

Land Use Series

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Bringing
Knowledge
to Life!

Planning Under Michigan Planning Enabling Acts: The Wexford County Example

*“Thirty seven million
acres is all the Michigan
we will ever have.”*

Former Governor
William G. Milliken

This flyer presents a method, or procedure for planning in Michigan which both incorporates the state-of-the-art for involving the public, and tools for public involvement management. This flyer follows the current research on public engagement. This flyer also explains how that public process is incorporated with the procedures required by Michigan statute’s coordinated planning and the new Michigan Planning Enabling Act. Particularly exciting are the reports from those communities using this system as to how smoothly and successfully their planning process was. This was also true with Wexford County –used as the pilot for this process, and reported here.

In 2001, for the first time in decades, significant amendments were made to Michigan’s Planning Enabling Acts. (Since then those three Acts¹ were codified into the Michigan Planning Enabling Act, and the content of the 2001 amendments remained in the new act.) These amendments provided new procedures for coordinating planning between adjoining units of local government. This paper summarizes the process, and then provides details for implementing these amendments. Models for facilitating the process are included. Finally, Wexford County is used as an example of possibly the first county in the state to develop a countywide plan under these new amendments.

Among other things, the coordinated planning added *procedures* for developing and adopting a plan. In general, the new basic process is that a unit of government developing a plan first provides notice of the intention to plan. The next step is to conduct background studies and research. A draft plan is then prepared, circulated, and public hearings are held. During this phase, adjoining units of local government are expected to review and comment on the draft plan. Following public hearings, the plan is then approved by the planning commission, and in some cases, by the local legislative body.

Wexford County (Cadillac, Manton, Mesick) is used as an example for preparing a plan and describing the adoption of a new plan.

Michigan State University
Extension Land Use Team

<http://ntweb11a.ais.msu.edu/luaoe/index.asp>

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¹P.A. 282 of 1945, as amended, (being the County Planning Act, M.C.L. 125.101 *et seq.*); P.A. 168 of 1959, as amended, (being the Township Planning Act, M.C.L. 125.321 *et seq.*); and P.A. 285 of 1931, as amended, (being the Municipal Planning Act, M.C.L. 125.31 *et seq.*).

The Chair of the County Board of Commissioners, the County Extension Director, a GIS technician, and the County Planner were responsible for planning the process. They were committed to including the public and multiple stakeholders, and to finishing the draft-writing process in one year. A one-year deadline may be daunting for a complex process with a large body of citizens. To accomplish this task, Wexford County used the Zig-Zag Decision Making Method,² combined with an inclusive planning process involving many people and coordinated planning principles. The Zig-Zag model of decision making is a systematic thinking process that can be used by teams to help make effective decisions. This model fosters:

- a. systematic thought about what is known about a situation or problem – the facts;
- b. what might be accomplished – the possibilities;
- c. what the likely outcomes of each possible course of action are – the consequences; and
- d. how each alternative might affect everyone involved or connected – the impacts.

After consciously going through this thinking process, the best alternatives are usually easier to choose. This process helps ensure that all-important information is included. The Zig Zag Model design is in Figure 1.

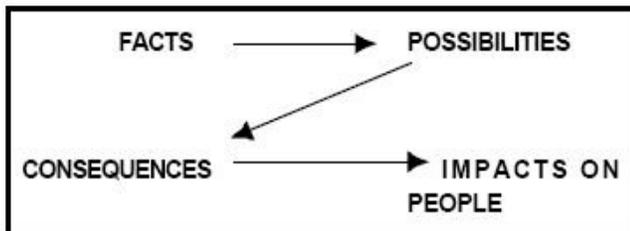


Figure 2: Zig-Zag model of decision-making.

First, facts are gathered. Define the problem in terms of all the **facts** and data that are known. Be realistic and thorough. Wexford County developed a *Fact Book* that provided background research

²Zig-Zag Decision Making Method developed through research by Isabel Briggs Myers (Myers-Briggs Personality Type Inventory).

about the county (discussed later). Next, consider all the **possibilities** by brainstorming, and listening to ideas without judging. Encourage thinking outside the box and creativity. In Wexford County, citizens identified the issues facing the county to be addressed by the plan. Third, weigh the **consequences** of each possibility. What are the most important criteria to consider? What would be the effect of each? What are the costs and benefits of each, or advantages and disadvantages? What actions might give the best result? In Wexford County, smaller subcommittees were established to do this work. Finally, it is important to assess the potential **impacts on people**. How would others feel about the decision? How does each alternative measure up in light of personal values? Again, in Wexford County, the subcommittees did this weighing of impacts. Finally, the planning bodies make the decision. In Wexford County, the decision was made first by a citizen planning group (approving a draft) and then was transferred to the Planning Commission for formal adoption.

One of the most important points, here, is that direct citizen involvement in preparing the plan occurs **before** starting to write the plan, and the citizens were **empowered** to actually write the plan. The idea is to make the plan a community plan, not just the “planning commission’s plan.”

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Step One: Plan to Plan

Developing the process in advance is critical to the efficient use of large groups of stakeholders. It

may take as long as two years to gather the appropriate background information and establish the planning process. The unit of government can do some of the work and other tasks may need to be subcontracted. Knowing ahead of time that work will need to be subcontracted will ensure that the subcontracted work is done in advance of the actual public meetings. Some items that might be subcontracted in advance include: land use/cover map and analysis, soil survey, other Geographic Information System (GIS) work and a public opinion survey. Other advance activities include identifying meeting facilitators (such as Michigan State University Extension – MSUE), developing meeting plans, identify stakeholders and planning committee membership, and developing a time line with deadlines.

Create a Fact Book: Gathering information during this advance stage is very helpful for the time when the actual committee begins to meet. Consider developing a *Fact Book* that includes a summary of important information about the municipality³ or county. Gathering all of the data and presenting it in a useful format is a major task. Some of the maps and surveys should be included. Developing such a document meets the Acts’ requirement for background studies and research, helps to define problems,⁴ and provides the first step of the Zig-Zag model.

The planning enabling acts identifies some of the background information that can be included in the Fact Book.

- a. Conduct studies, investigations, and surveys relative to the economic, social, and physical development of the municipality or county.

³Municipality means city, general law village, home rule village, township, and charter township. (Use of the word “Municipality” should not be confused with the use of the word in the title “Municipal Planning Act,” (now repealed) generally considered the former planning enabling act for cities and villages.)

