

## MINUTES

Cascade Charter Township  
Planning Commission  
Monday, June 3, 2019  
7:00 P.M.

**ARTICLE 1.** Chairman Sperla called the meeting to order at 7:00 P.M.  
Members Present: Johnson, Katsma, Krieter, Lewis, Noordyke, Pennington, Rissi, and Sperla  
Members Absent: Moxley; excused.  
Others Present: Community Development Director, Steve Peterson and those listed on the sign in sheet.

**ARTICLE 2. Pledge of Allegiance.**

**ARTICLE 3. Approve the current Agenda.**

**Motion was made by Member Lewis to approve the Agenda. Supported by Member Rissi. Motion carried 8 to 0.**

**ARTICLE 4. Approve the Minutes of the May 20, 2019 meeting.**

**Motion was made by Member Johnson to approve the minutes of May 20, 2019. Supported by Member Noordyke. Motion carried 8 to 0.**

**ARTICLE 5. Acknowledge visitors and those wishing to speak to non-agenda items.**

No visitors came forward.

**ARTICLE 6. Cascade Township  
Public Hearing**

**Requested Action:** Consider Recommendation to Township Board for Approval of the Master Plan.

Director Peterson introduced Lynee Wells, the Township Planning Consultant, to walk through the Master Plan presentation.

Ms. Wells started by stating that the Master Plan is entirely web based, and is the first of its kind in the region. The website has several different chapters that are divided into main sections which are Themes, Future Land Use Plan, Public Input, Implementation, and Appendices. Each section is filled with additional information and opportunities for residents. Ms. Wells then briefly went over some of the additional topics under the main section tabs.

Ms. Wells started with the Public Information section, and stated that the Intent to Plan notice was sent out in May of 2018. Ms. Wells stated that there was a robust social media campaign with the Master Plan, and a booth at the Summer Concert Series asking residents their impression of the Township, what the assets are, what the challenges

are, and how services can be better delivered to help all residents improve their quality of life. There was a Design Day in October, and information about the Master Plan delivered in a newsletter via the Facebook page. It was through public engagement that the themes for the Master Plan were created. Themes are Neighborhoods and Partnerships, Sustainability and Environment, Economy and Innovation, and Transportation and Mobility. Under each theme there is a dropdown menu with links to data, maps, and projects to support each themes goal.

Ms. Wells stated that each category under the Implementation Theme has actions listed with a link to their Strategy, Responsibility & Partners, and Success Indicator. Ms. Wells then stated that Staff has worked to develop time frames of completion for each individual action. Ms. Wells then briefly discussed projects in the Neighborhoods & Partnerships category such as providing permeable edges to parks and natural areas by increasing the number of access points; encouraging relationships between Forest Hills Public Schools, Kent District Library, and the Cascade Township Parks and Recreation Committee regarding the interconnectivity and collaboration between neighborhoods and neighborhood assets and services; identifying local philanthropists or benefactors who are interested in partnering, sponsoring, or investing in the Township's vision; increasing transparency of Commission and Board meetings in the Township; and actively engaging property owners in Cascade Village to familiarize them with the Village Plan, promote shared parking, and discuss implementation ideas.

Ms. Wells then moved on to discussing the Plans for Cascade Village, stating there were many comments related to walkability and pedestrian and bicycle safety centered around Cascade Road that were gathered from the community survey (with 510 respondents), and the public meeting and engagement sessions that were held. Ms. Wells states that the Township has limited control over the street space on Cascade Road, but there have been very beneficial conversations with Road Commission members on how to slow traffic in that area in such a way so that pedestrians and bicyclists feel safer. Ms. Wells states that this will, in turn, create more of a business environment where people will likely want to frequent and spend time, hopefully encouraging businesses to expand or open in the Cascade Corridor.

Ms. Wells states that concepts for Cascade Village include the addition of roundabouts, narrowing or reducing width of travel lanes slightly, adding a pedestrian connection on Old 28<sup>th</sup> St, an adjacent pedestrian bridge crossing over the Thornapple River, or a connection under Cascade Road to get to the east and west sides of Cascade Road. Ms. Wells states that she has walked through Cascade Village, and found it to be an uncomfortable experience as a pedestrian.

Ms. Wells states that concepts for Cascade Road changes include narrowing the (5) lanes and increasing the buffer along the edges, adding a center median in paces where there does not need to be a right or left turn, or adding bike infrastructure. Old 28<sup>th</sup> St concepts include adding on street parking, or a vegetated median. An option to reduce traffic speed on Thornapple River Drive includes keeping the 13 ft wide driving lane (standard is 10-11 ft wide in a suburban area) and removing the center turn lane, and adding an 8-foot sidewalk. The bridge on Cascade Road across the Thornapple River can have the drive lanes reduced with a buffer of paint to help slow traffic, and keep cars

further away from the edge of the sidewalk. Ms. Wells states that the lack of possible change at the intersection of Thornapple River Drive and Cascade is mostly due to the constraints of the narrow right of ways on Thornapple River Drive, and the Road Commission having control of the roads. She then states a more detailed plan for the provision of sidewalks will need to be done taking a closer look at the right of way.

Ms. Wells stated that concepts for The Village are illustrious and meant to spark conversation and encourage owners and developers to build in a new way. Ms. Wells believes that having the river corridor in The Village is a unique amenity.

Ms. Wells briefly discussed the Future Land Use section, and explained what those areas can be used for.

