

Minutes of the special joint meeting of the Georgetown Township Board, Planning Commission and Zoning Board of Appeals, held Monday, May 19, 2025

Meeting called to order by Supervisor Jim Wierenga at 7:00 p.m.

Present:

Board members: Jim Wierenga, Kelly Kuiper, Gene DeWitt, Gary Veldink, John Schwalm, Amy Grasman, Kevin Kelly

Planning Commissioners: Josiah Samy, Jeannine Bolhouse, Jessica Ulberg, Gary Veldink, Geoff Brown, Brian Reed, Tom Healy

Zoning Board of Appeals: Tom Healy, Kendall Grable, Susan Ouellette, Kyle Terpstra, Kelly Kuiper

Also present: Justin Stadt, Township Superintendent; Ryan Schab, Zoning Administrator (ZA); Joel Hanenburg, Department of Public Works Director; Mannette Minier, Township Staff

Absent: Tim Smit (ZBA alternate) Trevor Petroelje (ZBA alternate)

Overview of meeting from Supervisor Jim Wierenga

Jim Wierenga discussed the growth the Township has experienced over the past couple decades. He also stressed the importance of the Master Plan review. He stated that he believes every person at the meeting has Georgetown Township's best interests at heart, even if they share differing opinions. Due to the community's growth, there have been a lot of changes in the Township since the last time there was a deep dive into the Master Plan review. This review will be more involved than some of the other recent reviews.

Introduction of Tanya DeOliveira, Williams & Works

Jim Wierenga introduced Tanya DeOliveira, a Grandville graduate, who has been a planner at Williams & Works for nearly 4 years. The Township Board decided that a planner was needed for this review of the Master Plan and a committee was put together. Tanya DeOliveira was unanimously selected as the planner to assist the Township.

Introduction of Planning Commission Chairman Josiah Samy

Individual introduction of all members present

Every person at the meeting introduced themselves and stated what role they hold for the Township.

#250519-01 - Utilities Presentation by DPW Director

Joel Hanenburg presented his [Utilities Presentation](#) and fielded questions from the members of the meeting.

Josiah Samy asked if development is moving too fast for utilities.

Joel Hanenburg stated that the installation of utilities is often developer driven and would not happen unless a developer contributes towards the cost. Eventually there may need to be expansion of lift stations, but the developer would also be required to contribute to those improvements.

Josiah Samy asked if there are areas where it is easier to install utilities or areas where it is more costly.

Joel Hanenburg stated that all installation of public water and sanitary sewer systems is costly regardless of where it is located. Particularly, it is more costly around the edges of the Township, further away from where existing utilities are located. Sewer is more difficult than water since it needs to be brought back to the treatment plant.

Mannette Minier asked what program is in place by the Department of Public Works (DPW) to ensure these utilities are maintained.

Joel Hanenburg stated that the DPW regularly televises about 100,000 feet of pipes to inspect them and verify that there are no defects.

John Schwalm asked how many homes are still on septic systems in Georgetown Township.

Joel Hanenburg stated that he does not have an exact number, but there are 14,800 sanitary sewer connections. There are areas in the Township that refused to hook up to the sewer system in the 1980's when there was federal funding to install sanitary sewer. That is why there are a couple of streets that do not have sewer in the middle of areas where it would have been available. They are, however, connected to public water for the most part.

Tom Healy asked how long the primary sewer lines last.

Joel Hanenburg stated that it depends on several different factors. PVC watermain is supposed to last 120 years. Cement line's life expectancies depend on how much is flowing through it, how much Hydrogen Sulfide is in the line, etc.

Tom Healy asked what the best material is for sewer lines.

Joel Hanenburg stated that the new preferred material is Vylon for trunk sewer. It is a plastic material that is far better than the cement lines.

Tom Healy asked what the chances are of having public water and sanitary sewer service expand to the Northwest area of the Township and what would the difficulties be.

