MINUTES

REGULAR MEETING OF THE MONROE COUNTY PLANNING COMMISSION

DATE and TIME: April 10, 2019 at 7:00 p.m.

PLACE: Monroe County Courthouse Annex
        Board of Commissioners’ Committee Room
        125 East Second Street
        Monroe, MI   48161

MEMBERS PRESENT: Dan Brooks, Chairman; Mark Brant; Rebecca Curley; Floreine Mentel; Patrick Miller; Greg Moore; Mike Sperling

MCPC STAFF PRESENT: Jeff McBee, Community Planning & Engagement Director; Ryan Simmons, Planner

OTHERS PRESENT: John Chandler, Summerfield Township; David C. Hoffman, County Commissioner, Dundee Township; Bob Queen, Exeter Township

1. A quorum being present, Chairman Brooks called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. and the Commission proceeded to transact business.

2. Chairman Brooks led the Commission in the Pledge of Allegiance.

3. Adopt/Revise Agenda – Motion by Mrs. Mentel, supported by Mrs. Curley, to accept the agenda.

   MOTION CARRIED

4. Approval of the Minutes of the March 13, 2019 Meeting – Motion by Mr. Brant, supported by Mrs. Curley, to approve the minutes of the March 13, 2019 meeting as presented and to waive their reading.

   MOTION CARRIED

5. Call to the Public – Chairman Brooks asked the audience that was present if they would rather wait to speak when the Commission gets to the subject matter on the Agenda that they are here to discuss, which is under Old Business. The audience members agreed to wait until that point to speak.

6. Communications:
   A. Correspondence
      1. Email from U.S. Army Corps of Engineers regarding GIS assistance from Jeff Boudrie – Mr. McBee stated that he received a call from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers that praised Mr. Boudrie for his assistance with a GIS information request. Mr. McBee stated that he asked the member of the Corps if he would submit this in writing, as he would be happy to present this to the Board. Mr. McBee stated that, in response, he received an email from the Corps with this same praise.
B. Information
   1. Municipal Planning and Zoning Seminar on April 17, 2019 – Mr. McBee stated that he has signed up all of the Commissioners for the Seminar.

   Motion by Mrs. Curley, supported by Mr. Sperling, to accept the Correspondence and Information.

   MOTION CARRIED

7. Old Business:
   A. Partners in Planning Update
      1. Village of Estral Beach – planning and zoning services – Mr. Simmons stated that Ann Borowski from the Village’s Planning Commission contacted him and told him that they are making progress on their zoning ordinance. He stated that she had a few questions regarding certain land uses within the Township, and that he told her that they should speak to an attorney. He stated that there are issues because the Village is so small, but on the other hand they should not be excluding certain land uses in their zoning ordinance, so this makes zoning in the Village tricky. He stated that hopefully they will provide him with a completed zoning ordinance to review later this year.

   B. GIS Update – Mr. McBee stated that the GIS contractor is working with the County IT department to make sure that the County system is prepared to make the upgrades that need to be made. He stated that they are aiming for July to have everything up and running for the new GIS system.

   C. Remonumentation Update – Mr. McBee stated that the requests for qualifications went out and that they are due back April 11. They have already received applications back from the four companies that have been doing remonumentation for a while now. He stated that they are on track to get the program started up again for 2019.

   D. Continued Discussion/Recommendation Regarding the Purpose/Role of the Planning Commission – Chairman Brooks stated that the responsibility of the Planning Commissioners prior to this meeting was to review the document provided by Mr. Bosanac in order to understand where he is coming from regarding this document.

   Chairman Brooks summarized the previous discussion for the audience, stating that there has been ongoing discussion by the County Board of Commissioners regarding the subject of the value that the Planning Commission adds to the County. He stated that, based upon research across the State, many counties have already dissolved their planning commissions. He mentioned that Mr. Bosanac went over the five main functions of a planning commission, and asked the County Planning Commission to make a recommendation to the County Board regarding whether to keep or dissolve the Planning Commission. He stated that, ultimately, it is the County Board’s decision regarding whether to disband the Planning Commission or not. He stated that he asked the Planning Commissioners to list the ways that the Planning Commission adds value for the County, as well as for Staff to invite representatives of the County’s municipalities and members of the public to tonight’s meeting. Chairman Brooks then opened the floor for discussion.

