

**ADA TOWNSHIP PLANNING COMMISSION
MINUTES OF THE DECEMBER 19, 2019 MEETING**

A meeting of the Ada Township Planning Commission was held on Thursday, December 19, 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, Butterfield (arrived 7:01 p.m.), Carter, Easter, Heglund, Jacobs, Leisman

Absent: None

Staff Present: Ferro, Bajdek, Winczewski

Public Present: Approximately 18 members

III. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

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

Butterfield arrived

IV. APPROVAL OF MINUTES OF NOVEMBER 21, 2019 MEETING

Moved by Easter, supported by Carter, to approve the minutes of the November 21, 2019 meeting as presented. Motion passed unanimously.

V. PUBLIC HEARINGS

1. Request for Rezoning from the Medium Density Single-Family Residential (R-3) District to the Village Residential (V-R) District, Parcel No. 41-15-34-402-008, 7699 Fase Street SE, Chuck Hoyt, on behalf of TPR 7699 Fase Street, LLC

Chuck Hoyt of MENSA Capital presented on behalf of TPR 7699 Fase Street, LLC. Mr. Hoyt stated this 4-acre property was previously owned by the Kent County Road Commission. It is surrounded by residential single-family homes. The property currently has a building on it which was constructed around 1934 and has been used as a storage facility.

Mr. Hoyt stated the property was made available to Ada Township for purchase in 2016. Ada Township declined the offer and MENSA Capital purchased it in 2017. Mr. Hoyt stated MENSA Capital has been allowing public parking on the property during community events.

Mr. Hoyt stated the property was purchased with the intent to develop it into a residential neighborhood, compact in nature and walkable in its design. The applicant would like to build a neighborhood consistent with the Ada Township Master Plan. They are requesting a zoning change from R-3 to V-R because the lots in the R-3 district require a lot width of 90 feet with a 13,500 sq. ft. lot size. That is larger than what is required of Ada Moorings. Many of the existing lots on Fase St. are smaller than that dimension, therefore, they feel it is appropriate to ask for the V-R designation which requires 50 ft. lot widths and 7,000 sq. ft. lots. Mr. Hoyt stated he believes this site was not included in the V-R district because it was not in use as a residential site at the time the zoning designation was made.

Mr. Hoyt stated their goal is to make it into 16 single-family homes with lot widths of 50 ft. That would allow for affordable, walkable, and highly marketable residential units as encouraged in the Ada Village

Market Study.

Mr. Hoyt addressed two objections mentioned in the November 18, 2019 staff memo prepared by Planning Director, Jim Ferro:

1. *A lack of existing storm drainage facilities.*

Mr. Hoyt presented a recent survey which shows a storm drain and catch basin at the corner of the emergency access drive and Fase St.

2. *The proximity of a lower density neighborhood immediately adjacent to the north and east.*

Mr. Hoyt reviewed an aerial photo noting the home closest to the north east corner of the subject property.

Mr. Hoyt stated that they have every intent to do some landscape screening. Mr. Hoyt stated the side yard setbacks for homes in Ada Moorings are roughly 18 ft. and they would be significantly farther away from what homes currently are from each other in Ada Moorings.

Planning Director, Ferro, presented and reviewed a zoning map of the subject property and surrounding area. Ferro stated the R-3 zoning district requires a minimum lot size of 13,500 sq. ft. and a minimum lot width of 90 ft. when the property is served by both public water and sewer. R-3 zoning is typically found in the Ada Drive corridor which has public utilities. It is more of a suburban zoning district which includes neighborhoods such as Ada Croft Commons, Ada Towne, and Ada Woods.

Ferro stated that the V-R zoned properties on Fase St. allows for smaller lots. When the V-R district was created years ago, it was created to better match the lot sizes and characteristics of properties in the village at that time. Prior to the V-R designation, all residential neighborhoods in the Village were labeled in the R-3 zoning district. V-R designation allows 7,000 sq. ft. lots with a minimum lot width of 50 feet. Ferro stated he estimates that 16 homes could be built on the applicant's 4-acre property. If the applicant's property stayed in the current R-3 zoning district, no more than 8 homes could be built on the 4-acre property.

