

**ADA TOWNSHIP PLANNING COMMISSION Draft  
MINUTES OF THE JANUARY 12, 2006 SPECIAL MEETING**

Draft

A special meeting of the Ada Township Planning Commission was held on Thursday, January 12, 2006, at the Ada Township Offices, 7330 Thornapple River Dr., Ada, Michigan.

**I. CALL TO ORDER**

Meeting was called to order by Korth at 7:00 p.m.

**II. ROLL CALL**

Present: Chairperson Korth, Commissioners Burton, Gutierrez, Hoeks, Lowry and Sytsma. Absent: Commissioner Butterfield. Also Present: Planning Director Ferro.

**III. APPROVAL OF AGENDA**

Motion by Sytsma, second by Hoeks, to approve the agenda as presented. Motion passed unanimously.

**IV. OVERVIEW OF MASTER PLAN UPDATE PROCESS**

Planning Director Ferro gave a summary of the master plan update process. The purpose of the plan is to set forth direction of the Township for future growth and development. He noted they have been working on the plan for some time – working on demographics, population trends, existing Township land use, traffic data, etc. It is important that the public is involved in helping set goals and objectives for the future.

**V. SUMMARY OF DRAFT VISION STATEMENT**

Ferro presented and summarized the draft Vision Statement dated January 5, 2006. He noted that the Plan is intended to guide the formation of local government goals, policies and planned implementing strategies regarding land use and land development. The draft Vision Statement considers views expressed by the public in the survey conducted in 2004, as well as sound planning principles. There are some basic guiding principles contained at the document, such as making sure Ada continues to be recognized as an individual community and retains a sense of its history, insuring that future growth and development does not compromise quality of life and the Township's outstanding natural features and character.

**VI. PUBLIC COMMENT ON DRAFT VISION STATEMENT**

Korth invited public comment on the draft Vision Statement.

Public comments were set forth as follows:

Jamie Ladd, 6300 Fulton, spoke about natural community assets and natural features. He stated he would like to see the Vision Statement include some reference to the Ada Township Open Space Preservation Ordinance. He feels the language regarding the 100 year floodplain needs to be stronger, rather than just saying "discouraged". Under the Village section, there should be a vision as to what the Township would like to see for a parking plan for the Village. He spoke regarding the post office and the parking problems there and coming up with a solution for this. Ladd stated that the goal off narrow road widths can only be achieved with private roads, and it is unlikely that all development in the future will have private roads.

John Eck, 7817 Thornapple Club Dr., asked why the survey in 2004 was only mailed to registered voters rather than property owners. Also asked where in the Master Plan road improvements fit in. The roads in the downtown area need work. Ferro stated township officials meet at least annually with the Road Commission regarding road work needs. The Road Commission has a 5-year plan and there is more

emphasis in the next 5 years on repair and rehab compared to in the past. Eck suggested that paving of Natural Beauty Roads would not necessarily detract from their character.

Lowry pointed out that it is not the paving itself that causes the disruption; it is all of the clearing and grading that is done along with the paving.

John Westra (did not state address), commented that the Board approved an on-line discussion forum called Ada Connect, available on Township website – he encourages all to take advantage of this and encourages the Planning Commission to publish on that site and get as many sources of input on the Master Plan as possible.

Debbie Glover, 7879 Thornapple Club Dr., commented on the long-range goals and vision statement regarding the school systems. There has been lots of growth in the last 10 years and therefore there are issues that need to be addressed for the schools. She hopes there is communication between the Commission and the Forest Hills Public Schools' task force. She said she applauds the supporting policies regarding keeping low densities in rural areas. She did ask about land provided for high density residential use. The Cascade corridor area will have a major impact on Central High School with high density neighborhoods being developed. Central High School cannot support these developments. (Hoeks commented that by Appellate Court action, townships have no legal right to question a public school in terms of their developments, etc. – the schools have rights in their own domain. The Township will continue to have dialogue with the school system and try to cooperate in joint planning, etc.)

Betsy Ratzsch, 584 Ada Drive, also spoke regarding schools and people wanting to live in the area due to the schools, but there are also those wanting to retire, etc. in Ada, which is part of the future of housing which doesn't include school-age children. We need to think "outside the box" and come up with creative ways to let the community grow. She stated she agrees with the concept of a library. She stated she likes the idea of the Township having transit service. In terms of Ada as a cultural entity, it would be nice to have a small indoor venue for the arts, music, etc.

