

**PRAIRIE TOWNSHIP ZONING COMMISSION
MINUTES OF DECEMBER 18, 2007 MEETING**

Members Present: Howard Balzer, Christopher Finn, Glen Hymer, Hulda Moffitt, and Judy Stalter

Members Absent: None

Others Present: Connie Swisher, Zoning Inspector; Dana Scott, Zoning Clerk; and Pam Williams, Township resident; Bruce Whyte, Big Darby Accord Advisory Panel member (appointed by Prairie Township)

Call to Order: The meeting was called to order by Howard Balzer, Chairman, at 7:00 p.m.

Meeting Minutes:

Mr. Balzer asked for a motion to approve as written or as corrected the October 30, 2007 Zoning Commission Meeting Minutes.

Ms. Stalter referenced the last paragraph on page 5 and questioned the word “old” being used to describe the Frisch’s site. Ms. Swisher responded that she was talking about the current location of Frisch’s on West Broad Street.

Ms. Stalter made a motion to delete the word “old” before “Frisch’s” and approve the November 27, 2007 minutes as so corrected. Mr. Finn seconded the motion.

Roll call as follows:

Christopher Finn	Aye
Glen Hymer	Aye
Hulda Moffitt	Aye
Judy Stalter	Aye
Howard Balzer	Aye

The motion was approved unanimously.

Old Business: None

New Business:

Chairman Balzer announced that this public meeting was being held to conduct the following new business:

To revise the current Prairie Township Comprehensive Plan and to incorporate into the Plan land use development and planning provisions, principals and policies relating to the Darby Accord, the Town Center Development, the Broad Street Corridor, In-Fill/Redevelopment projects and future Conservation Development. The text entitled “Prairie Township 2007 Comprehensive Plan Update” contains all the revisions proposed to the Township’s current Plan and, if adopted, constitutes the updated and standalone comprehensive land use plan for Prairie Township.

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Mr. Balzer inquired if any person in attendance wanted to speak before the Zoning Commission about the update to the Comprehensive Plan.

Connie Swisher, Township Zoning Inspector, requested time to be heard. She asked Mr. Balzer if it was necessary for her to be sworn in before speaking. He responded that in his judgment swearing in, which was a requirement in a public *hearing*, was not so in a public *meeting*,

PRAIRIE TOWNSHIP 2007 COMPREHENSIVE PLAN UPDATE

Ms. Swisher asked attendees to direct their attention to the wall upon which she was projecting a computerized presentation (Microsoft PowerPoint) about the update to the Comprehensive Plan.

She stated that priority issues which influenced changes to the Township's general plan were:

1. Darby Accord Policies, Map and Mission Statement
2. Town Center Development Plan
3. West Broad Street Corridor Objective
4. Future Conservation Development
5. High Quality In-Fill/Redevelopment Projects

Modifications to Community Character & Land Use Policies

Ms. Swisher said that the 2003 version of the Plan called for two possible growth scenarios. Basically the Township was split down the middle by the Watershed. It was projected that higher-density development would occur in the eastern portion of the Township—with the exception of three subdivisions: Lake Darby Estates, West Point, and Village Park—and that rural-density growth would occur in the western part. Thus, it was anticipated that most of the area west of the Hellbranch would remain agricultural.

In the updated Plan, there are three development scenarios:

- | | |
|-----------------------------|---|
| 1. Eastern Prairie Township | Existing Urbanized: Quality In-Fill/Redevelopment |
| 2. Central Prairie Township | Proposed Town Center Development ¹ |
| 3. Western Prairie Township | Rural & Conservation Development |

Establishment of Conservation District & Riparian Setbacks

In order to satisfy land use and development policies in the Darby Accord, and to be in consensus with our Accord partners, Prairie Township needs to finalize in-progress drafts pertaining to establishing a Conservation District that provides riparian corridor protection. The Township must establish within its zoning code stream setbacks that provide reasonable and enforceable controls governing structures and uses within riparian setbacks along watercourses in the Big Darby Creek Watershed for portions of the Big Darby Accord planning area that fall within Prairie Township.

Big Darby Accord Advisory Panel

¹ The proposed location is generally north of West Broad Street (U.S. 40), south of I-70, east of Hubbard Road, and west of Hellbranch Run in Prairie and Brown Townships.

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On October 9, 2007, the Big Darby Accord Advisory Panel recommended approval of the 2007 Comprehensive Plan Update. The Advisory Panel did not issue any stipulations; however, it recommended that the words “package plants” be removed from page 20 (left column, first paragraph under the *Services* heading).

The Zoning Commission approved the deletion of “package plants” on page 20 of the Plan at its meeting on October 30, 2007.

Franklin County Planning Commission

On December 12, 2007, the Franklin County Planning Commission² recommended approval of the 2007 Prairie Township Comprehensive with two recommendations. Recommendations are as follows:

1. Update the riparian corridor calculations on page 34 to reflect the equation listed in Appendix 9-3 of the Ohio EPA State Water Quality Management (§208) Plan³ in order to comply with the Ohio EPA and the Big Darby Accord.

The Big Darby Accord included EPA calculations that were in draft form at the time of the Accord’s publication. After the Big Darby Accord was completed, the Ohio EPA issued the final calculations. The draft EPA calculations appear in Prairie Township’s Comprehensive Plan.

2. Remove the language regarding the LESA⁴ model on page 37.

In past years Franklin County planned on leading a LESA process to assess environmentally critical areas. As a result of larger, more comprehensive environmental assessment efforts, the County is no longer pursuing this.

