

White Pigeon Community Visioning

December 9, 2009

March 25, 2010

White Pigeon Township Hall

Participants: Dan Czajkowski, Don Gloy, Dave Girton, Wendy Dimmick, Diane Fenner, Beth Peterson, Kayleigh Salazar, Sherri Krogh, Morgan Gremore, Ron McAlister, Susan Cline, Earl Baldwin, Perri Saunders, Ron Drzewicki, Roy Manning, James Paulsen, Roger Wolf, Clayton Bell, Paul Roe, Michael Krajniak, [INSERT ADDITIONAL PARTICIPANTS FROM 3/25/10 HERE]

White Pigeon Community Timeline Scroll

1877 – Library organized

1977 – White Pigeon Community Association formed and first ‘White Pigeon Days’ held

1978 – White Pigeon sanitary system completed

1988 – Lake Wahbememe Lake Association formed

2000 – White Pigeon Area Community Foundation created

2000 – New Township Hall and Fire Department constructed on US-12

2001 – New location for Library at 102 N. Kalamazoo

2005 – Interact group formed at White Pigeon High School

2007 – John Edds memorial courtyard completed

2007 – Downtown Revitalization Association formed and flowers planted downtown

Mission/Purpose of Represented Organizations

- Control growth and protect natural resources
- Prepare youth for the future and turn them into assets to the community
- Carryout service projects within the community and region
- Make the community more attractive to residents and businesses
- Provide residents with the best possible service
- Maintain and improve infrastructure
- Improve community interaction and support businesses
- Protect water resources and manage growth
- Protect the land as a resource to agriculture
- Cooperate with partners and leverage community resources
- Promote the schools as an asset to the community
- Fund community investments in youth and physical resources
- Protect the environment
- Provide learning opportunities for youth and adults

SWOT Analysis

Strengths (internal)

- Close-knit community
- Location proximate to highway transportation network
- Abundant surface water resources
- Strong schools that engage with local governments
- Quality water and sewer infrastructure
- Excellent police and fire protection
- Good educational (advanced placement and extracurricular) opportunities

- Capacity to grow responsibly
- Rail access
- Agricultural heritage of community
- Basic medical facilities
- Hub for ambulance service
- Good emergency response facilities
- Fantastic library
- Community pride
- Regional proximity to cultural resources
- US-12 Heritage Route
- Skilled workforce
- Small community that makes it easy to communicate with local officials

Weaknesses (internal)

- Empty storefronts downtown
- Border community
- Limited employment opportunities
- Growing poverty
- Resistance to and fear of change (close-mindedness)
- Protective decision making interests (“good ole boys and girls network”)
- Hurdles and excuses (apathy) to public involvement in community decision making and betterment
- Apathetic parenting
- Poor inter-organizational communication (lack of communication networks)
- Uncoordinated and overlapping community meetings
- Limited gym facilities in schools
- Resistance to funding community investments in infrastructure/facilities
- Limited unity around community improvement initiatives

Opportunities (external)

- Grant writing resources
- “Nowhere but up”
- Bio-economy and agricultural resources
- World-class school system
- Community foundation with endowment
- Expanded early, vocational, and continuing educational opportunities
- Improve the character of the community
- Offer incentives and training for business expansion and entrepreneurship
- Strong brand to promote and market the community with promotional materials
- Innovative small business loans through tax breaks

Threats (external)

- Michigan tax structure and current business climate
- Unfunded mandates
- Lack of funding for education
- Not doing anything (stagnation)
- Divisions within the community
- Population loss and outmigration
- Consolidation of schools and local government (loss of local control)

- School of choice policy
- Financial distress
- Antiquated tax structure

Vision Talk

Participants were asked to envision the community 3-10 years in the future and individually write responses to the following questions:

- What have we achieved?
- What positive changes have occurred?
- What problems have been solved?
- What are people saying about the community?
- What are relationships like?
- How are people behaving differently?

Participants shared their thoughts with three different partners, each time prioritizing and incorporating their previous partners' good ideas. The group reconvened and participants shared general themes that emerged as **Community Visions**:

- Community collaboration
- Business incubator
- Improved housing stock
- Storefronts filled downtown
- More manufacturing jobs
- More shopping opportunities
- Consolidated public safety authority
- Rehabilitated, restored, and removed downtown buildings
- "The School of Choice" in the region
- Mentoring opportunities and expanded classroom into the community
- Engaged youth in community decision making
- *Controlled community economic growth (added 3/25/10)*
- *Capitalize on customers – residents of Klinger Lake*
- *Regional recreation opportunities*
- *Producer of renewable energy (wind) on farmland*
- *Strategic approach to dealing with cost/regulatory difference in Indiana*
- *Utilize railroad as source of commerce*
- *More coordinated planning*
- *Take advantage of transportation access (and heritage)*
- *Effective community marketing*