⁴§31(2) of P.A. 33 of 2008, as amended, being the Michigan Municipal Planning Act, M.C.L. 125.3831(2). (This footnote used to cite the following acts, each repealed as of September 1, 2008: §4(1) of the County Planning Act; §6(1) of the Township Planning Act; not an equivalent section in the Municipal Planning Act.)

- b. Formulate plans, and make recommendations for the most effective economic, social, and physical development of the municipality or county.⁵
- c. Cooperate with all departments of the state, and federal governments, and other public agencies concerned with programs for the economic, social, and physical development of the municipality or county, and seek the maximum coordination of the programs of these agencies.⁶
- d. Consult with representatives of adjacent counties in respect to their planning so that conflicts in overall county plans may be avoided.⁷
- e. Meet with other governmental planning commissions to deliberate,⁸ consult with municipalities (townships, villages, cities) within and adjacent to the municipality or county in respect to their planning, so that conflicts in plans may be avoided.

The Wexford County *Fact Book* included the “studies, investigations, and surveys,” and some of the recommendations. A list of the contents in Wexford County’s *Fact Book* is in Appendix A. In Wexford County, the *Fact Book* was more than 400 pages long. To ensure the information included in this book was widely disseminated, the county prepared a summary of the *Fact Book* and a series

⁵§31(1) of P.A. 33 of 2008, as amended, being the Michigan Municipal Planning Act, M.C.L. 125.3831(1). (This footnote used to cite the following acts, each repealed as of September 1, 2008: §4(3)(b) of the County Planning Act; similar language in §6(1)(b) of the Township Planning Act; not an equivalent section in the Municipal Planning Act.)

⁶§31(2) and (3) of P.A. 33 of 2008, as amended, being the Michigan Municipal Planning Act, M.C.L. 125.3831(2) and 125.3831(3). (This footnote used to cite the following acts, each repealed as of September 1, 2008: §4(3)(c) of the County Planning Act; similar language in §6(1)(c) of the Township Planning Act)

⁷§31(2)(b) of P.A. 33 of 2008, as amended, being the Michigan Municipal Planning Act, M.C.L. 125.3831(2)(b). (This footnote used to cite the following acts, each repealed as of September 1, 2008: §4(3)(d) of the County Planning Act (no equivalent language in the Township or Municipal Planning Acts)).

⁸§31(3) of P.A. 33 of 2008, as amended, being the Michigan Municipal Planning Act, M.C.L. 125.3831(3). (This footnote used to cite the following acts, each repealed as of September 1, 2008: §4(5) of the County Planning Act §6(2) of the Township Planning Act; not an equivalent section in the Municipal Planning Act.)

of one sheet of paper “*Fact Sheets*” which summarize each chapter. These *Fact Sheets* can be distributed inexpensively and in large numbers. The information can also be summarized in an oral presentation format. Wexford County disseminated the *Fact Book* to everyone involved in the planning process, made it available on CD for all who wanted it, and made it available on a website. The *Fact Book* and *Fact Sheets* used by Wexford County can be seen at http://35.8.121.133/wexford_county/index.html. A presentation is available at this website as well.

Step Two: Providing Notice

Providing notice is the first important step in communicating with affected municipalities as part of the Michigan Planning Enabling Act. Start by sending out a notice,⁹ which includes all municipalities within and adjacent or contiguous to the planning body’s jurisdiction. In addition, notice can be sent to all county, state and federal government agencies with significant land holdings in the municipality. For example, a county planning process should send notice to all of the townships, cities and villages within its boundaries, as well as to all counties, townships, cities and villages on its borders. In addition, if a government body holds significant land, such as a state or national forest, those bodies can be notified. Other important stakeholders would include environmental groups, business groups, industry representatives, human service agencies, homebuilders, Realtors, large land owners, and others groups that are appropriate. The list of stakeholders that received notice by Wexford County is included in Appendix B. Draft plans and the final plan all need to be provided to the same list of organizations.

Citizen Plan Committee: To create a Citizen Plan Committee, use this initial notice as an opportunity to invite each organization to send a

representative to planning meetings. Not only an invitation, but also a statement making clear the citizen group will be empowered to prepare the plan. By developing and including the Citizen Plan Committee from the beginning, this group becomes a major voice of experts knowledgeable about the plan. In addition, these representatives can help explain the plan to the organizations they serve. This process of invitation was used in Wexford County, in addition to placing public notice in the newspapers to open the process to any interested citizen.

It is important to maintain a balance of views on the Citizen Plan Committee; no one interest group should be over- or under-represented. For example, in Wexford County, the largest interest group was comprised of the representatives from the 22 municipalities invited to participate on the Plan Committee. In order to make sure that interest group did not have a majority of members, the full size of the group had to be 45 people or more. Therefore in Wexford’s case, no organization, interest group, or set of individuals with an identifiable agenda should number more than 22.

Public Opinion Survey: The master or comprehensive plan should reflect the values of the community. One way of determining community values is to conduct a public opinion survey. If a public survey was conducted, consider conducting a similar survey of the Citizen Plan Committee to determine if the Committee’s views are similar to the population at large. If there are great differences between the two surveys (the public and the committee), then steps can be taken to compensate for these differences by adding to the committee. In Wexford County, a public opinion survey was conducted in 2000 by Central Michigan University¹⁰. This survey was repeated at the beginning of the process by polling just the Citizen Plan Committee and other municipal planning staff

⁹§39(2) of P.A. 33 of 2008, as amended, being the Michigan Municipal Planning Act, M.C.L. 125.3839(2). (This footnote used to cite the following acts, each repealed as of September 1, 2008: §4b(2) of the County Planning Act; §7a(2) of the Township and Municipal Planning Acts.)

¹⁰Wexford County Commission (2000). *Report of Findings Wexford County Residents? Views of Land Use Planning and the Quality of Life*. Center for Applied Research and Rural Studies, Central Michigan University.

and elected officials.¹¹ This comparison indicated a close alignment of priorities between the citizens at large and the Citizen Plan Committee.