   Mr. Brant suggested that the Commission hear from audience members first. Mr. Chandler started, stating that the County Planning Commission provides another set of eyes and ears in order to help review what his township does so that they are able to come to a proper decision. He stated that the Planning Commission is a group that has one purpose, and that is to plan, but that the County Board has a multitude of responsibilities, and he is afraid that things will slip through the cracks or rubber stamped if they are left to the County Board, and that this would not be of benefit to taxpayers. He stated that,
because of this, he believes that the County should be very cautious about the idea of not having a planning commission.

Mr. Queen stated that he was a bit unsure of what goes on at the County Planning Commission level. Chairman Brooks asked if he was sent the documentation provided by Mr. Bosanac. Mr. Queen stated that he was sent it, and asked if these duties could be transferred for somebody else to do. Chairman Brooks stated that they could be. Mr. Queen asked if it is a vital necessity that these duties be performed by somebody, and that, if they are not performed, if it would add an added burden on the townships. He stated that he appreciates the work that the County Planning Commission has performed, and that the documentation that he has received in the past from them was well written.

Mr. McBee stated that dissolving the County Planning Commission would not add any duties or financial burden to the townships that he is aware of. He stated that the Planning Commission’s functions would be carried out in different ways, but that they would not be turned back over to the townships.

Chairman Brooks added that there would be quicker turnaround when it comes to zoning requests because the County Board meets twice a month, while the County Planning Commission only meets once a month. He also added that the County Planning Department would not be going away, just the Planning Commission itself. He mentioned that most of the Townships do their own planning or hire a consultant and have their own master plan these days, compared to in the past when the County did these things for them. Chairman Brooks stated that the decision to approve rezoning rests upon the Township Board, and that the County Planning Commission only makes recommendations based upon its County Plan and nothing more. He stated that therefore he does not see any kind of additional burden to the townships if there is not a County Planning Commission.

Mr. Hoffman stated that he is speaking for his townships and some of the other townships and that they feel better about their decisions when they also hear from the County Planning Commission. He stated that he understands if some county planning commissioners are burned out, but that there are other people out there willing to sit on the Planning Commission. He asked the Planning Commissioners what their personal feelings are regarding this matter. He stated that he only recalls the County Board discussing this matter twice. He stated that the County Board is busy with many things, and that if the Planning Commission does not have much on its agenda, it does not have to meet every month, but that it is important to keep the Planning Commission as a service for the people.

Chairman Brooks stated that the purpose of the meeting tonight is to get the feedback from the Planning Commissioners. He stated that he cannot answer Mr. Hoffman’s question for each of the Planning Commissioners. He stated that it was the County Board that came up with the idea to possibly dissolve the Planning Commission.

Mr. Brant clarified that it was his idea to dissolve the Planning Commission. He stated that he has been on the Planning Commission for 16 years and that he is not burned out. He stated that he likes to look at all of the County’s boards and commissions and determine if they are an effective use of the taxpayers’ dollars. He stated that, in the past, the County Planning Commission did all of the master plans for the County’s townships except for the largest ones, and that the Department’s staff used to be much larger. He stated that, over the years, the townships began to instead hire their own professional planners, and there are only a couple of communities that still use the Planning Department for their master plans and their zoning ordinances. He stated that, as a result, the Planning Commission no longer does a lot to guide what goes on in the County’s communities.
Mr. Brant stated that the Planning Commission does have the responsibility to act upon zoning ordinance changes, but the reason that this responsibility exists is because a county planning commission exists, but that if there were no planning commission, the County, by law, would not need to act upon any of those ordinance changes. He stated that, for the majority of these cases, the County Planning Commission just approves the recommendations that Staff makes. He stated that they do act on PA 116 farmland agreements, and that by statute that is the only thing that they are legally obligated to do, although these are not even all sent to the County by the townships.

Mr. Brant stated that this issue was brought up when there was discussion about hiring a new planning director, as he saw the writing on the wall, and that a part-time director was eventually hired because they could not justify spending the money on a new planning director considering how much less is going on in the Planning Department now, and that there is a clear lack of need for a planning department and planning commission in the same way that it used to be done. He stated that, most of the time, there are hardly any items on the agenda, and that the Planning Commission does not create ordinances for the County, but only takes a second look at what is proposed by township planning commissions to township boards. Mr. Brant stated that the townships would miss out on that second recommendation, but that it hardly ever disagrees with the townships’ recommendations, and the only time it does is when the County Plan and the Township Master Plan disagree. He added that the County Plan has also not been updated regularly. He stated that the money could be better spent in economic development or improving GIS services, and stated that the BDC is now doing much of the economic work that the Planning Commission used to do.

