

**ADA TOWNSHIP PLANNING COMMISSION
MINUTES OF THE JULY 18, 2019 MEETING**

A meeting of the Ada Township Planning Commission was held on Thursday, July 18, 2019, 7:00 p.m. at the Ada Township Offices, 7330 Thornapple River Dr., Ada, MI.

I. CALL TO ORDER

II. ROLL CALL

Present: Burton, Carter, Easter, Heglund, Jacobs, Leisman

Absent: Butterfield

Staff Present: Ferro, Bajdek, Winczewski

Public Present: 9 Members

III. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Moved by Easter, supported by Carter, to approve the agenda as written. Motion passed unanimously.

IV. APPROVAL OF MINUTES OF THE JUNE 20, 2019 MEETING

Moved by Burton, supported by Easter, to approve the minutes of the June 20, 2019 meeting as presented. Motion passed unanimously.

V. PUBLIC HEARINGS

- 1. Request for a Special Use Permit to allow a 5,291 sq. ft. Accessory Building, which is 1,291 sq. ft. larger than permitted by right for the subject 6.91-acre property, 3200 Pettis Ave. NE, Parcel No. 41-15-05-100-041, Ben Thomet for Christopher & Heather Hoexum**

Applicant, Chris Hoexum, presented his request. Mr. Hoexum stated the building will house additional vehicles, including recreational vehicles, and provide an extra space for indoor recreation for his kids. His children are in sports and will also use the space for training in the winter months.

Chairperson Leisman opened the public hearing at 7:02 p.m.

Joan Roberts of 3330 and 3350 Pettis Avenue commented that she would like to know the exact location of where the barn will be placed, why can't the barn be scaled down to a conforming size, how many stories will it be, what exactly will the barn be used for, and how will this affect her property value.

Robert Roberts of 3330 and 3350 Pettis Avenue stated he is concerned that approving this will be setting a precedence for accessory building size. He would also like to know how many stories it will be.

Monica Donahue of 5800 4 Mile Road would like to know exactly what the barn will be used for. She is concerned about noise generated from recreational vehicles.

Public hearing was closed at 7:05 p.m.

Leisman noticed that a site plan was not included in the packet. Copies were then made and handed out to the Commissioners and attendees.

Mr. Hoexum stated he has a total of 10 acres, the neighbors behind him have 10 acres, another neighbor has 18 acres, and the neighbor to the south of him has 100 acres. Mr. Hoexum stated the barn will store

his Brush Hog, a large John Deere tractor, dirt bikes, a UTV, and his small car collection. Also inside the barn will be a small activity room for his kids. The purpose of this barn will be for personal uses only with no plans to host parties, weddings, etc. Mr. Hoexum explained that he will preserve as much land as possible.

Easter expressed concern over the dirt bike noise. Mr. Hoexum stated the dirt bikes are already being used and he has not received any noise complaints from his neighbors. The dirt bikes he has are not the loud, obnoxious kind but are a smaller variety.

Bajdek summarized his staff memo as presented in the board packets. The applicant's property is located in the RP-1 Rural Preservation 1 zoning district and is situated approximately ¼ mile from Pettis Avenue. The 5,291 sq. ft. accessory building is proposed to be constructed near the northeast corner of the property which is currently forested. The building has been designed with architectural features to resemble a 'farm barn' and will complement the existing single-family home, as well as be compatible with the character of the surrounding area.

Bajdek stated zoning regulations limit the total combined ground level floor area of all detached accessory buildings to 4,000 sq. ft. for properties with 3 or more acres in all residential and rural districts. Bajdek also stated that there are no detached accessory buildings currently on the property and all other dimensional standards will be satisfied. Pursuant to 78.2 (a)(7) of the Zoning Ordinance, the Planning Commission may authorize an increase in building floor areas and heights for accessory buildings greater than what is permitted by right, with approval of a special use permit, if the Commission determines that the size, height, placement, design, and appearance of the accessory building will be compatible with the character of the surrounding area.

Bajdek stated that staff is recommending approval of the Special Use Permit, based on a determination by the Planning Commission that the size, height, placement, design, and appearance of the accessory building will be compatible with the character of the surrounding area, subject to the following conditions:

- Any exterior lighting on the building be of a non-glaring style, subject to approval by the Planning Department.
- The building shall not be used as a dwelling unit.

Board discussed the request and agreed it would be helpful to do a site visit before making any decisions.

It was moved by Carter, seconded by Easter to table the request for (1) one month. Motion passed unanimously.

VI. UNFINISHED BUSINESS – None

VII. NEW BUSINESS

1. Informal Pre-Application Conference, 92 Multifamily Residential Units on 9.64 Acre Site, 7590 East Fulton St., Parcel No. 41-15-34-127-003, Orion Real Estate Solutions

John Wheeler, President of Orion Real Estate Solutions, introduced the proposal. Mr. Wheeler stated that there are currently two apartment complexes in Ada; The Knoll and Stonefalls of Ada. When his company looked at this property of 9.5 acres, they learned that there are approximately 4.6 acres outside the floodplain which they can develop. They considered townhomes and small apartment buildings but the only way to make this project financially feasible would be to build a single apartment building of 4-stories with a total of 92 units, having parking spaces underneath and additional surface parking and garage parking onsite. Their current plan would be to market the apartments to the 55 and older crowd as well as the younger crowd who would like to live in Ada but can't afford a home.

Mr. Wheeler stated their market study is not yet complete. They are here to get the Commissioners feedback before they formally present their plan. They would like to work together with Ada to create a "once in a lifetime housing project for Ada".

