

**ADA TOWNSHIP PLANNING COMMISSION  
MINUTES OF THE MARCH 21, 2013 MEETING**

A meeting of the Ada Township Planning Commission was held on Thursday, March 21, 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: Chairman Korth, Commissioners Jacobs, Lunn, Leisman, Lowry, Easter, and Planning Director Ferro. Absent: Commissioner Butterfield (arrived 7:35).

**III. APPROVAL OF AGENDA**

Korth suggested moving election of officers to later in the agenda, after unfinished business. Motion by Easter, supported by Jacobs, to approve the agenda, including the change suggested by Korth. Motion passed unanimously.

**IV. APPROVAL OF MINUTES OF FEBRUARY 21, 2013 MEETING**

Motion by Lunn, supported by Lowry, to approve the minutes of February 21, 2013. Motion passed unanimously.

**V. PUBLIC HEARING**

**Request for Special Use Permit, Expansion of Development Plan Site for the 660 Ada Dr. Mixed Use Development to an Adjoining 12,270 Square Foot Lot, and Installation of a 15-Space Parking Area, in the (VR) Village Residential Zoning District with a Planned Village Mixed Use Overlay (PVM) District Designation, 640 and 660 Ada Dr. SE, Parcel No's. 41-15-34-151-009 and 152-009, Thornapple Pines Development, LLC**

Rick Pulaski, Nederveld Engineering, stated he is joined by Jay Rosloniec and Chuck Hoyt. Pulaski stated that work remaining to be completed on the 660 Ada Dr. site includes site landscaping, parking lot work, and a little bit of interior work. He stated the original approved plan included 26 parking spaces, and as tenants came in and construction progressed they have a higher occupancy than first anticipated. Pulaski stated there are now 38 employees regularly at the site, which has resulted in a need for more parking. He stated that after the plan was originally considered in October, they have looked for ways to fit additional spaces on the 660 Ada Dr. site, and have looked at a number of different scenarios for adding more parking, with input from tenants, the general contractors and the underground contractor, and they feel they have a good plan.

Pulaski stated we looked at adding parking up the hill to the south of the main driveway access, and concluded that excessive grading and tree removal would be required, including excavating into the right-of-way for Mars Avenue. He stated this alternative places the parking too far away from the building entrance, and wasn't a good flow for the guests or actual tenants. He stated we also considered adding head-in parking adjacent to the main driveway access, and concluded it would create conflict with vehicles entering from Ada Drive and with vehicles backing out of the basement level parking.

Pulaski stated that by implementing a one-way traffic pattern through the main parking area, they have been able to add several spaces adjacent to the curb, and have gained some spaces by converting the original planned garage/carport spaces to unenclosed spaces. The net effect is they go from 26 spaces up to 32 spaces. Pulaski stated with the 15 spaces proposed on the 640 Ada Dr. site, they will have sufficient parking. He stated with the evergreens and some deciduous trees added you won't really be able to see the

parking area. Pulaski stated they feel they have done a good job of squeezing as many spots out of the 660 site as possible, and have done a good job of screening the proposed parking at the 640 site, and the tenants and guest parking needs are met.

Easter pointed out that her company will become a tenant of the building as of April 1, and stated that this may constitute a conflict of interest.

Ferro reviewed provisions of the Commission bylaws regarding handling potential conflicts.

Korth asked Easter if she was an owner of the business that has the lease.

Easter stated, yes. She stated that she wouldn't say she has a financial interest in the outcome of the decision, but she has definite opinions and is not sure she can be objective.

Following discussion, it was moved by Lunn, supported by Jacobs, to determine that Easter has a conflict of interest and should abstain from voting on this issue.

Motion carried unanimously.

Easter recused herself from further participation and left her seat at the Commission table.

