

**ADA TOWNSHIP PLANNING COMMISSION
MINUTES OF THE MAY 21, 2015 MEETING**

A meeting of the Ada Township Planning Commission was held on Thursday, May 21, 2015, 7:00 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 7:00 p.m.

II. ROLL CALL

Present: Chairperson Korth, Commissioners Butterfield, Lowry, Jacobs, Lunn

Absent: Commissioners Easter, Leisman

Staff Present: Planning Director Ferro

III. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Motion by Jacobs, supported by Lowry, to approve the Agenda as presented.

Motion passed unanimously.

IV. APPROVAL OF MINUTES OF APRIL 13, AND APRIL 30 MEETINGS

Approval of the minutes was postponed to the end of the meeting.

V. PUBLIC HEARINGS

None.

VI. UNFINISHED BUSINESS

None.

VII. NEW BUSINESS

Pre-Application Conference, 47 unit detached single family and attached condominium development on 18.2 acres, Thornapple Pines Development

Chuck Hoyt, owner's representative, 660 Ada Drive, stated their presentation will describe the challenges they face on this site and the things they have done to overcome them. He stated the team they have put together to handle this project will be led by Nederveld, and the land planning will be done by HKM.

Mark Kurensky, HKM, stated he would like to walk the Commission through their design process, and the logic behind the concept plan, and obtain feedback from the Commission.

Kurensky stated the site is about 18 acres. Significant site characteristics include the presence of the railroad on one border, street frontage on Ada Drive, river frontage and views, wooded cover and significant topography, with nearly 100 feet of grade change on the site. Kurensky stated another important characteristic is the proximity to the Village commercial center. He stated it was determined a logical place for the entrance would be at Rix. To deal with topography and trees we will cluster the homes together so we can save trees as a group, and create large areas of open space where we can preserve the existing character. Also there is a naturalized wetland that exists and we think we can turn that into an asset.

Kurensky described the proposed layout of single family homes and attached row houses, using a 3-dimensional computer model of the site. He stated their plan places building frontages of 3-story townhomes facing Ada Drive, with the buildings built into the hillside. On the uphill end of the townhomes, the lower level parking is below grade. He noted the street network has sidewalk on at least one side of the street throughout the development.

Kurensky noted all single family homes would have front-loaded garages and would also have front porches.

Planning Director Ferro stated the applicant's intent is to submit this plan under the Township's optional form-base zoning rules that are in the planned village mixed-use district. The portion of the property that fronts Ada Drive back to Mars Avenue is designated in the village center sub-zone, the balance of the site is designated and called the village edge sub-zone, and both village house lots and row house type lots are permitted in both of those two sub-zones, so the boundary between the two sub-zones is not of much significance. Ferro stated in his memo he noted that the site affords expansive use of the Thornapple back water, and he should have stated that the views are of the river downstream of the dam. He stated the private road network as proposed would conform with the 10% grade limit that's in our private road standards, which require a minimum pavement width of 22 feet, and what's proposed is five feet wider.

Ferro stated the applicant's intent that the wider width would permit over flow and guest parking to occur in parallel fashion along the 27 foot wide road. Ferro noted one non-conformity of the proposed layout is the zoning rules permit a maximum number of 20 units accessed from a private road system that has only one point of access to a public road. He stated he would want to discuss with the applicant whether a secondary, emergency-only access could be provided. He stated he has talked with the fire chief about the site layout and he has looked at it, and with the road width and based on the site character he's comfortable with the lack of a second access considering a number of the town homes would be served by emergency services on the Ada Drive frontage. Ferro stated we need to talk with the applicant about a potential need to apply for a zoning variance for that aspect of the private road layout.

Ferro stated the site will be served by public water and sewer service, and it's likely the Township will want to see some internal looping of the public water main system that serves the site; that is something that hasn't been evaluated yet, and no utility layout has been submitted. He stated our storm water ordinance designates that the site in a performance zone requires storm water detention on the site to limit the discharge rate to pre-development rates. I've suggested it might be appropriate to treat this site under the same performance zone designation that applies to the village, which does not require detention but does require that water quality measures be taken.

