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June 6, 2018

Wexford Joint Planning Commission
c/o Cherry Grove Township
4830 E. M-55 Highway
Cadillac, MI 49601

RE: Master Plan Audit, Wexford Joint Planning Commission, Wexford County, Michigan.

Dear Wexford Joint Planning Commission,

Per your request, we have reviewed the Wexford Joint Planning Commission (WJPC) Master Plan and Fact Book¹ and provide this audit of the Wexford Joint Master Plan (WJ Master Plan). This WJ Master Plan audit is intended to: 1) identify Michigan planning and zoning legal requirements since WJPC adoption the Wexford County 2004 Comprehensive Plan;² 2) outline recommended planning practices for Master Plan update; and 3) provide additional recommendations for Master Plan update. This audit report is based on the requirements of the Michigan Planning Enabling Act, P.A. 33 of 2008, as amended, the Michigan Zoning Enabling Act, P.A. 110 of 2006, as amended, and recommended practices for good community planning process.

The geographic area covered by the existing WJ Master Plan and Fact Book covers sixteen (16) townships, two cities, and three incorporated villages. Of course, an updated WJ Master Plan, especially Ch. E1: County Wide Goals, Ch. E2: Government Cooperation, and Ch. F1: Future Land Use Map(s), should be limited to WJPC member townships.³

¹ A.k.a. Wexford County Comprehensive Plan, May 19, 2004, and Fact Book for the Development of the Wexford County Plan, 2002.

² With respect to the WJPC jurisdiction, in the fall of 2016 the WJPC carried forward the Wexford County Comprehensive Plan until such time that an updated WJ Master Plan is adopted.

³ The WJPC is comprised of eleven (11) townships including Antioch, Boon, Cherry Grove, Greenwood, Hanover, Liberty, Selma, Slagle, South Branch, Springville, and Wexford Townships.

A. LEGAL UPDATES (REQUIRED UPDATES)

- 1) **Zoning Plan.** The Michigan Planning Enabling and Michigan Zoning Enabling Acts⁴ currently require a master plan for communities that adopt a zoning ordinance to include a “zoning plan.” The zoning plan identifies a community’s zoning districts and their purposes, as well as the basic standards or “schedule of regulations” proposed to control the height, area, bulk, location, and use of buildings and parcels in the Township. The zoning plan must also consider the likely zoning designation of transition zones between zoning districts. This section of the Plan must relate these and other Master Plan recommendations to specific regulations within the Wexford Joint Zoning Ordinance. The zoning plan must be based on an inventory of current conditions relevant to Wexford Joint zoning, and the purposes for which zoning was adopted. *The existing WJ Master Plan does not possess a current zoning plan and relies on a composite zoning map dated April 4, 2002⁵, and must be amended to include such. A DRAFT zoning plan for the WJ Master Plan was prepared in December of 2016, and should be considered by the WJPC and included in Master Plan update as soon as practicable.*
- 2) **Economic Development Plan⁶/Placemaking.** Public policy currently embraced by community Master Plans focuses on economic development, new/global economy and new/emerging technologies. “Placemaking” is highly recommended as an important tool for planning for future community economic development. Placemaking is an approach to economic development planning that often results in the revision of zoning techniques to consider and plan for the “old” and “new” economies within a community and its region. The overarching goal is to retain businesses that a community now possesses, i.e., the “old economy,” and to plan for and remove barriers to emerging businesses and industries, i.e., the “new” economy.” Past economic development strategy was often focused on attracting new businesses and companies,

⁴ Michigan Planning Enabling Act, P.A. 33 of 2008, as amended, Section 33(2)(d), M.C.L. 125.3833(2) (d), requires that a Master Plan serve as the basis for the zoning plan, and the Michigan Zoning Enabling Act, P.A. 33 of 2008, as amended, Section 305, M.C.L. 125.3305, requires a zoning plan be prepared as the basis for the zoning ordinance. This requirement must be in any plan adopted or amended after September 1, 2008.

⁵ See 2004 Master Plan, Chapters F2: Industrial, F3: Commercial, F4: Office Service, F5: Resort, F6: Residential, F7: Rural Residential, F8: Agricultural-Forest Production, F9: Special and Unique Areas, F10: Transition Areas, F11: Zoning Plan Update, G1: Environmental Protection, G2: Ground and Surface Water Protection, G3: Recycling, Soil and Hazardous Waste, H1: Economic Development, H2: Tourism, I1: Human Services, I2: Housing, J1: Transportation, J2: Recreation, J3: Water and Sewer; and Composite Zoning Map, page 359.