Ferro presented background information on the request. He stated the request is similar to the one that was considered last October when action was postponed. He stated the application was withdrawn after he determined it should have been scheduled as a special use permit request. He stated the original application for redevelopment of the school house building was submitted under the provisions of the new Form Based Code that functions as an overlay district within the Ada Village area. Ferro stated the Planned Village Mixed Use district divides the village area into different sub-zones, and in each of those sub-zones different lot types are permitted. Then for each lot type there are permitted uses by right and 1 uses allowed by special use permit. Based on that structure, this property is within what is referred to as the "Village Center" sub-zone, and in that sub-zone "civic building lots" are a permitted lot type. A civic building lot is defined as "a lot located and designed to accommodate or which has accommodated a building which contains or has contained public or civic uses, such as community services, education, etc." He added that on civic building lots, residential and office uses are permitted with special use permit approval. Ferro stated those provisions are the reason why the original school house application was considered as a special use permit and their proposal to expand the boundaries of the civic building lot has also been scheduled as a special use hearing, to use the 640 Ada Dr. property for parking serving the office uses in the 660 Ada Drive building.

Ferro stated this proposal increases the parking supply on the original lot from 26 to 32 spaces, and adds an additional 15 on the adjacent property. In comparing the entire building floor area against our parking standards of one space per 300 square feet for office use, the parking demand ranges from 38 to 48 spaces depending on whether you count the reception area on the first floor that has a small conference room. The total supply if this request is approved would be 47, which falls within that range of 38 to 48.

Ferro stated that the zoning regulations state that parking on civic building lots may be located in the side yard if the lot meets the lot width and frontage percentage requirements, and provided they are set back at least 20 feet from lot lines adjoining rights-of-way. Ferro stated those dimensional standards are complied with here.

Korth asked if the dimensional standards are complied with under the assumption that we amend the original plan and add the 640 Ada Dr. site to the land subject to the plan. Ferro stated yes.

Korth stated there is already an existing parking lot in the side yard that is already within the confines of what we originally approved and what was conceived and presented to this planning commission related to this site. He stated we have two issues going on here, the first question is do we want to amend this plan and add more property, and the property that we're going to be adding to it is zoned as residential property, so that needs to be reflected upon separately from this addition request. Korth stated he believes we should consider handling this as two separate motions.

Ferro stated there are also access standards in the Form Base Code that state that rear lanes are the most desirable source of access to off street parking. Mars Avenue is a public street, so it does not fit within the strict definition of a rear lane or an alley, but it functions in that matter as a secondary access to the main building. Ferro stated that the added parking could also be accessed through the main entry to the 660 Ada Drive property, by using the drive connection onto Mars Ave. to access the proposed lot.

Ferro stated total retention of storm water is proposed with an underground retention system using infiltration of storm water. He stated there is very little grading required for the proposed parking area, adding that the site is terraced down about eight feet from the upper level parking area. He stated there are vegetated slopes on both of the side lot lines of this 12,000 square foot lot from when it was formerly occupied by a single family home that was demolished in 2002 by the previous property owner.

Leisman stated so right now it's zoned residential.

Ferro stated the underlying zoning is residential, with the Planned Village Mixed Use district as an overlay zone. Ferro stated the original 660 property that the school house is on is also zoned residential. He stated he doesn't recall whether its village residential or R-2 residential, but the underlying zoning district is single-family residential for the whole property.

Leisman asked whether the property has to be rezoned to get a special land use for the use.

Ferro stated no, there is not a rezoning; the Form Base Code overlay has already been placed over the entire village when this overlay district was adopted, and the provisions of that overlay district say that the provisions of the overlay district can be used at the option of the property owner.

Korth stated but if this were presented by a third party owner trying to use this overlay strictly for a parking lot it would fail the test, so the only way that it can correctly be considered is it has to be first be added to the plan that we already approved for the school building to be converted to its commercial use.

Ferro stated on its own as a 12,000 square foot lot it doesn't comply with the dimensional standards in the code.

Korth opened the Public Hearing; with no responses he closed the Public Hearing.

Jacobs asked whether there was any consideration given to locating the needed additional parking on the opposite side of Mars Ave. from the 660 Ada Dr. site.

Pulaski stated there would have to be a lot of grading done. He also stated they envision the Ada Drive frontage as being more of the commercial-oriented area, with the opposite side of Mars Ave. being more residential-oriented in the future. He stated Mars Avenue seemed to be the logical cutoff for that.