He stated there has not been any detail developed on architecture other than what's proposed here. From our perspective the most important areas are the ones that are in clear public view from the adjoining public road network, and anything that may be visible from longer distances. There are architectural standards that speak to turn-of-the-century architectural style in our form-base code, and what the applicant described with the architectural character will probably fit well with the form-base standards that are in the form-base code for building placement and character. The opportunities for a second access to the site are very limited by virtue of the fact that you have railroad on one side, water on another side, and very high steep terrain toward the southwest quadrant of the site. Ferro stated that the terrain of the site has a very strong influence on the site design. Ferro stated that many of us were probably expecting higher density on the site than what is proposed, and that it is also probably less than the applicant was initially expecting. Ferro stated the development potentially presents a significant increase in the population base within the village that is within walking distance of commercial and recreational amenities the village has to offer, so it has potential to contribute greatly to the vitality of the village.

Butterfield stated she likes the idea of calming traffic down the Ada Drive hill using building placement along the road frontage and parallel parking. The feature of the custom home lots would be the only thing I would wonder about, the height, and whether there would be a circular turn-around.

Lowry stated asked if they have taken into consideration that you may have two cars per unit. Kurensky stated each unit would have a 2-car garage.

Lunn stated he doesn't agree with Jim regarding the storm water detention not being needed. He thinks our ordinance shows that there's supposed to be detention.

Lunn asked if a second access under the railroad had been considered, as shown on some of the Envision Ada plans he has seen. Ferro stated within the last two years the applicant had a feasibility study done for a vehicular underpass under the railroad at the corner of Bronson and River St., and it concluded the cost was going to exceed \$1 million.

Korth asked if the goal was for this to be a private enclave development or is it meant to be an engaging, highly walkable addition adjunct to the village we're trying to design and build.

Chuck Hoyt stated their intent is to be integrated with the Village. Hoyt stated as an example of their intent, they investigated providing public access to the riverfront with a pedestrian access under the railroad viaduct, and that the railroad has stated they would not permit this. Hoyt stated this isn't a gated community, and there is nothing preventing residents of the greater community walking through the neighborhood.

Korth stated he believes it is very important that we have a clear understanding in any approval regarding whether there is public access into the development.

Hoyt stated their intent, in the design, is to be a part of the Village, and for people to feel welcome to come into the development.

Korth asked whether there would be a public access easement. Hoyt stated he didn't know if that would be provided.

Korth asked Jim what the Kent County Road Commission width is for a residential public road.

Ferro stated its 30 feet.

Korth suggested the possibility of increasing the density by substituting more townhomes for single family homes. He also suggested placing the townhomes along Ada Drive as close to the road as possible. He also state that a continued pattern of homes with front-loaded garage doors was not something we are looking for in the Village. Kurensky stated that grades on the site make it difficult to use other options such as alley access or side-loaded garages.

Korth suggested the possibility of using the parking area at 660 Ada Drive for residential guest parking on weekends. Kurensky stated they could explore that.

Korth stated he was pleased that no homes are being placed on the highest point of the site.

Korth suggested the possibility of placing public parking underneath the townhomes near Ada Drive, and exploring this concept.

Lunn asked why the existing garage was being retained on the site. Kurensky stated when the 2 lots labelled custom lots are developed, it could disappear. He also stated that the road accessing the 2 custom lots would only be 20 feet wide.

Korth asked Ferro whether there have been any conversations about developing an improved public access under the railroad viaduct. Ferro stated he and Hoyt have discussed the concept of a publicly-accessible river overlook on the south side of the viaduct. He stated railroad approval is an obstacle. Hoyt stated he has tried for several months to pursue this with the railroad, and has been met with refusal.

Korth stated the question for the Planning Commission is whether or not we think this is part of our village and should be pedestrian friendly.

Jacobs stated she likes the mix of single family and attached homes. Jacobs stated she would like to see more townhomes for more density; and this should be a public place where we would all feel comfortable walking around and having access to views of the Thornapple River.

Korth asked, given the constraints of this private road, are there enough connecting loops in some of the Envision Ada projects.

Ferro stated he thinks there will be much greater connectivity in development in other parts of the Village, that do not have the topographic constraints that we have here.

Korth stated maybe we should suggest amending the zoning code to isolate this district from that requirement.

Ferro stated I think it would be important to get Ross' input on that because he was on the Planning Commission when we amended those rules.

