



A MICHIGAN HISTORICAL SITE

CHARLEVOIX COUNTY PLANNING COMMISSION

301 State Street
Charlevoix, Michigan 49720
(231) 547-7234 / (231) 237-0113
planning@charlevoixcounty.org

Tentative Agenda
December 3, 2015
7:00 p.m.
Commissioners' Room
County Building

- I. Call to Order
- II. Pledge of Allegiance
- III. Approval of Agenda
- IV. Public Comments Unrelated to Agenda Items
- V. County Business Items
 - Approval of Minutes of October 1, 2015 Meeting
 - Correspondence and Communications
 - Planning Commission Comments
 - County Commissioner Comments
 - Staff Comments
 - Status of Future Land Use Plan Update
 - Discussion of 2016 Work Program
- VI. Townships, Cities, MDEQ & Corps of Engineers Items
- VII. Any Unfinished County Business
- VIII. Adjournment



CHARLEVOIX COUNTY PLANNING COMMISSION

301 State Street
Charlevoix, Michigan 49720
(231) 547-7234
planning@charlevoixcounty.org

DRAFT Meeting Minutes October 1, 2015

I. Call to Order

Chairman Jason called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. in the Commissioners' Room at the Charlevoix County Building.

Members present: Dennis Jason, Michael Buttigieg, Bob Tidmore, Larry Levensgood, Patrick Howard, and Ron Van Zee

Members absent: Bob Draves (excused)

Others present: Kiersten Stark (Planning Coordinator), Lora Manning (Administrative Technician) and Ron Reinhardt (County Commissioner Liaison)

II. Pledge of Allegiance

Dennis Jason led the Planning Commission in reciting the Pledge of Allegiance.

III. Approval of Agenda

MOTION by Larry Levensgood, seconded by Ron Van Zee, to approve the tentative agenda as presented. Voice Vote: all in favor. Motion passed.

IV. Public Comments Unrelated to Agenda Items

None

V. County Business Items

Approval of Minutes of September 3, 2015 Meeting

Motion by Larry Levensgood, seconded by Michael Buttigieg, to approve the minutes as presented. Voice Vote: all in favor. Motion passed.

Correspondence and Communications

- DEQ notice of post closure inspection at Cedar Ridge Recycling and Disposal Facility in Eveline Township; the facility appeared to be in compliance
- DEQ notice of inspection at the Waste Management Charlevoix transfer station, which appeared to be in compliance; the facility is currently leased by St. Marys Cement, Inc. to store source-separated plastics used as fuel in the cement-making process
- DEQ notice of inspection of the St. Marys Cement, Inc. landfill, which appeared to be in compliance
- DNR press release regarding Public Input Session on October 12, 2015 from 5:30 to 7:30 p.m. at the Charlevoix Public Library to discuss the DNR's proposed management plan for Fisherman's Island State Park
- DNR email announcing the Northern Lake Michigan Great Lakes Islands Collaborative Inaugural Meeting to be held on October 13, 2015 from 2:00 to 6:00 p.m. at Peaine Township Hall
- The next MSU Extension Master Citizen Planner webinar will be held on October 15th from 7:00 to 8:00 p.m. on the topic of New & Innovative Techniques in Park and Recreation Development Projects; 1 continuing education credit will be offered. Jason and Levengood are both interested in attending, but Kiersten will not be available to host the webinar at the County Building. Lora Manning was not certain if she would be available to host it, and will need to check her schedule; Kiersten will also contact Ross Maxwell (Parks Director) to see if he may be interested in the webinar and, if so, if he could possibly host it at Whiting Park; some of the Parks Committee members may also be interested in attending
- Charlevoix County Planners Forum flyer: The event will be held on Thursday November 5, 2015 from 5:00 to 9:00 p.m. at the Charlevoix Public Library; all Commission members would like to attend; Kiersten said she will be one of the speakers for the panel discussion regarding accessing information and resources on planning and zoning issues

Planning Commission Comments

- **Ron Van Zee:** *Both townships (Bay and Hayes) have been very busy, a lot of variance requests and special use permit applications in both townships. * Met with Scott Rasmusson from the DEQ regarding potential improvements that residents of Pine Point Subdivision would like to make to the beach area used by the public at the end of Eastern Avenue in Hayes Township. Contrary to the DEQ's position in the past, Mr. Rasmusson seemed to feel that although there are wetland issues in this location, he'd prefer to see the desired improvements done at one beach at the road end rather than on several individual parcels. * Buttigieg asked if there is a trend in all of the variance requests and special use permit applications. Van Zee stated the variance requests are virtually all on waterfront properties, but mostly to move closer to the rear lot line, away from the waterfront, and the special use permit applications are primarily for small home-based businesses.

