthy of preservation.
- ◆ Some areas are planned for a density that is too high given the site. For example, the Woodland Ridge Apartments property zoned R-3. Zoning should reflect the features on the site.

c.

- ◆ It shouldn't. There should be a minimal impact.
- ◆ The new wetland ordinance is very good; we should keep it.
- ◆ Higher density, where appropriate, is good; it reduces infrastructure costs, promotes a sense of community, and discourages sprawl.
- ◆ We should allow both low density and high density to offer choice. Both impact natural features in a different way, both good and bad.

Topic Three

a.

- ◆ We need architectural regulations. We want it to look nice without over-regulating or discouraging. Initially, the group wanted to limit them only to rooftops. After more discussion, it was agreed to permit them wherever; but some time of broad design controls should be applied.

b.

- ◆ Base it on the size of the lot. Only permit on larger lots. Who cares if a wood-burning stove is used on an agricultural parcel? But if you live in a subdivision, you wouldn't want your neighbor using one.

c.

- ◆ "Windmills are not pretty, but global warming is not going to be pretty either."
- ◆ We should be concerned about safety; kids should not be able to climb windmills.
- ◆ The facilities should not be taller than what is needed to provide power for the home.
- ◆ Height should be limited so that a structure cannot fall on an adjacent home; base height on setbacks in the district and distance to neighboring dwellings.
- ◆ Encourage community systems, where an entire neighborhood would set aside open space to install windmills to power each home.

(We skipped Three.d.)

Topic Four

a/b.

- ◆ We need varied housing. Every community needs a variety of housing – the “whole gamut” – or it becomes exclusive.
- ◆ Density belongs in the village, not the township. However, it is appropriate to continue the types of housing we have today. As development continues, the proportion of the variety of housing types we have today should be continued. We already have every type of housing desired in the community.
- ◆ There are too many duplexes along 148th Avenue; it is slummy. We should mix the housing types so no one area becomes slummy because of low-income concentration.

c.

- ◆ Just make them fit in and not be obvious.

d.

- ◆ 148th Avenue is high density and slummy because of rentals. The General Code of Ordinances should be enforced properly to ensure maintenance of these dwellings.
- ◆ Duplexes should be permitted in R-2/R-3.
- ◆ Do not allow 5 cars to be parked in the grass.
- ◆ Do not concentrate in one area. Put a cap on the number of dwellings in one area and distribute.

(We skipped Four.e. and Four.f.)

Topic Five

a.

- ◆ McDonald’s in Richland sets a precedent for future stores. It is monumental in design, very attractive in terms of architecture and landscaping.
- ◆ We are already a beautiful community; we are very green and open and there are no areas where additional landscaping is needed.
- ◆ For new development, we can require that a greater percentage of the lot be set aside as open space, especially for non-residential uses and particularly in the front yard.

b.

- ◆ Access and parking are the most important features; there should be ease in entering and exiting and in finding a parking space close to the entrance.
- ◆ Lighting and safety promote comfort and confidence and are important, too. We should require all business to install lighting, but it should be moderately bright and relatively inexpensive and affordable for businesses. Lighting should be context-sensitive and less intense near residences.

c.

- ◆ Height should be restricted near Lake Michigan, Spring Lake, and the Grand River.
- ◆ We should allow tall buildings in industrial parks to encourage more development and innovativeness.
- ◆ We can use increased permitted heights to accommodate low-cost housing in 3rd stories.

Topic One

- ◆ One person said that in the town they lived in previously, there were sidewalks everywhere and they could walk to everything. He missed that.
- ◆ There was some debate over whether to have a sidewalk (5' wide) or something wider like an 8' path instead. There was some consensus that a 5' sidewalk is too narrow to accommodate bicyclists and pedestrians
- ◆ There are some bike lanes on the road in the Village, but people park there because they aren't marked. There was some general agreement that bike lanes on the roadway would be ok, but they have to be clearly marked.
- ◆ Some places in the Township are under-served by these bike or pedestrian connections
- ◆ Sidewalks are required in PUDs in current ordinance?
- ◆ We added some bike paths to the map.
- ◆ To encourage walking or biking, businesses should be located where people live. I think they were getting at mixed uses, or permitting retail uses as an SLU in residential districts or something, but I couldn't get them there.
- ◆ M-104 is a problem because bicyclists don't want to cross it because of safety issues

Topic Two

- ◆ Steep slopes lead to erosion problems
- ◆ Township has a wetland ordinance that protects wetlands, and its pretty restrictive
- ◆ The wetland/stream corridor that runs east of 104 should be protected (circled in orange on map)
- ◆ The biggest concern here seemed to be with protecting wetlands, and the consensus was that the current wetland ordinance addressed this topic sufficiently.

Topic Three

- ◆ Solar panels on the roof are ok, but not in the front yard
- ◆ They are a "technology of the future" and as the technology evolves they may get smaller and become less of an issue, similar to the way satellite dishes have evolved from huge things to little tiny dishes you can hide on your roof
- ◆ Solar panels should be permitted, but size should be regulated. Don't permit the really big ones
- ◆ Wood burners smell really bad.

- ◆ It was suggested that there should be a minimum lot size or isolation distance for these furnaces so they don't stink up an entire neighborhood,
- ◆ Windmills are great. Nobody had any big problems with the smaller residential windmills.
- ◆ There should be a height restriction
- ◆ The biggest concern was height, size of the blade and noise
- ◆ Does the Township ZO currently address wind energy?

Topic Four

- ◆ To make keep costs down and make housing more affordable, the ordinance should count finished walkout basements in the minimum square footage requirements for single family dwellings. That way the houses don't have to be as big
- ◆ Multi-family housing should be provided, where appropriate, for those on limited/fixed incomes
- ◆ Duplexes shouldn't look like your typical duplex. In other parts of the country, they have duplexes called "mirror houses" or something like that where they essentially have two single-family houses that have floor plans that are mirror images of one another, but they are attached to each other and don't look anything like duplexes.
- ◆ Duplexes and multi family probably isn't appropriate within a single-family residential neighborhood unless they can be designed to match the character of the houses that are already there.
- ◆ Mixing uses (vertically) could make housing more affordable.

Topic Five

- ◆ Landscaping standards are already in site plan review and PUD ordinances
- ◆ Being able to get from place to place, regardless of weather, would be nice. For example, think about permitting covered walkways or something similar in walkable commercial areas
- ◆ Tall buildings are ok in the right place.
- ◆ However, currently the Township fire department is ill-equipped to service a tall building if needed.