Edith Pettis, 1023 Pettis Ave., submitted and read a letter regarding the need for mineral resource recycling, noting gravel pits are not sustainable. She noted the growth of Ada Township has created demand for recycled materials. She spoke about the benefits of using recycled materials. She asked if the new Ada vision provides for any inclusion of recycling facilities.

Jim Owens, 6374 Lehigh Court, suggested a lot of residents have lived in Ada for more than 10 years and believes the Township should be looking farther into the future than 10 years – possibly 20-30 years. He asked when public water and sewer is going to be on the other side of the river, noting that it will happen eventually. He spoke regarding the Fulton Street corridor and believes it is great how it is now – so why encourage more homes along it to encourage mass transit. Where would these people park. He feels gated communities should not be encouraged – the beauty of the land should be publicly accessible. He feels the vision statement has a major contradiction in it – urban density, mass transit, encouraging mingling of residential and commercial. Then, on the other hand, we are trying to keep the rest of Ada rural – so the other stuff will all be compacted. He does not believe we should be packing density south of the river, and trying to keep everything else rural. We should plan for utilities being extended across the river.

Dave Baar, 7465 Conservation, addressed the comment regarding timetable for water and sewer on the other side of the river. This may be required in the future. The main point he addressed was related to the walking and cycling community – a path across the Fulton St. bridge would be nice. He spoke about tying bike paths into the natural beauty roads. This would be nice for residents living along these roads and for cyclists passing through the community. He stated that the recent intersection changes at Fulton and Pettis make it difficult for cyclists and pedestrians to get through this area.

Don Shankin, 1021 Dogwood Meadows, stated we need to be more realistic about being able to preserve the farmland in the north quarter – there are only about 3 families that do farming and most of the rest of the land is vacant. Discussion and review with the landowners would be appropriate.

William Abrahamson, 1970 Wellpoint Court, complimented the Commission for the work that has gone in this so far. He addressed the issue of the situation on Pettis Avenue asking when this starts and when it stops. He stated he would hate to see the activities there expand into a larger industrial processing area. He stated that former mining sites could be a good location for affordable housing.

Greg Palazzolo, 6410 Knapp, applauded the Commission for undertaking this effort and thanked them for acknowledging the resident comments. He asked how far beyond the intersection we anticipated commercial zoning extending at the Knapp/Egypt Valley intersection.

Ferro stated that if this intersection is designated as a neighborhood commercial center, it should only be done if some precise boundaries are placed on it, along with some precise definition of types of uses we would want and limits on the total building square footage we would want. He stated that the type of development envisioned would be similar to what is in Cannonsburg at the corner of Cannonsburg Rd. and Honey Creek Ave. It would need to be well defined, beyond what is in the current vision statement. Another factor to look at is the available land near the corner. We are thinking “small,” something compatible with a “crossroads” type of environment.

Jamie Ladd commented that perhaps a separate bike path bridge could be put under the M-21 bridge.

John Eck commented that there would be some major engineering constraints in doing this.

John Westra spoke about process of obtaining input and presenting ideas to get the ideas out to the most residents as possible. He stated that many of the comments and ideas suggested tonight could be addressed in the planned Charrette process, if it is expanded to be township-wide.

The public comment portion of the meeting was closed.

## **VII. PLANNING COMMISSION DISCUSSION**

Hoeks thanked the residents for coming and making comments. Korth stated it is difficult when there isn't a fair amount of input from different perspectives. Ferro asked the Commission if they would like to hold another work session or include this in the next regular meeting. It was the general consensus to have a separate meeting. Hoeks commented that the goals should be specific, replace the passive language with active verbs. Korth stated they are trying to maintain a traditional small-town village and at the same time preserve an overwhelming desire by the residents to have a rural lifestyle that is quiet and away from it all. The vision statement tries to piece that together. There are two main facets to the community and the Commission needs to think about creating a vision statement that more clearly echoes these ideas, wherein the Village needs to be as dense as possible and the rest of the Township needs to be as rural as possible. Korth stated they are at a good starting point but it needs to be organized in a fashion that is more readable.

A work session meeting was scheduled for February 2nd at 4:15 p.m.

## **VIII. ADJOURNMENT**

Motion by Hoeks, second by Sytsma, to adjourn the meeting at 9:05 p.m. Motion passed unanimously.