Ferro stated one of the criteria used in evaluating a re-zoning request is how it conforms with the Ada Township Master Plan. In the case of the 2007 Ada Township Master Plan, amended in 2016, the subject property is shown as being used as a public/semi-public land use category. That was based on the fact that the Road Commission owned the property and the Township was entertaining the idea of purchasing the property for some other public use. Ferro stated the Future Land Use Map doesn't address the change in ownership from public ownership to private ownership.

Ferro stated there is a vision statement regarding residential land use in the Master Plan which states that "Ada Township will have a variety of housing styles and levels of affordability, to accommodate the needs of varying income, stages in life and housing preferences..." There is also a supporting policy that states the Township should "encourage compact residential development in and near the Ada Village neighborhood..." Ferro stated that he feels these statements support the applicant's zoning change request.

Ferro stated a second criterion used in evaluating a re-zoning request is compatibility with surrounding uses. Ferro stated that although Ada Moorings is in the R-3 zoning district, due to judicial proceedings back in the 1980's, Ada Moorings was permitted to have lots smaller than the minimum R-3 standard of 13,500 sq. ft.

Ferro stated the lot sizes to the east and north of the subject property range from about 7,700 sq. ft. on Fase St. and up to 15,333 sq. ft. in the Ada Moorings development. There are existing lots on Moorings Drive to the north of the applicant's property that are slightly over 12,000 sq. ft. in size.

Ferro noted that there are powerlines along the east side of the applicant's property which may put some constraints on how much landscape screening can be planted.

Ferro stated a third criterion used in evaluating a re-zoning request is availability of public facilities to serve the proposed use. Ferro stated there is both public water and sewer available to serve the subject property. There are also two means of access to Thornapple River Drive, one is from Fase St. and the other is from Kamp Twins Dr. Ferro stated the development of this property, as the applicant proposes, would potentially add around 160 vehicle trips per day. There are no traffic count studies for Fase St. but there are about 40 existing homes on the street which, using generally accepted traffic generation rates, generate about 320 vehicle trips per day. Ferro stated that even with a possible addition of 20 homes on the applicant's property, there would be daily traffic volumes below the acceptable limit.

Ferro stated a fourth criterion used in evaluating a re-zoning request is site suitability for the proposed use. The site is nearly flat and has very little significant vegetation. The site is well out of the 100-year floodplain and has no wetlands or other water/riparian features.

Ferro stated a fifth criterion used in evaluating a re-zoning request is the current supply of land already zoned for the proposed use in the area. The analysis of potential development in the VR district that was completed by the Planning Department in September, 2019 demonstrated that the acreage of land in the existing VR district boundary has potential for redevelopment that could result in a 47% increase in the number of home sites in the district (from 97 to 143 home sites), through division of existing parcels. However, there are currently very few existing vacant lots in the VR district that are available for development in the short term.

Ferro stated the final criterion used in evaluating a re-zoning request is whether the property can be reasonably used under its current zoning. Development of the subject property under the current R-3 zoning district would permit reasonable use of the property. Rezoning is not necessary in order to allow reasonable use of the site.

Ferro concluded his review by stating that VR zoning of the subject property is compatible with the character of the area provided that it is developed in a way that is sensitive to what surrounds it. In regards to storm drainage, the applicant addressed it in his recent survey and it appears it is available.

Ferro noted that the applicant could also apply for an R-3 PUD zoning which would allow development with density that is higher than the R-3 district. In doing so, the Township would have more discretion on the design and layout of the development that they wouldn't have if it was simply zoned V-R. Ferro stated the layout in comparison to surrounding homes is likely more important than density in this case.