**Motion was made by Member Rissi to open Public Hearing. Supported by Member Katsma. Motion carried 8 to 0.**

Chairman Sperla invited member of the public to come forward with comment. Ms. Ginny Dusseau (2975 Thornapple River Drive) came forward to ask about the appearance of tassel Park being extended into private property along the river, Member Rissi stated that it is mapped incorrectly by Regis, and will not be extended beyond its current property line. Ms. Dusseau then asked about the potential of a walkway from Cascade Road towards Thornhills, and expressed her concern of homes being so close to the roadway, not allowing adequate space for a safe walkway. Ms. Wells stated that this is not an engineered drawing, and its intention is simply to state the opportunity for a sidewalk in that area. Director Peterson stated that this particular walkway is favored by residents and frequently requested in the community, but has not yet been identified as a project in the coming years.

Ms. Nancy Eardley (1441 Sandy Point Ave) came forward to state her concern with the possible narrowing of roads, addition of medians and roundabouts and the ongoing construction to do so, the possibility of on-street parking on Cascade Road, and public transit in the Township. Ms. Eardley then stated that she did not believe the Township was being transparent in notifying the public of meetings as she did not see a Facebook post for the current meeting. She continues to state her concern and opinion about how the Township is spending tax money.

Mr. Jeff Dionne (2984 Thornapple River Drive) stated that he believes the community needs more housing, and has seen density increases in some places. He then states his concern about the walkability of Cascade Road across the bridge, or on Thornapple River Drive. Mr. Dionne believes there needs to be a barrier/guardrail in both places along the walkway to protect pedestrians, and that there needs to be a way to slow traffic through the residential areas and direct it back towards the business district.

Mr. Jim Lareau (2834 Thornapple River Drive) stated that he has a deed restriction on his property that was filed with Kent County in 2016, and that he has no intention of selling his property. He then reads part of the deed restriction on file that states what the property shall and shall not be used for in the event of an eminent domain takeover of the property.

Mr. Mark Rohde (3087 Thornapple River Drive) states his concern regarding getting pedestrians safely across streets with roundabouts, and the lack of businesses on the Master Plan Map to identify the area. He believes that people will want to live and walk to businesses in the area if they can do so safely. Mr. Rohde believes that Master Plan is too clinical, and lacks the human element of why people want to be somewhere.

Mr. Krik Rottschafer (2641 Cascade Springs Drive) states that he does not believe the Master Plan adequately portrays current businesses in the district (by not being shown on the map), and questioned who designed the Plan.

Mr. Jeff Johnson (2168 Thornapple River Drive) stated that he believes intentions are good with this Plan, but that communities form better organically. He states that tax money used to think of ways to entertain the community are not always supported by the community, and there needs to be an established threshold of approval by the community/tax payers.

Ms. Julie Wallace (2633 Thornapple River Drive) stated that she never believed Cascade was intended to be a walking village that some neighboring communities are, and that the transparency of how these plans are going to be funded is not clear. Ms. Wallace states that she believes she represents other residents that are not clear what the intentions are with the Master Plan.

**Motion was made by Member Johnson to close the Public Hearing. Supported by Member Rissi. Motion Carried 8-0.**

Member Pennington stated a response to a member of the public that a Master Plan is completed every ten years, as required by state law. He then stated that a lot of these designs are concepts asked to be considered by the Township, not engineered plans. Director Peterson stated that many of the designs are also on private property, and simply show future concept possibility. Member Noordyke stated that this plan is aspirational, and used as guidelines to show the direction that the community wants. Member Rissi comments that most of what is shown on the Master Plan comes from public comment gained by multiple surveys taken in the community. Chairman Sperla added that the community is not the same as it has been in the past, and that long-term growth is desired by both the Board and members of the community. Comments are appreciated, and help to determine what is desired by the public. Ms. Wells stated that it is recognized that there are different housing types wanting to be provided in the Township, and there is a desire to be open to and attract new businesses into the area as well.

Member Krieter offered that the Township does offer a robust website that has data available to the Public regarding Agendas and Minutes of Meetings held by the Township. She encourages the community to continue to attend Public Hearings as it is a great way to have their input heard.

Ms. Wells stated that the Township Board asserted their right to adopt the Master Plan as allowed by the State Statute. A recommendation would be made by the Planning Commission to the Township Board. Director Peterson stated that there will be a Public Hearing held at the Township Board Meeting, and that the Planning Commission will make recommendation of a resolution for the Board to adopt.

Chairman Sperla states that he is in favor of moving forward with a favorable recommendation to the Board.

Member Krieter asked if each individual project included in the Master Plan will be coming in front of the Planning Commission for review, Director Peterson stated that the Master Plan is used as a guidance, so it will depend on which item moves forward. Member Johnson stated that the Master Plan is used as a vision document, with input based solely from the township residents to guide development in the future. He then stated that the Township Board will have final decision on the Master Plan as they have been elected as the Officials to do so.

**Motion was made by Member Johnson to recommend the resolution for adopting the Master Plan. Supported by Member Lewis. Motion carried 8 to 0.**

**ARTICE 7. Any other business**

**ARTICLE 8. Adjournment**

**Motion was made by Member Pennington to adjourn. Supported by Member Rissi. Motion carried 8 to 0. The meeting was adjourned at 8:25 p.m.**

Respectfully submitted,  
Phil Johnson, Secretary