Joel Hanenburg stated that north of Fillmore St. there is an agreement with Allendale who services those parcels. The Township also has agreements with Blendon to provide some utilities along 48th Ave. There is public water available near there for Blendon to use.

Jim Wierenga commented that Joel Hanenburg brought in examples of the different types of materials that are used for our pipes and it would be worth the member's time to check them out before they leave.

Kendall Grabel asked what initiatives the DPW has taken to reduce the cost of water for consumers.

Joel Hanenburg stated that the Township has infrastructure that is aging and that will be required to be upgraded. The DPW operates as efficiently as possible to avoid additional costs. The expansion of Wyoming Water will also add cost to the consumer and the Township has their own upgrades they need to make.

Kendall Grable asked if residents could choose if they can use well and septic.

Joel Hanenburg stated that while there are some restrictions for septic, as long as you get approval from Ottawa County you can install a well. The county has reported that there are issues with some wells which could prevent someone installing them.

Jim Wierenga stated that there will be increases in water and sewer rates without choice from the Township Board. Wyoming Water plans to spend over \$600 million within the next 20 years to ensure they can keep up with demand, and roughly \$100 million of that the Township will have to pay for. When you factor in Wyoming's expansion, replacing our own aging infrastructure, there will have to be choices that are made but that is beyond the scope of this meeting.

There was additional discussion about sewer expansion and the limits of the current lift stations. As more development happens, more upgrades will need to be made to existing lift stations to ensure the system can handle the increased capacity.

Jim Wierenga stated that specifics will be important in the Master Plan review process, and he anticipates that Joel could be requested at a future Planning Commission meeting but this discussion could go on for hours. Joel gave a fantastic overview of the Township's systems in his presentation and will be a valuable resource throughout this process.

Joel Hanenburg also stated that the Township's engineer Prein & Newhof can assist with more complicated questions, but the members can reach out to him with questions they may have moving forward.

#250519-02 – Overview and Explanation of the Master Plan and Process to Update

Ryan Schab (ZA) and Mannette Minier gave a brief overview of the process, stated that the Planning Commission will be the commission tasked with creating this document. It is important for other members to follow the minutes or attend meetings if they want to know what progress the Planning Commission is making on the review. It will be important that both the Township Board and Planning Commission are on the same page by the end of the review process to ensure that the approval goes smoothly.

Tanya DeOliveira stated that she wanted to go through the schedule of the review process and hear comments from the members. She expects that members have different opinions and there will be dialogue. She stated that Justin Stadt and the ZA are her points of contact at the Township office. If members today have comments or concerns, they should use their points of contact. This is the kickoff meeting. For the subsequent Planning Commission meetings, members will get a draft of the chapters that are being worked on in advance. Once the objective information is entered into the Master Plan like census data, water sewer maps, etc., there will be community engagement

events. These are designed to get feedback that will be usable for the Planning Commission as they develop the Master Plan. A community engagement report will be put together and given to the Planning Commission to help develop the goals and objectives sections of the Master Plan. Finally, the future land use and districts sections will be discussed in more detail. Anyone at this meeting that is not on the Planning Commission is encouraged to attend these meetings. Once every chapter has been reviewed, a document will be put together for the Planning Commission to review in its entirety. After that a recommendation will be made to distribute it to the public. Then it formally is sent to the Township Board who will also determine whether the document is ready for public distribution. This timeline can vary depending on how long is needed to review the draft but once approved, it will be out there for the public for 63 days per the Michigan Planning Enabling Act. Comments will be received and evaluated. Once the public review period is done, a final review is completed by the Planning Commission and then it can be formally sent to the Township Board for final adoption. The project in its entirety will take about a year. It depends on whether there are chapters the Planning Commission wants to spend more time on.

Jeannine Bolhouse asked if there are marketing efforts done to bolster the community engagement events.

