

**ADA TOWNSHIP PLANNING COMMISSION
MINUTES OF THE JANUARY 22, 2008 SPECIAL MEETING**

A special meeting of the Ada Township Planning Commission was held on Tuesday, January 22, 2008, at the Ada Township Offices, 7330 Thornapple River Dr., Ada, Michigan.

I. CALL TO ORDER

Meeting was called to order by Korth at 11:00 a.m.

II. ROLL CALL

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

III. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

The agenda was approved as presented.

IV. APPROVAL OF MINUTES OF DECEMBER 20, 2007 MEETING.

Motion by Sytsma, second by Hoeks, to postpone approval of the December 20, 2007 meeting minutes to the February 21, 2008 regular meeting. Motion passed unanimously.

V. DISCUSSION OF PROPOSED AMENDMENT TO ZONING REGULATIONS TO ADD PROVISIONS FOR HELIPORTS, PARADIGM DESIGN

Ferro summarized the amendment. He stated that in drafting the proposed ordinance, he included provisions for heliport by special use permit in the R2 district, but also broadened the language to address the Township overall. He noted there has been a lot of public input, both for and against the concept. There has been discussion on many standards to place on the use, with a range of possibilities. The issue is one of balancing someone's desire to use their property, and evaluating whether that is reasonable, and then balancing this with the overall public safety, welfare and interest. Ferro noted the following input which was received since the last meeting:

- Commissioner Gutierrez's comments setting forth his input (due to his absence at the meeting). His comments state that the draft ordinance is well written and concise, but it should be clear that heliports should only be in the commercial and industrial districts. He states that the DeVos family could use the Alticor heliport and he believes this proposal is for convenience only. He states he will vote against the ordinance if it is written to include allowance of heliports in residential areas via special use permit.
- A letter to the editor of the *Grand Rapids Press*, and also forwarded to Ferro, from Frank Banko, 452 Adaway.
- 1/21/08 letter from Ray Kizor, 254 Greentree, supporting proactive approach to heliport ordinance.
- 1/21/08 letter from Robert Stead, 6530 Ada Drive, expressing concerns about having heliport in R2 zoning district.
- 1/28/08 letter (received on 1/21/08) from Eileen Judge Horowitz, conveying experience with helicopter landings in Harbor Springs.
- 1/22/08 letter from Doug Landman, 1062 Greenwood Court, stating the idea of residential heliports is not workable and is undesirable by residents.

Ferro then passed out a FAA Advisory circular concerning visual flight rules near noise-sensitive areas, which includes guidelines encouraging aircraft to maintain minimum altitudes above noise sensitive areas, defines noise sensitive areas, etc.

Hoeks stated that if we base our decision strictly on public input, we would propose very restrictive regulations. He proposed modifying the draft rules to restrict allowable locations to one's own property. If there was a need demonstrated to have access to a helicopter, Hoeks stated he would be more comfortable with this, but there is no apparent need – this is more of a “want” in this case.

Burton spoke about the survey sent to the Township residents regarding the small-town atmosphere. She believes if this were just a normal citizen (not a high-profile citizen) applying for this, the Commission should consider what they would do in that case. Heliports in a residential area would be something the Township would not want.

Butterfield stated she is considering this as only whether or not the Township should adopt the ordinance. She did a lot of research in other communities and Ada Township is unique for its rural beauty and she believes the community does not need heliports. She said she would only be open to this within the right zoning setting.

Lowry stated he believes the Commission's job is to take a look at the proposal and listen to the public comments. He doesn't want to see any kids subjected to undue danger – regardless of safety records and other data that has been presented, it only takes once for something to happen. He said he is not opposed to a helicopter ordinance, but ground rules need to be set. He agrees the Township needs to look seriously at some type of an ordinance, but only in commercial and industrial districts.

Sytsma stated she is not in favor of allowing landing of aircraft in any residential zones.

Korth stated he agrees with a lot of the comments. Korth feels that there should be an ordinance allowing heliports under a special use permit so the Township has a case-by-case ability to make decisions. He stated only the Agricultural district could be considered at this point.

Hoeks stated the ~~economy~~ autonomy of our Township should not be the prime consideration, and that we should consult with Cascade Township on this matter.

Korth stated based on what he is hearing, there is not a reason to involve Cascade Township, if we are heading in the direction of not permitting heliports in residential zones, which is the designation of our shared border.

Hoeks stated he disagrees, that it would be best to be in collaboration with another township.

Butterfield asked if the ordinance would cover existing heliports. Ferro clarified that the zoning regulations in general do not affect preexisting non-conforming uses. Hoeks stated he believes the Commission has general direction on this and should leave it to the planner to present a revised ordinance at the next meeting.

Ferro asked about any sentiments on minimum property size and separation distance from surrounding property. Korth stated he believes there should be some minimum acreage in place.

There was some discussion over the options of private/commercial use. Lowry suggested stating “personal” instead of “private”. Burton stated the size of the helicopter would predetermine the use.

Korth opened the meeting to public comment.

Doug Landman, 1062 Greenwood Court, stated we should regulate the activity, and not just the permanent facilities involved with a heliport.

Corky Paul, Pettis Ave., stated we should not rule out having a heliport on a site of 5 acres, in a rural area.

Kevin Nelson, Nelson Aerodynamix, stated that over the years, there have been no problems or complaints with helicopter landings at the DeVos property on Lake Macatawa in Holland. He also stated that much of the helicopter flight activity over Ada is regular Aeromed traffic between Grand Rapids and Greenville. He also pointed out that the helicopter industry has developed its own program to minimize impacts of helicopter operations – the “Fly Neighborly” program.

Rick Fiddler, Alticor, presented and submitted information regarding the historical number of flights at the Alticor helipad at 7575 East Fulton St.

It was concluded that Ferro would work on a revised draft of the ordinance, based on the direction provided by Commission members.

VI. STATUS OF ADA MOORINGS ROAD REPAIR REQUIREMENTS

The Commission reviewed the conditions of approval for Ada Moorings North from July of 2005 regarding Eastbrook’s responsibility for repair of road damage. Ferro stated that before Eastbrook started construction, the Township Engineer went out and videotaped the road condition and then videotaped again in the Fall of 2007. In early December, George Haga spoke with a board member from the Ada Moorings Association regarding the need for road repairs. The several homeowners associations within the development are trying to come up with an agreement on how to share maintenance costs, etc. for the road repairs. He noted that the wording in the condition states that Eastbrook is responsible for repair of “damage to the existing private road beyond ordinary wear and tear” and this will be open to interpretation and judgment wherein the Township may need to get input on this from the Township Engineer.

Korth stated that the Commission should have had a condition of approval with a specific date and time and perhaps amount that had to be done --- something along those lines.

Ferro stated that the Township Engineer will do an assessment to move this process along.

VII. PUBLIC COMMENT ON ITEMS NOT ON THE AGENDA

None.

VIII. ADJOURNMENT

Motion by Hoeks, second by Burton, to adjourn the meeting at 12:40 p.m.. Motion passed unanimously.

(Note: Underlining/ overstriking indicate revisions to draft minutes approved by the Commission).

Respectfully submitted,

Deborah Ensing Millhuff, CMC
Ada Township Clerk
rs:lm