

**ADA TOWNSHIP PLANNING COMMISSION
MINUTES OF THE JANUARY 18, 2007 MEETING**

A regular meeting of the Ada Township Planning Commission was held on Thursday, January 18, 2007, at the Ada Township Offices, 7330 Thornapple River Dr., Ada, Michigan.

I. CALL TO ORDER

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

II. ROLL CALL

Present: Commissioners Butterfield, Gutierrez, Hoeks, and Sytsma. Absent: Chairperson Korth and Commissioners Burton and Lowry. 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. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Motion by Hoeks, second by Butterfield, to approve the December 14, 2006 Meeting Minutes as presented. Motion passed unanimously.

V. PUBLIC HEARINGS

None.

VI. OLD BUSINESS

1. Site Plan Review, Land Division Application to Divide 26.04 Acre Parcel Into 7 Lots, 4860 Michigan St. (Parcel No. 41-15-30-101-001), Mary Abbott Cumming.

Todd Stuve of Exxel Engineering was present on behalf of applicant Mary Abbott Cumming. Stuve stated they are requesting approval of a land division creating 7 parcels. The zoning is RR, and all parcels comply. The overall density is 3.3 acres per lot, which is greater than the 2 acre requirement. Stuve gave some history on the plan since it was submitted back in June 2006. A main goal was to preserve the open meadow and pasture area. They are proposing a 7.25 acre preservation easement over the meadow area on Michigan St. Stuve went over alternate roadway options they had looked at. He stated they do intend on pursuing paving a portion of Taos up to their entryway. A few benefits of this would be the benefit to the development, keeping the residents on blacktop, and redirecting drivers back on Michigan, and thus not increasing the traffic to the south. Stuve noted they do not oppose any of Ferro's recommended conditions.

Ferro summarized his staff report. He emphasized that the overall density is 1 lot per 3.3 acres, which is well below the maximum permitted density of 1 lot per 2 acres in the RR district. In terms of complying with the standards of approval contained in the zoning rules, this proposed plan does a good job of meeting those conditions. Ferro spoke about the conservation easement that would need to be prepared and recorded for the 7.25 acre meadow. This will impose a permanent restriction on development of the land, specify uses to which the land may be put and the alterations of the existing natural conditions on the land which will be permitted. Ferro stated he recommends approval with five conditions as set out in his January 18, 2007 memo.

Hoeks commended the applicant on this revised plan, which in his opinion is a much better plan for the Township. Hoeks also spoke regarding trying to reduce as much tree damage as possible.

Butterfield asked about signage and lighting for the development. Stuive stated he believes there would be lighting, but probably nothing other than a road sign. She also asked whether Lot 6 could share the existing drive.

Sytsma agreed with Hoeks regarding the applicant's willingness to work with the Township and the need to reduce any tree damage. Sytsma also spoke about a possible lot split for Lot 6 and she also asked if it would be possible not to have a sign for the development.

Ferro spoke about tax benefits regarding a conservation easement on the 7 acres. He stated the owner is getting the benefit of using the 7 acres for density credit. Therefore, it is unlikely there would be much of a tax benefit to the owner from the donation of a conservation easement.

There was some discussion about paving of the gravel road and the Commission welcomed comments from the public.

Jon Forslund, 95 Taos Ave. NE, stated that he needed further information and clarification, as the plan he received from the applicant shows the access drive being located off Michigan St., not Taos Ave. He stated that if the neighbors had all received the correct plan, more of them would be in attendance this evening to express their concerns about additional access to Taos Ave.

Hoeks stated he does not feel this can be voted on in good faith without holding a public hearing and taking neighbor comments.

Stuive clarified that the plan sent out was a courtesy plan regarding the paving of the road and that issue is not being answered at this meeting.

Sytsma suggested having another work session for this application.

Gutierrez stated he is in favor of preserving the natural beauty road also, but they need access to the property. Gutierrez suggested the applicant come up with another rendition of the curve along the fence line. Hoeks asked if the county would permit access to the property off Michigan St. directly opposite the farm house across the street. Stuive said they would not permit that. The Commission discussed contacting a representative of the Road Commission for attendance at a work session meeting to educate everyone on what options are available.

It was moved by Hoeks, and seconded by Sytsma, to defer action on the land division application to divide 26.04 acre parcel into 7 lots, at 4860 Michigan St. (Parcel No. 41-15-30-101-001/Mary Abbott Cumming), until further information is obtained and a work session is scheduled. Motion passed unanimously. The work session meeting will be scheduled after contacting the Road Commission for their availability.

VII. NEW BUSINESS None.

VIII. REPORTS FROM COMMISSION MEMBERS/STAFF

1. Draft Amendment to Residential Building Height Limits

Ferro stated work was started on this some time ago, but not finished. A builder is interested in the process being moved forward to evaluate whether a change should be made in residential building height limits. Ferro spoke about some comparison data they have put together and believes it is not accurate to say that Ada's height limit is more strict than any other communities. Ferro stated he would like to postpone discussion on this until next month due to Commissioners being absent at this meeting.

2. Report from Tree Protection Committee

Butterfield stated the Committee had a preliminary meeting wherein they reviewed and had informal discussion on tree protection ordinances from a few other communities. The discussion also focused around commercial areas of the village -- trees in the public right-of-way, etc.

3. Discussion of Joint Work Session with Township Board

Gutierrez stated the meeting consisted of several agenda items and they were not able to go into great detail on all items.

Hoeks stated the meeting seemed somewhat chaotic and overshadowed by excessive commentary and not always directed to the point, other than discussion on open space preservation.

Butterfield agreed with Hoeks regarding agenda items and also felt the summary of open space preservation was enlightening.

Gutierrez also concurred with Hoeks and Butterfield. He stated he learned a lot about open space preservation and the struggle as a township with open space. He added there were some personal agenda items brought up that concerned him.

4. Master Plan Update Discussion

Ferro stated he wished they could have spent more time on the Master Plan/Vision Statement at the work session meeting. The only feedback received was regarding traffic in the Village. The growth north and east of the river is what brings traffic through the Village.

Sytsma spoke about protecting the high quality natural features in the Township.

Hoeks noted that one concrete recommendation was the Board's request for a recommendation from the Planning Commission regarding whether a Township-wide charrette should be conducted. Hoeks stated this should be put on the agenda.

Butterfield said another point brought up was how long can the moratorium be extended.

Ferro noted the results from the Ada Village Design Charrette will be available soon.

IX. PUBLIC COMMENT ON ITEMS NOT ON THE AGENDA - None

X. ADJOURNMENT

Motion by Hoeks, second by Sytsma, to adjourn the meeting at 8:55 p.m. Motion passed unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,

Deborah Ensing Millhuff, CMC
Ada Township Clerk
rs:lm