

**Minutes of the
Harris Town Board Work Session
December 21, 2011
Comprehensive Plan Update**

The Harris Town Board met on Wednesday, December 21, 2011 for a work session. The purpose of this work session was to:

- Meet with the Applied Insights representative John Powers to continue the process of updating the Harris Township Comprehensive Plan, originally adopted in 2006.

The work session began at 7:30pm at the Harris Town Hall. This meeting was open to the public.

Officers of the Harris Board in attendance were: Supervisors Larry Key & Gary Rosato, and Clerk Michele Smith. Absent: Treasurer Becky Adams and Supervisor Dennis Kortekaas

Also in attendance were John Powers – Applied Insights, Julie Kennedy – Twp Road Engineer from SEH, Allie Jervalin – ICC Intern, and Dan Butterfield- township resident and member of the Airport Road Neighborhood Association.

Chairman Rosato opened the work session, and then turned it over to John Powers to facilitate.

Powers shared that he and Julie met with Dan Swenson, from Itasca County Environmental Services Department, and Tony Carter from the Itasca County Hwy Department, for general discussion of what was happening at the county level. Because Harris Twp is unique, given its large population, and overall lack of means, the county could not commit to giving special attention to the things that Powers and the board had hoped. Overall, the County expressed that they are unable to help the township accomplish their (township) goals if it requires that they (county) change their policies and comprehensive plan.

Powers discussed with Swenson and Carter their thoughts on adding county staff to the current round table meetings between the township and the Grand Rapids city staff. This would be instead of having a separate meeting between just the township and the county. The County was open to this idea. The board felt it would be beneficial, especially when working on repairing county/city/township roads that are located close to each other. Having the county represented at these round table meetings would help both the county and township be better informed of projects going on in the township including developments and PUDs (ex: troop town).

The group in attendance at tonight meeting discussed in some length the zoning along the Hwy 169 corridor. Currently most areas *not* zoned commercial and so the township can have a say on what goes in via CUP (Conditional Use Permit). The board prefers the CUP method to a blanket rezone to commercial as the latter would allow any type of business to come in, wherever they wanted. However, something the board had not considered was that if a big business development comes in at the township's northern border (south of where Menards was going to be), the area would need to be annexed by the city for proper zoning regulations. The developer would seek annexation by the city – which is different than the city coming after the township.

The group also revisited the option to incorporate as a city, as mentioned in the existing comprehensive plan as an alternative to avoid annexation. However, this would require that the township have their own zoning department and a full city staff, which would drive up the levy to cover these costs. As a result, it was unknown if incorporation would be a good alternative to explore – or even put in the updated comprehensive plan.

Powers then guided the group through the agenda for tonight's meeting (see attached):

1. The board reviewed the existing comprehensive plan, section by section
The current comprehensive plan was reviewed, starting with pages 13-16, the factors influencing the future (of Harris Twp). It was noted that the South Central Intergovernmental Planning Board had disbanded, and that as a result, a sewer regulation by the *township* may now be needed.
2. Community Center Complex Design Public Meeting
Powers shared a draft agenda for the public input meeting on the Community Center Complex. The group reviewed and modified it, noting that it should be clear that the design of the complex is in the proposal stages, and that nothing has been decided yet. One topic to be added was the cemetery expansion.

The meeting date for the community input session was set as: January 18th, at 6:30pm at the town hall.

A postcard mailer will be prepared and sent out by Julie, as well as a press release. Clerk Smith will update the website.

The following "regular" comprehensive meeting date was set for Feb 15th (*though later changed to February 29th*).

Tonight's work session adjourned at 9:30pm.

Respectfully submitted,
Michele Smith, Harris Township Clerk