Tanya DeOliveira stated that there are marketing efforts made by Williams & Works but the best way to get engagement is reaching out to people. The members at this meeting are all well connected individuals in the Township and sometimes personally reaching out to people works the best. You should also make use of the online platforms available like Facebook, Nextdoor, or any other social media platforms where people in the Township receive their information. She also mentioned that Big Rapids did a community open house closer to the end of the process so that people could see how their input was implemented into the Master Plan which was helpful to show people that they have a say in this process.

Josiah Samy asked if the data collected for public engagement is public facing and if people will have access to it.

Tanya DeOliveira stated that everyone in the Township will be allowed to participate in the process. Once all the data has been collected from all the different events, it will be given to the Planning Commission as a public engagement report and then it can be added to the appendix of the Master Plan itself if the Planning Commission chooses to do so. She views it as publicly available information because it was part of a public process.

Gary Veldink asked what a proper timeline would be for this process given the size of the Township.

Tanya DeOliveira stated that due to state requirements and going through all the different chapters, it should take at least a year. It can take longer than this if the Planning Commission decides they want to spend more time going through certain chapters in more detail or if they want more time to review drafts. We should always be working on moving forward but there is no need to rush the process. It is roughly a 12-to-18-month process. She also said that the number of meetings the Planning Commission has dedicated to the process will affect the timeline. It is recommended that one meeting per month is dedicated completely to the Master Plan review.

Tom Healy asked if there is anything in the existing Master Plan that jumps out to Tanya, as a professional planner, that needs to be addressed.

Tanya DeOliveira stated that she reviewed the plan when preparing for her interview. In terms of existing conditions, the Master Plan is solid. There will be discussions among the Planning Commission on what needs to be addressed. She will be facilitating those conversations and providing feedback to the Planning Commission. It is clear from the questions being asked that members here are dialed in and have a sense of what is going on. She will be able to assist with improving the goals section and narrowing down the future land use map. A lot of the Township is already built out. This is not necessarily like Olive Township that is more rural and agricultural, and their goals are mainly to stay that way. Georgetown Township is doing some growth and Tanya plans to help lead the Planning Commission in those conversations on how to address it, but not necessarily tell them exactly what they should do.

#250519-03 - Review public engagement activities and ask members to vote on which ones will be done.

Tanya DeOliveira asked the members about their opinions on the public engagement portion of the process so that everyone can decide on what events will be done. The options are: online survey (A), pop-up events (B), visioning workshop (C), and open house (D).

Jim Wierenga stated that he likes the online survey and pop-up events. He recognizes that surveys and events at the Township office do not always yield the most participation, which is why he likes the pop-up events to meet residents where they are.

Tanya DeOliveira went through each option individually to provide additional context to the members. The options are below:

Online Community Survey (option A). The Township may opt for a community survey to gather input and feedback. The survey can be made available on the Township’s website, social media, and in printed form. Email, postcards, and other methods to invite and ensure residents, business owners, and stakeholders are aware of the survey’s availability with originally developed marketing materials can be created and sent out. This is a great option to allow individual community members to participate at a time and location convenient for them.

Pop-Up Planning—2 Events (option B). Designed to meet people where they are, the planning team will work with the Planning Commission or Steering Committee to identify two different opportunities for pop-up planning events. Our team will “pop-up” at popular destinations or gatherings, such as local parks, the Farmers Market, or other well-attended events to gather community input. Activities at these events will be eye-catching, quick, and designed to ask people what they like or what could be improved within the Township. This is also a great opportunity to engage people who may not typically be aware of or involved with traditional planning processes.

Visioning Workshop (option C). Inviting community members to participate in a forum dedicated to diving deeper into master plan topics or a focus on a specific Township sub-area, and can provide valuable knowledge to influence a forward-looking vision for Georgetown Township. The workshop will include a series of activities to capture participant perspectives and will include hands-on exercises. Objective data gathered

during the workshop will provide critical information for the future land use chapter that will be articulated through inspiring graphics and succinct language in the Master Plan.

