

Wabedo Township Planning Commission
Duties and Responsibilities
September 16, 2003

The Wabedo Township Planning Commission presently consists of six members who are appointed by the Wabedo Township Board of Supervisors. The bylaws require that three of the members be full-time residents of the township, while the other three members are part-time residents. The Planning Commission is advisory to the Board of Supervisors and serves at their direction. The Planning Commission generally meets nine times a year from March through November. However, additionally this year we will meet in December and next year we will meet in January and February also in order to work on updating the Comprehensive Plan for the Township.

The Planning Commission was originally established in 1997 and their initial assignment was to write the Comprehensive Plan for the Township. The Board of Supervisors approved this plan in May 1998. After approval of the plan the planners began to look at requests for variances and conditional use permits that come through the County. The planners research the requests and determine if they meet the requirements of the plan. They then share their findings with the County governing body.

The process for reviewing variances and conditional use permits works in the following way. The Cass County Board of Adjustment handles requests for variance. The Cass County Planning Commission handles requests for conditional use permits and land reclassifications. Members of these county boards make site visits to each and every one of the requests. Wabedo Township sends two members of its Planning Commission to meet the county members at each and every site visit. At these site visits our planners interact with the county members and defend and explain the township positions. The next step is for the township planners who did the site visit to bring the decision back to the full Planning Commission, who then agree on a decision. That decision is brought to the Board of Supervisors for their final decision. At least one of the Wabedo planners then attends the County public hearing on the variance, conditional use permit or land reclassification, bringing to the meeting the decision of the Wabedo Town Board of Supervisors. Occasionally a letter may be written to the county in lieu of attendance at their public meeting.

Wabedo Township's purpose in attending these site visits and county public meetings is to make sure that the proposed variance of change does not go against the township Comprehensive Plan. This is to ensure that Wabedo Township continues to develop in the direction that the residents want it to develop. This method has worked surprisingly well. Wabedo Township Planners have developed a good working relationship with the County Planners and Board of Adjustment members. The County people look to Wabedo people for input on the issues in the township.

There have been a couple of other areas where the Wabedo Planning Commission has been involved. One of these is in land transfers. The other is where the Planning Commission wrote up the guidelines for the township to take over a private road to become a township road. Planners will assist and support the Board of Supervisors in any way that they can.

The final duty of the Wabedo planner, at least for the next several months, is to do research and to help rewrite the Comprehensive plan for the township. The goal is to have the plan rewritten so that it can be approved at the annual meeting in March of 2004.

In summary, the general duties of the township planner for Wabedo Township are as follows:

- ⑤ Attend and participate in regular monthly meetings
- ⑤ Attend site visits with the County Board of Adjustment and County Planning people, as required.
- ⑤ Research variances, conditional use permits and land reclassification requests to determine if they meet the Comprehensive Plan of the Township.
- ⑤ Attend County Board of Adjustment and/or County Planning Commission meetings as required.
- ⑤ Attend and participate in any special meetings or any special hearings run by the township Planning Commission.
- ⑤ Help in researching and rewriting the township Comprehensive Plan.

Now that the general duties of a planning commission member have been spelled out, what are the qualities that a planner should possess? A planner must be able to interact successfully with a wide variety of people such as residents, County employees, developers, and with other planners. A planner must be able to read and interpret county ordinances and platting maps. A planner should be able to speak up at public meetings, such as the monthly planning meetings and the various county meetings. A planner needs to be able to make decisions that will be for the future good of the township. A planner must support the vision for the township as spelled out in the comprehensive plan, as the plan reflects the vision of the residents of the township.

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