Mr. Wheeler stated they did a similar project as this called "Rivers Edge" located off Monroe in Grand Rapids where the parking was underneath the 5-story building.

Mr. Wheeler stated they will need a height variance as the proposed 4-story building will be about 12-15 feet higher than what is allowed.

Michael Lubbers, Architect and Director of Design at Ghafari, stated he is excited to be working on this project. Mr. Lubbers stated that they recognize the plan doesn't conform to the PVM district standards. However, they have implemented design elements in this apartment building which complement the surrounding new buildings recently completed in Ada.

Leisman asked if they have, or are aware of, the Envision Ada Plan which depicts the desired residential plan in the proposed area. Planning Director, Ferro, stated the Envision Ada Plan shows a hypothetical layout which includes a mix of attached and detached buildings, but he doesn't feel it should be viewed as a prescription of what the Township wants.

Ferro summarized the materials presented in the board packets. Ferro stated that the previous owner of the property added floodplain fill on a portion of the property, creating a buildable site elevated close to the floodplain elevation of about 4.7 acres. The proposed density of development is 9.5 units per acre for the entire 9.64-acre site. When broken down to the 4.7-acre buildable portion of the site, the proposed density is 19.6 units per acre.

Ferro stated the development would be accessed from the existing Fulton St. driveway to the Marketplace Square Condominium with no new driveway access to public streets.

Ferro stated the property has 3 different zoning designations. It is located in the underlying zoning district of the C-1 Neighborhood Commercial district which applies to the whole village. It has 2 overlay designations: Planned Unit Development (PUD) and Planned Village Mixed Use Development (PVM). The PVM zoning designation is optional and can be used at the option of the property owner. The applicant has the choice to submit their plan under PUD or PVM.

Ferro stated he reviewed how well the proposed concept meets the PUD and PVM standards. He feels the site does meet the eligibility requirements in the PUD standards under subsections 1, 2, and 3; the site has sensitive natural features, a clustering of development on the filled portion of the site, and preservation of the remaining natural features of the site. The site also has public utility services and has direct access to a public street.

Ferro stated the proposed concept has not been designed to conform with any of the PVM district standards. In this district, an “Apartment House” lot is defined as “a lot located and designed to accommodate a detached building which resembles a large house but which contains multiple dwellings.”

Ferro stated one way to develop the site which would be more in keeping with what is encouraged in the PVM district standards and in the Envision Ada plan would be to achieve close to the same density with multiple buildings rather than a single building.

Ferro stated it is important to maximize density on the site in order to support the commercial sector within the Village.

Ferro noted the increased cost of development if more than 1 building was constructed; extra perimeter walls, extra elevators, etc.

Easter asked if these will be rented or owned by the occupants. Mr. Wheeler stated these will be rentals.

Chairperson Leisman opened the floor for Commissioner feedback:

Jacobs stated there is a shortage of affordable housing in Grand Rapids for older adults. In hearing what has been presented so far, it does not seem this would fall under affordable housing.

Mr. Wheeler responded that the price point will be similar to what they charge at The Knoll in Ada. Rent there is between \$1.45 – \$1.65 sq. ft. Affordability is different for everybody. They try to be fair in their practices and build long-term value.

Easter stated she doesn't feel this project resembles the 1820's – 1940's time period. She doesn't feel like this single massive building fits with the character, quality, and quaintness of the Village.

Ferro asked to know the length of the building. Applicants were not able to answer. Ferro stated it appears to be in the 500 feet range. Applicants disagreed, feeling it was shorter in length.

Burton stated her initial reaction was that she didn't like the single large building and would like to see it broken up. She feels the style is more contemporary and would like to see it restyled to soften it more to the quaintness of the Village. Burton asked if the garages would be seen from Fulton Street. Mr. Wheeler stated there will be a good-sized buffer of trees between the garages and Fulton. Burton stated she agrees that density is needed in this space.

Board discussed the possibility of traffic issues coming in and out of the apartments onto Fulton.

Heglund stated he is excited about the density and usage in the Village and feels the price point is good. Heglund stated he liked the plan when he first reviewed it but after reviewing the Envision Ada plan, he likes the latter more.

Carter stated having 1 large building maximizes views of the river and is more efficient. The problem is that it's a monstrosity and does not meet the PVM district standards. The applicant may not agree with the PVM district standards but it is something the Township put a great deal of money into. Is there a way to split the building into 3 or 4 sections? Carter stated he has concerns that there will be pushback from the community if this is left as 1 large building. Carter stated he feels we still need to address affordable housing in Ada.

Ferro asked if there will be amenities. Mr. Wheeler stated there will be a club room and exercise room. Leisman stated the Township has been working a long time to get rid of the 1970's era strip mall and gain

the feeling of a quaint village. A large apartment building doesn't fit with that vision. Leisman stated he would be more interested in this idea if part of the building were condos so people owned them and were vested in them. Leisman stated this area is not the place for affordable housing as it is in the heart of the village and on the water. Leisman stated he also has concerns about this building being 4 stories.

Mr. Wheeler thanked the Commissioners for their time and stated they will keep working on their plan and will stay in touch with the Planning staff.

VIII. COMMISSION MEMBER/STAFF REPORTS

Ferro stated he has not yet worked on Village density and lot sizes as discussed during June's meeting.

IX. PUBLIC COMMENT – None

X. ADJOURNMENT – Meeting adjourned at 8:20 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Jacqueline Smith, Ada Township Clerk