

**ADA TOWNSHIP PLANNING COMMISSION
MINUTES OF THE FEBRUARY 19, 2009 MEETING**

Draft

A meeting of the Ada Township Planning Commission was held on Thursday, February 19, 2009, at the Ada Township Offices, 7330 Thornapple River Dr., Ada, Michigan.

I. CALL TO ORDER

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

II. ROLL CALL

Hoeks called the roll. Present: Chairperson Korth; Commissioners Butterfield, Hoeks, Lowry, and Sytsma. Also present: Planning Director Ferro. Absent: Commissioner Gutierrez. (Commissioner Easter joined the meeting at 8:40 p.m.)

III. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

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

IV. APPROVAL OF MINUTES OF THE JANUARY 15, 2009 MEETING

Motion by Hoeks, second by Sytsma, to approve the January 15, 2009 meeting minutes as presented. Motion passed unanimously.

V. PUBLIC HEARINGS

1. Revised Preliminary PUD Plan, Cascade Trail, Phase 2, 40,834 Square Foot Medical Office Building and a 6-Unit Adult Foster Care Home, 5018 and 5038 Cascade Rd, Parcel No. 41-15-31-376-001 and 002, Cascade 5038 LLC

Dan Hendrickson presented the revised plan. He went over the areas of change: (1) increased building height from 30 feet to 41 feet; (2) increased building size to 40,834 square feet as maximum building area; (3) eliminated entry on north side of the building; (4) are reconsidering the foot path between the neighborhood to the west; and (5) parking for Olivia's Gift has been modified slightly.

Ferro stated the Commission recommended approval of a slightly different plan in November, with a condition that the medical office building is limited to a maximum height of 30 feet. Rather than having the recommended plan be presented to the Township Board for approval, the applicant choose to come back to the Commission with a revised plan which provides additional details regarding the architectural character of the proposed medical office building, and seeks approval for a building height of 41 feet, measured from lowest grade to midpoint of the pitched roof. Sytsma noted that the dumpster location has also been moved on this revised plan.

The public hearing was opened with the following comments being made:

Marie Parzych, 1070 Huckleberry Lane, is concerned about the size of the building. When driving down Cascade, there are no other 3-story buildings. This seems to be much larger than needs to be in the area.

John Logan, 1084 Huckleberry Lane, stated he is also concerned about the building height. Where are the mechanicals going to be placed, such as the generator? The church serves as a buffer zone; now the largest office building is going to be placed in their back yards basically.

Doug Landman, 1062 Greenwood Forest Dr., stated that with this new square footage, this building would have twice as much square footage as the Hilltop building, as well as an extreme height. He urges the Commission to take the neighbors' views into consideration.

Ryan Grant, 4999 Luxemburg, stated his house has the least amount of vegetation between this proposed site and the adjacent neighborhood. They will basically have to keep their blinds closed. He spoke about the safety issues regarding the trail.

The public hearing was closed.

Ferro noted the square footage added to the building fills in an offset in the original building footprint, at the southwest corner of the building. He stated it lengthens the unbroken western facade by 20 feet. Ferro stated he has looked at the proposed site grades compared to the finished grades of the rear yards of the surrounding homes. The proposed finished grade at the rear of the medical office building is substantially below the grades of the adjacent back yards, which lessens the visual impact of the proposed building height.

Ferro also observed that there is some significant vegetation along the west property line. The existing grades are shown to be maintained in this area, which should enable the existing vegetative screening to be retained. He pointed out that the applicant has requested the removal of the requirement to have an east-west pedestrian connection through the site. Ferro feels it is not particularly wise to have this connection, as it would not connect to any existing pedestrian route on the adjacent property to the east. He believes the sidewalk connection between the medical office building and the public sidewalk along Cascade Road makes a lot more sense, and he recommends retaining the requirement for this connection. There are no other changes other than the dumpster location at the Olivia's Gift site, which was an improvement requested by the Commission.

Ferro stated he recommends approval of the proposed building height. However, he noted that he is hesitant about the major shift in the economic climate since this project was originally proposed last fall. It may be a number of years before the medical office building is constructed. The Commissioners should determine whether it is wise to grant zoning approval for something that is not likely to be built in the immediate future.

Henrickson spoke regarding the economic climate and noted they are looking at building ownership opportunities as an option, which may make it possible for them to secure a building user in spite of the economy.

Hoeks spoke about building height in comparison to the Hilltop Building. He believes the height of this building will be considerably lower visually than the Hilltop Building. Hoeks asked if this could be approved for a limited amount of time. Ferro stated he would have to look into the PUD regulations to address this. Hoeks said he is still uncomfortable with all of the asphalt by Olivia's House, especially if the parking spots will only be used occasionally. Henrickson stated they need to be sure there is enough parking. He stated there is the ability to park at neighboring businesses, although there is no formal agreement to that effect.

Lowry asked Ferro if a PUD is granted, can it be subject to any changes made to the zoning ordinance. Ferro stated once an approval is given, it is subject to the zoning rules in effect at the time approved.

