

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

A meeting of the Ada Township Planning Commission was held on Thursday, March 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, Easter, Gutierrez, Hoeks and Lowry. Also present: Planning Director Ferro. Absent: None. (Commissioner Sytsma joined the meeting at 7:35 p.m., and Commissioner Butterfield joined the meeting at 8:20 p.m.)

III. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Motion by Gutierrez, second by Easter, to approve the agenda as presented. Motion passed unanimously.

IV. APPROVAL OF MINUTES OF THE FEBRUARY 19, 2009 MEETING

Motion by Hoeks, second by Lowry, to approve the February 19, 2009 meeting minutes with the revision of changing the date in the first paragraph on page 6 to "March 10th". Motion passed unanimously.

V. PUBLIC HEARINGS

1. Request for Special Use Permit for 9,300 Square Foot Addition to Existing Accessory Building, 6807 North Fox Meadow Lane, Parcel No. 41-15-33-176-008, AMDG Architects

Brent Dykstra presented the request on behalf of AMDG Architects. He presented the plan which is a proposed addition and renovation to the accessory building on the property. The proposed expansion consists of adding a large great room on the south face of the existing building, adding a garage on the east side of building, and expanding the game area on the north side of the building. Dykstra presented diagrams of views of the property from different directions, an image of the building in its existing state, and an image of the proposed additions. He noted they are making every effort to maintain the agricultural feel of the building. Dykstra said they have designed this in such a way that it will not have an adverse affect on public services or storm water runoff.

Gutierrez asked what the plan is for runoff. Dykstra stated they currently have a series of gutters on the existing building which go into sub-grade drainage and outlets to a lower portion of the site, and they propose using the same system for the addition. Korth asked if there would be additional paving to get to the garage. Dykstra stated there is already a paved path through the woods that connects the home to the existing building. The garage addition would have hardscape further east which would connect to the paved path and this is only visible from the existing home.

Korth opened the public hearing. There were no comments and the public hearing was closed.

Hoeks stated this is a first class operation in terms of design and beauty and it meets the criteria regarding size, height, placement and appearance. It is also compatible with the character of the surrounding area. Easter stated she agrees with Hoeks. Gutierrez asked if the owners plan on renting this out for any type of business-related purposes. Dykstra stated this is only for private use. Sytsma stated this looks great. Korth asked about lighting on the north side. Dykstra stated there are no current plans to change what is there now.

Ferro stated he recommends approval based on the finding that the standards have been met, as noted by

Hoeks above.

Motion by Hoeks, second by Sytsma, to approve the special use permit for a 9,300 square foot addition to existing accessory building at 6807 North Fox Meadow Lane (Parcel No. 41-15-33-176-008), based on a finding that the standards for approval have been met. Motion passed unanimously.

VI. UNFINISHED BUSINESS

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

Ferro gave a summary of this project. At the February Planning Commission meeting, an overview of the project was provided. This is a major reconfiguration of parking and vehicle access at the Forest Hills Central campus. Ada Township was contacted by the neighboring residents asking for the Planning Commission to become involved and to act as an advocate on the neighbors' behalf. Ferro pointed out to the residents that a public school project is exempt by state law from township zoning review and authority. So, this is basically in front of the Commission for review and comment. This agenda item was postponed last month in order to allow time to visit the site and obtain further information. Ferro spoke about the several neighborhood input meetings that have been held, along with a public hearing held by the DEQ on the proposed wetland permit.

Tim Raymer was present representing Forest Hills Public Schools.

Ferro spoke about the hearing held by the DEQ regarding wetlands. He stated that the DEQ representative stated he has walked the site, and feels that the applicant's identification of the wetland boundary was accurate, and was on the generous side. He noted the criteria that need to be met for a wetland permit to be issued: relative extent of public and private need for proposed activity, balancing of need versus detrimental impact, whether there are feasible and prudent alternatives that would accomplish the same benefit without wetland impact, probable impact on public health, and size of wetland. He stated there was a question asked at the hearing as to why there is no mitigation proposed by the school district to replace lost wetlands, and the DEQ stated this is not generally required for projects this small, in part because efforts to construct additional wetland area adds risk of introducing invasive species to the wetland. This risk needs to be balanced against the benefits of the added wetland area. Ferro stated that the DEQ representative encouraged the public to focus their comments on the criteria in the State wetland law. He pointed out that the wetland permit process does not consider non-wetland impacts, such as proximity of the road to neighbors or loss of upland trees. There was also some discussion regarding managing storm water runoff.