Community Open House (option D). An open house offers an informal setting in which residents and stakeholders can review the various elements of the Master Plan, engage in interactive planning activities, and talk one-on-one with members of the Planning Commission or Steering Committee and the consulting team regarding specific issues or subjects. An open house would be hosted at the Township Hall or another engaging location, like a popular eatery or public gathering space. The event would be advertised for a specific time and date to the public through flyers and advertisements in a local newspaper, the Township's website, social media posts, and other medium. *This can also be an optional task that can occur at the end of the process to allow the entire community to view the draft plan at some point before the plan is adopted. Boards could be made to explain and share out many themes and highlight important matters that arose during the planning process.*

Amy Grasman inquired how many events the Township gets to choose.

Tanya DeOliveira stated that each event has its own price. According to the Planning Enabling Act, it is not required to do any of these events. But if community engagement is important to you, we recommend doing at least two or three.

Amy Grasman said she can see the online survey being effective and referenced the fact that only one member of the public was present at the meeting. She also spoke in favor of the pop-up events.

Gary Veldink said that if 17,000 surveys are sent out, the Township will get 2,000 responses, and then the decisions will be based on those 2,000 responses rather than the 15,000 that did not respond. That has always been his issues with surveys and warned of the danger of them.

Mannette Minier asked if the survey is sent out to people or do people have to come pick it up.

Tanya DeOliveira stated that the survey is available online and then it will be important for members to get the word out about the survey. It will be advertised online but the best way to get responses is to tell people directly about it and encourage them to take it. She said that 200-300 responses is considered a win. When you think about that as proportion of the population, it is very small. Gary's point is well noted, but it is nice to have data.

Josiah Samy stated that as Township officials it will be their responsibility to get the word out about it. He acknowledged survey fatigue, but it is a challenge that they must overcome to get good data. They should brainstorm locations to put the survey to ensure it reaches the most amount of people. He agrees with Jim that at a minimum the survey and pop-up events should be considered. The Farmer's Market, Touch-a-Truck, and Slip-and-Slide events are all good places to potentially do a pop-up event.

Jessica Ulberg asked how long the survey will take.

Tanya DeOliveira stated that they try to keep the survey to 20-30 questions and not longer than 10 minutes. It takes a couple minutes to do the demographic questions and then you can start asking

about land use. The questions are written in plain language and relatable to residents. She noted that the survey and pop-up events will have different questions so that people can participate in both without feeling like they are wasting their time.

Jim Wierenga stated that the open house he sees as being largely ineffective to gauge community engagement but also necessary. Inevitably, there will be residents that wonder why they did not have a say in this process, and it will be important to note that the Township provided many opportunities for their voice to be heard including an open house at the Township office.

Kelly Kuiper agreed with Jim Wierenga's assessment on the open house and stated that the same could be said about the survey. They both feel necessary to do even if they are not entirely effective. She also stressed the importance of hosting pop-up events that reach different demographics. If one pop-up event was at the Farmer's Market and reached families and young children, then the other pop-up event should be targeted towards a different demographic. She also noted that if major changes are made to the plan, the open house should be held towards the end of the process and the changes should be clearly shown on poster boards to showcase them to the community.

Jim Wierenga noted that Kelly Kuiper mentioned options A, B, and D (survey, pop-up events, and open house). He asked the members if they agree with doing all three of them.

John Schwalm asked if communities typically do all four of the events.

Tanya DeOliveira stated that communities usually do at least two of them. Some have not gone with the survey due to survey fatigue. Residents have been calling out for opportunities to make their voices heard even if they do not always participate in the process. Most communities do between two and three events. She agrees with putting the open house at the end if they decide to do the survey and pop-up event as well. That gives people the opportunity to participate in the process and review what has been decided before it is officially approved.

John Schwalm stated that he would like to have the survey and open house. The pop-up event sounds okay, but he is worried about the overall cost.

