

HARTLAND TOWNSHIP PLANNING COMMISSION SPECIAL MEETING
JUNE 16, 2005-TOWNSHIP HALL-7:00 P.M.

1. CALL TO ORDER- The meeting was called to order by Chairman Fox.

2. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

3. ROLL CALL- Members present: Chairman Fox, Commissioner Rataj, Commissioner Bickel, Commissioner Hopkins, and Commissioner Germane. Absent: Commissioner Kalenauskas.

4. CALL TO THE PUBLIC

5. INTRODUCTION OF INVITED SPEAKERS

Commissioner Germane welcomed everyone to the Woodlands/Tree Ordinance Educational Session. The objective of the session is to educate the general public, the Planning Commission, and the Township Board members on topics associated with trees and woodlands ordinances. Commissioner Germane recognized the fact that the Hartland Township ordinance is not as detailed as it could be in protecting our natural resources such as woodlands, wetlands, steep slopes, and riparian areas. The Natural Features(NF) Committee members include: Commissioner Bickel, Commissioner Germane, Planner Barb, and resident Eleanor Conway. The committee is eager to learn more about woodlands ordinances and seek input before recommending changes to the Hartland Township ordinance. The NF Committee has decided to focus on the protection of the woodlands because all other natural features are directly or indirectly related to the woodlands. Steps taken by the NF Committee in preparation for adopting a Woodlands Ordinance are: collecting other Township's Woodland and Tree Ordinances, seeking public opinion via survey that has recently been distributed to township residents, and writing a draft which is expected to be complete in August of 2005. Invited speakers include: Mike Gaden, Natural Resources Educator - MSU Extension, Dan Swallow- Van Buren Township Environmental Director, Mike Homier, Attorney, Foster, Swift & Collins, and Beth Duman, Wild Corner, Howell, MI. Attorney Mike Homier could not be at this presentation but will be happy to make a presentation at a later date. *Commissioner Bickel* gave an overview of the Natural Features survey that was distributed earlier. She stated that 147 surveys were returned; it reinforces public interest in protecting our natural resources. The average ranking of Natural Features in order of importance for protection according to the survey are: 1. Woodlands tied to wetlands. 2. Fragile waterways. 3. Animal habitat. 4. Storm water runoff. 5. Shoreline. 6. Steep slopes. 7. Rural character.

6. PRESENTATIONS BY INVITED SPEAKERS

Mike Gadin- Positive Benefits of Trees and Woodlands- a look at the scientific benefits of trees and inter-relationships between trees and water quality. The 10 reasons we need trees: 1. Trees help purify the air by absorbing pollutants. 2. Increase property values and improve the tax base. 3. Improve neighborhood appeal, attracting businesses, shoppers,

and homeowners 4. Cool our cities by reducing heat generated by buildings and paved surfaces. 5. Tree shade can save an average household up to \$250 annually in energy costs. 6. reduce amount of pollutants in sewer systems. 7. Make urban environments more pleasant. 8. Provide habitat for birds and other wildlife, maintaining a balance with nature. 9. Reduce the amount of water-borne pollutants that streams and rivers. 10. Reduce levels of domestic violence and foster a more sociable neighborhood environment. *Mr. Gadin* stressed the importance of effective woodland management which includes: Promoting conservation, restricting tree removal, human assisted regeneration, and giving priority to natural standings or groups of trees.

Dan Swallow- Township Successes with Tree Ordinances- the benefits and pitfalls of a woodland ordinance. The Van Buren Tree ordinance makes it mandatory that developers include on their survey any tree that is 5 inches or more in diameter. They must also identify the species, the condition of each tree, and whether they wish to save or remove them. Every tree of 5 inches or more in diameter that is removed must be replaced. It is a 1 to 1 ratio with a minimum of 2 to 3 inches. The advantages of the ordinance are the cash incentives for developers to preserve trees, keeps a more rural appearance, increases property values, works well with open space or cluster development ordinances. The pitfalls of the ordinance are that there is no minimum preservation requirement, there are loopholes that the developer can get around, there is no additional incentives for saving larger, or landmark trees, and the ordinance does not protect the trees after the development is complete.

Jim Ludwig- How Woodland Ordinances can be Beneficial to Balanced Land Use Planning- Perspectives of woodland ordinances from a professional planning consultant and licensed landscape architect. Different ways to regulate trees: Woodland Ordinance which includes the ecosystem as a whole, and a Tree Ordinance which includes regulating landmark trees, regulate removal of a certain size, requiring replacements, payment to a tree fund, planting on public property. Using these regulations as a planning tool promotes a quality development and offers desirable options for lot layout and size to encourage preservation. The cost of replacements will be an incentive. In order for the ordinance to be effective, the preliminary site plan should include: preliminary grading, a detailed tree survey, and a preliminary woodland plan. The final site plan should include confirmation of all of the requirements and a cost estimate. *Mr. Ludwig* stressed the importance of regulation. As examples, he used pictures of developments in which the area was not regulated and in turn the woodlands were destroyed. He also used pictures of developments where regulatory measures had been taken, in which the woodlands were still flourishing.

Beth Duman- Practical Applications of Individual Environmental Stewardship- examples from Livingston County of how individual landowners, regardless of the existence of a woodland ordinance, can beautify their land and benefit our local environment. Mrs. Duman is a member of the Wild Corner, a non-profit organization that promotes increasing natural areas and habitat restoration. By raising public awareness of wildlife habitat, the Wild corner encourages homeowners to add plants that are native to the area

and retain part of their property as an unmown wildlife area. They discourage the use of chemical herbicides, fertilizers and pesticides. Creating wildlife areas encourage a more park-like setting throughout neighborhoods, reduces the amount of run-off and flooding, and encourages more birds, butterflies, and wildlife.

7. CLOSING STATEMENTS

The main concerns of the audience were: Protecting native trees less than five inches in diameter, and protecting individual property owner rights.

8. ADJOURNMENT

Commissioner Germane thanked everyone for coming and joining in the learning process. Adjourned at 9:40 P.M.