Meeting Rules: Establishing rules of conduct and a decision-making process for the Citizen Plan Committee is important and should be discussed and approved by the group involved. In Wexford County, the rules of conduct that were established were to speak when recognized and to listen when someone else was speaking. In order to develop a shared understanding of all sides of an issue, participants should listen to understand and learn another participant's viewpoint fully before making a response. It is also important for participants to express their ideas so that all ideas are heard. The process can be arduous and it is helpful if the group stays positive and focused on solutions. Further, participants were advised to separate the personalities from the issues to avoid personal attacks. Humor was encouraged to keep the discussion from becoming too serious or heavy. Despite a tight schedule, it is important not to rush discussions or the issues will not be fully weighed.

Meeting Consensus: One way a group can determine if it has arrived at consensus is to vote by showing the degree of agreement with a decision. For example, participants would raise all five fingers if they have full, unconditional support of an item. If the item is supported, four fingers are raised. If the participant is neutral on the item but will support it, three fingers are raised. If the participant is neutral on the item and does not support it, two fingers are raised. If the participant is against the item, one index finger is raised. Finally, if the participant is adamantly opposed to the item and will actively work against it, a fist is raised (zero fingers). Ideally, significant discussion or debate occurs before such a vote so that some sense of the issues is clear and differences can be resolved before a vote is taken. After consensus or

¹¹Diebel, A (2003). *Citizens' and Government Officials' pinions of County Services and Planning Priorities in Wexford County, Michigan*. Department of Resource Development, Michigan State University. Draft report available on request, diebela@msu.edu.

a majority vote is obtained, it is important that each committee member represent the consensus view.

News Media: Establishing a relationship with the news media (e.g., newspaper editor) for the community will help explain the purpose, share the schedule of the planning process, and determine which reporter will be assigned to cover the planning process. This initial period is the time to stress the importance of having one reporter following the process, so the reporter learns along with everyone else. A consistent reporter can be more accurate. The more a reporter learns and understands the fewer errors are made. A reporter who goes through this entire process will also become the newspaper's "expert" on planning and zoning issues. Once it is known who that reporter will be, give a copy of the *Fact Book* to that reporter. Also include the reporter on mailing lists, etc. to receive everything the Citizen Plan Committee receives.

Step Three: Prepare a Draft Plan

Plan Content: There are basic components that are required of a plan under the Planning Enabling Acts. (See *Land Use Series* "Check List # 1F What should be in a Master Plan"¹² available at www.msue.msu.edu/lu/) The Planning Acts requires that a plan including text, maps, plats and charts, shall be for the development of the municipality or county, and address land use issues, and may project 20 years or more into the future.¹³ The Plan shall include a specific list of items, such as future land use map, zoning plan, community improvements, recommendations for implementation. For a summary of the content of a plan see *Land Use Series* "Check List # 1F What should be in a Master Plan"

¹²Solomon, Dean (and Brad Neumann and Kurt H. Schindler); *Land Use Series* "Check List # 1F What should be in a Master Plan" May 1, 2008: www.msue.msu.edu/lu/

¹³§33(1) of P.A. 33 of 2008, as amended, being the Michigan Municipal Planning Act, M.C.L. 125.3833(1). (This footnote used to cite the following acts, each repealed as of September 1, 2008: §4(2) of the County Planning Act; §7 of the Township Planning Act; and §6(4) of the Municipal Planning Act.)

A good plan, however, is not just the book, or document that goes on the shelf that is the final product. That “book” just records the decisions and direction chosen. As important – and sometimes more important – **is the process that involves people, and that is experienced by people during the creation of the plan.** It is this process that builds consensus, that helps a municipality or county have a common vision. **It is this process that is at the heart of planning.** This involvement is one of the main reasons why a plan should be annually reviewed for possible updating when the plan is more than five years old.¹⁴ In five years time, enough people have left their elected or appointed office, or other leadership roles, that it is time to reconstruct the consensus and vision.

Grounding: A significant portion of the time in the planning process in Wexford County was spent on step one of the Zig-Zag model, the “facts.” In addition to developing the *Fact Book*, information was shared with the committee of stakeholders (Citizen Plan Committee) that participated. The Michigan Planning Enabling Act provides for citizen involvement in the planning process through the appointment of a citizen committee of the planning commission.¹⁵ In Wexford County, the Citizen Plan Committee filled that requirement. After the *Fact Book* was completed, the Citizen Plan Committee began its meetings.

The first two or more Plan Committee meetings can focus on bringing the Plan Committee up-to-speed with facts. In Wexford County, the first session was spent on demographic, growth and development trends in the state. This statewide information had a significant impact on the Plan Committee. The growth patterns can either be embraced as positive or reviled as negative. Both perspectives were expressed and enabled all

members of the Plan Committee to understand the issues from a similar base of knowledge. The second meeting presented similar information only from the perspective of Wexford County. Portions of the *Fact Book* were discussed so the Plan Committee had a similar knowledge base about the County as well as the state. An example of the kinds of issues that were raised was the aging demographic population moving into Northern Lower Michigan - an aging population of retirees. This change raised concerns about an increased need for services and a decline in participation in some parts of civic life. However, this population also provides a degree of economic development for the County.

At the second meeting, a “build-out” model was presented to the Plan Committee. A build-out is a demonstration of what the County would look like if all land were populated in the way it was currently zoned. Buildout in Wexford County was approximately 500,000 people – compared the county’s current population of 31,000. This information increased the perception among Plan Committee members that zoning was a critical component in planning. The citizens then requested, and received, a “Planning and Zoning Primer” program.¹⁶

Possibilities: Once the facts are more clearly understood, the group can move through the Zig-Zag Model to “possibilities”. This step in the process is the creative brainstorming where all ideas are considered. In Wexford County, the Plan Committee identified the issues, concerns and priorities it wanted to address. During the third meeting, the Wexford County Citizen Plan Committee brain stormed issues based on what they heard from the state-wide and county-wide presentations of the “facts.” This brainstorming laid the groundwork for prioritizing issues into

¹⁴§45(2) of P.A. 33 of 2008, as amended, being the Michigan Municipal Planning Act, M.C.L. 125.3845(2).

¹⁵§17(2) of P.A. 33 of 2008, as amended, being the Michigan Municipal Planning Act, M.C.L. 125.3817(2). (This footnote used to cite the following acts, each repealed as of September 1, 2008: §4(3)(c), §4(3)(d), and §4(5) of the County Planning Act; §6(1)(c) and §6(2) of the Township Planning Act; and §7b(1) and §6(1) of the Municipal Planning Act.)