Gary Veldink stated that the Planning Commission will be having open meetings throughout this entire process and challenged the need for an open house.

John Schwalm stated that having a specific event dedicated to residents like an open house is different.

Josiah Samy agreed and added that attending a Planning Commission meeting can be intimidating, especially if you are looking to provide feedback. Residents would have to speak during the public comment section and speak to a panel as opposed to a more relaxed forum like an open house. People are busy and do not always want to attend Planning Commission meetings, there may be a better turn out at a specific event that is scheduled for resident feedback.

Jim Wierenga addressed the question of cost. The Township Board has authorized up to \$35,000 for this project. If all four options were approved, we would still be under the \$35,000 authorized. If options A, B, and D were approved as the discussion has indicated are the favorites, it would be roughly \$30,000 for everything. Which is about \$5,000 under what has been budgeted.

Justin Stadt stated that this entire group should decide which events to go with because at the end of the day the Planning Commission will be making a recommendation, and the Township Board will be approving it.

Jim Wierenga stated that there is overwhelming support for options A, B, and D (online survey, pop-up events, and open house) and those options are within the budget. He proposed moving forward with those options unless there are any objections.

There were no objections to moving forward with approving the following Community Engagement Options:

- Online Community Survey (Option A)
- Pop-Up Planning-2 events (Option B)
- Community Open House (Option D)

#250519-04 - Opportunity for each member to speak with planning ideas, comments and suggestions for revisions to the Master Plan text and Future Land Use Map or to identify areas that need further review.

Attachments: [Master Plan Requirements Checklist](#)
[MTA Procedures to Amend the Master Plan](#)
[Master Plan adopted in 2021](#)
[Future Land Use Map adopted in 2021](#)

Tanya DeOliveira stated that she is very interested in what the members have to say. She may not see members of the Zoning Board of Appeals or Township Board for a while and they should take this opportunity to give their own opinion. She will also be reviewing the documents with feedback that they submitted prior to the meeting.

Jim Wierenga stated that the Township is a bedroom community with a lot to be proud of. There are a lot of things about the Township that we should want to hold on to. It is important to think about what the end goal of this process is. His goals do not include to continue to be one of the fastest growing communities in the state or to fill up every area of the Township. He prefers that residents' quality of life is protected by preserving breathe-ability. Congestion is already an issue noted in the existing Master Plan. Preserve Agricultural and Rural Residential zoning districts. The Township's job is not to provide developers with inventory or allow farmers to sell their land to a developer for a new plat to go in. The Township has to maintain all the utilities that get put in even if a developer pays to have them installed. He would not like to see one apartment development go in after another. The Township already has a mix of housing options available. The new Master Plan should be able to withstand legal challenges from developers. He acknowledged that this process will involve give and take and some tradeoffs, he is one member with one vote. There should be ample green area surrounding the Township to allow residents to enjoy where we live.

Josiah Samy stated he agrees the Township is a bedroom community and we should preserve the calm environment and quality of life. We should minimize congestion and protect some of the rural/agricultural areas. He also acknowledged that the Master Plan should look at some of the corridors like Chicago Dr. as a place that could add density. He encouraged members to research

“Strong Towns.” Instead of developing the Township outwards, we should be looking at how we can add density to some already developed areas. The Master Plan should look at pocket zoning, which means not the entire Township needs to be more dense but certain areas could be great for things like mixed use developments. Mixed use could provide developments that have first floor businesses, second floor office spaces, and third floor apartments or a mix of all of those. Big box store retail is facing challenges already that mixed use could help alleviate. Mom and pop shops could have more of a chance with mixed use developments. The Township should protect itself from Grand Valley State University’s growth and the state’s new requirements which would force the Township into having wind/solar farms. It is important to be able to preserve those rural areas of the Township.

