

**ADA TOWNSHIP PLANNING COMMISSION
MINUTES OF THE JANUARY 17, 2013 MEETING**

A meeting of the Ada Township Planning Commission was held on Thursday, January 17, 2013 at 7:30 p.m. at the Ada Township Offices, 7330 Thornapple River Dr., Ada, MI.

I. CALL TO ORDER

Meeting was called to order by Chairperson Korth at 7:30 p.m.

II. ROLL CALL

Present: Commissioners Butterfield, Easter, Jacobs, Korth, Leisman, Lowry, Lunn
Staff Present: Planning Director Ferro.

III. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Motion by Easter, supported by Lunn, to approve the Agenda. Motion passed unanimously.

IV. APPROVAL OF MINUTES OF December 20, 2012 MEETING

Butterfield stated she believed the condition of approval pertaining to signage for the landscape contracting business on Vergennes St. should state that lighting of the sign is prohibited.

Korth stated this was also his recollection.

Motion by Easter, second by Lunn, to approve the December 20, 2012 meeting minutes, subject to correcting approval condition number 3 on page 4 for the Enchanted Gardener special use permit to add that the sign shall not be illuminated.

Motion approved unanimously.

V. PUBLIC HEARING

Special Use Permit, 1,120 SF Addition to Existing 1,120 SF Accessory Building in the Rural Residential (RR) District, at 6001 Grand River Dr. NE, Parcel No. 41-15-29-126-005, John A. Sebright

John Sebright stated since he submitted the application, he has decided to down-size the addition a bit, but that he is seeking approval for the proposed building as originally submitted, with a 56 foot building width. Sebright stated the existing building was originally used as a temporary residence while the original owner was building the main house. He stated a lot of the interior is taken up by a longer room, bathroom, kitchen with cabinets, so the building is fairly sizable but storage is limited. He stated he is requesting to add to the size of the building for storage of his boat and other personal items. Sebright showed a photo of the existing building, noting it cannot be seen by the neighbors. He stated the addition will be carved into the hill a little bit, but will not be any more visible than it is now.

Ferro summarized the procedures and standards used in determining whether to approve an accessory building that is over the normal permitted by-right size limit of 1,800 square feet. He stated the Planning Commission may authorize a building larger than this limit as a special use permit if it determines that the size, height, placement, design and appearance of the building will be compatible with the character of the surrounding area. Ferro stated a public hearing notice was published, and neighbors within 300 feet were notified.

Ferro stated the property is largely wooded. He stated the building is several hundred feet from Grand River Drive, and this time of year you might be able to see it from the road across the wetland that lies

between the Sebright property and Grand River Drive. He added the building is fairly close to the property boundary with an existing setback of about 20 feet, and for this proposed size of an accessory building there is a 50 foot setback requirement. Ferro stated that in addition to applying for the special use permit the applicant is also proposing a boundary line adjustment in which he would obtain additional land to the west of the building from his neighbor, and an equal area of land from his property would be conveyed to the neighbor, so there is no net gain or loss in total lot area.

Ferro stated the building is a low profile, single story building, earth toned with lap siding that is very similar to the lap siding on the house. He stated there have been three letters in support of the application received, including one from the neighbor to the immediate west who is the closest residence to the building. Ferro stated in addition to the two letters that were in your packet there's one additional letter that was received a couple of days ago also in support.

Ferro recommended approval subject to two conditions: one requiring that the boundary adjustment be completed and recorded before a building permit is issued; and two, the building exterior shall use lap siding of a style and color consistent with the existing home and accessory building.

Ferro asked Sebright if he was planning to keep the same siding and color. Sebright stated yes, the siding will match the house.

Leisman stated it appears the building meets the compatibility requirement, but he has a concern about keeping the same roof pitch. Leisman also asked what is the purpose of requiring the accessory building to be the same color as the house? He noted that we have many accessory buildings in the Township that have a style and color different than the house.

Korth asked if Ferro had recommended that condition for any reason other than that is what the applicant offered in his plans.

Ferro stated that was in part, the reason, and he was also considering that we do have a standard for accessory buildings that are in the front yard requiring color compatibility with the house, but that standard doesn't apply in this case.

Leisman stated it struck him that it may be over-burdensome if we require every over-size accessory building to meet such a standard.

~~Easter~~ Butterfield stated it seems like a good baseline, and if somebody does come to us with something unique and we like what we see on a case-by-case basis it could be acceptable.

Ferro stated one other thing he had in mind is the character and earth-tone of the existing building really fits in with its surroundings.

Easter suggested that if the building is not viewable from the road, it can be at the discretion of the owner.

Ferro stated it's at the Commission's discretion whether you feel that matching color with the house is important to meet the "compatibility with the area" standard. He noted that the applicant's narrative statement makes reference to the fact that this structure was here before most of what's around it, and more or less established the character of the area.