Butterfield stated the building footprint contains on the west elevation a bump-out which softens the roof line for the neighbor's view, and she believes this is major. She is also concerned about the generator and that there should be some sort of condition regarding insulation, etc.

Henrickson stated the generator would be in the lower level of the building, not outside.

Sytsma stated she recommends that the construction of Olivia's House not be contingent on any potential occupancy of the medical office building. She believes the Olivia's Gift facility should be constructed as soon as the builder is ready.

Ferro stated the applicant has presented a plan that ties Olivia's House and the medical building together. That is what is in front of the Commission. If the applicant would wish to separate their submission into two parts, they could do that.

Korth spoke about having adequate presentation of the visual impacts of the buildings. He believes he needs to see a perspective of roof lines of neighboring houses in comparison to the medical office building, as well as seeing the existing church building footprint superimposed on the proposed site plan, in order to get a complete visual picture. Korth spoke about the pedestrian throughway and believes this needs to definitely be left there and he will not support removal of this or removal of the front entrance either. He also will not approve the increased size of the building.

Motion by Hoeks, second by Sytsma, to postpone the revised Preliminary PUD Plan for Cascade Trail, Phase 2, for one month and that the Commissioners will have a site visit in the interim.

Motion passed unanimously.

VI. UNFINISHED BUSINESS

None.

VII. NEW BUSINESS

1. Site Plan Review, Addition of 313 Square Foot Deck and Barrier-Free Ramp for Ice Cream Service Window, Parcel No. 41-15-34-103-019, 587 Ada Dr. SE, Tom Cooper

Tom Cooper, 591 Ada Drive, stated he wants to put an ice cream shop in his building and would like to install a barrier-free ramp. Ferro went over the plans that were submitted. The site is zoned C-1, wherein an ice cream shop is permitted. The proposed ramp and deck comply with all applicable setback requirements. The additional parking demand from the change of use ranges from 2 to 3 spaces, which is very minimal. There is also on-street parking in the Village that serves this building. He has encouraged the applicant to use a traditional style railing which would fit the Village character better.

Ferro recommends that a small, 5' x 5', area where the existing dry-cleaning portion of the building projects forward toward the street be retained for landscaping. Ferro said he recommends approval subject to the applicant submitting a more detailed plan for any patio that may be installed between the deck and the street.

Gutierrez asked about the safety of having food and dry cleaning businesses in the same building, with the cleaning chemicals, etc.

Cooper clarified that the dry cleaning business is just a drop off and pick up site.

Sytsma asked the applicant to change the safety-cone orange color to something that fits in better with the Village feel. Cooper stated he would take this request into consideration, but is not especially in favor of changing it.

Korth asked if there will be pedestrian through-traffic on the ramp when the shop is closed. Cooper stated he will most likely put a chain or something to block the entrance of the ramp. Korth suggested there be shielded lighting, if any exterior lighting is proposed.

Motion by Lowry, second by Butterfield to approve the addition of a 313 square foot deck and barrier-free ramp for ice cream service windows, subject to the following conditions:

1. The applicant shall submit to the Planning Director a more detailed plan for any patio that may be proposed by the applicant between the deck and the sidewalk, which incorporates some landscaping.
2. Any added exterior lighting shall be residential cut-off style.

Motion passed unanimously.

(Commissioner Easter joined the meeting at this point, 8:40 p.m.)

2. Review and Comment on Site Plan for Driveway Access, Parking and Storm Water Management Changes at Forest Hills Central Campus

Ferro stated the Forest Hills Public Schools district is planning to undertake some major changes to the Central Campus this summer, along with Ada Vista and Ada Elementary. The site changes are for improvement of vehicular circulation through the campuses. Public school projects are exempt from Township zoning regulations and thus, the Planning Commission has no review and approval jurisdiction over the project. Ferro said that he has been contacted by some concerned neighbors and this is on the agenda as a communication item for possible comments to the school district. He pointed out the school district has always worked cooperatively with the Township on projects, and has invited our comment and input on their projects. He noted they have done so on this project within the last week. Ferro stated that the Township has already provided input to the district regarding improving storm water management on the campus, and the district has been responsive to this input. He stated that neighbor concerns that have been expressed center on the proposed new access drive through the campus, intended to provide separation between bus traffic and other vehicular traffic. The school held a neighbor input meeting last week, and they are in the process of making some changes to the layout in response to concerns raised.

Tom Walters, Director of Construction and Energy Management of Forest Hills Public Schools, spoke on behalf of the school. He went over the objectives of the project, and the process the district has used in developing the plan.

Korth asked how many traffic incidents have occurred that have warranted these dramatic changes to the campus. Walters stated there have been some documented situations, and basic on-site traffic control is an issue.

Hoeks asked if the tennis courts were an impervious surface. Walters indicated that they were. Hoeks observed that replacing the tennis courts with parking partially substitutes one impervious surface with another.

Butterfield asked if the existing vegetation along the west edge of the campus will be retained as is. Walters stated a lot of it will be left as is, and that they will work with the neighbors on adding appropriate screening, but indicated the neighbors do not want fencing as a barrier.