Amy Grasman stated that her priority is to preserve farmland. The Township does not need to fill every piece of property in the future. The Rush Creek property would be great for a hotel, restaurant, and potentially a low amount of apartments as long as it is consistent with the Master Plan. Encourage development of our parks. Since we are a bedroom community, people want to live here and they want nice parks to be able to go to. She would like an Ottawa County Parks person to be involved with the process and for the board to understand what they are planning in the Township.

Gary Veldink stated the Township needs to be aware of what adjacent municipalities are planning, specifically Blendon along the 48th Ave. corridor. He would like to be in line with what they are planning to do. For example, if their commercial area is going to be the corner of 48th Ave. and Port Sheldon St., the Township should consider adopting a similar plan. These projects will be driven by utilities. The availability of sanitary sewer will be the big driver for the development of the northwest quadrant of the Township. The Township currently requires that sewer is available if you want to develop Low Density Residential, it may be worth looking at requiring that for all types of developments including commercial properties. That would relieve some of the requests the Planning Commission currently receives and would slow the growth of the northwest quadrant. It would also give the Township more control of development since we control the utilities.

John Schwalm stated that he agrees with Gary Veldink and Jim Wierenga. The Township is blessed and a wonderful community. He is worried about potential change specifically using Hudsonville as an example of a place that has made changes. Those changes will affect the school systems and the utilities. People have invested a lot of money into Georgetown, because of all the lakes we have and stability we have in our community. Our Sheriff’s department does not get many calls here because we have a very solid place but that all can be thrown away in a heartbeat. He urged the Planning Commission to be careful and stated that communities like Grand Rapids and Kentwood can deal with adding density. Georgetown Township is a gem where people want to move to. The Township is trying to draw in young couples by adding to our downtown, improving the library, revitalizing Maplewood Park or our awesome school systems. He taught at Grandville for a long time, but it is a different place now. He cautioned the idea of smaller homes, eliminating garages, mother-in-law suites, accessory dwelling units, and rentals in general.

Susan Ouellette stated that she wants young couples to come to Georgetown and enjoy the new library, but they cannot afford to live here. She has three children in their 30’s and housing is not affordable for them. Georgetown Township does not need to solve the entire crisis but it should absolutely be something the Planning Commission is thinking about. A lot of people are going to

retire in the Township soon that have grandchildren and we do not know where they are going to live.

Gene DeWitt agrees with Gary Veldink that we should be looking at what Blendon is doing on their side of 48th Ave. at the major intersections. Georgetown historically is set up to offer convenience to people who live in different areas of the Township like the J&H off Cottonwood Dr. He also agrees with Amy Grasman that we should focus on our parks. He wondered if there is a good spot for another lake or playset. He also would like to see an area that is dedicated to where food trucks could be set up, maybe off a trailhead. He recognizes that the mining operations could be wrapping up within the next few years and that could be a great spot for some of his ideas.

Tom Healy stated that housing affordability is a huge issue because the kids that come to our schools and love Georgetown and grew up here cannot afford to stay here. There are ways that we can address these issues like offering accessory dwelling units. The concept of tiny homes he is no fan of but he does believe that some provisions need to be made for affordable housing. He agrees with Josiah that mixed use developments are important because those areas could retain their commercial character and attain some density. Those places can be bigger than four corners while addressing needs of people that live nearby.

Kelly Kuiper stated that she wants to focus on cost and changing demographics. She urged members not to view Georgetown Township with rose tinted glasses. She built her home brand new for \$285,000 in 2016 and today she could sell it for \$540,000 which is completely ridiculous. Her 28 year old self could not have afforded the house that she lives in today. It is important to acknowledge that reality and to ignore it is to be naïve about how we have ended up here. There are dramatic demographic changes in the world today. By 2034 there will be more 65 plus people than 18 and under. More families are now caring for others and more families are single people. The household dynamics are very different than they were 10 to 20 years ago. 50 plus year olds do not want to move and would rather stay in their community but houses are not being built for the aging population. Housing is not being built for single people when our Low Density Residential district requires 85 foot wide lots. This forces developers to maximize that space and build large homes which cost in excess of \$600,000. No one is saying you need to sell your house and live in a tiny home or townhome, but there are people that may want that option in Georgetown Township. It is important that our Master Plan represents the will of our 60,000 plus sized population and to investigate what they want. It would be wise to consider smaller lots and as a developer she has seen many 32 foot wide homes that are not tiny and are beautiful homes. They can be built on 60 foot wide lots.