- **Patrick Howard:** *Doesn't have anything to report at this time.
- **Michael Buttigieg:** * The "Gravel Grinder" bicycling event will be Saturday October 3rd and will have some international participants as well as individuals from many other states. * Heard that the results of the state lamprey study are in and for the first time in decades the numbers are finally coming down.
- **Larry Levensgood:** * Attended the Lake Charlevoix Steering Committee meeting last month; talked about installing fish shelters in Lake Charlevoix, and now there is an app for your cell phone to find the locations of the shelters. Some lakes are seeing an effect from the shelters and some are not. * The Household Hazardous Waste Collection Event was held September 11-12 and appeared to be the biggest yet. Alison Adams, who is replacing Kelly Martin as the Conservation District Coordinator, also worked at the event. Levensgood feels she will do well and has a lot of enthusiasm for the position.
- **Bob Tidmore:** * Beaver Island's big event last month was the collaborative meeting with representatives from several islands in Maine at which they discussed common issues and how best to address them. It was very informative, and participants identified the 3 primary issues of concern on our Island: marketing, telecommunications, and the Island economy. He felt it was very productive overall and they will continue working with this group in the future. * DNR spoke to the Wildlife Club on the Island this past month. Discussed the bass numbers in the Archipelago and they are coming up. Bass tagged in the area are being found 40-50 miles away, with fish traveling between the Archipelago, the Traverse City area, and across to the Upper Peninsula. The DNR is not in favor of the fish shelters as they feel they don't necessarily help to increase the numbers, but instead simply get the fish to congregate, making them more easily accessible.
- **Dennis Jason:** * Also attended the Beaver Island collaborative meeting and found it very informative. * Attended the last Parks Committee meeting, and the non-motorized trail funding is not going well. The construction bids for Phase 1 came in and we were short roughly \$240,000. Phase 1 will go out for rebidding in January. Phase 2 will go out for bid in February. The Frey Foundation declined our grant application for Phase 3. Jason feels that the Parks Millage funds of \$100,000 could be better served by being put towards the trail as he feels this is the primary economic stimulus project the county has, and we need to look at whatever we can do to make this happen.

County Commissioner Comments

Commissioner Reinhardt: * Stated he's fine with the Parks Committee using any funds they have in their budget in any way they wish, towards parks or this trail; however, he will not personally support any means of taking general fund or millage funds allotted for

townships and applying it to the trail project. He has spoken to people and businesses in other areas and they all indicate it is the motorized hobbyists on ATVs, ORVs and snowmobiles that are spending money in their businesses and buying their gas, not the bicyclists. He feels we have a lot of people here who should be supporting that more as well. Bob Tidmore commented that on Beaver Island they are happy to see people and families frequently in town on golf carts and side-by-sides spending money and enjoying activities.

Staff Comments

Kiersten Stark: * She has been working with the Parks Department, heavily involved with the non-motorized trail and its grants and funding. It is very difficult to line up the funding sources to integrate the way they need to for this multi-phase project. She has recently submitted a grant application to the Community Foundation for \$52,000, which is a portion of the local match needed for Phase 3. She's also looking at other grant opportunities for this project. * Parks Millage Work Group follow-up meeting was held today to discuss ways to fine-tune the application process. There will be an information session on the application process for township, city and village officials to be held on October 19th at 1:00 p.m. in the Pine Lake Room.

Reschedule November Meeting

In order to avoid a scheduling conflict with the Charlevoix County Planners Forum on November 5th, the Commission rescheduled their next meeting for Wednesday November 4th at 7:00 p.m. in the Commissioners' Room. Kiersten said she hasn't yet scheduled the monthly meetings in any other location as that will take some time to arrange. She will also talk to Kevin Shepard, the County Coordinator, further about changing locations.

VI. Townships, Cities, MDEQ & Corps of Engineers Items

City of East Jordan Master Plan Draft

Kiersten summarized the Planning Department Staff Review of the proposed City of East Jordan Master Plan. In comparing the proposed future land uses in East Jordan with the planned future uses in South Arm Township along the shared border, the only potential issue is northeast of the East Jordan Community Park where there is an existing residential area in the City bordering an existing Industrial area in South Arm Township. Although, at this time there doesn't appear to be any land use conflicts. She also had a few minor suggested changes, such as on page 36 regarding the location of the East Jordan Senior Center. The plan indicates that the Senior Center is located downtown in the Civic Center, but it is moving to a new location. The future land use map also poses some difficulty in distinguishing between some of the blue and gray shades (commercial and industrial categories), which they may wish to change. She also noted that the street scape photos included very few people and that adding a few more photos of people would further enhance the plan. Jason felt the plan was very well done, and they provided a very good explanation of the planning process. Levengood commented he

was somewhat surprised that the bridge seemed to be portrayed in a negative light, and he feels it is one of the city's more unique features.