¹⁶Schindler, Kurt H.; *Planning and Zoning Primer*; MSU Extension Land Use Team education program which covers basics of planning, plan implementation and zoning in about 2+ hours. Intended audience for this program is for those who are not members of a planning commission or zoning board of appeals.

manageable parts of a plan.

To prioritize the issues, Wexford County used an interactive program during the third Plan Committee meeting using the instant, electronic voting device, Option Finder™ during its fourth meeting. An interesting discovery from using this device resulted because people's votes were anonymous. As committee members ranked and affirmed choices and comments about the issues presented, participants had an instant view of where a majority of the committee's values were. At the end of this fourth session, the priorities were used to develop subcommittees to work on the set of priorities.¹⁷ Committee members, based on their individual interests, chose to join a subcommittee of the Plan Committee and selected subcommittee chairs. Each subcommittee was assigned a neutral facilitator.

Consequences & Drafting the Plan: The next steps in the Zig-Zag model are to weigh the "consequences" of each "possibility," thinking through the impacts on people and the environment. In Wexford County, the subcommittees were charged with preparing a draft plan in the form of a chapter(s) on their issue. To speed the process, subcommittees received significant support from the staff and volunteers acting as facilitators: assignment sheets were developed, pertinent *Fact Book* sections were identified, and a style sheet for the chapter format was provided. The subcommittees met as often as necessary and the subcommittee facilitators meet in-between subcommittee meetings to communicate among themselves about the progress and direction of the discussions.

Some of the Wexford County subcommittees developed the drafts of their chapters in three or four meetings. The following facilitation techniques can help outline the process. The first session can be used to identify everything that must be

considered in the chapter assigned to the subcommittee. This task revisited the issues, but narrowed them to the issues relevant for the chapter in question. This meeting is the time to identify the criteria for selecting issues and ensure that the subcommittee agreed that these issues were the ones that are most important.

The second meeting can be spent conducting a T-Chart analysis of *how things are now* and *how we would like things to be*.¹⁸ This simple two column display of issues helps identify goals. A Force-field analysis¹⁹ can also be used to identify the *forces that help us* and *the forces that hinder us*. This two-column display helps identify the strategies by working on the barriers and opportunities that exist for the issue at hand.

Subcommittee members can be given homework – to take portions of the chapter (e.g., one goal per person) and develop the goals, objectives and strategies for the chapter. These statements can then be discussed and refined at the third meeting. This last step may take a fourth meeting to gain consensus on the language of the goals. The chair of each subcommittee can be charged to report the results to the larger Planning Committee. This charge placed the importance of the work on the committee rather than on the facilitator.

Regardless of the style or frequency of the

¹⁸A T-Chart is a public deliberation tool to organize material into two columns. A T-shaped bar is drawn, with room for headings at the top, and material sorted into columns. This helps a group of people to focus and be organized about an issue and to think in two dimensions. T-Charts are also useful to compare and contrast information. It is best used to show relationship. (Source: Training tools from MSU Extension LeadNet by Lela Vandenberg.)

¹⁹A "Force-Field Analysis" is a public deliberation tool used to help the group avoid overlooking forces that may affect successes, highlights both assets and liabilities. It is a visual representation of the positive and negative forces at work when moving toward a goal. The idea is to identify the enabling forces and strengthen them, and to identify the opposing forces and diminish them. This tool is useful with complex issues when planning a solution, launching a project, and identifying the causes of a problem. (Source: Training tools from MSU Extension LeadNet by Lela Vandenberg.)

¹⁷§33(2) of P.A. 33 of 2008, as amended, being the Michigan Municipal Planning Act, M.C.L. 125.3833(2). (This footnote used to cite the following acts, each repealed as of September 1, 2008: §4(3)(a), §4(3)(b), and §4(2) of the County Planning Act; §6(1)(a) and §6(1)(b) of the Township Planning Act; and §6(4)(a), §6(4)(b), and §6(4)(c) of the Municipal Planning Act.)

subcommittee meetings, all subcommittees had a deadline to report findings to the larger, Wexford County Citizen Plan Committee. The draft chapters were sent to all Plan Committee members in advance of the meeting and posted on the web site. When the Committee reconvened, each subcommittee chair presented an oral report on the subcommittee's finding and recommendations. These presentations allowed discussion about the actual content and language of the plan. Where there were conflicts, a process for resolution was devised. For example, the environmental and economic subcommittees had some disagreement about the language in the plan. Representatives from those two committees met to resolve the differences through dialogue. A final meeting of the overall Plan Committee then adopted the subcommittee reports/chapters as the draft plan²⁰ to be sent to the County Planning Commission.

Project Website: Communicating the drafts to everyone involved is one way to reduce these conflicts at the end. Facilitator meetings between subcommittee meetings can help identify issues that may need to be revisited by the subcommittees before the final versions are submitted. Wexford County also made use of a website as one means of communication. In Wexford County, the website was developed by Michigan State University through an interdisciplinary grant administered by the Victor Institute for Responsible Land Use and Development in collaboration with the Institute for Water Research, the Department of Resource Development, the Department of Forestry, and the Michigan Natural Features Inventory. The website was developed under a grant from the United States Department of Agriculture Forest Service (USFS),²¹ but any municipal website could be used for this

²⁰ §41(1) of P.A. 33 of 2008, as amended, being the Michigan Municipal Planning Act, M.C.L. 125.3841(1). (This footnote used to cite the following acts, each repealed as of September 1, 2008: §4(3)(a), §4(3)(b), and §4(2) of the County Planning Act; §6(1)(a) and §6(1)(b) of the Township Planning Act; and §6(4)(a), §6(4)(b), and §6(4)(c) of the Municipal Planning Act.)

²¹ *Web Accessible Natural Resource Information/Decision Support System* (2001). <http://www.iwr.msu.edu/usfs/>.

purpose.

The Wexford County website was used to post meeting minutes, the *Fact Book*²² and it contained draft chapters of the master plan²³ as it was being developed for anyone to review. In addition, the website provided links to planning resources, and on-line mapping instructions. In five months, the website averaged ten visits per day (1,549 visits); most visits were to the home page and the *Fact Book*. Over 1,296 files were downloaded, mainly parts of the *Fact Book*. The use of the website increased dramatically after it was introduced at one of the Citizen Plan Committee meetings. This number of visits provides compelling support for

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the usefulness of such a site.