Jessica Ulberg stated that the Master Plan should identify corridors where mixed use can be developed. She understands that if she had not bought her house 10 years ago she would not be able to afford to live in the Township and sees the availability of affordable housing as an issue. She agrees that the Township should plan for the 48th Ave. corridor in conjunction with Blendon Township. She also agrees that the Township should work with Ottawa County Parks and the Master Plan should emphasize the updates to the Bend in the River Plan along with the Grand River Greenway Plan.

Kendall Grable discussed the stranded residential properties along Chicago Dr., Port Sheldon St., Baldwin St., and other major corridors. These were homes left behind by zoning changes and road expansions. The Township should think about acquiring these properties as sometimes people want to redevelop them but the lots are simply too small. The Master Plan should focus on better

use of public space and create buffers between zoning districts. These lots could be small parks or remain undeveloped. He also brought up the Lowing Woods PUD. He sees the reduced Low Density Residential setback requirements as beneficial to developers but as a detriment to the community. The roadways are overwhelmed as they were not designed for the increased density and he is concerned about the strain on our DPW infrastructure. When residents come to the Zoning Board of Appeals asking for variances they are met with a strict set of seven standards but he feels like developers have gotten the benefit of the doubt in allowing these deviations. He wants to protect low density developments and their aesthetics. And give residents the ability to enjoy their properties without excessive regulation. Focus on putting the individual's freedoms and rights before that of developer's.

Jeannine Bolhouse stated that in the Master Plan she wants to see innovative ideas for what Georgetown Township's growth should look like. She wants to investigate where growth should happen, what it should look like, and where the best areas are for adding density. She does not believe staying stagnant as a community is sustainable for the growth Georgetown Township is experiencing. Specific areas should be called out as areas for growth. We should also decide which areas we want to remain unchanged as they are beautiful and important to our community. The Master Plan review should discuss revenue for the community as we look ahead to significant infrastructure costs. We should have a plan for how we can bring more revenue into our community. This is our opportunity to decide how we want our community to look and where we want growth to happen as staying the same is not an answer.

Kevin Kelly stated he largely agrees with Jim Wierenga's comments. Housing does play a huge role in what needs to be looked at in Georgetown Township but acknowledged that this is not only a Georgetown Township issue. He referenced his son in Plainfield who purchased a "starter home" for \$290,000 that still needs \$100,000 of work before it is livable. Georgetown Township cannot solve the housing issue as it goes much deeper than our community, but he would like to see some other forms of affordable housing in the Township, other than apartments. Transportation is an issue, specifically the Cottonwood/Baldwin and exit area. There should be another exit on the north side of Georgetown without having to go to Grand Valley. He also focused on economic development and said the Township should prioritize attracting restaurants and businesses. Everyone leaves Georgetown to go out to eat, he would like residents to live here and spend their money here. There are dozens of unused Liquor Licenses available and we need to attract them to the Township. We need to maintain our current infrastructure as well.

Brian Reed stated that the Planning Commission will need to evaluate how they can facilitate progress while preserving what the Township has. Revenue streams need to be expanded. Other municipalities have businesses that Georgetown Township does not have and there should be a focus on making Georgetown an attractive destination. The Township needs an attractive destination in which the community calls home and we should be self-sufficient. He supports growth if it is tempered, measured, targeted, and fits with what we already have. This could assist in driving revenue that our community has been missing and will need in the future.