⁶ Michigan Planning Enabling Act, P.A. 33 of 2008, as amended, Section 33(2)(d), M.C.L. 125.3833(2) (d), requires that a Master Plan serve as the basis for the zoning plan, and the Michigan Zoning Enabling Act, P.A. 33 of 2008, as amended, Section 305, M.C.L. 125.3305, requires a zoning plan be prepared as the basis for the zoning ordinance. This requirement must be in any plan adopted or amended after September 1, 2008.

e.g., if new industry came to a community - jobs would follow. Placemaking focuses on attracting innovative and well-educated people, emerging/disruptive businesses and industries as a key component to planning for the new economy. In other words, create and maintain a vibrant and attractive community, talented people will come, and new commerce will follow. Fostering a rich cultural environment, educational excellence, high quality recreational opportunities, and maintaining a high quality natural environment are considered essential to community success in the new economy. *DRAFT economic development plan for the WJ Master Plan was prepared in December of 2016, and should be considered by the WJPC and included in Master Plan update as soon as practicable.*

- 3) **Transportation/Complete Streets.** The Michigan Planning Enabling Act⁷ currently requires any master plan to include a transportation plan (and/or master street plan) inventorying the extent of all transportation system components, and coordinating and planning regionally for “roadways....to provide appropriate access to all legal users...whether by car, truck, transit, assistive device, foot or bicycle.” In other words, it is required that master plans consider and plan for pedestrian-based and well as vehicular travel (i.e., “complete streets”). Master plans should inventory and plan for transportation networks, facilities, and public transportation, and must consider and plan for multi-modal transportation including non-motorized and pedestrian travel within each. *The existing WJ Master Plan does not possess a complete streets section, and must be amended to include such as soon as practicable.*
- 4) **Blighted Areas.** Current Michigan law⁸ also requires master plans to evaluate blighted areas within a planned community and to recommend options for their redevelopment and/or rehabilitation. *The existing WJ Master Plan does not possess a blighted areas section, and must be amended to include such.*
- 5) **Rezoning.** Current Michigan law⁹ requires Master Plans for communities with zoning to address the standards or criteria to be used when considering rezoning requests. *The existing WJ Master Plan does not possess a rezoning criteria section, and must be amended to include such as soon as practicable.*
- 6) **Statutory Citations.** Numerous references to Michigan statutes and amendments within the existing Master Plan, especially Chapter D4: (Master Plan) Legal Authority, are out-dated and/or have been amended or replaced and *require updated citations.*

⁷ Michigan Planning Enabling Act, P.A. 33 of 2008, as amended by Public Acts 134 and 135 of 2010, Section 33(3), M.C.L. 125.3833(3). This requirement must be in any plan adopted or amended 90 days after December 17, 2010 .

⁸ Michigan Planning Enabling Act, P.A. 33 of 2008, as amended, Section 33(2)(c), M.C.L. 125.3833(2)(c).

⁹ Michigan Zoning Enabling Act, P.A. 110 of 2006, as amended, Section 202(1), M.C.L. 125.3202(1).

B. PLANNING PRACTICES (RECOMMENDED UPDATES)

- 1) **Opinion Survey and Analysis** -The existing WJ Master Plan heavily relies upon the results of a Wexford County public opinion survey from the fall of 2000 to inform the 2004 Plan's vision, goals and actions.¹⁰ *It is highly recommended that a random sample regular mail survey or web-based resident (not highly recommended) and visitor opinion survey be completed, included press releases/public notices and detailed report of findings (web-based survey also produces a includes power point-based report of findings).* The results of such a survey are very important to update WJ Master Plan visions, goals and actions.
- 2) **Facilitated Resident Input Sessions** - It is recommended that a professional planner facilitate four (4) to five (5) public input sessions at different locations, days of the week and times within the WJPC geographic area to identify community trends, challenges, opportunities and future goals/development options. It is recommended that an update WJ Master Plan's vision, goals and actions be in part based on the results of such facilitated input sessions, opinion survey results, and Planning Commission brainstorming, guidance and direction.
- 3) **Demographics/Housing Data** - The existing WJ Master Plan primarily relies upon 2000 U.S. Census data. U.S. Census will be next performed in 2020, with new data available in some categories by 2021-2022. It is recommended that *demographics*, including but not limited to population/population projections (see Fact Book Ch. B8, maps on Fact Book pp. 199- 202, and Appendix C6), *housing* (see Fact Book Ch. B11 and Appendix C7), *human services* (see Fact Book Ch. B9), education (see Fact Book Ch. B9), *employment* (see Fact Book Ch. B10), *economic measures* (see Fact Book Ch. B10), etc. within the existing WJ Master plan *be updated with 2015 to 2018 estimated census data* to inform an updated WJ Master Plan vision, goals and actions. *Infrastructure measures*, i.e., roads, bridges, trails, rail, public transit, traffic, drains, public sewer and water, public buildings/facilities, parks, utilities, communications/mail, emergency services within Ch. B12 (and maps Fact Book pp. 303-318) are also based on conditions before 2002, and *should also be updated*.
- 4) **Land Use Cover Change/Parcel Analyses** - The land use cover change (Ch. B4), land ownership (Ch. B13), and parcel data (Ch. B4 and maps pp. 112-114) analyses relied upon within the existing WJ Master Plan utilizes data for the years 1978 and 1989/99, i.e., publicly available data bases in 2002. Parcel (Ch. B4) analyses relied upon within the existing WJ Master

