

Mecca leaders preparing to update plan

By **BOB COUPLAND**
Staff writer

MECCA — Township trustees are working with the Trumbull County Planning Commission to update its 32-year-old township comprehensive plan.

Trustees met recently with the planning commission representatives and more than 15 residents to review a survey of what the residents want to see in the updated comprehensive plan.

Trustee Greg Chopko said the process has begun to move forward with updating and expanding the plan to focus on future land use and economic development in the township.

He said the township has 2,000 residents who were asked to fill out an online survey of what they want the township to be 10 to 20 years in the future.

"This comprehensive plan is government by the people and for the people. We are asking the residents what are the priorities that the government should be working on for the township's future," Chopko said.

He said the township has economic needs and having an updated plan will help with future development.

Chopko said township officials plan to be "more pro-active" and seek more grants for the township.

Trustee Christen Clemson said there is grant funding available and the township would like to get some of it to help upgrade and enhance items in the township.

Julie Green, director of the planning commission, said the comprehensive plan will take 18 months to complete. The current plan is from 1993.

Green said the township currently has no zoning and can decide whether they want zoning or not in the new plan.

She said the plan and zoning can work together if the township decides to look at zoning.

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"The survey asks questions of what your visions and goals for the township are. The plan will help chart a vision for your future," Green said.

She said when the township is going after grant funding for a particular project officials may be asked if that is identified in a plan such as this

Zachary Steiner, a planner with the planning commission, said the comprehensive plan would address infrastructure needs of the township and what funding would be needed.

He said the plan would have sections on transportation, future land use, economic development, and safety forces and services.

SURVEY RESULTS

Steiner said the survey results showed residents like the rural atmosphere of the township and the proximity to Mosquito Lake.

He said the survey showed residents want more housing opportunities, more restaurants, support hunting and outdoor activities, want roads improved, natural gas to homes, and broadband connections.

Steiner said residents would like more recreational space such as parks and snowmobile trails.

He said residents feel the challenges facing the township are the condition of roads and infrastructure, and need for more growth both residential and business.

As for a question on the survey on Mecca having land-use zoning residents said that

people come to Mecca because there is no zoning

Some residents feel if zoning was on the election ballot the issue would not pass by the voters.

As for larger items such as possibly changing the designation of Mosquito Lake, Green said local officials and residents can reach out to their state representatives.

"Reach out to your state officials and let your voices be heard. The state and federal levels are who control the funding," Green said.

Clemson said while many people do comment on Mosquito Lake, which divides the township in half with a west side and east side, the designation of the lake is industrial for flood control and for drinking water uses only and not designated for recreational use.

Clemson said if residents want to see the designation of the lake changed there is a process that would need to be followed which takes time. She said this would involve the Army Corps of Engineers and any changes to the lake's designation would be at the federal level.

"It takes the citizens to speak out and make their voices heard saying what is important to the community," Green said.

Green said state officials removed from the state budget funding for addressing hydrilla issues in Mosquito Lake which would have provided funds from the Ohio Department of Natural Resources match the \$300,000 the county commissioners had committed for hydrilla control. Hydrilla is an aquatic plant that is considered an invasive species.