

CASCADE CHARTER TOWNSHIP

STRATEGIC PLAN 2014-2016

Adopted by the Township Board on November 2, 2011

I. Overview

In July 2011 the members of the Cascade Charter Township Board outlined their shared vision of the future of the Township. The Supervisor, Board and Manager were later joined by Staff Leaders of the Township to discuss how to attain the vision and goals identified by the Board. In a subsequent meeting the Treasurer, Manager and Staff Leaders identified the tasks that could be completed in each goal area in the first year of the plan.

This is a summary of the total teams' key areas of discussion:

- A Vision Tour of Cascade Charter Township circa 2014-2016
- Major Goal Areas that were identified from the vision tour
- Major Strategic Goals including:
 - a) Key objectives
 - b) Tasks to be completed in one year

II. A Vision Tour of Cascade Charter Township circa 2014-2016

By 2016, a visitor to Cascade Charter Township will be given the following tour:

- A community with a successful and thriving Village Center that would include destination restaurants, shopping and family oriented recreational activities.
- Completed streetscapes to 28th Street and Cascade Road possibly with traffic calming improvements in the vicinity of the intersection.
- Create a Convention/Visitors Bureau that promotes Cascade Township as a business location, a place to visit and live.
- A mass transit system with express service to downtown Grand Rapids.
- A River Front Area that would support more pedestrian traffic with walkways and destination restaurants especially at Thornapple and Cascade Roads.

Vision tour continued -

- Recreational opportunities that serve residents and draw visitors to the Township, including:
 - a) Peace Park with nature oriented activities.
 - b) Completion of existing natural parks.
 - c) Development of Recreation Department programs (pool, softball, etc.) that attract people to the area.
 - d) Continued development of pathways and trails.

Vision tour continued.

- Continued economic development encouraging commercial and retail businesses to the Township, including:
 - a) The Town Center
 - b) Complete the Commercial/Industrial Park and develop appropriate tax incentives.
 - c) Attract a university or college campus or expansion of the flight school at Centennial Park.
 - d) Develop an Automotive Repair Park.
- Continue to support township services that help to maintain the viability of the community including:
 - a) Consolidation or realignment of public safety services.
 - b) Expansion of sewer and water.
 - c) Buried utilities.
 - d) All funds are self-supporting.
 - e) Maintain Township millages at minimum levels required to provide quality services to residents to be competitive with other communities.

III. Major Goal Areas (Not Prioritized)

In order to realize the 2016 Vision for Cascade Charter Township the Board identified Four Major Areas of Focus for the Township:

Goal Area One

Cascade Township is a destination with a strong regional identity.

Goal Area Two

Infrastructure that supports the current and future needs of the community.

Goal Area Three

Recreational development that supports residents and attracts visitors.

Goal Area Four

Maintenance of the financial health of the township.

IV. Major Goal Areas with Key Objectives and One Year Tasks (2011-2012)

Goal Area One

Cascade Township is a family friendly community that supports economic development and growth and has developed a town center, a pedestrian oriented river front and has a strong identity throughout the region.

1. Objective: Develop a Town Center at 28th Street and Cascade Road that attracts business, shoppers and visitors and readily identifies Cascade as a destination.

Tasks to be completed in 2011-2012:

- Organize a Collaborative Task Group with the Mission of:
 - a) Gather existing plans and discuss their impact on development in the Town Center area.
 - b) Identifying possibilities for development.
 - c) Commission a single plan that blends the existing plans for future consideration.

- Participants in the Collaborative Task Group might include: the DDA, Property Owners, Board Representative, Staff, the County Road Commission, Cascade Community Foundation, Forest Hills Business Association, etc.

2. Objective: Develop the River Front into a Pedestrian Friendly Destination

Tasks to be completed in 2011-2012:

- Investigate and report on the feasibility of further development along the river. This includes contacting current owners and exploring location options (Auto Repair Park) and costs assessments. Report findings to the Board for potential future actions.

Goal Area Two

Cascade Township continues to maintain and expand its infrastructure in order to support the present and future needs of the community.

1. Objective: Bury utilities in selected areas of the community

Tasks to be completed in 2011-2012:

- Support and coordinate with the DDA's effort to study this objective. Identify priority locations, determine cost and funding and complete the study and set priorities (phases)

2. Objective: Develop Efficient, Service Effective and Cost Effective Approaches to Offering Police and Fire Services.

Tasks to be completed in 2011-2012:

- Study other approaches to Police and Fire Services other than single stand alone department. This includes pros and cons of; PSO, Shared facilities and/or equipment, Attrition/reduced service levels with more personnel on-call, consolidation with other entities.
- Provide information so that the Board can make a decision within the year.

3. Objective: Provide Mass Transit Service from Cascade Township to Downtown Grand Rapids.

Tasks to be completed in 2011-2012:

- Gather information and review prior studies that were done on latent demand for mass transit (buses) in Cascade Township.
- Identify areas for service, including express shuttle.
- Obtain cost data for other options.
- Identify funding options.
- Bring study with options to the Board for decision.