(Participants of the 3/25/10 session were asked to find a partner and briefly review the SWOT Analysis and Vision Talk notes from the 12/9/09 session. They were then asked to generate two additional 'community visions' for 3-10 years into the future)

Brainstorming and Prioritizing Action Items (3/25/10 session)

Participants were split into groups of 4 or 5 and asked to brainstorm specific 'action items' that will make the 'community visions' reality. The action items were written on large note cards and posted on the wall. Participants were then asked to vote for the top two priority actions items (number of votes in parentheses):

- Local farmers market (10)
- Coordinate internet websites and Facebook (7)
- Expand role of Parks & Recreation Board (6)
- Publish White Pigeon Township newsletter 2 times a year (3)

- Coffee shop, Bakery (2)
- Health and environmental grants (1)
- Historic grants for historic homes (1)
- Antique mall/pedestrian mall (1)
- Beautification of US-12 and Kalamazoo Street (1)
- White Pigeon Library – expand cultural civic offerings (speakers) (1)
- Agriculture convention / training facility (1)
- Pigeon River boat ramp and park (canoe/boat rentals)
- Larger bait shop (enhance existing)
- Satellite stores
- Barber shop
- White Pigeon website
- Re-establish welcome wagon program
- Develop a business incubator
- Promote/market black squirrels
- Senior programs enhancement (Bridge/cards/exercise/games/book clubs)
- Enhance volunteer programs – recruit, communicate, coordinate
- Youth/Senior connection – mentoring, helping, tutoring – promote Big Brother/Big Sister program
- White Pigeon Schools – adult enrichment courses/offer (painting, yoga, photography, mind-body connection)
- Bus stop
- Get State government officials more involved in township issues – make elected officials accountable!

Action Planning

Of the actions items generated through brainstorming, the top four receiving the most votes were selected for conducting the ‘action planning’ exercise. Participants were split into new groups of 4 or 5 and each group was asked to begin planning a particular action item. After each group entered initial comments on a particular action item, the groups rotated to another action item, such that each group had the opportunity to offer input on each action item. The plans to accomplish the four priority action items are:

- Farmers Market
 - Willing to help:
 - Tony Wright – Downtown Revitalization
 - Who else to involve:
 - Permits issued by?
 - Contact Mendon Farmers Market for help
 - Contact Monsanto/Pioneer/Fresh Solutions
 - (Ronna Girton (Dave’s wife))
 - What can be done:
 - Protection from elements (sun/rain/etc.)
 - Make it attractive and inviting
 - Easy in/out with parking
 - Who issues applications to participate
 - Possible location – US 131 & US 12 – Wabememe Rock (?) building behind (this is Mottville township)
 - Consider making participation free

- Simplify participation
 - Promotion – Use Township sign
 - By When:
 - Summer 2010
- Coordinate Internet website and Facebook
 - Willing to help:
 - Sherri and J. Kasey
 - Who else to involve:
 - Pam Gates – H.S. Computer teacher
 - Rick’s Computer Service – Rick Soice
 - Nick Jackson – Three Rivers but White Pigeon native
 - Who else to involve:
 - Link them/create
 - Make sure any website is maintained
 - Publish links in newsletters
 - Post meeting times for each entity
 - By when:
 - A.S.A.P. – Township Facebook already in place
 - Link to Klinger Lake Association Facebook
- Expand role of Parks and Recreation
 - Willing to help:
 - Don Gloy, Beth Peterson
 - Who else to involve
 - MSU Extension
 - Can the board oversee the Farmers Market if housed at a Park (public land)?
 - What can be done:
 - Bike lanes
 - Pedestrian walkways
 - Family programs
 - Ask for grant money to assist in parks and recreation program (perhaps to build setup for Farmers Market)
 - By When:
- Township Newsletter
 - Willing to help:
 - Sherri
 - Who else to involve:
 - Lake Associations (all lakes)
 - Library
 - Check with other communities
 - What can be done:
 - Combine current newsletters – all
 - Put newsletter on web and promote on White Pigeon library computers

- Links on website for all community newsletters (schools, library, village, township, lakes)
- Newsletter can be mailed with tax bills
- Include web addresses in newsletter
- By when:
 - July 2010

White Pigeon Township officials were asked to communicate the action planning results to the individuals 'willing to help' and charge those individuals with the leadership roles to initiate the action items.

- Facilitated and recorded by Brad Neumann, AICP - St. Joseph County MSU Extension