Mr. Brant stated that he believes that the County Planning Commission has run its course, and stated that four of the counties that are near the size of Monroe County already do not have a county planning commission. He stated that one county that is close to ours in size works without a planning commission now, and that the County Board takes care of statutorily obligated duties and that planning department staff deals with all other matters. He stated that he did not think that the County Planning Commission would be missed by the townships, as the Planning Commission already does not do much.

Mr. Chandler asked if big issues ever come before the County Planning Commission. Mr. Brant replied that he could not name one. He asked Mr. Chandler when there was a case in Summerfield Township that was big enough for him to show up at a County Planning Commission meeting. Mr. Chandler stated that he could not answer that, and stated that he was asked to come and support the continuation of the County Planning Commission. He stated that he is not fully aware of everything that the County Planning Commission does and does not do. He stated that he is wondering what he is doing here if he is being told that there should not be a County Planning Commission.

Mr. Brant stated that townships require a planning commission in order to have a master plan that supports township zoning, but that the county planning commission just duplicates what the township planning commission already does. Mr. Chandler replied that, at times, he needs more planning expertise. Mr. Brant stated that every municipality has someone who watches out for them, and that the County used to do this, but no longer does. He stated that he believes that each township should have their own planning consultant, because how townships see what should happen in their borders differs from how the County sees it, and the County Plan often differs greatly from the townships’ master plans. He stated that the County only looks at how township zoning requests relate to the County Plan.

Mr. Hoffman asked what would happen if there is no longer a county planning commission to watch over the townships. He stated that the people like to hear what the County Planning Commission’s thoughts are. Mr. Brant replied that nobody comes to the County Planning Commission meetings. Chairman Brooks stated that nobody comes unless there is opposition to a zoning case. Mr. Brant stated
that there was a crowd last month, but they were all in agreement with the Planning Commission’s recommendation. Mr. Hoffman stated that this is good and that the people want to hear the Planning Commission. Chairman Brooks stated that there was no discussion from the Planning Commission on the zoning case because there was no opposition from the Planning Commission, so the public just came and left. Mr. Sperling stated that Mr. Hoffman was referring to previous rezoning cases when the public did come and speak.

Mr. Brant asked whether there should still be a planning commission just for the rare occasions when people from the townships show up here just so they could feel good that the Planning Commission is here. Mr. Hoffman stated that the public wants to hear what the County Planning Commission has to say. He stated that otherwise, without a county planning commission, it will just be 15 separate counties within Monroe County. Mr. Brant stated that this is how things are already. Mr. Moore stated that statutorily this is how things are. Chairman Brooks stated that Frenchtown Charter Township already does not listen to the County Planning Commission.

Mr. Queen stated that his township does not compare what they are doing to what the state allows and does not allow, and that their attorney and planner is supposed to look at things, but they sometimes do not. He asked if this is something that the County Planning Commission does. Mr. Brant stated that if they saw something that was glaringly against state law, they would let his township know. Mr. Queen asked if the County Planning Commission had expertise regarding state law. Mr. Brant stated that they do not. Mr. Simmons stated that he is a trained planner and has an understanding of state planning law. Mr. Moore stated that Mr. Simmons would not be going anywhere, though. Mr. Simmons stated that this is something that the township’s planner should be able to do too, as well, and anybody who is a trained planner should know planning law. Mr. Queen stated that there are some things that happened in their Township that should have been caught but were not. Mr. Simmons stated that, on the other hand, planners are not lawyers, and do not know all aspects of law. Mr. Brant stated that there are other things that planners are also not going to know, such as building codes.

Mr. Chandler asked the rest of the Commissioners how they feel. Dr. Miller stated that he is opposed to getting rid of the Planning Commission. He stated that the County Board and the Planning Commission are not the same creature, and that the County Board involves people who are politically connected and have the money to run for office, which is a very small proportion of the people within a county, but that the County Planning Commission is made up of people appointed from different areas, and it is open for people to participate in the Commission if they choose to. Dr. Miller stated that he has read all of the documentation provided, and that he has been on the Commission for a long time too. He stated that he is hesitant to give away an opportunity for the public to participate, ask questions and get information. He stated that the Planning Commission represents quite a diverse group of people as opposed to being elected officials. He stated that he does not think that the usefulness of the Planning Commission could be measured whether a certain number of people show up or not, and that the Planning Commission should be viewed as an opportunity for the public, and that it is different than them going to a County Board meeting. He stated that he has seen the County Planning Commission work as it should, and he would not like to see it go away.