Editing Draft Chapters: Because a different committee wrote each chapter, the chapters differed dramatically in terms of the style of writing and level of detail. Editing the plan for style is an important next step. However, when editing, the ideas and concepts must be retained. It is the spirit and intent of coordinated planning for the plan to belong to everyone; therefore editing must not alter the content – only the style. Similarly, when the

The plan should represent a true consensus on what is in the plan; not what appointed or elected officials want.

²² Web site for the Wexford County *Fact Book*: http://35.8.121.133/wexford_county/factbook/toc.html .

²³ Web site for the Wexford County Plan: http://35.8.121.133/wexford_county/minutes.html#Minutes .

draft is submitted to the Planning Commission, the commissioners could exercise their power to make the final decision. Such an action would only be as good as the degree that it is accepted by the community it serves. The plan should represent a true consensus on what is in the plan; not what appointed or elected officials want.

Step Four: Adopting the Plan

After the plan is submitted to the Planning Commission, everyone should still be kept informed about its progress. Citizen Plan Committee members can be the strongest allies in moving toward implementation. Personal invitations to hearings, a current website and newsletters are ways to keep these key stakeholders informed. The Planning Commission will face dilemmas as the draft plan is discussed and presented for broader consideration such as political and jurisdictional disputes. Commissioners must decide when to re-involve citizens and when to make decisions on their own. One tool to guide the process of dispute resolution is the Harvard University Locus of Decision-making model for resolving disputes (Figure 2).²⁴

Policy Situation	Problem identification	Solution	Locus of Decision
Type I	Known	Known	Leader (planner/planning commission)
Type II	Known	Unknown	Leader (planner/planning commission and Citizens)
Type II	Unknown	Unknown	Citizens

Figure 2: Harvard University Locus of Decision-making Model.

This model reflects how decisions tend to be made in communities. In some cases, staff and elected officials may resist these tendencies in an effort to maintain control of the process. However,

the model will manifest itself despite this resistance. For example, if an issue becomes controversial, citizens may become angry, actively preventing the officials from acting. Even if one is able to adopt the plan, the document will still not enjoy support it should have outside of the members of the Planning Commission. Conversely, if citizens withdraw from participation because they feel marginalized, the plan will “sit on the shelf” rather than be a working plan. As a result, the decisions that are actually realized will occur according to the model rather than according to a plan that is approved in opposition to the model. One way to prevent citizen anger or withdrawal is to consider this model when designing the process.

In this model, a Type I policy situation is when the problem and solution are both known. In these situations, the “expert” should make the decision. This kind of issue may involve a legal matter in which courts or statutes clearly indicate what can, or cannot be done. For example, mobile homes are often considered an undesirable development type in a community and opposed by citizens. However, a subcommittee decision to prohibit or exclude mobile homes would not be defensible in court. The Michigan Supreme Court has determined that mobile homes must be allowed on equal footing (and equal standards) wherever dwellings are allowed. In Type I situations, the planner makes the recommendation and the Planning Commission makes the decision. The Commission should communicate the decision and reasons, in detail, back to the Citizen Plan Committee and subcommittees.

A Type II situation occurs when the problem is known, but the solution is unknown. The solution is a matter of judgment because there is no “right, or wrong answer.” This decision should be made in a joint collaborative process between citizens and the planning commission. Commissioners should consider giving deference to the citizens by referring to opinion surveys or the full Citizen Plan Committee’s preferences. These types of decisions might include matters of political viewpoint or personal philosophy. For example, the average size and value of dwellings in a neighborhood are

²⁴Heifetz, Ronald A. and Riley M. Sinder; *Political Leadership: Managing the Public’s Problem Solving?*; Harvard University.

known. Should regulation of new dwellings (including mobile homes) include a minimum size and width – and what should the size and width be? In Wexford County, there was concern about a loss of farmland. The Plan Committee recommended a 40-acre minimum parcel size. That size has become controversial. The problem is known, but the solution is not. In Type II situations, the Planning Commission identifies the point of disagreement with the proposed solution. The Commission identifies the parties representing the different viewpoints and refers the issue back to the Plan Committee or subcommittees representing the different viewpoints. The Planning Commission should give deference to the decision of the citizens (o p i n i o n s u r v e y) o r P l a n Committee/subcommittees. When trust or interpersonal relationship skills are lacking, a neutral third party who is credible and trusted by all parties can help facilitate the resolution.

A Type III situation occurs when the problem is unknown and the solution is unknown. Deliberation is needed to determine what the problem is (as opposed to identifying the symptoms) and the solution is a matter of judgment. Again, there are no “right, or wrong answers.” In these situations, the process should involve the citizens making the decision. Giving deference to citizens by studying opinion surveys or the Plan Committee’s preferences would be ways of determining these preferences. Planner/planning commission involvement would be to do research to create background studies and facts on the issue. This research may move the issue to Type II. Whether or not there is a problem and what it might be, can be a matter of opinion. For example, is loss of farm land a problem, or is it a sign of economic growth as land moves to a different use? The solution, if one is needed, can be a matter of political viewpoint or personal philosophy. Another example is environmental degradation. Some feel environmental degradation is occurring and others do not. If a draft plan proposed environmental planning districts for special and unique areas, consensus on what those districts should be might be lacking – and there may not be agreement on

what the problem is, if any. In a Type III situation, the community, planning commission, staff, or another, raises an issue or point of disagreement for discussion. Deference should be given to the decision of the citizens as determined through opinion surveys, the Plan Committee, or subcommittees. Again, if trust is lacking, or interpersonal relationship skills are lacking, a neutral third party who is credible and trusted by all parties can help facilitate the resolution.

Plans are not successful if they just sit on the shelf gathering dust. The plan that is ultimately approved should be the “community’s plan,” not just the “local government’s plan.” Just a local government’s plan is the type of plan that gathers dust. Be concerned about silence from involved citizens. When people “check out” that also means lack of support for the plan.

Following this process the plan that is ultimately approved is the community’s plan, not just the local government’s plan. It is the citizen’s answers that count on issues where decisions are judgment calls, or political opinions. It is important not to alienate those that were involved in creating the plan. They are the plan’s biggest supporters. But they can become the biggest critics, obstruct the process, or they just go away in silent disgust.

