

PLANNING COMMISSION MEETING – JUNE 16, 2022

MASTER PLAN WORKSHOP – HOUSING & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

The meeting was called to order at 6:05pm by Chairperson Larry Shaffer.

MEMBERS PRESENT: Larry Shaffer, Nancy Griswold, Lou Lundquist, Jenny Irwin, Phil Bontrager, & Christine Lundquist

GUEST SPEAKERS: Julia Cogger & Dottie Lajoie from CUPPAD

AGENDA: The meeting agenda was approved on a motion by Lou with support by Phil.

MINUTES: The minutes of the June 14 meeting/workshop were approved on a motion by Lou with support by Nancy.

PUBLIC COMMENT: The Township clerk noted that there were complaints at the Township's board meeting regarding the afternoon meeting times of the Planning Commission. The Commission noted that at the prior planning for the workshops, audience members had requested some afternoon sessions because they worked night shifts. One of the four meetings had to be rescheduled to afternoon to accommodate the speaker's schedule. Larry indicated that the Planning Commission would plan to hold a meeting to summarize the workshop sessions to accommodate those who were not able to attend some sessions.

AFFORDABLE HOUSING, SHORT-TERM RENTALS & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PRESENTATION BY CUPPAD: Julia Cogger began with a review of demographic information from the recent survey. Among the items she highlighted were:

- 39% of survey respondents live less than 3 months per year in Burt Township.
- 54% of Burt Township residents are 65 years or older.
- Only 36% of respondents indicated they lived in Burt Township year round.
- 13% of respondents indicated they work in Burt Township. 57% indicated they were retired.
- Most respondents want to see planned & limited population growth.
- Most respondents want to see planned and structured commercial development.

Julia noted that there were many similarities between a recent U.P.- wide survey and the Burt Township survey. She noted that low job opportunities are an issue in much of the Upper Peninsula and that many would be interested in working remotely from Burt Township if broadband was sufficient to handle their needs. Dottie noted that the **federal government is currently funding improvements in broadband services and Burt Township should be eligible for that funding.**

The discussion of short-term rentals began with information from Dottie. She noted that on the positive side, short-term rentals give visitors an opportunity to get to know the community better. On the negative side, it can create a lack of long-term rental options. A member of the audience indicated they do not believe ST rentals affect LT rentals. This created significant discussion. Dottie noted the need to strike a balance between the two so housing is available for workers. An audience member asked if it was local or outside investors driving the increase in short-term rentals. Dottie indicated it was both. An audience member asked if the percent of ST rentals owned by local residents was known. That information is not currently available, but the Township Clerk indicated they could figure it out by reviewing the ST application forms.

An audience member suggested the Township might consider imposing a "use tax" that would be paid by ST renters and passed thru to the Township to offset increased municipal costs caused by the increase in ST rental units. Other audience members noted that the property owners already pay a higher property tax rate for non-homestead property.

The township clerk indicated that the need for increased law enforcement services is probably the primary additional cost the Township incurs related to increased rental units, caused by occasional disruptions in residential neighborhoods where they are located.

Jenny observed that ST rental owners do seem to keep the property up better to encourage more rentals. The rentals also make for fewer “vacant” homes and possibly fewer break-ins as a result.

It was noted that the ST rentals have created some jobs for local property management and maintenance.

An audience member expressed concern that lower income community members will be forced into less desirable housing. The Township Clerk noted that we need housing for plumbers, electricians, contractors, etc. in addition to those working in stores, restaurants, bars, etc.

The need for more senior housing to accommodate elderly residents who are no longer able to maintain their homes was noted. The complex built for that several decades ago is now used more as low income housing than senior housing. An audience member noted that senior housing involves more than space, as medical service, delivery services, transportation and other needs need to be incorporated.

Phil suggested that we may want to contact some communities that have previously dealt with some of these issues to see what worked for them.

Christine asked Dottie and Julia to address the “economic development” topic over and above ST rentals. Dottie noted that Recreation is the big push regionally and given Burt Township’s logistics, it is likely what we will have to concentrate our efforts on it. She indicated that in many communities this involves creating/sponsoring more recreational events to draw people into the community. She noted recent efforts in the Negaunee area to create cross country trails and events. Christine noted that Chamber of Commerce members had businesses to run and the limited population provides a limited number of volunteers for additional events. Dottie suggested that Alice at the Iron Ore Heritage Trail organization may be a good source of information. An audience member suggested that we need to find a way to pay workers at commercial recreational events. This would provide additional jobs in addition to staffing events.

Larry invited any additional audience or commission comments. There being none, he thanked Julia and Dottie for their presentation.

ADJOURNMENT: The meeting was adjourned on a motion by Christine with support by Phil.