Hoeks stated there is great appreciation for the administrative staff of the school to consult with the Commission on this and this contributes to a much more complete understanding. He noted he is concerned regarding the proposed west road. He asked if they have considered the possibility of a compromise regarding the impervious surface -- to have a greater student parking lot in exchange for eliminating the proposed west drive. He does not see the need for the additional road. Some options could be that the two way traffic could be separated by something that would be aesthetically pleasing, or there could be a round-about.

Raymer stated they have looked at a lot of things and they share concerns of the neighbors -- they are trying to separate student walking areas with the drives. The buffer width is the required width. The width of the pavement would have to be increased to add a double lane of pavement in order to create some separation.

Easter stated she visited the site. She said as a mom, she is very concerned about the existing safety

issues at the school now and this needs to be remedied as soon as possible. She does not see how there is a better resolution to this problem. Lowry asked about the road being closed when it isn't in use and if that is an option. Raymer stated this is feasible and they will certainly take a look at this. There are a lot of activities that go on at the school, and this needs to be considered also. Lowry also asked about the water quality. Raymer stated there is an option of creating additional storage/pre-treatment and they are open to that concept. Gutierrez stated one positive aspect is that the water going into Paradise Lake will be cleaner, so the overall quality of life and quality of the wetlands will be greatly improved. Negative aspects are the concern of the proximity of the road to the property line and the sacrifice of the wetland area. A solution would be to move the access road to the east as far as possible and continue to treat water going into the wetlands. We need to find a happy medium. Korth asked if any study has been done to predict that there is no risk of a change in the height of Paradise Lake's water during storm events that would raise the water table to the extent the basements of homes around the lake could be affected.

Korth then stated there has been a lot of discussion about trying to move the road to a position further east, that doesn't seem to be workable. Korth also complimented the school district for the amount of effort they have put into this. Butterfield asked about putting up a fence and adding vegetation. Raymer stated they do plan on adding vegetation back into the site. Sytsma spoke about traffic calming ideas such as more curves in the road.

Following discussion, the Commission came up with the following items to include in a written recommendation to the school (which Ferro will prepare):

- Request at the State level a variance to narrow the access road from 30 ft to 22 ft.
- Try to move the road farther east if at all possible.
- Work on the storage of water to ensure it is clean and better than the water currently going in there -- create a true benefit.
- Put in speed bumps or something to aid in traffic moving at a slower pace.

Korth concluded stating that when you look at the site plan and compare it to an aerial of the existing site plan, this is going to be so much nicer.

VII. NEW BUSINESS

None.

VIII. REPORTS FROM COMMISSION MEMBERS/STAFF

1. Discussion of 2009 Planning Commission Priorities

Ferro stated he generally agrees with the priorities the Commissioners came up with. However, he encouraged the Commission to assign the highest priority to three of the tasks included in the list – completion of a Capital Improvements Plan, as mandated by the Planning Enabling Act, adopting zoning ordinance changes that are called for in the 2007 Master Plan, and completing other planning and zoning ordinance amendments to conform with the Zoning Enabling Act of 2006 and the Planning Enabling Act.

Korth suggested that the architectural components of the form-based code be developed as “Design Guidelines,” to be implemented through the PUD zoning rules, rather than hard and fast zoning rules. He also stated that the dimensional standards of form-based zoning could be put in the zoning rules, pertaining to items such as minimum lot sizes, and build-to lines.

The consensus of the Commission was to rank the 3 projects as suggested by Ferro as the highest priorities, followed by revisions to the riparian protection standards, and other projects as ranked by the priority-rating exercise.

2. Comment on Proposed Cascade Township Master Plan

Korth noted that the public hearing on the Cascade Township Master Plan was scheduled for Monday night.

3. Update on Private Recreation Center Proposal in Vergennes Township

Ferro reported that the zoning application for the private recreation center in Vergennes Township had been withdrawn, and it was not known whether it would be re-submitted.

IX. PUBLIC COMMENT ON ITEMS NOT ON THE AGENDA

None.

X. ADJOURNMENT

Motion by Sytsma, second by Lowry, to adjourn the meeting at 9:35 p.m. Motion passed unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,

Susan Burton
Ada Township Clerk
rs:lm