Chair Leisman opened the public hearing at 7:35 p.m.

Miles Fase of 7680 Fase St. stated he thinks the re-zoning is a terrible thing to happen. Fase St. already has traffic problems. Fase St. does not need more vehicles or more buildings. Mr. Fase stated he does not care about a Master Plan. He is concerned he would be charged for more water and sewage built for the additional homes. He thinks the whole thing is ridiculous and terrible.

Mark LaCroix of 7551 Fase St. stated he has concerns about the density in regards to the road. Fase St. has become a parking lot. With more and more Township events, residents are parking on both sides of the street. You can barely fit 2 cars on the road when there are cars parked on both sides. Another concern is that Fase St. is a pedestrian thoroughfare. Mr. LaCroix stated there is already many children, bicycles, wagons, etc. in the street and it has become dangerous. He feels adding more traffic on Fase St. would be irresponsible. Mr. LaCroix stated the intersection of Fase St. and Thornapple River Dr. is extremely dangerous. He thinks that until the safety issues are addressed, there should not be more density on the end of Fase St.

Broderick Bebout of 826 Moorings Dr. stated he agrees with Mr. LaCroix's comments and asked several questions:

1. Do any of the Trustees get a financial benefit for the completion of this project?
2. Is there a site plan so the residents can see the layout for the 16 potential houses?
3. Will there be any change to the emergency access road between Ada Moorings and Fase St.?
4. Will there be any common element built into this project?
5. Will the power lines be relocated?

Tom Manus, owner of two rental homes on Fase St., stated he agrees with the public comments tonight. The pedestrian flow does create a problem. Mr. Manus inquired what the minimum square footage of the homes would be on these lots and expressed concerns over the possibility of very small homes being built thus causing property values to decline. Mr. Manus stated the traffic is the main issue and he is totally against this.

Arjia Wilcox of 842 Dogwood Meadows Dr. stated she once sold in Ada Moorings and she represents MENSA Capital in the Riverpoint development. Ms. Wilcox stated she is speaking as a homeowner in Ada Moorings and prefers to look at homes vs. an eyesore. She has lived in Ada Moorings for 16 years and has walked past the storage facility for 16 years. She feels very strongly that the Township needs to make an improvement in the community. This development will add to our local businesses and community enjoyment. Ms. Wilcox stated she doesn't feel an additional 16 homes will add much traffic and that neighborhoods and the Township can control traffic flow. She feels her home will increase in value by having an improvement to an eyesore. Ms. Wilcox stated it is easy to look at free land and want it to stay that way, but she does not feel that way. She wants her home value to increase and her community to be whole.

Jeremiah Gruchow who lives on Cascade Road stated he has a small development going on in Ada right now in a R-3 zoned district. Mr. Gruchow stated his homes are at a higher price point because of how many homes they can put in an R-3 development. Mr. Gruchow stated he gets calls 5-6 times per week from people wanting to know if they can provide homes at a smaller price point but he can not in the R-3 district because of how much money goes into development. Mr. Gruchow stated he feels the applicant's request would fit the need for the community and allow an opportunity for people to find a home that is a little more affordable.

Delvin Ratzsch of 7653 Fase St. stated he has a running battle with the Kent County Road Commission in regards to the intersection of Fase St. and Thornapple River Dr. Mr. Ratzsch stated that according to some studies, this intersection is one of the most dangerous types of pedestrian crossing situations. If the proposal is to add up to an additional 20 houses, this intersection is going to be more dangerous. He encouraged the Township to apply more pressure on the Kent County Road Commission to improve the safety on this

intersection if this development does get approved.

Noelle DiVozzo of 7115 Bronson St. stated the pedestrian and traffic issues do need to be addressed on Fase St. before any development takes place. If development does take place, she would like to see affordable housing.