MOTION by Dennis Jason, seconded by Larry Levengood, to send a letter to the City of East Jordan, stating their Plan was well done, and that no issues were found aside from those noted in the Planning Department Staff Review. Voice Vote: all in favor. Motion passed.

VII. Any Unfinished County Business

None

VIII. Adjournment

MOTION by Michael Buttigieg, seconded by Bob Tidmore, to adjourn the meeting at 8:20 p.m. All members were in favor of the motion. Motion passed.

Submitted by:

Robert L. Tidmore
Secretary

RLT/llm



News and analysis from **The Center for Michigan** • <http://thecenterformichigan.net>

©2015 Bridge Michigan. All Rights Reserved. • Join us online at <http://bridgemi.com>

Original article URL: <http://bridgemi.com/2015/11/the-graying-of-michigan-farmers-and-what-they-will-leave-behind/>

Economy & competitive position

The graying of Michigan farmers, and what they will leave behind

5 November 2015

by **Ron French**
Bridge Magazine

27

MASON – Jeff Oesterle may be the new face of farming, even though that face is 65 years old.

At an age when his non-farmer neighbors in Ingham County, are retiring and collecting Social Security checks, Oesterle is planting and harvesting 4,500 acres of corn, wheat, soybeans and hay.

The average Michigan farmer in 2012 was 57.6 years old, eight years older than the average for farmers a generation ago in 1982, and almost 16 years older than the median Michigan worker in 2012, the most recent statistical year available. While the graying of Michigan’s farmers isn’t likely to have an impact on consumers, it is reshaping what we think of as traditional family farms in the state.

“People like to look at a little 80-acre farm that raises a few head of hogs and cattle and maybe a few chickens running around, Oesterle said. “It looks good in a magazine.” But it’s increasingly no longer the norm in Michigan.

In reality, family farms are larger than ever, pricing out many young people who might in past generations have purchased farmland, and setting the



Jeff Oesterle, center, is one of a growing number of Michigan farmers who continue to work the fields after age 65. He has help on his farm from his sons, Don, on the left, and Russ, right. (Courtesy photo)

Aging farmers

Michigan’s farm operators are advancing in years, raising questions about who will take over the state’s massive agriculture industry



stage for major turnover in the next 20 years as older farmers retire, according to David Widmar, an agricultural economist with **Agricultural Economic Insights**, and a researcher at Purdue University.

The average age of farmers is over 50 in every county in the state, ranging from 50.8 in Oscoda County in northeast Michigan, to 61.9 in the Upper Peninsula's Schoolcraft County.

The graying of the Michigan farmer sounds like a story of demographics, but at its root, it's about economics.

"It takes such a large amount of capital to start a farm," Oesterle said. "It's almost impossible ... for young people to get into the business."

In the past, farmers passed their farms onto their children, but "more and more children are not staying in agriculture," said Frank Wardynski, the Michigan State University beef and dairy extension educator in Ontonagon County, where the average farmer was 61.4 in 2012. "So mom and dad are farming until they retire, and then selling the farm."

And young people can't afford to buy those farms like they might have a generation or two ago. "Usually they're selling it to other older farmers. Maybe not as old as them, but not a new farmer," Wardynski said. "No one graduates from high school with enough money to start doing that."

The trend is the same across the country. The average age of farmers is rising across the United States, ranging from 55.7 in Nebraska to 61.1 in Arizona. More than a third of farmers were over the age of 65 in 2012, according to data from the U.S. Department of Agriculture. There were more farmers over the age of 65 than all farmers under the age of 45 combined.

To some extent, the graying of farmers across the U.S. and in Michigan is a reflection of the U.S. population as a whole growing older, said Widmar, the Purdue researcher, who studies ag economics and trends and has **written about aging farmers**.

