



## **ADA TOWNSHIP PLANNING COMMISSION MEETING MINUTES OF THE MARCH 17, 2022 REGULAR MEETING**

A regular meeting of the Ada Township Planning Commission was held on Thursday, March 17, 2022 at 7:00 p.m., at the Ada Township Hall, Assembly Room, 7330 Thornapple River Dr., Ada MI.

### **I. CALL TO ORDER**

Chair, Korth, called the meeting to order at 7:01 p.m.

### **II. ROLL CALL**

Members Present: Carter, Heglund, Jacobs, Korth

Members Absent: Burton, Butterfield, Easter

Staff Present: Buckley, Said

Others Present: 10

### **III. APPROVAL OF AGENDA**

Moved by Carter, supported by Jacobs, to approve the agenda as presented. Motion carried.

### **IV. APPROVAL OF MINUTES OF THE FEBRUARY 17, 2022, REGULAR MEETING**

Moved by Carter, supported by Jacobs, to approve the minutes as presented. Motion carried.

### **V. APPROVAL OF MINUTES OF THE MARCH 2, 2022, SPECIAL MEETING**

Carter mentioned that he thought the minutes should include a note about his daughter-in-law working for Progressive AE. Minutes were amended. Moved by Carter, supported by Jacobs, to approve the minutes as amended. Motion carried.

### **VI. PUBLIC HEARING**

#### **1. Request for Special Use Permit, K-12<sup>th</sup> Grade Private School (Journey Academy) in the R-3 Zoning District, 6025 Ada Drive, LLC**

Commission member, Jacobs, disclosed that the applicant is represented by Warner, Norcross and Judd where she is employed, however, she said she has no connection to the applicant and that she can be fair and impartial and the Commission agreed that no conflict of interest exists.

Presenters introduced themselves: Michael Hofmann, AMDG Architects represented the applicant, Jim Rabaut, Warner, Norcross and Judd, represented the property owner, and Daryn Kuipers, a parent at Journey Academy and on the building committee.

Mr. Hoffman stated Journey Academy was a small, private, school that currently operates in

portable classrooms on Spaulding Road and was looking to move into the property at 6025 Ada Drive. He said the current number of students is 38 with 3 teachers, projected for next year 42 students, and projected growth by 2027 of 100 students. He explained that Journey Academy was looking to occupy the building with minor renovations to the interior/exterior and he described some of the changes.

Mr. Hoffman said the current daily schedule is 8-8:30 a.m. drop off and pick up is 3:15-3:45 p.m. He said they were aware of the traffic concern on Ada Drive and he shared the details of the traffic flow process with student counts and statistics.

Mr. Rabaut addressed concerns noted in the staff report; addition of trees, explained the consistency of the trip counts report, and said he understood that with the prospect of increased student count they would need to address Planning Department concerns about traffic.

John Said, Planning Director, asked the applicant whether Kent County Road Commission had been asked to provide input about a left turn lane and he made reference to the St. Roberts project. Mr. Hoffman said it would not be a normal process to go to the Road Commission if they were not making adjustments like curb cuts and for a school of that size and the cost of a left turn lane, it would probably make the project unfeasible.

Mr. Hoffman went over all the start times and end times of the other schools on Ada Drive and said that the schools have told him they were willing to shift their start times by 15 minutes to help ease traffic flow.

Korth opened the public hearing at 7:22 p.m.

Laurie Snedeker, 6016 Adacraft, said she has no problem with the land use for a new school, but she was very concerned about the traffic. She shared concern about the kids walking to school and crossing Ada Drive (at 45 mph) with no cross walk.

Marsalene Hamilton, 6028 Adacraft, shared concern about the traffic on Ada Drive. She said that parents of the middle school park on the road at pickup time and it was very dangerous.

John Babcock, 770 Adaway, shared concerns about the traffic and if student numbers increase whether an expansion would be needed. Director Said, explained that if the student enrollment exceeds an amount to be determined, the applicant would be required to come back to the Planning Commission for review.

Daryn Kuipers, 5250 Rollingbrook, said he respects that the traffic on Ada Drive is very busy and he shares that concern, but he felt wrong slowing down the progress of the academy and allowing 36 students the opportunity.

Nancy Letherby, 518 West Abbey Mill, had questions about tuition, scholarships, state regulations, and university affiliations, which are not zoning-related items. Mr. Kuipers offered to meet after the meeting to answer any of her questions.

Nancy Gaskill, 4990 Ada Dr., shared concerns with the heavy traffic and the speed limit on Ada Drive.

Said stated that he received 3 written communications of support and read each of them into the record. The letters of support were from: Liz Peters, Principal at St. Robert School; Mark Stuit, Director of Advancement at Ada Christian School; and Jim and Nonee Kuipers, of 6540 Ada Drive.

There were no other public comment and the public hearing was closed at 7:40 p.m.

There was lengthy Board discussion regarding concerns for the traffic on Ada Drive and particular ways to enter and exit the school parking lot (possible exit turning right only), the concerns for the safety of pedestrian crossings and non-crossings on Ada Drive, the Commissioners agreed that staggering start times would help traffic flow, as well as limiting the student count to 50 or 75 maximum.

Jacobs said that if the Commission were to consider approval, it should include a condition to stagger start times for Journey relative to the surrounding schools to help limit the congestion/number of cars on Ada Drive.

Following Board discussion, Korth asked Said to address the Commissioner's concerns, about the Ada Drive corridor, with the Township staff, Trails Committee, Kent County Road Commission, and the Kent County Sheriff Community Policing Officer. Said stated that he would undertake the initiatives suggested and provide an update at the next meeting.

Carter said he was not comfortable approving the request because of all the concerns shared from the neighbors and that he would prefer to postpone a decision and await any progress achieved by the Planning Director with the County/Sheriff/Trails.

Moved by Heglund, supported by Jacobs, to approve the Special Land Use Permit for 6025 Ada Drive, subject to the following conditions:

1. This Special Use approval is for the existing building only, and for a student population not to exceed 75 students. Any expansion of the school building or to the student population beyond 75 students shall require an amended Special Use review and approval.
2. The required start time will always be at least 15 minutes different than all the other schools on Ada Drive.
3. Prior to the issuance of any building permit, the applicant shall submit and obtain Staff approval of a landscape plan providing two shade trees in front of the existing building, with a minimum caliper of 2.5".
4. Any exterior building-mounted light fixtures shall be full-cutoff fixtures to control light emission.

Roll Call:

Ayes: Heglund, Jacobs, Korth

Nays: Carter

Absent: Burton, Butterfield, Easter

Motion carried 3-1.

## **VII. NEW BUSINESS**

### **1. Request for approval of revised Planning Commission Bylaws**

Moved by Carter, supported by Jacobs, to postpone the request for approval of revised Bylaws until the April meeting. Motion carried.

### **2. Election of Planning Commission Officers**

Moved by Heglund, supported by Carter, to postpone the election of officers until the April meeting when more officers are present. Motion carried.

## **VIII. OTHER BUSINESS - none**

## **IX. COMMISSION MEMBER / STAFF REPORTS**

Said stated that the Master Plan consultant, Progressive AE, was approved by the Township Board and Staff would be meeting with Progressive AE on March 18 to start the kick off.

Said made note that the April 21 meeting will begin at the new start time of 5:30 p.m.

## **X. PUBLIC COMMENT – none**

## **XI. ADJOURNMENT**

Moved by Carter, supported by Jacobs, to adjourn the meeting at 8:46 p.m. Motion carried.

Respectfully submitted,

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Jacqueline Smith, Ada Township Clerk

rs:eb