

Montcalm County

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8:30 a.m. to 12 noon
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Bringing Knowledge to Life



Citizen Planner Sessions Scheduled

MSU Montcalm Extension has received a grant to conduct two special sessions of the Citizen Planner Program. These sessions have been scheduled for Thursday, December 13, 2007 and Thursday, February 28, 2008 at the Montcalm County Intermediate School District Building located at 621 New Street in Stanton.

The Thursday, December 13 session scheduled for 6:00 p.m. is "Working Across Community Boundaries-Coordinated Planning." This session will be beneficial to the more than 150 appointed and elected officials in Montcalm County who are involved with the planning process at the township, city/village and county level.

Three of the areas where coordination can be mutually beneficial include economic development, transportation and water quality. Many see the lack of coordinated planning as one of Michigan's top environmental challenges.

Kurt Schindler, Regional Land Use Educator with MSU Extension, will go through the coordinated planning process of the recent Coordinated Planning Act and the step-by-step process between adjacent jurisdictions and the County Planning Commission.

The session will also cover the Joint Municipal Planning Act of 2003 which applies to cities, villages and townships. This legislation provides for two or more municipalities to adopt an ordinance that approves an agreement establishing a joint planning commission. Schindler will detail the agreements and procedures involved in implementing this act.

The cost for this session is \$15.00 per person. Please register for this session by Monday, December 10, 2007. Make checks payable to MSU Montcalm Extension and mail to: MSU Montcalm Extension, P.O. Box 308, Stanton, MI 48888. Please include your name, address, phone and e-mail address on the attached registration form.

Citizen Planner Sessions Scheduled

(continued from front page)

The second session will be scheduled for Thursday, February 28 at 6:00 p.m. at the Montcalm Area Intermediate School District Building in Stanton. This session will deal with "Planning for Water Quality" and will cover the issues and procedures to consider in preserving ground and surface water quality. Details will be announced at a later date.

Farmland Preservation Meeting

The Montcalm Land Use Coalition is sponsoring a meeting on "Farmland Preservation." The speaker for this Thursday, January 24 session will be Dennis Pennington, Barry County Extension Educator who will talk about the farmland preservation programs that have been implemented in Barry County. The county has approved an ordinance for the purchase of development rights and Pennington will discuss the development, implementation, goals and accomplishments of their county farmland preservation program.

The program will be held at 7:00 p.m. at the Montcalm County Intermediate School District, 621 New Street, Stanton. There is no charge to attend.

The Land Use Coalition is planning a program on Carbon Credits for March 27. Details will be announced at a later date.



Mapping Program Policies Fee Schedule

The Montcalm County Board of Commissioners has recently adopted a set of policies and a fee schedule for the use of the county digital mapping program. Details are available on the web site <www.montcalm.org> under the mapping menu.

The mapping program has many useful features for township, city and village planning commissions and governing boards. The website has base map layers, zoom in and out capabilities, a measuring tool and overlays including parcel ownership and tax information. The site can easily give information in a printable form for all parcel owners within 300 feet of a zoning amendment request.

Training is available to help you with the site. Contact the MSU Montcalm Extension Office at 989-831-7500 for details.

Township Visits

I have appreciated the invitations and the opportunity to visit with several Township Planning Commissions and Boards these past months. This has given me the opportunity to meet commissioners and get acquainted with what is happening in your township and help me better understand what I can do to support your efforts.

I would be happy to schedule a visit with your Township, City or Village. Please give me a call.



Working Across Community Boundaries Coordinated Planning

Thursday, December 13, 2007

6:00 p.m.

Montcalm Area Intermediate School District
621 New Street, Stanton

Cost: \$15.00/person

There are over 1,800 local governments in Michigan with planning and zoning authority. Thousands of citizens are involved in the planning process as appointed or elected officials, making decisions on the township, city/village and county level.

Planning in Michigan is truly citizen-driven.

Speaker Kurt Schindler, Regional Land Use Educator with MSU Extension, will cover legal requirements and the benefits of coordinating planning activities with other local governments.

Please register by **Monday, December 10, 2007**. Make checks payable to MSU Montcalm Extension and mail to MSU Montcalm Extension, P.O. Box 308, Stanton, MI 48888.



Working Across Community Boundaries

Name _____

Address _____

Phone _____ E-mail _____

This program is supported by a grant from the Land Policy Institute at Michigan State University.

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The Importance of Community Review

If you've ever tried to rush a new ordinance quickly through the adoption process, you may wonder why in the world you need to post a notice in the newspaper, wait 15 days, hold a public hearing, then, on top of that, submit the proposed ordinance to the county for review and wait another 30 days for a response (whew)!



State law (the Michigan Zoning Enabling Act of 2006) **requires** that a township planning commission hold a public hearing and that they post a notice in the local newspaper no less than 15 days before the public hearing date to ensure that community members have a reasonable opportunity to attend the public hearing or submit written comments to the planning commission. The public hearing provides the forum for the expression of comments before a decision is made. This law also **requires** the township planning commission to submit the proposed zoning ordinance to the county planning commission for review and comment **after** holding the public hearing. The 30 day period allows time for the county planning commission to meet, review the proposed ordinance and respond back to the township.

I know, many of you are probably thinking about how this is such a waste of time because nobody ever shows up at most of these hearings! However, following these statutory requirements is an issue of due process, protected by our Constitution. Omitting one of these requirements could open up your township to unwanted litigation and undermine the validity of your ordinance.

Obtaining community input can be your most valuable tool as a government official. This input can often shed light on potential unintended consequences of the new ordinance, "loopholes" that may not have been covered, or other issues. Additionally, this process can usually avert later resentment and conflict within your community, particularly when the new ordinance is of a controversial nature. During times like these, it may be prudent for the township board to hold its own public hearing before adopting the new ordinance, although this is not required by law.

Many communities use guides or checklists to ensure that they have properly followed procedures when adopting an ordinance (available through MSU Extension). When in doubt, check with your municipality's consultant or attorney.

By: Ryan Coffey, Newaygo County Land Use Educator

