

BENZIE COUNTY PLANNING COMMISSION
October 1, 2008
MINUTES

MEMBERS PRESENT: Tanner, Moorman, Pitcher, Damm, Ross, Ralston, Roberts
MEMBERS ABSENT: None
STAFF PRESENT: Neiger, Seger
OTHERS PRESENT: Ted Curran, Glen Puit, Alison Michalek

I. CALL THE MEETING TO ORDER Chairman Ralston called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

II. APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA: Motion by Moorman seconded by Pitcher to approve the Agenda as is. Ayes: All Nays: None Motion carried.

III. Public Hearing – Proposal to amend the Benzie County Comprehensive Plan 2020 by adding the Draft update to the Socio-Economic White Paper.

Open Public Hearing: Chairperson Ralston opened the public hearing, welcomed guests, and asked the Commissioners to introduce themselves.

CALL FOR CONFLICT: There were no conflicts stated by any of the Planning Commissioners present in regard to the pending Amendment.

PRESENTATION AND STAFF ANALYSIS: Dave Neiger, Director –Planning Department presented the Staff analysis. He indicated the Draft Socio Economic Update was to amend the original document and not replace it as stated in the Agenda. Neiger gave an overview of the document and proposal of the 1st White Paper. He then introduced Karen Roberts, Planning Commissioner and presenter of the document.

Karen Roberts stated the four categories of focus in the document as 1) Growth, 2) Composition of Growth, 3) Workforce, and 4) Economic Structure

GROWTH:

- * Our County is the fastest growing population in NW Michigan and 2nd or 3rd in the State, but not our economy.
- * The data supported a growth pattern of Sprawl.
- * Composition of Population over time illustrates a population increase shifting from Benzonia (Central County) to Almira and Inland (eastern county) Townships.
- * Population within the City of Frankfort and the Villages decreased while rural areas increased, further indicating a pattern of sprawl.
- * The increase in population is due primarily to in-migration of older segments of the population. This has caused a clear shift from younger families with children to retirees. The median age in Benzie County is increasing at the highest rate of the ten counties of the Northwest Michigan Council of Governments (NWMCOG).
- * There are dramatic differences in age and when comparing Lake Twp (61.3%) to Inland Township (34.9%).
- * Benzie is ranked at the middle of 10 counties in the NWMCOG with respect to median income

HUMAN CAPITAL (workforce):

- * Knowledge and skills:
 1. 85% plus had completed a High School level education or higher. This is 80% of the State Average.
 2. 20% of Benzie County residents have a College degree.
- * Occupation Distribution – Management professionals were below both Michigan and national levels.

1. Sales and Office professions are higher than state and national averages.
2. Construction increased since 2000. The increase is in the area of carpentry as opposed to architects.

ECONOMIC STRUCTURE:

- * Proprietorships (small businesses and self employment) are 40% of the employment in the County.
- * Farming was twice that of the State average.
- * The large number of construction employment makes the county more vulnerable to an economic slowdown.
- * Higher than normal rates of employment were found in the arts and entertainment categories.

INDUSTRIAL:

- * Traditional exports from Benzie are flat or declining.
- * Recreation and Tourism related employment are flat.
- * The only area of growth was in personal and business services, primarily for county residents.
- * There is a trend away from businesses serving tourists to businesses that service residents.

K. Roberts notes that she has made several presentations throughout the County to various clubs and organizations.

Open Public Input

1. Proponents Statements – None
2. Opponents Statements – None
3. General Statements and Questions
 - Ted Curran - where do we use this data?
 - Ralston - First white paper moving toward the update of the County Comprehensive Plan.
 - Niger – This is one of nine reports to be used in the final update of the Comprehensive Plan. The White Papers serve to reprioritize goals, objectives and implementation strategies. There was discussed the implementation of the Comprehensive Plan.
 - Glen Puitt from Michigan Land Use Institute (MLUI) commended the County for the report. The report speaks volumes on the economic and cultural divides within the County. Findings correlate with info the MLUI has found.
 - A. Damm – She found that upon review of the White Papers that there was much to be done.
4. Rebuttal - None
 - a. Proponents - None
 - b. Opponents - None
5. Correspondence – 3 letters. One from Leelanau County Planning Commission with several primarily grammatical and formatting comments with complements on a well done report. Another from Richard Figura, Chair-Empire Township Planning Commission. He praises the report and comments that it is interesting and has relevance to Empire Township. Lastly, Manistee County Planning Commission praises the report in their letter.
6. Deliberations
 - a. Tanner – It will be interesting to see what will happen in another 5 years with this economic downturn.
 - b. Roberts –It has been frustrating to work with 7-year-old data. By 2010 when the next Census is taken, it will again take years for that data to be released.
 - c. Tanner – Benzie High School graduates are not returning to the county.
 - d. Ross – More young families are leaving our communities.
 - e. Ralston and Roberts – Both reinforced the need for a comprehensive County Economic Report.
 - f. Roberts – cooperation with the Economic Development Corporation (EDC) would be necessary to do the right kind of data analysis. The current county master plan is silent on economic data. Additional sources of data not included in the census information are needed from bankers, businesses and various other sources.
 - g. Ralston and Pitcher – discussed presenting the Socio Economic Report to the Benzie EDC.
 - h. Neiger - added that there is a Benzie County EDC Strategic Plan and a Community Economic Development Plan by the NWMCOG. There are many inter-relationships between the Traverse Bay Economic Development Corporation (TBEDC) communities, the counties, and the various Chambers of Commerce in the 5 County (TBEDC) and the 10 County (NWMCOG) area.