According to the amended planning enabling acts, formal adoption includes “approving the draft plan for dissemination” by the Planning Commission and the Legislative Body. The various subcommittee reports, or chapters, are compiled into a proposed (draft) *Plan*.²⁵ Then the Planning

²⁵§41(1) of P.A. 33 of 2008, as amended, being the Michigan Municipal Planning Act, M.C.L. 125.3841(1). (This footnote used to cite the following acts, each repealed as of September 1, 2008: §4(3)(a), §4(3)(b), and §4(2) of the County Planning Act; §6(1)(a) and §6(1)(b) of the Township Planning Act; and §6(4)(a), §6(4)(b), and §6(4)(c) of the Municipal Planning Act.)

Commission approves the draft *Plan*,²⁶ and the governing body approves the draft *Plan* for dissemination.²⁷ The draft plan is sent to all governments within and contiguous to the planning area.²⁸ Consider also sending the draft *Plan* to everyone on the Citizen Plan Committee list. Those receiving the plan have the opportunity to comment on the plan and those comments are sent to the County Planning Commission. Depending on who is creating the plan, and if it is a new plan or an amendment to an existing plan, determines the time frames for comment periods. (See Appendix D for time frames for comment.)

Finally, the Planning Commission holds public hearings on the revised plan.²⁹ The Planning Commission reviews any comments made and may make further changes to the modified draft *Plan*. It is recommended that for each comment, the commission summarizes all comments in an appendix, which reflect (1) changes the draft *Plan* as indicated in the comment/submission, or (2) prepares facts and reasons why the comment should not result in a change to the draft *Plan*. For comments that do not result in changes to the plan, the facts and reasons should provide a preponderance of evidence why the comment does not have merit. Once all comments are addressed,

the Planning Commission and (sometimes) the governing body adopt the final plan.³⁰ If the elected governing body (the township board, village or city council, county board of commissioners) had reserved the right to adopt the plan, the plan has not received final approval until the governing body acts to adopt the *Plan*.³¹

To further coordination, the planing enabling act amendments require copies of the adopted plan to be sent to all governments within and contiguous to the planning area in order for the plan to finally be considered adopted and in effect. The amended acts establish that copies of the *Plan* be sent to everyone required.³² (Must be sent to all those who received notice the planning process was starting. Might also consider sending the *Plan* to the list of Citizen Plan Committee members.)

Step Five: Implement the *Plan*

The new planning enabling act amendments ensures that plans are reviewed regularly. Not more than five years after adoption, the Planning Commission shall review the *Plan* to determine if it needs revision. If it does, then the Planning Commission should update it or prepare a new *Plan*.³³ For the plan to be effective, the commitment of stakeholders is important. For example, if a

²⁶§41(1) of P.A. 33 of 2008, as amended, being the Michigan Municipal Planning Act, M.C.L. 125.3841(1). (This footnote used to cite the following acts, each repealed as of September 1, 2008: §4c(2) of the County Planning Act; §7b(2) of the Township and Municipal Planning Acts.)

²⁷§41(2) of P.A. 33 of 2008, as amended, being the Michigan Municipal Planning Act, M.C.L. 125.3841(2). (This footnote used to cite the following acts, each repealed as of September 1, 2008: §4c(3) of the County Planning Act; §7b(3) of the Township Planning Act; and §7b(2) of the Municipal Planning Act.)

²⁸§41(2) and §39(2) of P.A. 33 of 2008, as amended, being the Michigan Municipal Planning Act, M.C.L. 125.3841(2) and 125.3839(2). (This footnote used to cite the following acts, each repealed as of September 1, 2008: §4c(3) of the County Planning Act; §7b(3)(a), §7b(3)(b), §7b(3)(c), and §7b(3)(d), of the Township and Municipal Planning Acts.)

²⁹§43(1) of P.A. 33 of 2008, as amended, being the Michigan Municipal Planning Act, M.C.L. 125.3843(1). (This footnote used to cite the following acts, each repealed as of September 1, 2008: §5(1) of the County Planning Act; and §8(1) of the Township and Municipal Planning Acts.)

³⁰§43(2) of P.A. 33 of 2008, as amended, being the Michigan Municipal Planning Act, M.C.L. 125.3843(2). (This footnote used to cite the following acts, each repealed as of September 1, 2008: §5(3) of the County Planning Act; and §8(3) of the Township and Municipal Planning Acts.)

³¹§43(3)-§43(4) of P.A. 33 of 2008, as amended, being the Michigan Municipal Planning Act, M.C.L. 125.3843(3)-125.3843(4). (This footnote used to cite the following acts, each repealed as of September 1, 2008: §5(4) of the County Planning Act; and §8(4) of the Township and Municipal Planning Acts.)

³²§43(5) of P.A. 33 of 2008, as amended, being the Michigan Municipal Planning Act, M.C.L. 125.3843(5). (This footnote used to cite the following acts, each repealed as of September 1, 2008: §5(5) of the County Planning Act; and §8(5) of the Township and Municipal Planning Acts.)

³³§45(2) of P.A. 33 of 2008, as amended, being the Michigan Municipal Planning Act, M.C.L. 125.3845(2). (This footnote used to cite the following acts, each repealed as of September 1, 2008: §5(7) of the County Planning Act; §9(2) of the Township Planning Act; §8a(3) of the Municipal Planning Act.)

county plan defines a future landuse map, such a plan will be ineffective if the townships, cities and villages do not see the benefit of such a plan to them. The coordinated process should allow these issues to be raised before the decisions are made.

Conclusions

The new planning enabling act amendments mandates a coordination of planning efforts procedure. This coordination can best be done through intense public participation in the process Wexford County combined the coordination and citizen participation processes by developing a Citizen Plan Committee that included stakeholders from a wide spectrum of people throughout the county and its various government bodies. The process used state-of-the-art techniques for public involvement. The process was well received and well attended by the citizens. The commitment of very busy citizens was admirable. The process received significant support from MSU Extension, enabling it to be completed in a relatively short period of time. However, the short time frame also reduced the amount of discourse on issues of potential conflict, and led to inconsistencies in the style of the chapters. As a result, the Planning Commission had a large job to edit the final product. A large amount of editing increases the chance that unintended change of policy decisions takes place. A slightly longer process would have reduced this concern.

