



ACME TOWNSHIP
NEW URBANISM CITIZENS ADVISORY COMMITTEE
Tuesday, January 31, 2006, 9:30 a.m.
Acme Township Hall
6042 Acme Road, Williamsburg MI 49690,

Meeting called to Order at 9:45 a.m.

Members present: Krakow, M & Lori Craig (Co-Chairs), D. Krause, D. Rohn N. Veliquette

Ex-Officio Members present: Andres, Sr., Andres, Jr., P. Brink, L. Bussa, L. Grant

Staff present: S. Corpe, Township Manager/Recording Secretary

Krakow stated that he hopes politics is not being put before what's best for the community. Regardless, the group will do its job and each person will work according to their integrity. It was made public that this would be done cooperatively. To this point he has done his best to keep the committee going, but he is uncertain if there is an attempt to stall the process going on. He would like to have a frank discussion about what the committee's obligation is from this point forward. Obviously the advisory is to provide a recommendation to the Board of Trustees.

Bussa asked if Krakow was asked to stall the process; Krakow said that it has not been done verbally but has been communicated to him in other non-verbal ways.

Krause felt that a "pretty low blow" was made at the Planning Commission meeting last night when Scott Nowakowski, Tim Stoepker, and Jim Goss made a point of coming up to him and Krakow and saying that "you realize we are not going to do anything until the court proceedings/mediation are concluded." Krause stated that he realizes fully what their conditions are and why they must do what they must do; he does not understand given this why they have strung the group along for four months and made us think that they would participate. Krause feels we should proceed to make a selection and present it to the Board. Rather than keeping 3 property owners hanging, if one chooses to accept the consequences of not participating that is their responsibility.

Rohn had a discussion with Steve Smith yesterday wherein Smith stated that Goss does not represent his decision in this process. She felt she and the group were led to believe that Goss did have the authority to represent that landowner, and asked if anybody had a different take on the situation. Krause said that Goss has stated that he was representing the VGT interest. Rohn hopes that the process will proceed as well and has the highest hopes for the process.

Krakow realizes that the Andres family, Dr. Johnson and others have a big stake in this process. Right now he is very upset that a group of people came together for the good of the community and have been treated in this manner. He said that Grant has no direct stake in the situation but has invested much of his time and effort. The group has been on the "up and up" the whole time, and no member present has done anything "on the side" or with ill will.

Krakow asked Grant what he thinks about the position the group finds itself in. Grant said that the advisory has a task to complete and must move forward. All three interviewed firms have spent at least \$10,000 - \$15,000 to get to this point, and the two that will ultimately be unsuccessful should be notified as soon as possible and allowed to move on. Krakow asked Grant how he has perceived the process to date. Grant asked how the evaluation will be performed, feeling that only the core five members of the advisory should vote, subject to input from the ex officio membership. Krakow stated that this issue is something that has come up over the past 24 hours and that the ex officio members

were present so that they could have input into the process. Grant noted that it would be foolish to choose a candidate who a major landowner in the project area could not support. If the major landowners felt neutral about all three, there would be no weighting from them. Grant noted that Goss was present at all three interviews, he had the opportunity to ask questions if he wished, and what he thought of the applicants was very evident from his body language. Krause felt that it was very clear that Goss was receiving feedback from the rest of his group by the things he would say at subsequent meetings. Grant feels the advisory has worked more efficiently than any other group he has witnessed who are engaged in a similar endeavor.

Krakov asked if Grant perceives, as he does, that a protest is being conducted against the advisory; Grant was unable to offer an opinion. Grant, Rohn and Krakow all advocate staying on task. Rohn is very excited that three excellent firms were attracted and that the properties were so exciting to them.

Grant asked if the members of the advisory each have a leading candidate in mind. Veliquette did not, Rohn is torn between two, and Krause has a clear favorite. Grant mentioned that it is a good idea to guard against the tendency to have the 1st interviewee remain most clearly in mind.

Bussa had hoped before he left that Dr. Johnson would be able to be personally involved while he was gone. He feels that the three firms interviewed are all of the highest caliber and that any three can do the job. It will be a difficult job. He did have a favorite at one time, but as an ex officio member he would accept any of the three and do his best to persuade Dr. Johnson similarly. We are trying to do our best for the township, and he believes that in the end this will be commonly understood. He feels the end product will be embraced by the community. There will be difficulties with the people who have invested a large sum of cash with the hope of a large return from building a town center. If they do not succeed they will be very upset. He does not believe the township can impose a plan upon them, but that they must come to embrace it themselves. Bussa will do whatever he can to make the plan become a reality.