Mr. Moore stated that citizens still have the opportunity to go to many other types of meetings. Dr. Miller asked if the same type of people who go to a Board Meeting are the ones who go to a County Planning Commission meeting. Mr. Moore stated that people who came to the meeting last month were just told to show up to this meeting and were not even aware that the decision would be made at the Township Board meeting. He stated that people in the building, real estate, business and development communities that he has spoken to have been glad to hear that there is a possibility that an unneeded step
minutes of the April 10, 2019
Monroe County Planning Commission Meeting

may be eliminated in the building and development process. He stated that, statutorily, the County Planning Commission has no teeth at all.

Mr. Hoffman stated that building inspectors might be the next thing gotten rid of. Mr. Moore stated that townships also have their own building inspectors. Mr. Hoffman stated that the building and development community has the same view of building inspectors that they do of planning commissions. Mr. Moore stated that they would still be going through the township for final approval. Mr. Sperling stated that they would still have to go through the Board, so they would not save time. Mr. Brant stated that things like rezoning requests would not go through a board. He stated that only the PA 116 agreements would need to go through the Board. Mr. Sperling stated that the public would then lose a voice if the County Planning Commission does agree with the public on a rezoning request. He stated that he understands the argument that the County Planning Commission has no teeth, but that it is still another level of confirmation for the public.

Dr. Miller stated that he believes that there should be a lot of voices about how land is used in the county, and not just voices from developers, as there are a lot of different opinions about zoning and where development should and should not be. He stated that the goal therefore should be to appoint people from as many different facets of the community as possible, so those other opinions are heard, and that the County Planning Commission is an opportunity for this. Mr. Moore stated that he did not just mention developers but also small business owners. He stated that the longer time for zoning cases to go through the County Planning Commission could sometimes be the factor that would make a small business owner decide to develop, expand or hire more people. He stated that when there is no statutory power, such as the situation with the County Planning Commission, he just sees it as being redundant, and that, as a result, having a County Planning Commission could also hinder economic development, and that we should want the local townships to have control.

Dr. Miller stated that, ultimately, what we should want is for people to have input. He stated that the County Planning Commission does have value if anything ever goes to court. He stated that he owns a business now, so he understands Mr. Moore’s argument, but that he believes that the more open the process is, the better that it is, and, the more opportunities there are for the public to give input, the better. He stated that, by taking opportunities away, people will have less input, and that the smaller things are made, the more difficult it will be for them to have input.

Mr. Moore stated that he wants to make it clear that he does not think the County Planning Commission has no value, but that he wonders whether it has enough value compared to what some of the negatives might be. He stated that the County Planning Commission only makes recommendations based upon what the Master Plan says, no matter how many people show up, and that it has no real power. Dr. Miller stated that this is the purpose for the Planning Commission as a way of showing that the county government is open. Mr. Moore stated that they could do this at the township level at their township planning departments or township meetings. Mr. Sperling stated that they would not be able to do this at County Board meetings, though. Mr. Brant stated that these actions would not come to the County Board. Mr. Sperling stated that that level would be cut right out and the public would lose its voice.

Mrs. Mentel stated that she had concerns about doing away with the County Master Plan and having a strategic plan instead. She stated that developers would just have things put in the strategic plan that would help them get what they want when they want it. She stated that the average person has no idea what is on the consent agenda for the County Board meetings, and that nobody on the County Board would be willing to pull anything from that consent agenda. She brought up the Frenchtown Charter Township Nike Park proposed development, and stated that the County Board tried to tell them what they should do with the property, but asked how the Board would know what is best if they had not read
all of the documents that the Township had. She stated that she does not want to see the opportunity taken away from the public to say what they have to say, and stated that the County Planning Commission has educated a lot of people. Mrs. Mentel mentioned having a pilot program and then asking the townships how they feel about the changes, so that we would not be stuck with any changes, and mentioned that the people from Ash Township were smart enough last month to know that they should go to the County Planning Commission for the next step.

Mrs. Curley stated that she understands both sides of the arguments being made and that she disagrees with the idea of having a pilot program, as once something is taken away, it does not come back. She stated that she understands the idea of revising the Planning Commission, how many members there are, what its functions are, and addressing fiscal responsibility issues. However, she stated that when things are streamlined, sometimes things are lost in the process, such as people and diversity. She stated that the County Board already has a lot on its plate. She mentioned the five functions of the planning commission, and asked, if four these functions would not exist if the Planning Commission is dissolved, then why do those functions exist in the first place.