Ferro stated there is a lot on the opposite side of Mars Avenue that is also terraced similar to the way this lot is, and it has some fairly level ground on it that was also a former single family home site, so it also wouldn't require very much grading to turn it into parking.

Butterfield asked if the existing building at 626 Ada Drive is owned by Thornapple Pines. Ferro stated yes, and that it is a vacant home.

Jacobs asked if the two lots she just inquired about were zoned village residential as well.

Ferro stated he didn't know for certain whether it was Village Residential or R2 residential, but that both are single family residential districts.

Leisman asked if the Commission has had the idea that this actually would be incorporated as part of the village business district.

Korth stated that conversation actually came up when the original site plan was being presented, and one of the things that was accomplished with the changes that were made at this commission level was the addition of a significant stairway from the entrance of the 660 building that ties to the existing parking lot, as well as the rebuilding of the sidewalk on Ada Drive all the way into the village that was accomplished as part of this process.

Korth stated the original project was warmly received by the Commission, in part because it was presented to us as having a significant residential component. We didn't require a minimum amount of residential use, and what ended up happening is the entire building went commercial and there's no residential except one residence. He stated had he known the whole building was going to be commercial and they needed 50 parking places we would have worked harder at the beginning to get the parking on the existing property so we weren't eating up an important street side area for a permanent parking lot.

Lunn stated he thought it was discussed that Mars would be vacated at some point.

Hoyt stated they are looking into that, there's nothing formal at this time, but it will be quite a process to do that, and they are not at a point where they can move forward with it right now.

Jacobs asked whether the applicant has plans for the other two residential lots to the north of the proposed parking area, and whether those plans are tied to what happens with the parking lot proposal.

Hoyt stated no, they just have not completed the plan for the overall parcel. Hoyt stated he has not been involved in the planning with the larger parcel. He stated he believes the direction will be focused on residential use for the remainder of the property, but he can't say that for sure.

Jacobs asked if any thought had been given to deleting the 4 or 5 spaces closest to Ada Dr., to increase the setback from the street.

Hoyt stated it's definitely a potential, although he believes that with the setback proposed, the terrain and the proposed landscaping, you're not really going to see that parking lot from Ada Drive.

Leisman stated it looks like there was approval for 26 parking spaces and now the request is to increase that to 47, that's a big increase, its way over 50%. He asked whether there was any hint of that in the original proposal.

Ferro stated we were all originally anticipating that there would be a greater residential component in the building, and that hasn't come about. That has a big impact on parking demand with that space all being used for office use rather than a mix of residential, office, or live work which was another potential use. He stated it appears the original parking supply wasn't adequate to serve the entire building with 100% office use.

Hoyt stated they originally knew there was a certain amount of space that was going to be taken up for certain uses, for instance they knew the top two floors were going to be more residential/office, kind of a live work space there, and they knew they had a smaller office coming in, but they didn't know what the remainder of the project was going to be. They were fortunate to have tenants come in to that space, and there was anticipation that this might be a more mixed use project at the time and it just took a turn where they ended up having office tenants, which obviously had greater need for parking. Hoyt stated they really need to find a place for them, and they are in a tight spot if they are not able to secure additional parking.

Korth stated part of the current site lends itself to additional parking. He stated the applicant has shown alternatives that show additional parking can be accomplished on the current site, and it appears that the proposed parking area on the adjacent site is being driven by lower cost, at the expense of compromising the planning that is very much taking root within the community at this point. He stated he cannot in good conscience create another traditional parking lot. Korth stated they could put parallel parking or head-in parking along either side of Mars Avenue, but to take essentially prime virgin land on the main façade of our community and permanently turn it into parking is not something he would support.

Hoyt stated he respectfully disagrees and that the proposed site is really the perfect spot for this and the least invasive. Pulaski stated he has spoken to the Road Commission about parking along Mars Avenue and it's not something they're going to permit. They've already said no to that. He stated the proposed lot is a much needed parking spot for a valuable party within the township, with attractive landscaping in a side yard location, unlike what you would find in a typical commercial area.