Korth asked if the expansion of the roofline would continue the same roof pitch and gable line.

Sebright stated it may go a little higher but it will be even, so the two sides of the roof are equal.

Korth then opened the public hearing. Seeing no public comment, Korth closed the hearing.

Motion by Leisman, supported by Easter, to approve the special use permit subject to the following conditions:

1. Documentation that the boundary adjustment transaction has been completed and is of record with the Kent County Register of Deeds shall be provided prior to issuance of a building permit.
2. The building exterior shall use lap siding of a style and color consistent or otherwise compatible with the existing home and accessory building.
3. The square footage of the building addition may be smaller than proposed in the original application, subject to approval of a revised plan by the Planning Director.

Motion passed unanimously.

VI. UNFINISHED BUSINESS None.

VII. NEW BUSINESS None.

VIII. STAFF/COMMITTEE/COMMISSION MEMBER REPORTS

Process and Schedule for Charrette Follow-up/Village Design Study

Ferro provided information to the Commission on recent acquisition of land in the Village by an Amway-related business entity, and the DDA's intent to undertake an urban design study to develop ideas for how the acquired properties and other property owned by Amway along the south side of M-21 could be re-developed in a way that carries out the principles of the 2006 Village Design Charrette. He stated the DDA is preparing to issue a Request for Proposal (RFP) to recruit a consultant to help with this process.

Easter asked if Amway has expressed their intent; what was their reason for purchasing the property?

Ferro stated that Amway representatives have told the Township that they have no specific plans for developing any of the property at this time, and they would like the Township to take the lead in generating public involvement in coming up with ideas for the property. Ferro stated he believes Amway recognizes that getting some of the design ideas that came out of the Village Design Charrette six years ago implemented was being held back by the fact that property ownership was fragmented into multiple owners with differing goals and situations.

Korth stated clearly the company and its owners are heavily involved and invested in this community. He noted that for Amway to compete for the best talent in the world, they've got to have potential employees want to come and live in Michigan, and that's one reason they have invested so much in the Grand Rapids region as a whole. He stated they also want this bedroom community where the main corporation sits to be inviting.

Easter stated it is very encouraging that the company wants to stay within the intent of the Village Design Charrette, and is not seeking to impose a plan on the community.

Lowry stated if history repeats itself, they will move very slowly at this as they do everything else; that's the history behind the company, they don't move hastily.

Ferro stated one big challenge in developing plans for the area involved is how to develop new space in a form and character that's more consistent with the core of the village, without putting existing tenants out

of business in the process. We need to find ways to build new space and allow existing businesses to transition from old space to new space quickly without having to shut down.

Korth stated the next step is the DDA is working on a draft RFP to engage the consultants that will help with this process. The Township has earmarked and transferred \$100,000 to the DDA, and it was suggested by the CIP Committee that in the future more money be earmarked for the DDA to help support the whole process, especially since there may be community acquisition of some of this property needed for green space and civic space.

Status of Capital Improvements Plan Update

Ferro stated the annual update of the Capital Improvements Plan will be scheduled for public hearing at the February meeting. He stated the Capital Improvement Plan committee has finished this year's update, and it now comes to the Planning Commission for review and approval.

Korth stated this will be the third time the Commission will approve this. He stated the plan lays out by all of the fund groups in the Township's budget accounts and the capital projects proposed in each fund for the next five to seven years.

Ferro stated we're going to see a little over a 2% growth in our tax base this coming year, which is a turn-around from what we've had in the past three years. Jacobs asked where the 2% increase in gain will come from. Ferro stated he believes there is some new industrial tax base, and some stabilization in residential tax base. He noted there has not been much new residential development in the past few years.

Korth stated one thing you will see in the CIP is a targeted level of expenditure for local road upkeep, based on pavement condition ratings that are maintained by the Road Commission. Ferro stated that the CIP does not identify specific roads for repair work, since that takes annual dialogue with the Road Commission in the Spring. He stated we have gone through an analysis to come up with an estimate of how much we should be investing in road repairs each year to keep pace with deterioration, otherwise you're just getting worse and worse conditions every year.

Korth stated based on all the roads we have and the current age and condition of the roads we are able to put together a target level of expenditure based on what we need to do to keep on top of this.

Easter stated we wanted to make sure that we were leveraging all the matching dollars available from the Road Commission.

Ferro stated he would have the draft CIP delivered to Commission members in the next 1-1/2 weeks.

IX. PUBLIC COMMENT None.

X. ADJOURNMENT

Motion by Easter, second by Lowry to adjourn the meeting at 8:16 p.m. Motion passed unanimously.

Respectfully Submitted,

Susan Burton, Township Clerk
SB/dr