Mrs. Curley stated that she understood Mr. Moore’s arguments about the County Planning Commission delaying the development process, but stated that those people are not necessarily the average person who might have a different skin in the game. She stated that taking away the County Planning Commission would be taking something away from the people. She stated that people may come to the County Planning Commission not knowing why they are here, but that they knew why by the time they left, as planning commissioners such as Mr. Brant educated them, even if it was not necessarily the Planning Commission’s responsibility to do this.

Mrs. Curley stated again that taking the Planning Commission away would just take an opportunity away from the public. She stated that she personally finds County Board meetings to be intimidating, and that other members of the public also might feel that way and not speak their mind, but that they do not have to feel that way at the County Planning Commission meetings, and that they have an opportunity to speak here. She stated that, even if the Planning Commission does not have power, it can share information with the public, and that something would be missing if the Planning Commission is wiped out.

Mr. Sperling stated that, based upon the information provided in the agenda packet, 63 out of 83 counties in the State have planning commissions, and that he does not know how much is being saved by eliminating an average of just seven people a meeting. He mentioned that the average number of planning commissioners for a county planning commission in the State is seven. Mr. Sperling mentioned the public only being able to speak at County Board meetings during the one public comment period. Mr. Moore corrected him and stated that there are still two public comment periods during Board meetings for the public to speak. Mrs. Mentel stated that they only get three minutes to speak, though.

Mr. Sperling mentioned the Planning Commissioner reports from Dr. Miller and Mrs. Mentel that they would not receive any more without the existence of a County Planning Commission, and that they would not be invited to County Board meetings to provide their information. He stated that reducing the requirement for a Planning Commission quorum might help, but that meetings are rarely canceled due to lack of quorum. He stated that he does not think that it is a good idea to take an opportunity away from the public to provide their voice, and agreed that the public would not be as likely to want to come to County Board meetings.
Mrs. Curley stated that she did not think that the County Commissioners would be looking at the Master Plan when making decisions about what the townships want to do, and asked who would be trying to tie things together in the County. Mr. Moore stated that the Board gets quarterly updates from the County Administrator provided by the county departments that are put into the report to the Board. Mrs. Curley asked who would look at the big picture. Mr. Moore stated that he would as an elected official and that it is part of his job, and that there would still be a County Planning Department even if there is not a Planning Commission, and he stated that he felt like this part was being conflated. Mr. Moore asked whether the value that Mrs. Curley is mentioning is worth still meeting considering the additional step in the development process and the additional wait.

Dr. Miller stated that he does not know how a value could be put on giving the public an opportunity to participate. Mr. Moore stated that this would not be going away. Dr. Miller stated that we already know that there is an opportunity for the public to participate because the Planning Commission already exists, but that it would be a gamble taking it away, and that all of the planning commissioners have participated in educating the public who has come to these meetings. He stated that putting a dollar amount on public participation might be good budgeting, but that it is bad government.

Mr. Moore stated that he has never made an argument that it is some kind of financial windfall, but that he is looking at it as a negative towards economic development and servicing property owners. He stated that a majority of what the Planning Commission does is rezonings, and that there was a recent case in Bedford Township that had 85 people show up to the township planning commission meeting and 125 people showing up for the township board meeting, but that no people showed up to the County Planning Commission meeting. Mr. Sperling stated that they did not want to drive so far to Monroe. Mr. Moore stated that this just made his case then, as the townships have their own planners, planning commissions and township boards, and this makes the county planning commission redundant and that he dislikes seeing useless government. He stated that he understands Dr. Miller’s points, but that the people already have opportunities to make their voices heard at township planning commission meetings, township board meetings, and at any additional public hearings at the local level.

Mr. Queen stated from the audience that he thinks the County Board meetings are cold and harsh to the public, and that the County Planning Commission meeting seems to be run more like how meetings are run at his township. He stated that County Board meetings only give the public three minutes to talk, and then the Board may not even address the issue. He stated at his township meetings he often asks the audience for their views, similar as to what occurred at this meeting tonight. He stated that he sees at the County Planning Commission level more of a small-time thing. He stated that he sees a concern if there is ever a lousy township board, and that the County Planning Commission can be a voice of reason in cases such as these, and that he can see the value provided for the people in this, even if the County Planning Commission has no authority.

Mr. Moore asked Mr. Queen what makes him think that a really bad board would listen to a planning commission with no authority. Mr. Queen stated that it gives the opportunity for an opposing set of views to be presented, and that these could even be put in the newspaper eventually and that hopefully democracy would prevail on the side of right.