Appendix A: Content of Wexford's *Fact Book*:

Wexford's *Fact Book* includes:

1. **Introduction: Acknowledgments.; Summary.** (Maps: County or municipality Location Map).
2. **Former Plans.**
3. **Geography:** Geology; Location; Climate (Maps, Charts, and Graphs: Quaternary Geology, Topographic, Daily Temperatures Graph).
4. **History:** Narrative for a regional perspective and region-wide common points; historic sites list; Government Land Survey history; municipal size; list of first order control points (Maps, Charts, and Graphs: Historic Population Data Table; Political Boundaries Maps for 1800 to present)
5. **Michigan Trend Future summary and Michigan Land Resource Project summary.** (Note: More current *Fact Books* might include materials on "Michigan Strategic Growth", or various universal planning principles such as Smart Growth, Green Design, Principles of Prosperity, Sustainability, and so on.)
6. **Land Use:** Land Use/Cover Change (Agricultural; Forestry; Urban (Sprawl, Residential, Open Lands/Parks, Commercial, Transportation, Industrial, E x t r a c t i v e ; u r b a n g r o w t h a r e a) ; Rangelands/Fields/Grassland; Water and Wetlands Future Land Use; and areas of minor change. Map , Charts, and Graphs: Land Use/Cover Table, Land Cover Circa 1800 (Pre-European Settlement Vegetation) Map, pre-1978 land use maps, Land Use/Cover Map 1978 (MiRIS), current Land Use/Cover Map, Land Use/Cover Change analysis maps, Farmland With State Preservation Agreements in Place ?PA 116 Agreements.?)
7. **Natural Resources:** Surface Water, Surface Water Inventory, Groundwater; On Site Sewage Disposal (Restricted Areas for Septic and Drain Fields, New Technology, Soils With Limitations for Wastes & Industrial Development); Soils (summary of soil survey), detail of Soil Characteristics; Forestry (Old Growth); Agriculture; Mineral Resources. (Maps, Charts, and Graphs: Major Watersheds, Surface Water Features, Wetlands, Aquifer Vulnerability to Surface Contamination in Michigan, Soil With High Water Table Map (Aquifer Vulnerability to Surface Contamination), General Soil Types, Forest Production Potential Map (soil types), Old Growth Forests, Agricultural Production Potential Map (soil types), Limitations of Soils for Septic Systems, Slope Characteristics of Soil Types (Steep Slopes).
8. **Environment:** Air and Water Pollution (Soil Erosion and Septic Discharge, Oil and Gas Exploration); Land/Water Margins; Solid Waste. (Maps, Charts, and Graphs: Land/Water Related Laws in Michigan Graphic, Oil and Gas Wells Map.)
9. **Ecology, Habitat, Scenic Resources:** Special Animals and Plants (Special Animals and Plants List for county and municipality); Landtype Associations; Conservancy, Soil Conservation District, Conservation Resource Alliance, WildLink; Special and Unique Areas (list). (Maps, Charts, and Graphs: Landtype Associations, Special and Unique Areas
10. **Population:** Most recent Census Data Advance Final Counts; Population Distribution; Population Estimates (current year, Future Population Projections, Impact of Growth analysis. (Maps, Charts, and Graphs: Table of Population Estimates, Table of Population Projections, Population Density Map, Housing Density Map, Seasonal Population Estimates Table, Projected Resort Population Map, detailed Population Data.)

11. **Human Services:** Medical Health, (Health Indicators Data: Job Injuries/Illness, Cardiovascular Health, Substance Abuse, Dental, Child and Maternal Health); Mental Health; Education (School Performance Measures, Enrollment); Elderly Care; Community Social Health; Crime (Crime Data Per Year, Juvenile Crime Data, Risk Factors); Service/Civic Organizations and Social Life. (Maps, Charts, and Graphs: School Districts.)
12. **Economics:** Industrial; Retail and Service (Retail Sales, Retail and Service Data, Estimated Effective Household Buying Income); Government; Agriculture; Unemployment; Tourism; Jobs (Annual Employment Averages 1980-present, Occupation, Industry Statistics); Commuting; Hinterland; Income Level (Census Income, Poverty Status); Business Retention and Recruitment; Brownfield Redevelopment. (Maps, Charts, and Graphs: Largest Employers; Largest Tax Payers, Employment Trend, Number Unemployed, Unemployment Rate Graphs, Manufacturing Employment, Retail Employment, Services Employment Graphs, Construction & Mining Employment, Government Employment, Transportation-Communications-Utilities Employment Graphs, Economic Hinterland Map(s))
13. **Housing:** Housing Stock (Housing Affordability for Owner Occupied Housing); Homeless; Housing for Disabled; Contractors, Inspectors (Zoning Permits and Actions, Construction Code Permits, New Construction Data); State Programs. (Maps, Charts, and Graphs: Housing Data.)
14. **Infrastructure:** Transportation (Railroad, Trails, Airport, Public Transit, Roads (Road Types and Status, Road Surface Conditions Summary, Surface Condition Mileage by Municipality); County Drains; Public Water (List of Public Water Systems, Source of Water and Sewage Disposal); Public Sewer (List of Sewer Systems); government Facilities/Buildings; Recreation/Parks (Recreational Planning Organization Inventory of Recreation Facilities); Private/Regulated Utilities (Electricity, Telephone, Natural Gas, Cable Television, Internet providers); Post Office; Emergency Services. (Maps, Charts, and Graphs: Transportation: Road Surface Map, Transportation, Traffic Count Data, Average Daily Traffic (ADT) Count by Municipality, County Drains, Areas Served By Municipal Water, Sewer Service Districts from 1975 *Facilities Plan* Map, Areas Served by Municipal Sewer Map, Outdoor Recreational Facilities, Indoor Recreational Facilities, Recreation Action Plan Map, Electric Utility Service Areas Map, Local Phone Exchanges Map, Communication Towers Map, Areas Served by Natural Gas Map, Local Zip Code Map, Fire Districts Map, EMS Districts Map.)
15. **Land Ownership:** Public Land Ownership; Private Land Ownership; Subdivided Land; [Native American] Foreign Policy (Historical Context, Jurisdiction-Generally, Jurisdiction-Zoning, Jurisdiction-Taxes, Jurisdiction-In a

particular county/geography; Specifically, Indian Sovereignty, Municipal Concerns, Successful Coordination Elsewhere. (Maps, Charts, and Graphs, Public Land Ownership Chart Detail, Public and Private Land Ownership Chart Summary, Public Land Ownership Map, Parcelization Map, Recorded Subdivisions Map.)