Hoeks asked whether the new access road could be routed around the east side of the wetland, instead of the west side. Walters noted that the route proposed was preferred by the DEQ as being the least

impacting on the wetland. Routing the road along the east side of the wetland would result in greater impact on the wetland, due to the grades in this area.

Korth asked if there are calculations for before and after percentages of asphalt coverage. Walters stated they do not at this point, but the engineers are working on that. Walters stated that on the total site there is not a net loss of impervious area. Ferro stated that there is a net gain in impervious surface that drains to the wetland, which then flows to Paradise Lake.

Korth opened the meeting for public comments:

Dean Leutscher, 5779 Stonybrook Ct., stated he was surprised by this plan. He pointed out that since he was notified, he went to the school open house. He suggests an alternative of no access roads. They haven't proven a need for this or for more parking. Believes the number of student permits can be restricted.

Elizabeth Eggleston, 5780 Stonybrook Ct., referred to the map and spoke about the species in the wetlands. Believes the access road will just create issues for students and destroy green space.

James Starner, 942 Paradise Lake Dr., noted his home will be right across the street from the proposed road. He spoke about the power of the Planning Commission in this situation. (Korth spoke about their authority regarding runoff issues.) Starner stated they are very concerned about the water quality of Paradise Lake and believes this situation will create more stress. He stated he is glad to see the public schools improving, but the two things of concern are the road and the amount of parking being considered.

Bill Heuschkel, 5765 Stonybrook Ct., spoke about runoff and discharge into the lake.

Barb Witt, 900 Paradise Lake, submitted a picture of her home and view to the lake. She thanked the district for responding to their concerns. She stated she is concerned about the lake and the wildlife. A lot of trees will be removed and this will be a big impact on wildlife and the lake.

Paul Berkas, 5742 Stonybrook Ct., stated that their backyard is approximately 8 feet from the edge of the tennis courts and thus, their property will be closest to the connector road. He is concerned about the size of the parking lot and the congestion of having one large parking lot. He also spoke about access issues and the route of students walking to school and having to cross the road.

Marlis Jacobi, 1000 Paradise Lake Dr., stated she understands the issue of safety which initiated some of this change to the campus. From the perspective of a resident there are safety issues raised by making the lake more accessible from the campus, and the need for residents to increase their home insurance.

Bud Gallagher, 1022 Paradise Lake Dr., stated the road would be an eyesore and suggested another route.

Korth commented that he would like the opportunity for the Commission to take the time to walk the school site and time to understand the impervious surface and runoff issues. He spoke about the comparison of the road to an elevated walkway over a wetland, and suggested that elevating the road be looked at as an option. He suggested having the Township engineer look at all of this and give his opinion. He would like the Commission to present some comments/recommendations to the school, but believes a little more time and research is needed before doing so. Sytsma commented that seven days is not enough time to make a decision on these proposed changes, with no disrespect to the school. Korth stated the school district is having another meeting on March 12th. School is still in process of working on the storm water issue. Korth's suggestion is to take the time necessary to give input with respect to the storm water management and other issues that have been discussed. He would like to have a resolution

prepared for the March 19th Planning Commission meeting to present to the community and then ultimately to the school.

Tim Raymer, Assistant Superintendent for Finance and Operations for Forest Hills Schools, noted they are certainly open to suggestions. The site is a challenging site. There are 2,000 students on the site, a bus garage, etc. They have looked at multiple versions. With this approach, they did meet extensively with the DEQ. They are willing to discuss the specific concerns and want to work with the neighbors and the Township. Their primary concern will always be the safety of those 2,000 students.

VIII. REPORTS FROM COMMISSION MEMBERS/STAFF

1. Discussion of 2009 Planning Commission Priorities

Ferro noted this item was postponed from last month's meeting. He is hoping to have the Planning Commission spend some time brainstorming and discussing what they see as priorities for ordinance updates and planning work that needs to be done. He suggests it may be good to set this for discussion at a special meeting/retreat/day session. Sytsma commented on the size of the list and believes each Commissioner should rate their priorities and submit to Ferro ahead of time. Easter stated she believes this is a good idea to spend a decent amount of time on the priority list, but believes an outside facilitator is not necessary. The Commission discussed different options for proceeding on this.

2. Communication from Cascade Township re: Draft Master Plan

Korth suggests Commissioners take an opportunity to go on line and look at the master plan or attend the meeting scheduled in March, and suggests Ada Township present comments to Cascade Township.

3. Referral of Special Use Permit Application in Vergennes Township for Comment

Ferro stated he received correspondence from Vergennes Township regarding a proposal for a large, indoor/outdoor sports complex on 3 Mile Rd., just beyond Ada Township's eastern border. This letter invites comments from Ada Township on the proposal. Ferro will draft some comments to be reviewed at the March Planning Commission meeting.

IX. PUBLIC COMMENT ON ITEMS NOT ON THE AGENDA

None.

X. ADJOURNMENT

Motion by Sytsma, second by Lowry, to adjourn the meeting at 10:00 p.m. Motion passed unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,

Susan Burton
Ada Township Clerk
rs:lm