Ms. Swisher informed the Zoning Commission that the County Planning Commission, which is a sizeable panel, commended Prairie Township on its Comprehensive Plan.

Ms. Stalter, speaking for the Zoning Commission, thanked Connie Swisher and Bruce Whyte, a former member of the Commission, for their professional input and long hours of hard work dedicated to producing the update to the Comprehensive Plan. She also extended appreciation to Tracy Hatmaker, Township Administrator, for his help with the project.

Discussion about Recommendations

- LESA

“Soil Policies” on page 37 are included under *Environment Policies* in the Comprehensive Plan. One of the soil policies, entitled “LESA Model”, is as follows:

Participate in completing the Franklin County LESA model as a tool for assessing environment critical areas.

² Case PRAIR-07-08, prepared by Ben Weiner, Franklin County planner.

³ Refer to last page of minutes for excerpt from Appendix 9-3.

⁴ LESA: Land Evaluation and Site Assessment; it is a system that helps state and local officials make sound decisions about land use. It is made available through the Natural Resources Conservation Service, United States Department of Agriculture.

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Action: Participate in efforts to formulate the LESA model and incorporate the model into planning and site development analysis.

Ms. Swisher explained that LESA might have been included in the 2003 Plan because at the time Franklin County planned on leading a LESA project, and the system was available. Also, the Township did not have access to GIS. In the years since, the Graphic Information System (GIS)⁵ has become the standard for obtaining geographically referenced information. Currently the Township consistently uses GIS, which is a comprehensive information resource.

Even though the Township wholeheartedly endorses GIS, Ms. Swisher said that she did not have a compelling reason for removing the language about LESA. She told Commission members that she thought whether to retain or remove LESA from the Plan was a discretionary matter. Ms. Swisher said that leaving LESA in the Plan does not prohibit using GIS; and in the event the GIS system goes down, Township staff will probably use LESA.

- Riparian Corridor Calculations

Zoning Commission members readily agreed that the riparian corridor calculations should be changed so as to be in compliance with the Ohio EPA and the Big Darby Accord Watershed Master Plan.

Ms. Swisher stated that in order for the Township to enforce the EPA riparian setback regulations, they must be included in law, namely, the Prairie Township Zoning Resolution. However, amended Article 21 (Big Darby Creek Critical Resource Protection District) has not been approved. In addition, amended Section 650 (Franklin Soil & Water Conservation District) in the Franklin County Zoning Resolution, upon which Article 21 is modeled, has not been approved. Therefore, the calculations, as well as other portions of the text, are potentially subject to change.

Because it is law, Mr. Finn said that he thought it was important for the calculations to appear in the Township Zoning Resolution; however, he also supported them being in the Comprehensive Plan so that a reader does not have to go to a second document to determine what they are.

In order to effect enforcement of the EPA regulations, Ms. Williams suggested adding “pursuant to Article 21 of the Prairie Township Zoning Resolution” on page 34 of the Comprehensive Plan.

Motion to Approve Prairie Township 2007 Comprehensive Plan Update

There being no further discussion....

Chairman Howard Balzer made a motion to recommend approval of the proposed revision to the Prairie Township Comprehensive Plan, which revision is reflected in the Text entitled “Prairie Township 2007 Comprehensive Plan Update” and would, if adopted, constitute the updated and standalone comprehensive land use plan for Prairie Township; and further to

⁵ GIS is a collection of computer hardware, software, and geographic data for capturing, managing, analyzing, and displaying all forms of geographically referenced information. Reference: www.gis.com.

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accept the Franklin County staff recommendation to update the riparian corridor calculations on page 34 to reflect the equation listed in Appendix 9-3 of the Ohio EPA State Water Quality Management (§208) Plan; and to add on page 34 *Riparian corridor calculations will be enforced pursuant to Article 21 of the Prairie Township Zoning Resolution*; and to reject the Franklin County staff recommendation to remove LESA model text on page 37.

Judith Stalter seconded the motion.

Roll call as follows:

Christopher Finn	Aye
Glen Hymer	Aye
Hulda Moffitt	Aye
Judy Stalter	Aye
Howard Balzer	Aye

The motion was approved unanimously.

Next Meeting:

Mr. Balzer announced that the next meeting of the Prairie Township Zoning Commission would be Tuesday, January 22, 2008, at 3:00 p.m. at the Township Hall, 23 Maple Drive.

There being no further business, Mr. Balzer adjourned the meeting at 8:15 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Hulda Moffitt, Secretary
Prairie Township Zoning Commission

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RESOURCE:

Appendix 9-3
208 Plan Prescriptions for
Water Quality Protection within the Big Darby Creek Watershed
Applicable to portions of:
Champaign County
Franklin County
Logan County
Madison County
Pickaway County
Union County

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2b Size of the Setback Distance – The local zoning regulation applicable in western Franklin County should be, at a minimum, delineate stream setback distance using one of the following three methods:

1. The setback distance from the centerline of the stream shall be sized as the greater of the following:
 - a. the regulatory 100 year flood plain (based on FEMA mapping);
 - b. a minimum of 100 feet (on each side); or
 - c. the distance calculated using the following equation:

$$W = 133DA^{0.43}$$

where:

DA = drainage area (mi²)

W = total width of buffer (ft)

W should be divided by two (2) in order to calculate the setback for each side of the stream.