Geoff Brown stated that he is in real estate and is familiar with homes not being cost effective. The larger issue will not be solved in Georgetown but we do need to look at ways to provide more cost effective housing. We also need to generate revenue that is not tax dollars on our people, which means bringing in more businesses. We have to more effectively define Georgetown Township, we currently do not know where "downtown" is. Along the corridors we may need to look at raising our height limits to bring in more businesses off of exit 69. We should be spending

our money here in Georgetown rather than taking those tax dollars elsewhere. In order to preserve what we have, we need to find new ways to fund it.

Kyle Terpstra stated that he agrees with what John Schwalm said, we have to protect what we have in Georgetown. Affordable housing is a very hot topic right now, it is prevalent in the media and discussed at all levels of government. He questioned at what cost is it built. He questioned what a high density area would look like in 50 years' time and how many more services will need to be provided to those areas that do not necessarily generate more tax revenue. He stated that while on the Strategic Impact Board he learned that farmland produces more tax revenue than subdivisions due to the maintenance costs that subdivisions require.

Tanya DeOliveira stated that housing affordability is certainly not only a Georgetown Township problem and not everyone agrees on how to address it. She has experience working with communities and working through these questions. She is here to help facilitate conversations and not everyone needs to agree. The goal is to land in a place that will provide the Township with tools to make decisions later on. She said she recognizes that parks are something that is important to the community and it will be helpful to look at the parks master plan and the county's parks plan. It is clear that everyone loves Georgetown Township. She believes it is wise the members are wrestling with difficult conversations rather than not addressing them at all. She appreciates that the community wants to be Georgetown Township and you should not try to be Kentwood or Wyoming or something that you are not. She will work to set up the Township to have the most control over their future as possible. She looks forward to working with everyone and will be in touch with Justin Stadt and the ZA. It is okay that not everyone agrees at this moment. Everyone has a good understanding that she is looking forward to translating into a Master Plan.

#250519-05 - Public Comments

Shawn Haff, 1482 Winifred St., stated that he believes the parks need work but knows that help is on the way for them. He acknowledged that affordable housing is an issue. His experience on the board of review showed him that there are houses that were built in the 1970's going for \$550,000 that have never been upgraded near the gravel pits. He likes the size of the community and is not overly excited about explosive growth. Some growth is alright, but Georgetown Township is a great community. He was a Grand Valley State University student about 25 years ago and argued for its expansion. Now he does not even recognize it with how much it has grown. He wants to keep the community close knit and avoid it becoming a city.

#250519-06 – Closing Remarks

Jim Wierenga thanked all the members for their attendance, especially the Planning Commission as they will have the responsibility of putting the Master Plan together. He encouraged other members to stay up to date with the process and reminded them that they are invited to the Planning Commission's public meetings.

Josiah Samy stated that everyone is welcome to attend the Planning Commission meetings and assured that everyone in this room is working towards the same goal. He encouraged everyone to read the minutes and to reach out to the ZA or Justin if they have comments they want the Planning Commission to be aware of. It is important to not wait too long until they have a full draft together.

John Schwalm stated that people buy their first homes in Wyoming or Grand Rapids and then after accumulating enough wealth, they can move to Georgetown which is the end of the rainbow. He acknowledged that his kids cannot afford to buy their first house here as he was not able to do that either and started in the inner city. If you radically change that dynamic, then you can radically change our community. He does not support radical change.

Josiah Samy stated that it is not the Planning Commission's goal to radically change our community but there is a balance to be found in offering different types of housing. The goal is not to add a ton of units to Georgetown and radically change it but rather to make sure there are different options available.

John Schwalm stated that is what Grand Rapids and Wyoming need, Georgetown does not need that. People that voted for us do not want to see us go in that direction.

#250519-07 - Adjournment

Moved by Gary Veldink, seconded by Jim Wierenga to adjourn the meeting.

MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:10 p.m.