Korth asked for someone to move on the application and do it in two parts: adding the additional land to the plan, and the second one being whether or not you approve the parking lot.

Butterfield asked what the applicant envisions for the rest of the property to Rix St., and how the form-based code overlay relates to this property.

Ferro stated the existing frontage of the existing 660 Ada Dr. property is more than 300 feet. The addition of a 73 foot wide lot increases that frontage by 24% and only 45 feet out of the 73 feet is fronted by pavement. He stated in the big picture with respect to the entire facility that's a fairly modest expansion of the overall project. Ferro stated it is unfortunate that the mix of uses in the building was not managed by the owner to fit the parking that was originally approved, which was our expectation, that the mix of uses in the building would be managed so that the parking supply would be adequate to serve those uses. He stated it's also unfortunate that the applicant is only now seeking approval for additional parking after leases are all signed; but again it's a 24% expansion of that frontage on Ada Drive in a very visually unobtrusive fashion. The hillside terrace almost blocks the parking totally from view from vehicles coming down the hill, and coming up the hill you're at an elevation well below the grade of the parking which will also make parked cars minimally visible. So any visual benefit gained by cutting off five spaces is minimal. The proposed parking is already very low profile from a visual standpoint. It's a pretty modest incremental change to the overall project, although the circumstances through which it all came about are very unfortunate.

Lunn asked if we had the opportunity at the time of original approval to set the percentage or square feet for the mixed-use. Ferro stated we probably could have established parameters, since office use requires special use approval.

Korth stated he would like to ask the commission to consider whether or not it would be worthwhile to have a work session meeting and ask the applicant to bring their larger plan to have us understand what their plans are for the area between Mars and Ada Drive so that we can understand the larger context.

Jacobs concurred with the need for a work session, rather than deciding this in a vacuum. She stated she recognizes the need for parking, and she believes we need to provide the site the parking that is needed. However, she also sees that we're trying to make the village walkable, and we need to look at the larger view. She stated if we knew a little bit more of what you were thinking down the road, it would be helpful.

Following discussion, it was moved by Leisman, supported by Lowry, to postpone action until the April meeting, with the understanding that the applicant may request the Commission to hold a work session meeting in the meantime.

Butterfield stated between now and the April meeting she would like to have a clearer understanding of what we would be voting on from a procedural standpoint, including whether the two parcels would need to be combined.

Korth stated we have a motion to postpone for one month, we have support for that motion, and the intent of one month is to give the applicant an opportunity to either reach out to the commission to set up a time to work together; otherwise it will be voted on next month.

Motion passed unanimously.

Korth stated we will take written public comment between now and the April meeting.

## **VI. UNFINISHED BUSINESS**

### **Request for Special Use Permit for a Type II Home Occupation Involving Storage of a Commercial Vehicle Within an Accessory Building, in the R-2 Zoning District, 729 Alta Dale Ave SE, Parcel No. 41-15-32-101-061, Jody Knapp**

Jody Knapp, 729 Alta Dale Ave SE, stated he is asking for permit to park his truck in accessory building in back.

Ferro stated last month action was postponed so commission members could visit the site. He stated in his staff report he has recommended approval, with one change made in the recommended conditions of approval. He stated that one of the concerns he has heard from the neighbor is that is that even though the truck eventually gets parked in the storage building at the rear of the property, occasionally it is allowed to sit up near the house for some period of time before it's driven back to the storage building. Ferro stated he has revised the recommended conditions of approval to require that the truck shall be parked at all times in the storage building, except when it is departing from or arriving at the property. Ferro stated the intent is that the truck be driven immediately to the storage building when the owner arrives home at the end of the day. Ferro stated the recommended conditions also contain a prohibition on deliveries to the house from common carrier trucks, because of the traffic obstruction and hazard that would create. He stated the applicant states he has already made arrangements for any common carrier deliveries to take place somewhere else other than this property. Ferro stated the third condition places a limit on the number of business deliveries to the property of no more than three per week. He stated that frequency of deliveries was another concern expressed by the neighbor.