Krakov felt that all three firms were “fabulous” but had their own niches. It was his hope that this would be perceived by the landowners and those small differences would become the determining factor. Each candidate had different thoughts and perceptions about the site and the people. He was fortunate enough to drive each candidate back to the airport and hear their questions. All of them were asking the same questions, mainly in terms of whether they brought something new to the community.

Bussa said he spoke to Goss last night. Goss said he had attended each meeting, and expressed a preference for RTKL. It seems they may have worked together before, and he may believe that firm can bring retail resources to the table more than others. Krakow agreed, noting that RTKL has worked with Anderson, which was the firm that developed Eastwood Towne Centre in Lansing. This is one important factor for the advisory to keep in mind.

Andres, Jr. stated that sometimes he agrees with the VGT’s position and sometimes not. He said he is very close to them and can get their ear. Andres feels that what has been said this morning is very disrespectful to them, and that some of the issues being discussed this morning are concerns he raised at the outset of the process. He noted that the Board has required that a majority of the landowners involved must be on board or a recommendation should not be brought forward. It is his contention that the VGT has essentially cast a “no” vote for the process, so it must stop at this point. Krakow feels it would have been more professional for them to say that none of the firms seemed conducive to their interests rather than disrespecting the advisory.

Andres felt that there were some pointed questions addressed to the applicants. He felt this was demonstrated by Senen Antonio yesterday, who said they would work with the township and the

landowners. They mentioned that they would hold public charrettes, but in Andres opinion due to the way it was phrased this is only to make the public feel like their opinion matters.

Krakov feels strongly that if the VGT never had any intention of participating they should have said so at the outset and not strung the advisory along.

Andres, Sr. feels that the lack of presence from the VGT should not be construed as an action against this advisory. He stated that he tried unsuccessfully for 7 years to come before the Township Board with a rezoning request for his property. He tried to guarantee that he would prevent undesirable types of development on the site. He never got beyond the Planning Commission. He feels that this is really the VGT and Meijer making the point that without them the project won't get paid for. He would like CCAT, the township and the landowners to sit down together to sketch out what everyone would like or not like. Rohn disagreed with the idea that there is no way to pay for the project without assistance from those two landowners.

Krause stated that he does take it personally and feels he was "lead by the nose" through this. Speaking directly to VGT, he feels there has been ample opportunity for them over the past four months to say that they were unable or unwilling to come to a decision at the end of the process. The group has spent a lot of time.

Krakov stated that nobody has ever made a verbal commitment regarding who would pay for the project. Rohn observed that at every meeting the group's search for grant funding was discussed. Craig noted that it was never this advisory's task to address funding, yet they are trying to help in this regard anyway.

Grant said that Andres Sr. mentioned that Andres Jr. has offered to create a mutually agreeable design. He does not discount this as an option.

Krakov stated that the advisory's thoughts are now clearly on the public record. He does not feel that it would be advisable to proceed with deliberation about the firms today, and proposed another meeting to make the final selection for recommendation to the Board. A recommendation will be made. He hopes that all of the landowners with a vested interest will choose to attend and participate constructively in the process. The next meeting will be their second opportunity, today originally having been the first, and if they choose not to take the opportunity that is their choice. Craig asked how their absence might be construed, either as a yes or no. The group didn't feel it could be construed either way. Veliquette stated that their absence will affect his choice of firms, as one of his leading criteria was availability. The process has been on a fast track to date so he was factoring in who would be available soonest, but if the process may proceed at a slower pace from here on out it may well change his choice. Rohn is interested to hear other people's thoughts and see if they impact her own.

Krakov asked if the advisory wants to request a special meeting of the Board within the month of February to allow time past next Tuesday to try to build some level of productive communication with the VGT and Meijer. He would generally prefer to stick to the deadline, but perhaps a small amount of extra time is needed under the circumstances. Veliquette felt this might be advisable. Rohn is uncertain what could be gained by prolonging the process, as the absent parties are well aware of the timeline and the interviews are fresh in everyone's minds. Krause does not feel that the advisory can reasonably expect the missing groups to return to the table, but Krakow still feels that allowing them another opportunity couldn't hurt. Kurtz stated no concerns with scheduling a special meeting, as this is an issue of key importance.

Andres Sr. suggested that as the advisory considers who will be selected, perhaps today they could narrow the field from 3 to 2 to allow more consideration time for the remaining 2. Krakow and Rohn must leave, so there is no time today.

Meeting adjourned at 10:54 p.m.