Mrs. Mentel brought up a case from Frenchtown Charter Township in the past that she abstained from participating in which Planning Staff brought up how the Township was not even following its own Master Plan. She stated that otherwise this would have never been pointed out. She stated that she did not want to take a voice away from people, and stated that real estate development interests are just looking at money and getting what they want, when they want it, and that they do not care what happens to the other people who live around an area that is being proposed for development. She stated that, at
the County Board level, the public is only going to get three minutes before they are cut off, and that she has seen other people not being allowed to get up and say the same thing.

Chairman Brooks stated that he thinks that the Planning Commission is at a point where it should be making a motion for a recommendation to the County Board. Mr. Hoffman asked from the audience if Mr. McBee and Mr. Simmons have a voice in this. Chairman Brooks stated that they do not. Mr. Hoffman asked if there are any commissioners missing from the meeting tonight. Chairman Brooks stated that there are four vacancies that the County Board has not made appointments to replace. Mr. Hoffman asked why the Board has not replaced them. He stated that he has been talking to three other County Commissioners who are ready to go along with the Planning Commission’s recommendation. Mr. Hoffman asked Chairman Brooks for his views. Chairman Brooks stated that he is neutral as the Chairman unless there is a tie.

Mr. Brant stated that the Planning Commission has been discussing this for a while and has put off making the recommendation until this current meeting, and that they were giving a chance for the local municipalities to have some input and to not be blindsided, but that only two people showed up. Mr. Hoffman stated that he is representing twenty people. Mr. Brant asked where these people are, and stated that Mr. Hoffman is being untruthful about the number of citizens who he is representing. Mr. Queen stated that he often sits through meetings so that his citizens do not have to, and that he takes back a lot of what goes on at these meetings to them. Mr. Brant stated that he understands this. Mr. Hoffman asked Mr. Chandler how many people were at his meeting asking him to come down and stated that there must have been thirty people there. Mr. Queen stated that he tries to come back as a neutral voice and not on either side most of the time. Mr. Hoffman stated that he tries to do the same.

Motion by Dr. Miller, supported by Mr. Sperling, to continue the operation of the County Planning Commission as it currently exists.

Chairman Brooks asked if there was any discussion on the motion. Mr. Brant stated that there is a lot that is dysfunctional about the Planning Commission currently, such as the number of vacancies, and that, if the decision is to keep the Planning Commission intact, then they should make it more efficient somehow. Chairman Brooks stated that his plan was to, after this vote is taken, do something to address the bylaws as it pertains to the size of the Planning Commission. Mr. McBee stated that the County Planning Ordinance addresses the size of the Planning Commission. He stated that the Planning Commission changes the bylaws, but these bylaws are derived from the County Planning Ordinance, and that this would have to be changed first. Dr. Miller asked if they would have to go through the normal county ordinance process with public comment. Chairman Brooks asked if the number of planning commissioners in the Ordinance would need to be reduced. Mr. Brant stated that he is not sure.

Dr. Miller stated that some things apparently would have to be investigated, but that his concern is that the Planning Commission continues to exist. He stated that he is also concerned with being aggressive about increasing representation on the Planning Commission. However, he stated that he understands if things need to be tweaked, changed or reorganized. He stated that, if there is some compromise, he is not opposed to this. Mr. Brant stated that, if it is agreed that the Planning Commission should stay, that they seriously look at reorganization so that it brings better value and that there is a core group of people who care enough to come to every meeting and do the homework. Chairman Brooks brought up that Herb Smith, the agricultural representative on the Planning Commission, resigned today, and that he was going to announce this later in the meeting.

Dr. Miller stated that he did not want to delay this, but that he believes that the Planning Commission has not done a good job advertising itself since he has been on the Commission. He stated that part of the
compromise should be how the Planning Commission presents the value of itself, so that it encourages members of the public to become a part of the Commission, as opposed to the Planning Commission presenting itself as having no value, and that representation should be as diverse as possible.

Chairman Brooks called the question and asked for a vote on the motion.

**MOTION CARRIED**

Mr. Brant pointed out that this decision has no teeth. Chairman Brooks stated that the County Board is now aware that the Planning Commission considers itself to be a value add to the community. Mr. Sperling stated that he believed that this was similar to discussions of reducing the County Board from nine to five members. Mr. Moore stated that he did not think this was comparable because the County Board is set up statutorily by the State.

