

**Minutes of the January 18, 2012  
Harris Town Board Work Session – Comprehensive Plan  
Public Input Discussion on Proposed Community Complex**

The Harris Town Board met on Wednesday, January 18, 2012 for a work session. **The purpose of this work session was:**

- To secure community suggestions and commentary on a potential “Community Center Complex” that the Harris Town Board is considering developing. The “community complex” was defined as a single site at which to locate all township maintenance and town hall facilities. This public meeting was intended to provide an opportunity for town residents to learn about the concept, and offer commentary and direction on all aspects of the potential undertaking.

The community center concept is part of the process to update the Harris Township comprehensive plan. A consulting team of SEH, Inc. and Applied Insights<sup>North</sup> are assisting the township in this effort.

The work session began at 6:30pm at the Harris Town Hall. All township residents (apx 1,400 households) were sent an invitation postcard last week, and notice was also published in the Herald Review newspaper.

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

Also in attendance were: John Powers – from Applied Insights, Julie Kennedy – Twp Road Engineer from SEH, and **approximately 55 residents**. It was a great turnout, given the very frigid temperatures that night.

Chairman Rosato opened the work session, and then turned it over to John Powers to facilitate. (*An agenda for the discussion will be attached to these minutes.*)

Jackie Edwards, Allie Jervalin, and Phil McDonald were introduced by Julie Kennedy as the current Civil Engineering interns from ICC, who will be working with the Town Board on this Community Complex project. Interns have been working with the board for about 3 years now, to help identify the special relationship between the amount of property/space the township has, and the amount of space that various items would occupy (i.e. new cemetery, potential new town hall, pavilion, etc.).

**John Powers began the meeting by emphasizing that no decision would be made that night**, and that the purpose of the meeting was to get ideas from residents on desires, concerns, and possible uses for a potential community complex. He explained that the town board is only in the “idea stage”, and that tonight was for brain storming key points, as outlined on the agenda.

The residents were seated in 7 small groups of apx 6-8 people per table; each had maps of the proposed site, agendas, and were led through discussions on the various key items as outlined on the agenda. Residents jotted their group’s ideas on post-its note, and then reported out to the group in an orderly fashion. Julie Kennedy wrote down the key ideas on flipchart paper, while all post-it notes were collected for review – even one’s not shared with the group. The key points of discussion were as follows:

- Desired Features: The features and functions of a community complex, to be located on the site (must haves and would like).
- Design Criteria: Factors that should be used to govern the desired feature *selection and design* (ex. The location of buildings within the site, the road access(s), the size of buildings, the cost, maintenance, functionality, etc.)

- Town Hall Design: Space – what functions must the building serve? What must be considered in the building design? (Priority was to be applied to both functions and features.)
- Cemetery Expansion: Facilities and features that are desired for the expanded cemetery, and any site design considerations.
- That last item discussed was Words of advice to the town board. Comments included
  - Justification of the need for a complex and hall (why do we need them?)
  - What are we going to do with existing facility/buildings if we build?
  - Annexation update?
  - Comment: Hall is small and too noisy when talking – even at same table
  - What was the cost of buying the propertys to date, the cost of engineering, the interns, etc.? (What has the township spent on the project to date?)
  - What is the cost of the future development?
  - Where is funding coming from? How will it be paid for?
  - Include an option for remodeling existing facility(s)
  - Advantages/disadvantages for residents?
  - Will it be revenue generating? Or just maintain/ break even?
  - One resident commented that she appreciated the board looking forward and visioning this

John Powers then talked about upcoming issues that would be discussed as a part of updating the township's comprehensive plan. One key area mentioned was the Hwy 169 corridor and related land and traffic issues. Powers noted that there will be public meetings to discuss this area. Residents will be notified of the meeting via postcard again, just as they were notified for tonight's meeting. (By a show of hands, this is what brought people to tonight's meeting and was deemed a very good way to notify residents of the meetings.)

In response to several questions from residents, John Powers talked a bit about annexation. He'd recently met with the City of Grand Rapids, and found they are not looking to annex any portion of Harris Township; there is nothing on their docket. However, Powers went on to explain that a different kind of annexation potential should be considered: The Township is one development away from the next development coming into the township, along the northern border – which could result in potential annexation. Once a development/business is built on Mark Hawkinson's property, the land to the south would be in Harris Township. And, it's very likely that any new development in that area would petition to the city, asking to be annexed in order to receive city sewer and water, roads, etc. As a result, Powers explained that the township will need to decide if they want to try and use the County's powers of zoning to stop intense commercial development, or plan for some area of orderly annexation to allow development in a specific area. Will the plan be to fight it, or plan for it? These ideas will be discussed during Hwy 169 corridor public meetings – which was likely be in March.

The next work session for the Comprehensive Plan was scheduled for Wednesday, February 29<sup>th</sup>, at the Harris Town Hall. This will be a general work session, and the public is invited.

Tonight's work session adjourned at 8:45pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Michele Smith, Harris Township Clerk