

Minutes of the Chesterland Steering Committee's Community Presentation

held at West Geauga High School, Room 124
at 3:00 p.m. on Sunday, November 11, 2007

Committee Members:

Present: Bill Laditka
Tom Basista
Bruce Becker
Ron Cotman
Geraldine Fisco
Jeff Huntsberger
Bob Somrak
Tim Todaro

Absent: Jack DeChellis
Joe Mazzurco

Proceedings:

The presentation began at 3:00 p.m.

First agenda item:

As Sunday was Veteran's Day, the committee began the presentation with the recitation of the Pledge of Allegiance. Following this, the committee took a moment to thank the veterans present for the service they have provided.

Second agenda item:

The committee members took turns to introduce themselves and talk a little bit about their backgrounds.

Third agenda item:

Bill Laditka explained briefly the events that led to the development of the Steering Committee.

Fourth agenda item:

Geraldine Fisco shared with everyone her vision of Chesterland.

Fifth agenda item:

Geraldine Fisco presented the Mission Statement. Jeff Huntsberger and Bill Laditka listed and explained the Cornerstone Principles.

Sixth agenda item:

The committee introduced the ad-hoc issues, expounded briefly on what they are and asked for volunteers to help explore and research these issues. Sign-up sheets were available in the back of the room after the presentation for those interested in joining the ad-hoc committees.

Seventh agenda item:

Bill Laditka presented the committee's planning (big picture) schedule, listing the committee's tentative schedule and goals for the next three to four months. The committee hopes to compile all information by March 2008 and may hire a consultant in April to guide it through the rest of the planning process.

Eighth agenda item:

Bill Laditka informed people of Front Porch and its location. The committee hopes to make Front Porch a place where people can get together to discuss the future of Chesterland. The committee will try to make up-to-date information readily available at the Front Porch. In addition, the committee intends to create a wall of collage to enable people to put up pictures and comments of what Chesterland means to them and what Chesterland should or could be.

Ninth agenda item:

The approximately 40 public attendees were invited to speak. Some of the questions and comments that were shared were:

1. How does the Steering Committee plan to collect real information from the community as most of them will be quiet about what they want for Chesterland?
 - Through smaller groups of people such as existing organizations, the Front Porch, surveys and questionnaires and the committee itself will go out and engage with the people of Chesterland.
2. Have seen many towns like Chesterland that opted to build strip malls and when the malls were abandoned, the towns became "ghost towns" and hope Chesterland would not head in that direction.
3. Are the commercial property owners and developers supporting this plan?
4. Are there ways to stop certain visually unattractive buildings from coming in before the plans are fully developed?
5. Does the committee have a blog, website or email to keep everyone in touch?
 - The committee is very interested in using technology to create the "big dialogue" but would need help from volunteers with knowledge and expertise in these areas to help make it possible.
6. What does the committee envision the Town Center to be?
 - The committee has no answer for this question because ultimately the goal is to have the people of Chesterland tell the committee what they want/desire for Chesterland.
7. Feels that if the committee is thinking about a walking town, the town center would have to be away from the corner of Mayfield Road and Chillicothe Road because there is too much traffic and too many safety issues involved.
 - The committee does not know where the town center would be and is exploring all options by doing research and getting input from the community. The committee feels that the important thing is to identify what we (the people of Chesterland) want first.
8. Thinks that the committee instead of coming up with the master plan should focus on a few small steps first to get people on board such as ways to help concerned pedestrians cross our streets safely right now.