Knapp stated his frequency of receiving deliveries has declined, due to the parent company raising the minimum dollar amount of orders before they ship. He stated his deliveries are now down to about every other day or every third day. He also noted that UPS deliveries to his property are not business related, because Maatco only uses FedEx.

Korth asked what about the care of the vehicle in terms of washing, do you wash it outside.

Knapp stated in the summer he generally stops behind the house to wash the truck.

Korth suggested an allowance be given for this activity. Korth asked whether Commissioner's had any new perspectives on the application after their site visits.

Butterfield stated the building where the vehicle is stored is in a very non-visible location.

Easter stated she was surprised at how quiet the truck is. She stated maybe it would be a neighborly concession to wash the vehicle off-site on the way home.

Ferro stated there are some additional photos that were submitted by Mr. Bishop, the neighbor, which he circulated for review by Commission members.

Lunn noted that on his site visit a neighbor from across the street came over and stated he was in support of the application.

Leisman stated he agreed with Ferro's recommended condition regarding immediately taking the vehicle to the storage building. Leisman suggested that any approval motion state that the use of the vehicle is restricted to mobile tool sales.

Ferro asked what the length of the truck is. Knapp stated the box length is 18 feet.

Korth asked if Ferro had a description of the vehicle as well as that the van is used for tool sales.

Korth invited comment from the public.

Bob Bishop stated he lives next door to Mr. Knapp. He read a letter that he had given to each commissioner.

Jacobs asked if the requirement limiting deliveries should explicitly exclude UPS deliveries, and apply only to Fedex deliveries. Ferro stated the condition is worded to apply only to deliveries of business inventory, without naming the carriers. Leisman asked how the township would enforce that. Ferro stated primarily by neighbor observation.

Motion by Jacobs, supported by Easter, to approve the special use permit for a Type II Home Occupation involving the storage in an enclosed accessory building of a commercial step van used for mobile tool sales with a box length not to exceed 18 feet, subject to the following conditions:

1. Except when departing the premises or leaving the premises, the truck used in the applicant's business shall be stored at all times within the accessory building at the rear of the property.
2. Deliveries of business inventory by common carrier truck to the premises shall not be permitted.
3. Deliveries of business inventory by small parcel delivery services shall be limited to no more than 3 deliveries per week.

Motion passed unanimously.

## **VII. ELECTION OF OFFICERS**

Ferro stated the bylaws state that: "At the October meeting each year the commission shall elect from its membership a chairperson, vice chairperson, and secretary. All officers shall serve a term of one year or

until their successors are selected and assume office. All officers shall be eligible for re-election for consecutive terms for the same office or for other offices.”

Jacobs asked what the duties of these positions are. Ferro read the descriptions in the Bylaws.

Motion by Leisman, supported by Lunn, to re-elect the current officers to their respective positions for the year ending September 30, 2013, those being Korth, Chair, Butterfield, Vice-Chair and Easter, Secretary.

Motion carried unanimously.

## **VIII. NEW BUSINESS**

None.

## **IX. STAFF/COMMITTEE/COMMISSION MEMBER REPORTS**

### **Status of Consultant Selection, Ada Village Urban Design Plan**

Korth and Ferro reported on the DDA’s planning initiative for the Village, including the status of the consultant selection project and the recent presentation that was made to the Ada Business Association membership meeting.

### **Consider Change in Meeting Time from 7:30 p.m. to 7:00 p.m.**

Ferro stated the Township Board recently decided to change their meeting time to 7:00 p.m., beginning in April. He stated Supervisor Haga suggested that the Planning Commission be informed of this and asked to consider whether they wish to make the same change.

Motion by Easter, supported by Lowry, to change the Planning Commission’s scheduled meeting time from 7:30 p.m. to 7:00 p.m.

Motion carried unanimously.

## **X. PUBLIC COMMENT**

None.

## **XI. ADJOURNMENT**

Motion by Jacobs, second by Lunn to adjourn the meeting at 9:39 p.m. Motion passed unanimously.

Respectfully Submitted,

---

Susan Burton, Township Clerk  
SB/dr