Chairman Brooks stated that there are four vacancies now, and stated that the Commission needs to know from the Board what their plan is to fill the vacancies or what the process would be to streamline the Board. He asked each Commissioner which area of the community that they represent on the Commission. Mr. Brant stated that he thought that we should ask the County Board to maintain the Planning Commission but to reorganize it, and then we can figure out what categories we want represented on the Commission and properly designate what category each current member of the Commission represents.

Motion by Mr. Brant, supported by Mrs. Curley, to recommend to the Board of Commissioners to look into an efficient organization of the Planning Commission without getting rid of the Planning Commission.

**MOTION CARRIED**

8. **New Business:**
   A. **Consent Agenda**

**TOWNSHIP ZONING REVIEWS**

200.1-4-19-6  **Erie Township** (text)
Erie Township is proposing to amend various Articles of its Zoning Ordinance. These amendments address solar energy systems, small communications towers and signs within the Township.

Recommendation: That the Monroe County Planning Commission advise the Erie Township Board that it recommends approval of the proposed amendment for the reasons stated above.

**FARMLAND REVIEWS**

200-4-4-19-9  **Raisinville Township** (Owner: Knabusch, D. & S.)
The property is a parcel totaling approximately 73.3 acres in size. It is located on the north side of North Custer Road west of Doty Road.

Recommendation: That the Monroe County Planning Commission approve this application for inclusion in the Farmland and Open Space Preservation Program because it is consistent with the intentions of Part 361 of Public Act 451 of 1994 (more commonly known as PA 116), and for the reasons stated above.
Whiteford Township (Owner: Windom, L. & Mayer, J. & C.)
The property consists of two parcels totaling approximately 43.42 acres in size. It is located on the west side of Whiteford Center Road between Bibb Road and Temperance Road.

Recommendation: That the Monroe County Planning Commission approve this application for inclusion in the Farmland and Open Space Preservation Program because it is consistent with the intentions of Part 361 of Public Act 451 of 1994 (more commonly known as PA 116), and for the reasons stated above.

Whiteford Township (Owner: Miller, H. & J.)
The property consists of a parcel totaling approximately 14.12 acres in size. It is located on the south side of Consear Road west of Whiteford Center Road.

Recommendation: That the Monroe County Planning Commission approve this application for inclusion in the Farmland and Open Space Preservation Program because it is consistent with the intentions of Part 361 of Public Act 451 of 1994 (more commonly known as PA 116), and for the reasons stated above.

AMENDMENTS TO THE AGENDA

TOWNSHIP ZONING REVIEWS

Frenchtown Charter Township (text)
Frenchtown Charter Township is proposing to amend Article 4.0, Section 4.45 of its Zoning Ordinance. These amendments address accessory structures within the Ordinance.

Recommendation: That the Monroe County Planning Commission advise the Frenchtown Charter Township Board that it recommends approval of the proposed amendments for the reasons stated in Staff’s report.

Frenchtown Charter Township (map)
This is an official request to change the zoning on a parcel totaling approximately 0.92 acres from R-3-A, Multiple Family Residential District to C-2, General Commercial District. The purpose of the proposed rezoning is to develop the property into a swimming pool service and retail business establishment. The site is located on the west side of North Monroe Street (M-125) north of Mall Road at the intersection with Santure Road.

Recommendation: That the Monroe County Planning Commission advise the Frenchtown Charter Township Board that it recommends denial of the proposed zoning change request, as the rezoning is not in agreement with the Monroe County Comprehensive Plan and is in the vicinity of incompatible single-family residential uses, and for the other reasons stated above.

London Township (text)
London Township is proposing to add Section 5.605.5 to its Zoning Ordinance and to amend Article 12 of its Ordinance. These amendments address small ponds and procedures and standards within the Township.
Recommendation: That the Monroe County Planning Commission advise the London Township Board that it should review the proposed amendment to Article 12 regarding amendments to the Zoning Ordinance, but recommends approval of the other proposed amendments for the reasons stated above.

200.1-4-19-10 Whiteford Township (map)
This is an official request to change the zoning on two 3.2 acre parcels acres from AG, Agricultural District to R-1, Single Family Rural Residential District. The purpose of the proposed rezoning is to sell the parcels so that houses can be built. The site is located on the south side of Erie Road between Whiteford Center Road and the dead end at U.S. 23.

Recommendation: That the Monroe County Planning Commission advise the Whiteford Township Board that it recommends approval of the proposed zoning change request, as the rezoning is in agreement with residential land uses to the north and east and preserves a majority of the site as agricultural land, and for the other reasons stated above.