— worth \$3.9 billion in 2014 — when they retire. **Click on a county to see the median age for farm operators, compared with the median age of the population.**



Source: U.S. Census of Agriculture

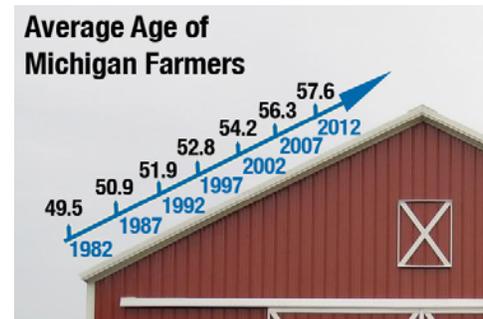
“The U.S. workforce is aging, we’re living longer and we’re working longer in life,” Widmar said.

One hundred years ago, the largest percentage of farmers were between the ages of 35-44, Widmar said. By 1980, the largest share were aged 55-64. Now, the largest proportion of farmers are over 65.

“At some point, they’re going to exit production,” Widmar said. “When that happens, it’s going to change the dynamics of who controls farmland.”

Fewer farms, more corporate

That could mean more corporate-owned farms. But it almost definitely will mean a further concentration of farmland in fewer hands, as those with the capital to buy farmland extend their holdings, Widmar said.



One third of all farmland in the nation is owned by farmers over age 65. The USDA estimates that 10 percent of all farmland will **change hands in the next five years.**

“How will that play out? Is there a family member who is going to step up and continue the operation? We don’t know that from the data,” Widmar said. “What we do know is, when you look at the trends, when a third of the population leaves, there aren’t a lot of farmers to step up and fill that void.”

MSU Extension officer Steve Lovejoy says there’s no need to panic. He argues that the farmer-age data distributed by the USDA is misleading because it only considers the age of the “primary operator” of a farm, not everyone who works there.

“You’ve got grandpa who is still considered the patriarch of the family, and maybe two generations working with the farm who aren’t counted,” Lovejoy said. “That’s different from (median worker age) in other aspects of the economy.”

That’s the situation for Ingham County farmer Oesterle. “My grandfather was a farmer and my father was a farmer,” Oesterle said, “and now I have two sons who work on the farm and grandchildren who are interested in farming.”

Some older farmers who don’t have children interested in taking over operations are finding ways to pass along their acreage to young farmers. Lovejoy says some farmers have signed contracts with young workers who operate their farms in exchange for a stake in the land that grows over time.

The USDA, meanwhile, is developing what amounts to a **matchmaking service**, connecting veteran farmers looking to retire with young farmers willing to work their way to ownership.

The National Young Farmers Coalition has pushed for policy changes that would ease the path for young agriculture workers, such as student loan forgiveness programs similar to those that exist for some teachers and physicians.

“I see stories that say, ‘Oh my God, farmers are dying off,’” MSU Extension officer Lovejoy said. “Well, I have no doubt the land is going to get produced as long as my grandchildren live.”

“I don’t think we’re going to run out of farms,” Widmar said. “But I do think we’re going to see a transition from farmers to farms, where the business doesn’t cease to exist (when a farmer retires or dies). Producers are going to become larger and have a different skill set.

“I don’t think consumers will notice anything,” Widmar said. “But inside the industry, the players are going to change.”

Senior Writer Ron French joined Bridge in 2011, after winning more than 40 state and national journalism awards at The Detroit News. [See more stories by him here.](#)

3 comments from Bridge readers.

Karen Fifelski

November 5, 2015 at 9:50 am

I hope that the increase of the “factory” farm doesn’t continue. I am a beekeeper and it is almost impossible to find places to place my bees as it is. I have to find places that is not affected by pesticides, fungicides and herbicides. These chemicals not only affect the forager bees that are directly exposed to them but the queen bee with her reproduction and the larvae.

Also even though there are thousands of acres of “green” there is little to nothing form the honey be to eat. The corn and soybeans only blossom or have pollen once then there is nothing to eat forage on.

Jim

November 5, 2015 at 9:53 am

The fact is Oesterle’s are an example of how this land is being handled. They are passing it to another generation. Of course they and other farmers are buying some of their neighbors land, but it will still be farmed. This is happening all over the state, and across the country. There will be more large farms simply because of economics, but that isn’t unique to agriculture...consider the retail environment, and just look at the concentration in the grocery industry, dry good, pharmacy, auto parts business or most any other sector of our economy. The reference to “corporate” farms is also interesting...exactly who are they? There are some very large farms that are incorporated because of tax reasons, but still run by the family that owns the farm.

Matt

November 5, 2015 at 12:05 pm

Just got back from South Dakota, same thing or more so there. But don’t worry, we may not see self driving cars on our roads real soon but i’ll bet within 5 years you see one farmer able to be working five fields simultaneously while he is sitting at his kitchen table looking at his smart phone! Looking at those big fields, I wouldn’t blame him. The same trend continues.