¹⁰ See 2004 Master Plan Appendix K4: Specific Detail/Recommendation; Selected Strategies; and Fact Book 2002, Appendix C3: Land Owner Opinion Survey. Also see Fact Book Ch B5: Opinion Survey on Agriculture and Forestry; Ch B6: Opinion Survey on Environment; Ch B7: Opinion Survey on Special and Unique Areas; Ch B8: Opinion Survey on (Population) Growth; B9: Opinion Surveys on Health Services, Education, Crime-related Issues, and Cultural Quality of Life; Ch B10: Opinion Survey on Economics; Ch B11: Opinion Survey on Housing; Ch B12: Opinion Survey on Infrastructure, and Sewer and Water Systems; Ch B14: Opinion Survey on Planning and Zoning; and Appendix C3: Landowner Opinion Survey.

Plan relies upon data for the years 1978 and 2001. *It is recommended that Master Plan update include accessing or directly producing new land cover data for 2018, i.e., urban/built-up, agriculture, forest, grass/shrub land, wetland and open water categories (and associated subcategories), and comparing 1999 data to a new 2018 analysis/data set. Parcel state equalized value and building permit trend analyses and using past and current data could also be completed.*

- 5) **Environment/Natural Resources** - The environment (Ch. B6) and ecology/natural resources (Ch. B7) sections of the existing WJ Master Plan date back to policies, programs, regulations and governmental agencies before 2002. *It is recommended that Master Plan update the environment and natural resources/ecology sections be revised as a part of a Master Plan update.*
- 6) **Vision/Goals and Future Land Use Map Future** - *It is highly recommended that an updated WJ Master Plan Chapter 8: Future Land Use Plan, Policies, Goals and Actions be completed based on public input and survey results. It is also highly recommended that this very important section of an updated Master Plan be written in a more accessible, measurable and streamlined format, and that an updated zoning map be produced using GIS. Update Master Plan mapping (especially future land use map), demographics, citizen survey, update zoning and development plans, complete facilitated input sessions, and update goals and actions.*
- 7) **Local Plans and Regulations** - *It is recommended that the summary of local and regional planning and zoning by neighboring communities, especially including the WJPC, be updated as the existing WJ Master Plan relies upon information from 2002 or earlier.*

C. **ADDITIONAL PLANNING CONSIDERATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

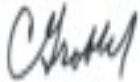
- 1) **GIS mapping** - It is noted that maps within the Wexford County 2002 Fact Book rely upon spatial and tabular data from the years 1972 through 2001. *This would involve updating existing Master Plan maps including wetlands, prime farmland, forest lands, topography, soil types, septic limitations, hydric soils, and updated parcel maps, etc.).*
- 2) **General Comments.** The existing WJ Master Plan exists in two parts - the Master Plan which in total contains community 20-year vision, goals and actions, and a Fact Book which contains maps, data and descriptions of community demographics, physical layout, transportation, housing, natural resources/environment, etc. The Master Plan as it exists consists of a total of 622 double column pages, i.e., a 184 page Mater Plan and a 438 page Fact Book upon which the Master Plan is based. Numerous WJ Planning Commissioners and WJPC staff have suggested that an updated WJ Master Plan should be significantly consolidated and dramatically streamlined in order to make the plan more “accessible” and much more “user friendly.” We wholly agree with this intention, yet remain cognizant of the fact that minimum requirements of Master Plan must be met to comply with Michigan law, and good community planning process typically takes a community well-past the minimum legal requirements in crafting and adopting an Master Plan. Finally, formatting issues, typographical errors and grammatical matters within the Master Plan and Fact Book should addressed through a WJ Master Plan update.

RECOMMENDATIONS

In summary, it is recommended that that WJPC consider the above Master Plan audit results, and determine which of the above to undertake in a Master Plan update process. Items above detailed in Section A: Legal Updates are required, and items in Section B: Planning Practices are recommended or highly recommended. We would be pleased to meet with the WJPC to further discuss the results of this audit, and then to provide a revised not to exceed cost proposal/contract for Master Plan update based on those decisions.

I look forward to assisting the WJPC in this matter. If you have any questions regarding this report, please contact me at 231-499-7165 or cgrobbel@grobbelenvironmental.com. Thank you.

Sincerely,



Christopher P. Grobbel, Ph.D.
Senior Project Manager

enclosures

Reference: http://msue.anr.msu.edu/resources/check_list_1f_content_of_a_plan