Betsy Ratzsch of 7653 Fase St. stated that she is worried about traffic and noted that there would also be an increase in garbage trucks, school busses, turn-around traffic, etc. Ms. Ratzsch stated that she loves the idea of some small homes, preferring no more than 1,800 sq. ft. She would also like to see more affordable homes. The Master Plan has a vision to offer homes in a variety of price points and she does not feel that is true right now.

Dawn Bebout of 826 Moorings Dr. stated the subject property is an eyesore as it sits now. Nice homes would be an improvement but 16 homes seem too much. Fase St. has too many cars and the pedestrian crossing is dangerous.

Public Hearing closed at 7:57 p.m.

Chair Leisman offered the applicant to speak on the concerns raised from the residents. Mr. Hoyt declined.

Ferro stated the emergency access gate is for Ada Moorings only.

Ferro stated in regards to site layouts, nothing has been presented to the Township. He also does not know if there will be a common area, but there is not a requirement to have one. He has no knowledge of the minimum square footage of homes that the developer would propose. Ferro stated the Commissioners can request to see plans if that would help conceptualize, but the Planning Commission can not approve or deny based on layout in the VR district.

Ferro stated he is not aware of any plans to relocate the power lines. Mr. Hoyt stated there are no plans to move the power lines.

Jacobs stated the neighbor with the shortest setback will likely be concerned about the vegetation screening.

Jacobs stated that any costs related to infrastructure / utility connections would be the developer's responsibility.

Jacobs stated there have been numerous conversations, meetings, and studies between the Township and the Kent Count Road Commission on the safety of the pedestrian crossing area at Fase St. and Thornapple River Dr. It is a county road and the KCRC has essentially said they can not do anything to help. Jacobs encouraged audience members to talk to the people who make decisions at the KCRC.

Ferro stated the Township is currently in the process of updating the community trail and walkability plan. A lot of public input has been collected and this southeastern area is rated as one of the highest ranked needs for a potential project to improve better access into the Village.

Leisman stated he agrees with the Planner's recommendation to deny unless the applicant wants to table the

application and show the Planning Commission some plans so they can conceptualize the changes. Carter stated that if it is tabled, he will likely deny because even if the plans are acceptable by the Planning Commission and the area is rezoned to V-R, the applicant is not bound by those plans in the V-R district.

Leisman stated a Site Plan Review is required for any developments over a certain number. Carter asked how many lots the applicant's property could be split into as it is currently zoned. Ferro stated 8 lots.

Leisman stated the Planning Commissioners' options are: to recommend approval to the Township Board, recommend denial, or table the request to allow the applicant to bring more information or allow them to resubmit their re-zoning request as a PUD.

Carter stated he favors the PUD option as it allows the Planning Commission to look at landscaping, screening, roads, sidewalks, etc.

Leisman asked Mr. Hoyt what he would like to do. Mr. Hoyt stated he would like to table the request and informed the Commissioner's that it was not presented as a PUD because it can be a cumbersome process. He felt it was unnecessary. He doesn't feel the site will allow 20 units as a V-R zoning would allow, and feels they are capped out at 16 units.

Mr. Hoyt stated that if they re-submit their application and request a PUD, they would be allowed up to 24 units and they would likely apply for that many. Easter noted that Mr. Hoyt just stated he felt the property was capped out at 16 units.

Mr. Hoyt commented that Riverpoint of Ada, single family homes, has lots that are 50 ft. wide. He recommended looking at those lots to get a feel for the size.

Burton asked about pricing. Mr. Hoyt stated the homes will be market driven.

Leisman stated if a PUD application is presented, there will be a new Public Hearing.

It was moved by Jacobs, supported by Carter, to table the request for 1 month. Motion passed unanimously.

VI. UNFINISHED BUSINESS – None

VII. NEW BUSINESS - None

VIII. COMMISSION MEMBER/STAFF REPORTS - None

IX. PUBLIC COMMENT – None

X. ADJOURNMENT – Meeting adjourned at 8:25 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,