4. Objective: Insure Future Water and Sewer Sustainability.

Tasks to be completed in 2011-2012:

- Conduct a comprehensive water and sewer sustainability study and compare costs to other communities.
- Report to the Board for further decisions.

Goal Area Three

Maintain and Continue to Develop Recreational Opportunities that Support Cascade Residents and Attract Visitors to the Community.

1. Objective: Completion of Natural Parks.

Tasks to be completed in 2011-2012:

- Burton Park
 - a) Determine and report on providing access for bikes on paved portions only.
 - b) Determine and report on vehicular access from the Burton entrance to the handicapped parking area. Consider the impact on “through traffic” from Burton to Windcrest.
 - c) Create accurate pathways map for distribution with addition of trail markers.
 - d) Investigate and report on promotional ideas to increase usage (i.e., guided walks, cross country skiing, yoga in the park) and advertise in the Cascade Connection.
- Peace Park
 - a) Construct/place self-guided kiosks with map.
 - b) Create trail markers.
- McGraw Park, construct/place self-guided kiosks with maps.
- McGraw Park (2012-13) determine and report on the possibility of a Boardwalk in wetland areas that are frequently inaccessible due to flooding.

2. Objective: Add/Improve Recreational Opportunities within the Township

Tasks to be completed in 2011-2012:

- Investigate improvements to all existing fields in the Rec. Park.
- Investigate the need and timing to create basketball courts in the Rec. Park.
- Examine and make a recommendation to the Board regarding a fee structure for park usage by “for profit” entities
- (2012-13) Determine and report on the installation of a “Splash Pad”
- (2012-13) Examine and make a recommendation to the Board regarding the possibilities of additional township programs to be offered in the Parks
- Pursue and report on collaboration with other entities for recreational opportunities.

3. Objective: Add to Existing Pedestrian Pathways

Tasks to be completed in 2011-2012:

- (2013-14) Form a focus group to determine location and time line for additional pathways and determine cost and millage

Goal Area Four

Maintain the Present and Future Financial Health of the Township

- 1. Objective: Review bond and debt issues annually to pay down if interest income continues at current low rates and there are sufficient surplus funds available.**

Tasks to be completed in 2011-2012:

- Review bonds that are callable in 2012. Recommend to Finance Committee appropriation of funds in the 2012 budget for those Callable Bonds. (Muni Notes at US Bank-Pathways and Tassel, due 2016 and 2002 Bonds at Bank of NY-IRF and Pathways due 2017).
- Review the CIP for coming year; while interest is low, recommend the acquisition of big items with lease agreements or installment plans as opposed to bonds.
- MERS investments are currently earning substantial interest. Investigate and report on the advantages or disadvantages of paying down the Township's pension debt liability.

- 2. Objective: Maintain Fund Balance**

Tasks to be completed in 2011-2012:

- Propose a process for review of revenue on a regular basis. Keep revenues and expenditures in alignment.
- Propose a policy that will add responsibilities to department heads to monitor and maintain their budgets. Propose a budget amendment form that requires reasons for budget adjustments.
- Enforce budget limits. Propose a policy of not approving purchases and services in line items that are in deficit.
- Include Accounting Department in Manager/Department Head Budget Preparation Process.
- Establish workflow process where line item spending crosses departments.

- 3. Objective Develop Cash Flow/Capital Expenditure Forecast.**

Tasks to be completed in 2011-2012:

- Create a quarterly cash flow forecast.
- Update the ten year forecast every three years.
- Review all voted upon millage rates and make recommendations regarding increasing or decreasing the rate prior to placement on the ballot.
- Review the Township's financial health on a regular schedule. Have the Treasurer, Deputy Treasurer, Finance Director and Accountant meet monthly to review the following: Upcoming projects, debt, CIP, Additional bond issues, millage and projected taxable values.
- Propose a policy to require consideration of the source of funds to support an added expenditure as an amendment to the annual budget.
- Establish transparency to the citizens by updating the report of the Township's financial health on the Township web site.

SUGGESTED NEXT STRATEGIC PLANNING STEPS

Unlike traditional long-range planning, strategic plans are designed to maintain an ongoing discussion among leaders regarding goals and direction of the community. Strategic plans must be flexible in order to capture unforeseen opportunities or deal with emerging challenges. To support this ongoing discussion it is suggested that the leaders of Cascade Township take the following actions:

- The Manager, Treasurer, Clerk and Department Heads review this document to insure that it is in line with their commitments and understandings.
- Identify champions (leaders) for each objective.
- The Manager submits the strategic plan for discussion, potential adjustment and final approval.
- The Manager will post the Strategic Plan on the Township Web Site and encourage public involvement to assist in the implementation of the plan.
- The Board should get monthly updates from Staff on one or more goals that are in work progress.
- The Board and senior staff should conduct a complete review of the status of the strategic plan six months after approval.
- One year after approval the Board and Staff should review the total plan, progress to date and identify tasks to be completed in the next year

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