

**Harris Town Board
ROUND TABLE DISCUSSION
with the Staff of Grand Rapids
Wednesday, November 30, 2010, 7:15pm**

The Harris Town Board met on Wednesday, November 30, 2010 at 7:15 p.m., at the Blandin Foundation, with the following members present: Supervisors Gary Rosato, Dennis Kortekaas, & Larry Key, Clerk Michele Smith and Township Engineer, Julie Kennedy. Absent: Treasurer John Jokela.

Present from Grand Rapids: Tom Pagel - City Engineer, and Rob Mattei - Community Development Director.

The purpose of tonight's round table was to continue dialog between the township and the city staff (not the city council) on upcoming improvement projects on shared roadways and anything else of common interest.

Comprehensive Plan Updates

Rob Mattei gave an update on the city's comprehensive plan. A focus group meeting of surrounding areas is coming up on December 9th, from 1-3:00 p.m. These communities include Cohasset, Arbo, Coleraine and Harris Twp. Supervisor Rosato can make it to the focus group meeting, but not Julie. Mattei explained that about 14 other focus meetings have been held, with various interest groups. The one next week will be the last one.

At the focus group meeting, the group will talk about future land use scenarios. Two options (maps) have been developed by the City of Grand Rapids: Alternative A and Alternative B. They looked 20 years in the future, and how the city might want to develop. (It was noted that these are not zoning maps, but rather land use maps). The second (B) alternative is a little more aggressive with regards to development. Along the Harris Twp boundary, there really is no difference between the A and B alternatives, per Mattei. Before the focus group meeting, the board was encouraged to go to the city's webpage, and look at *existing* land use maps.

Next steps: The comprehensive plan steering committee will review the information gathered from the focus groups, and develop a draft land use plan for the future. So far, groups seem to like a combination of the two alternatives. It's the city's goal is to have an updated Comprehensive Plan into the final public approval phase by March 2011.

Julie asked if a layer file with current zoning on it for the Harris Township could be shared with her, to match up with the City's maps. It would help when the township reviews their comprehensive plan - especially along the developing business area (by new Wal-Mart). Tom Pagel agreed this should be doable.

Mishawaka Road (Isleview & Horseshoe Lake):

The City of Grand Rapids is planning on reconditioning their portion of Isleview Road, with a reclaim and overlay, from the Golf Course Road to the intersection with Horseshoe Lake Road / Mishawaka Road, and then south on Mishawaka Road from that intersection, to the city limits (where it changes to Harris Township's jurisdiction.) The Harris Town Board confirmed that they are also planning to improve their portion of Mishawaka Road, from the city line, through the densely populated Cottage Grove area, and beyond to "the hill" (not all the way to Hwy 169).

The city discussed the pros/cons of joining with the township for bidding purposes. The main pro was that it could reduce costs – especially with regards to mobilization costs for reclaiming, signs, etc. Cons included a 2% administration fee that the city would charge the township – which could offset any savings. And a "cooperative construction agreement" between the city and township would be needed, to explain how things would get paid. One other potential con was any repercussion regarding annexation, and the appearance that Harris Township "needed" the city for this road improvement project.

The town board will make a recommendation in February, on which way to bid the project (together or separate). Supervisor Rosato shared that he'd liked the idea of bidding the project together, to save money and to show residents that two government entities can work together for the common good of both.

Mornes Road

Pagel recapped that Mornes Road is a road that the County took over a year ago, when the City of Grand Rapids annexed Grand Rapids Township. However, Mornes Road is on the township border so the southern side is in Harris Township and the northern side is in Grand Rapids. As a result, the City cannot claim Mornes Road as a MSAS (Municipal State Aid Street) road, as a portion lies outside the city limits. Mr. Pagel requested at the last round table meeting that the town board consider a resolution to grant a 33 feet ROW currently located in Harris Township, to become part of the City of Grand Rapids so that the entire road would then lie within the city's jurisdiction. This would then allow the city to receive apx \$50,000 per year in state aid money, which in turn could be used to improve the road.

Pagel commented that he talked with Mayor Adams about how the city can build a comfort level with Mornes Road residents in order to acquire the needed ROW. The city has 1 year left to get the ROW to claim Mornes Road as a Municipal State Aid road. Mayor Adams was willing to meet with residents 1:1, along with Pagel and two township supervisors, to explain that the City has no interest in annexing Harris Twp, but that they just need to acquire a 33 foot ROW in order to get state aid money for a higher level of road maintenance – including Mornes Road.

Supervisor Rosato stated that he felt a *neighborhood meeting* might be better than 1:1 meetings with residents, and include the entire board and township Attorney Andy Shaw. Rosato liked the idea of having Mayor Adams, Pagel and Mattei there too, to explain how the property will be affected, and how jurisdiction is different than ownership.

Pagel commented that the township technically could grant the ROW without the residents' permission, but agreed that the town board would *not* want to do that. However, acquiring the 33 foot ROW from the 6 residents of Mornes Road could be done at any time, per Pagel; they don't all have to be done at once.

One advantage for the residents, per Pagel, is that the city is willing to compensate them for granting the property easement, to secure it as Grand Rapids ROW. He estimated about \$4,000 (30 cents a sq foot) for larger tracks, and apx \$2,000 for the smaller areas. As an added bonus, the city has agreed that the Mornes Road residents in the township would not be specially assessed when the road is overlaid some time in the future. Also, the residents would have a little less land that they are taxed on, but that setbacks would not change as they are still measured from the center of the road.

The question was raised, "What would the township get out of this arrangement?" (Why do it?) Pagel explained that Harris Twp residents would get a better road, and a commitment from city that there is no threat of annexation by the City of Grand Rapids.

It was suggested by the board, and agreed to by Pagel, that a term such as "corporate boundary adjustment" would be used instead of "annexation", as the latter causes a great deal of angst amongst township residents.

Supervisor Key stated he was willing to work with the city on this project, as did Supervisor Rosato and so a **neighborhood meeting for the affected Mornes Road residents was set for: January 19th (Wed) – 2010 / 7:30pm at the Harris Town Hall**. Julie will put together flyers for residents, and have it for the board to review at their Regular Meeting next week (Dec 8). Clerk Smith will secure the town hall with the Caretaker.

The round table work session adjourned at apx 9:30 p.m., and another meeting will be set up in the next few months.

Respectfully submitted,
Michele Smith - Clerk