- i. Tanner – Land use policy may be affected. For example, towns used to be vital with stores, entertainment, etc.
- j. Roberts – There is a current idea that the young generation chooses a place to relocate to after graduation from college and then find work. It is essential a Plan takes advantage of this idea to promote the best sense of “Place”. This will not just happen by itself.
- k. Neiger – suggests that typos will be handled between him and Roberts.

Motion: by Tanner, supported by Pitcher, to adopt the Socio Economic Report Update 2008 as is with some typos corrected according to the Leelanau County Planning Commission’s comments. Discussion – Pitcher discussed the Adoption process. Neiger suggested a friendly amendment to change the title page to reflect the new PC membership. Pitcher – The Effective Date is when? Corrected version needs to be sent to Dawn Olney, County Clerk for filing.

Ayes: All Nays: None

E. Ralston **Closes Public Hearing – 8:00 P.M.**

IV. Public Input – Alison Michalak, Platte Township Clerk, questioned where the Zoning Ordinance writing was at. Platte Township and residents have been working on an overlay/zoning district update. She passes a one (1)-page document to the Chair.

V. Announcements – Chair Ralston – Joint meeting with the County Parks and Recreation Commission (PRC) on October 27, 2008, to hear public input on the Draft Update County Parks and Recreation Plan with two (2) new components – History and Culture. Tanner, also chair of the Parks and Recreation Commission noted that only one (1) person showed at the last Public Input session and needed to notify the Government Group of the same. Neiger further discussed the format and location at the Mills Community House at 7:00 pm with a PRC business meeting at 5:00 PM at the Government Center.

Ralston also announced a Special Meeting of the Planning Commission on October 7, 2008 at 7:00 PM. The purpose of that meeting is to: 1) Address alternative Budget Proposals for the Planning Department. 2) Planning Commission Ordinance – needs more discussion and clarification.

Seeger – Updated the PC on the Grand Vision and the Benzie County Public Information Kick Off Meeting set for October 14, 2008 at the Benzie Central High School (BCHS) Auditorium. He also needs help distributing posters advertising that meeting. Topics of the meeting will be the results of the workshops followed with Grand Vision scorecard distribution and a review of the voting process.

Sager-states that he is here to work with the PC as Zoning Administrator and continues to be grateful for the opportunity to use his skills to work for Benzie County. He goes on to say that when he was hired for this job, he was asked to make improvements to operations within the Department. These improvements are identified in the Wyckoff Study and they have been echoed across the townships we serve.

“When I got started I was under the impression that there was a great sense of urgency that was necessary to make these improvements and to move them forward. I think that due to the methods I chose to use, the result was your message to me at the last Planning Commission meeting of September 2008. So, I am here tonight to apologize for the methods I used that did anything other than build trust, continuity, and teamwork. I’m asking for your forgiveness for the methods I have used to move this forward. I am also asking to make progress in an atmosphere and spirit that’s best for Benzie County. That’s all I have.”

Mooreman – Wondered about the Zoning Ordinance Rewrite Committee (ZORC) – where are we on the amendments? Seeger – Deferred to the Chairman. Ralston - We had a public workshop and received input that has not yet been incorporated into the draft ordinance. Moore man – Is that all that there is to do? Ralston – As far as she knows. Roberts’s comments that in addition to completing the process for adoption of the special land use sections of the ordinance, ZORC still has to address the

Platte Township issues, the Draft Platte Lake Overlay District language, and a wind energy ordinance. Seger – I'm looking for direction. Right now there is a No Confidence vote towards me. The Board of Commissioners has done what they've done in their last meeting, so I'm looking for direction. Pitcher – Clearly, there is a misunderstanding. I fully planned on a ZORC meeting next week, so stay tuned. There's been miscommunication somewhere.

Ralston – Appointment of a Subcommittee to address budget issues and statement to the Board of Commissioners. Roberts – The Fiscal Year (FY) 2008-09 Budget was voted and approved. Then there was a motion to let the PC study and propose alternate solutions. Roberts asks -What money framework can we look at. Can we look at the entire county budget? Neiger – You can look at fund balance and contingency funds. Damm and Pitcher – Look at funds within the Planning and Zoning Budgets. Tanner – Also look at these and at contingency or General Fund fund balance. The PC has two County Commissioners serving on it with access to the contingency and fund balance. Look at resources available just within the Planning and Zoning budgets and if it's not adequate, look elsewhere. Tanner notes that Neiger also assists the PRC and is helping to draft their new master plan. Neiger – The proposed budget from the PC should possibly include a portion of funding from Parks and Recreation for his time spent on the PRC Plan as well as trail planning and implementation. Ralston – Appointed the subcommittee of three- Damm, Roberts, and Tanner-to develop the Budget Proposal and Statement to the county Board of Commissioners for the October 14, 2008 Committee of the Whole (COTW) meeting.

VIII. ADJOURN: Chairman Ralston adjourned the meeting at 8:35 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted:

Karen Roberts, Secretary

Dave Neiger, Recording Secretary

Nov. 5, 2008 Draft