- The committee thinks it is important to get the whole picture first before addressing the smaller steps so we would actually know where to go. It is a long process but it does not mean it is not possible to slowly get people involved and pick a project or two that can be done right now to discuss with the Board of Trustees. This will hopefully result in something tangible to show the community what Chesterland is capable of becoming. For example, one of the committee's members, Jack DeChellis has set up his own Landscaping Committee on the side, to create and beautify the "gateway" to Chesterland. Working with volunteers, the goal is to put up split rail fencing in some sections of Mayfield Road between County Line Road and Caves Road. The beautification of the "gateway" also includes planting trees and spotlighting. He mentioned that the committee has met with Hawken School, and it is very interested in being part of the project. Hawken School is also willing to put up a "Welcome to Chesterland" sign on its property. The Landscape Committee will next try to convince private homeowners to participate in the project.
9. Many Chesterland residents are afraid that the master plan will eventually lead to increased density and higher taxes. Suggested that the committee may want to poll the community on what they want before putting too much effort into developing the master plan. Also thought that the committee will probably get more support if it just focuses on senior housing instead of the whole town center. The committee will need to find ways to get ahead of the rumor mill to avoid being run over by it.
 - Will need to let people know that the master plan is not about increasing density or taxes.
 10. Increased taxes are going to chase people away, so the important thing is to find someone who can write grants.
 - The committee will eventually want to find someone who can write grants but right now, it is still at a preliminary stage where it is exploring and researching options for Chesterland and trying to get input from Chesterland residents on what they want for the town. If we do not know what we want, we will not know what grants to apply for.
 11. Support what this committee is doing because have not seen any improvement in Chesterland for the past three decades, only deterioration.
 12. Do not want Chesterland to continue deteriorating and eventually attract undesirable businesses to the area. Do not want Chesterland ending up like Brookpark Road. Support the committee in trying to come up with a plan/vision for Chesterland.
 - The committee wants input from the people of Chesterland. It will be a chance for Chesterland residents to dictate the kind of town they want. The committee wants to create a "big dialogue" where residents can freely communicate their wants, visions, and ideas and encourages everyone present to get the word out.
 13. Feel that we (the township and residents) have very little say in the community. For example, the State can do whatever they want along Mayfield Road and Route 306.
 - It is possible to work with the State but first we would have to know what we want and research those options.

14. Feel that residents from Russell contribute to the economy of Chesterland because they do a lot shopping in Chesterland. Wonder if the committee accepts volunteers from Russell.
 - Yes.
15. Wonder what is the State's plan for Mayfield Road and maybe the committee should find that out first. What type of funding does the committee have?
 - The committee does not have the authority to implement anything. The committee is currently exploring and researching options for Chesterland and trying to find out what Chesterland residents want. The committee does not have any type of funding. All committee members are volunteers.
16. Support what the committee is doing and believe that it is important to have a master plan first before proceeding towards individual (smaller scale) projects.
17. Never heard any resident wants to change from township to city.
18. What are the different municipality options?
 - Senator Grendell explained the differences between a township, a village, and a city, noting that the main difference is that a township has no income tax. While it is possible to have a village within a township, cases have shown that there are usually a lot of problems associated with that type of relationship and most of the time, the village and township ended up merging anyway. The main concern is changing from a township into a city because it will then be responsible for all the current state roads, which translates into higher taxes for the residents. On the other hand, the State does have a lot of control over a township, requiring the township to go through the State to get permission to do some things.
 - Again, the committee is simply gathering information such as that just given by Senator Grendell. The committee has no authority to decide anything and is not saying if Chesterland should adopt one form of government over another. The committee is just trying to document all available information so that if ever such situation arises, the township and its residents will be able to decide which way they want to go.
19. Been to Township Meetings for the past two years and know that there are a lot of untrue rumors and irresponsible reporting going on in Chesterland. Wonder if the committee has any idea of how to overcome the rumor mill and irresponsible reporting.
20. Every year, the Chamber of Commerce tries to acknowledge businesses in Chesterland for making their property aesthetically appealing. This year, the Chamber of Commerce only sent out ten letters. On the whole, there is nothing charming about Chesterland and the town does suffer from it. We have to create a reason for residents to stay and shop in Chesterland instead of spending their money elsewhere.
21. Chesterland is unappealing. Nothing sets Chesterland apart from other rundown towns.
22. We now have exactly what we planned. Let us now go forward and try to change what we all agree that we do not like. If we know what we want Chesterland to be, we can eventually work with the State (when they do make changes within Chesterland) to achieve what we want.

23. The committee may want to consider video and audio recording to help prevent untrue rumors, and also to capture all the education points that are made in the meeting.
24. Support what the committee is doing and told the committee not to be discouraged by all the negative comments. There are many residents who do not want to continue to live in the current condition Chesterland is in.
25. Suggest digital recording of every meeting to put on the township's website to let everybody know of everything that transpires in these meetings.

Tenth agenda item:

The presentation continued to one-on-one discussions for those who were interested.

The meeting officially adjourned at 6:00 p.m.

Minutes submitted by Administrative Assistant, S. Christine Gumal.