16. **Existing Zoning:** Composite Zoning Map; Buildout and Other Analysis; Analysis of Existing Zoning (Planning, (What is “Good Planning”?), Review of Zoning Text, Zoning for Coordination and Streamlining; Neo-Traditional Zoning (Traditional Neighborhood Development Checklist). (Maps, Charts, and Graphs: Estimated Areas of Current Zoning Districts, Composite Zoning Map, detailed Buildout table).
17. **Other (Appendixes):** Other Applicable Statutes; Bibliography; Other Selected Reports, Studies; Land Owner Opinion Survey (Background, Interviewing and the Sample, The Findings, Demographic Characteristics of the Sample; minority reports.)

Appendix B: List of stakeholders receiving notice by Wexford County

The Notice (which also included an invitation to send a representative to be a member of the full committee) in Wexford was sent to:

- a. **Wexford County Planning Commission.** Care should be taken to make sure a quorum of the County Board is not on this committee.
- b. **Wexford County Board of Commissioners.** Care should be taken to make sure a quorum of the County Board, or any of its committees is not on this committee.
- c. **Representatives of each of the 22 municipalities in Wexford County.** One from other Elected Bodies,³⁴ one from the planning commission/zoning board if one exists, and one from a Downtown Development Authority, if one exists.
- d. **Special interest groups.** (Others may be added.)
 - i. Other (Vertical) Governments
 - (a) United States Forest Service, Manistee-Cadillac Ranger District
 - (b) Michigan Department of Natural Resources Forest Division
 - (c) Michigan Department of Environmental Quality
 - (d) District #10 Department of Community Health
 - (e) Michigan Department of Transportation
 - (f) Natural Resources Conservation Service
 - (g) *Gaaching Ziibi Daawaa Anishnaabe* (Little River Band of Ottawa Indians)
 - ii. County agencies

³⁴“Elected Bodies” means the County Board of Commissioners, Village Council, City Council, Township Board of Trustees.

- (a) Wexford County Road Commission
- (b) Wexford Department of Public Works
- (c) Wexford County Drain Commissioner
- (d) W e x f o r d C o u n t y
Surveyor/Remonumentation program
- iii. Business Interests
 - (a) Cadillac Area Chamber of Commerce
 - (b) Manton Chamber of Commerce
 - (c) Cadillac Area Visitors Bureau
 - (d) Northwest Michigan Home Builders Association of Missaukee, Osceola, Wexford
 - (e) Industrial Board/Cadillac Area Industrial Group
- iv. Conservation/Environmental Interests
 - (a) Cadillac Area Land Conservancy
 - (b) Cadillac Sportsman’s Club (MUCC affiliate)
 - (c) Cadillac Area Citizens for Clean Air
 - (d) Environmental Committee of Cadillac Rotary (Clam River Greenway)
 - (e) Wexford County Conservation District
 - (f) Michigan Conservation Foundation
- v. Major Landowners, landowner association
 - (a) Lake Mitchell Property Owners Association
 - (b) Gitchegume Property Association
 - (c) Stone Ledge
 - (d) Consumers Energy, Cadillac Office
- vi. Farm/Forest Interests
 - (a) Wexford County Michigan Farm Bureau
- vii. Human Services/Youth/Other
 - (a) 4-H Wexford
 - (b) Wexford-Missaukee Human Services Collaborative Body
 - (c) Harrietta Civic Club
 - (d) Religion/Churches
 - (e) Historic Society
 - (f) Community Foundation

Appendix C: Content of a Plan:

This section is based on what can be coined as “best planning practices”³⁵ derived from a proposed Coordinated Planning Act developed by the Michigan Chapter of the American Planning Association. For information about the content of a plan see *Land Use Series* “Check List # 1F What should be in a Master Plan” by Dean Solomon, Brad Neumann, and Kurt H. Schindler; May 1, 2008: www.msue.msu.edu/lu/ .

³⁵Michigan Society of Planning’s *Implementation Guidelines for the 2001 Planning and Zoning Law Amendments* “Types and Contents of Plans” and Schindler, Kurt H.; *Land Use Series*; Checklist C1, M1, T1; “For Adoption of a County/City & Village/Township Plan”; February 1, 2002. (<http://www.msue.msu.edu/wexford/LU/index.html>).

Appendix D: Time frames for plan comment under the Michigan Planning Enabling Acts.

County, Village, City, or Township Plans:

1. Those receiving the draft *Plan* have 63 days to make comments on the draft *Plan*³⁶ (42 days for an amendment³⁷).
2. At the end of the 63 days, the Planning Commission reviews the comments and may make modifications to the draft *Plan* (42 days for a draft amendment).
3. For each comment:
 - a. Summarize all comments in an appendix, and
 - b. Change the draft *Plan* as indicated in the comments and submissions, or
 - c. Prepare facts and reasons why the comments should not result in changes to the draft *Plan* by providing a preponderance of evidence in the appendix why the comments do not have merit.
4. At the end of the 63 days, the Planning Commission acts to hold a public hearing on the modified draft *Plan*.³⁸ (Plan amendment is 42). Following these hearings, the plan may be formally adopted.)
5. At the end of the 63 days, the Planning Commission reviews the comments and may make modifications to the draft *Plan* (42 days for a draft amendment).
6. For each comment:
 - a. Summarize all comments in an appendix, and
 - b. Change the draft *Plan* as indicated in the comments and submissions, or
 - c. Prepare facts and reasons why the comments should not result in changes to the draft *Plan* by providing a preponderance of evidence in the appendix why the comments do not have merit.

³⁶§41(3) of P.A. 33 of 2008, as amended, being the Michigan Municipal Planning Act, M.C.L. 125.3841(3). (This footnote used to cite the following acts, each repealed as of September 1, 2008:§7b(4) of the Township and Municipal Planning Acts, §4c(4) of the County Planning Act.)

³⁷§45(1)(b) of P.A. 33 of 2008, as amended, being the Michigan Municipal Planning Act, M.C.L. 125.3845(1)(b). (This footnote used to cite the following acts, each repealed as of September 1, 2008:§9(1)(a) of the Township Planning Act; and §8a(1)(a) of the Municipal Planning Act, §5(6) of the County Planning Act.)

³⁸§43(1) of P.A. 33 of 2008, as amended, being the Michigan Municipal Planning Act, M.C.L. 125.3843(1). (This footnote used to cite the following acts, each repealed as of September 1, 2008:§5(1) of the County Planning Act; and §8(1) of the Township and Municipal Planning Acts.)