Motion by Mr. Brant, supported by Mrs. Curley, to approve the items on the Consent Agenda as proposed by Staff.

MOTION CARRIED

B. 2018 Annual Report – Mr. McBee stated that the Annual Report follows the same format that we have been following for several years now. Chairman Brooks asked if anybody had any questions regarding the Annual Report. Mrs. Mentel stated that the Report is very detailed. Mr. Simmons stated that the Report format was created originally by Lee Markham, and that he has just updates the Report with current information on a yearly basis.

Motion by Dr. Miller, supported by Mrs. Mentel, to accept the Annual Report.

MOTION CARRIED

C. 2018 Building Activities Report – Mr. Simmons stated that the building numbers for 2018 are on Page 88 of the agenda. He stated that there were 284 single family units constructed in 2018. He stated that this is down from 2017, when the number was 326 permits. He stated that the average value for a new single-family home has increased by quite a bit, though. Mr. Simmons went over the numbers briefly for the other categories of new construction.

Dr. Miller asked about projections regarding population growth in the County. Mr. Simmons stated that SEMCOG does regular population growth projections. He stated that population growth is supposed to be pretty flat, but that certain parts of the County have been declining such as in Monroe, but that others have been growing slightly such as Bedford Township. He pointed out that there are more empty nest situations, so the number of houses may be increasing somewhat, but there are fewer people living in these houses. Mr. Moore stated he just did a presentation on this topic for the BDC and that growth is projected at 0.5% for 2020. He stated that Bedford Township, Frenchtown Charter Township and the Village of Estral Beach have had the greatest growth and percentage of growth.

Motion by Dr. Miller, supported by Mrs. Curley, to accept the 2018 Building Activities Report.

MOTION CARRIED

9. Budget & Finance
   A. March Finance Reports – Mr. McBee stated that at this point we should be at 25% for the year and we are at 22.31%, so we are under budget at the moment.
10. Committee Member's/Director's Report:
   A. Lake Erie Transit Commissioner Report – Dr. Miller stated that business is good and is up by about 5%. He stated that this is directly connected to how much gasoline costs. He stated that they are moving forward towards setting up their waiting station in Monroe City Hall. He stated that the agreement has been concluded and that it has been sent on to SMART. He stated that he will inform the Commission soon of the date when the station is expected to be open. He stated that in the station there will be information on a digital screen of where the buses are. Dr. Miller stated that they have added another bus that they acquired through grant money, that there are currently 10 hybrid buses, and that they are doing their part to reduce emissions and pollution.

   Mr. Brant asked if LET is exempt from gasoline taxes and so will not be affected by the proposed increase in the gasoline tax. Dr. Miller stated that they are exempt. Mr. Moore asked for more information about the link between gas prices going up and bus ridership. Dr. Miller stated that when gasoline prices go up it takes more of the income of people in the middle or lower middle class, and that they are more willing to use the bus to get to places for certain activities. He stated that there have been increases for all three of the areas in which they operate, and they are trying to add more communities. He stated that they would like to work something out with the community college so they can offer more services to the college. Mr. Sperling stated that LET did a good job handing out safety vests to riders who needed them. Dr. Miller explained to the Commission how this program works.

   B. Monroe County Parks and Recreation Commission Update – Mrs. Mentel stated that they are trying to coordinate a prairie management plan for West County Park with the assistance of the National Park Service. She stated that out in Vienna Park that they will be installing a new dugout for baseball. She stated that they are also coordinating in funding and in-kind work with Black Swamp Disc Golf Group for the disc golf program at Vienna Park in order to replace the baskets on the course. She mentioned that they have many more baseball tournaments now at Vienna Park.

11. Other Items from Members
   A. Mr. Sperling asked about whether the quorum would change if the Board of Commissioners changed the number of members on the Planning Commission, and asked what the quorum is now. He was informed by several Commissioners that the quorum is six. Mr. Brant stated that this would be changed.

   B. Dr. Miller congratulated the members of the Planning Commission for working through its differing points of view and attempting to come up with a compromise regarding the existence of the Planning Commission.

12. Next Meeting is scheduled for May 8, 2019 at 7:00 p.m.

13. Adjournment: Motion by Mr. Brant, supported by Mrs. Curley, to adjourn the meeting.

   MOTION CARRIED

   The meeting concluded at 8:30 p.m.

   MEETING ADJOURNED

:rnds