Pre-Application Conference, partial demolition (630 square feet), building addition (1,500 square feet) and site redevelopment for a restaurant with outdoor seating and upper floor residential unit, 584 Ada Dr., Parcel No. 41-15-34-105-004, Ron Cook/Nonna Cafe

Ron Cook, owner Nonna Café, stated he has a contract to purchase the Betsy Ratzsch Pottery property, which will give us an opportunity to grow our business. He stated he currently has people come in through the door, with no place to sit. The new location would provide us with a larger kitchen, more dining space and an area to expand our retail offerings. We are proposing to tear down the 600 square feet at the back of the building and replace it with a 1,500 square foot footprint with a basement storage, main floor dining area of 25-30 seats, and a kitchen. He stated the second story would be a rental apartment, and there would be a 1,000 square foot deck adjacent to the building. He stated construction would be the same style as the current building with metal roofing. The cement pad in back of the building would be demolished and we would put through a walkable path of bricks, and two handicap spots would be created in that location. Cook stated we are looking for assurance that this is an acceptable project, pending review of actual drawings, and he is comfortable with the present parking available.

Ferro stated this is a pre-application conference with no formal action called for; it's an opportunity for the applicant to get general feedback on the development concept, and some indication of commissioners' thoughts on the project. Ferro stated he has heard concern from surrounding property owners and businesses in this part of the village over parking availability and what impact on parking demand would be created by this proposed project. He then went on to explain the zoning rules regarding parking demand stating there is language that allows for relaxation of the requirements by the Planning Commission "if documentation is provided to the Planning Commission that the requirements of this article would result in an excessive number of un-needed spaces." He noted in the past the Planning

Commission has used that provision liberally to allow new development to occur in the village, changes of use, building additions, additions of outdoor seating, without imposing a requirement for additional off-street parking.

Ferro stated in his staff report he listed projects that have been approved since 2003 with that flexibility in parking requirements. Also, he stated applying the parking requirements of the ordinance without any relaxation of the requirement, 16.5 spaces would be required. He stated he believes the site has room for three or four spaces on site, and the 16.5 includes a two space requirement for the upper floor residential unit. He stated his view is we have less of a parking supply problem in the village and more of a parking management utilization problem in the village. He noted the number of added public parking spaces that have been added in the Village in recent years, including 30 spaces on the west end of Bronson St. and 80 spaces in the Community Church parking lot through a license agreement with the Township, which are used very little by the public.

Ferro stated he would not recommend that the Township suddenly begin placing a hold on new development due to a concern with parking, with no prior notice.

Ferro also noted a contract has been signed with a consultant to conduct a comprehensive parking study and strategy development for the entire village, including the core area between Ada Drive and Bronson, looking at our existing parking inventory, and conducting parking utilization surveys. The parking study will involve a lot of stakeholder and public engagement, and it is to be done in 10 to 12 weeks.

Ferro stated that the solution to our parking needs in the Village needs to be public parking, not required off-street parking on individual lots, which doesn't work well in a downtown.

Butterfield asked how the parking requirements for retail space would equate to restaurant use.

Ferro stated the parking requirement for retail use is one space per 200 square feet, and for restaurant use, 1 space per 100 square feet of floor area.

Butterfield stated we need to add to the vitality of the Village, and we need to address parking, but it is not for the applicant to solve.

Lunn asked if the café plans on the hours being the same as current.

Cook stated the current location will be breakfast and lunch, the new location lunch and dinner, and the retail store. In front we want to have prepared foods, pastries, packaged goods, a mini gourmet shop; and behind that would be 25 to 30 seats with seating on the deck in the summer time.

Korth brought up the fact that public parking has also been added on Thornapple River Dr. that is very little used. He stated that the parking study should provide very valuable information on the actions that need to be taken in the future to address parking. He noted that parking adequacy is a subjective thing, and that some people are more willing to park some distance from their destination than others. He added that one of the Envision Ada goals is to make walking a more comfortable and pleasant experience.

Cook stated my situation is I have to commit hard money and I'd prefer not to do that without a secure understanding that we can go ahead with the project and the parking is not going to be an issue.

Ferro stated there has not been a formal application for approval submitted yet, so no formal action can be taken.

Korth stated we could have a special meeting for a site plan review and approval from the Planning Commission.

Ferro stated he would need a complete site plan with all the site improvements, what's going to happen in back of the property where the slab is, elevation sketches, landscape plans, utility services, following the submittal requirements in the ordinance.

Corky Paul, 589 River Street, agent representing Ron Cook, stated that Ron would like to have an indication from the Planning Commission that when he comes forth with the site plan that he will be afforded the same parking requirements that have been done in waiver over the last 15 years so that he can move forward with this.

Butterfield stated we should grant him the same flexibility that was afforded others. But do I think we have enough parking right now, I don't, but it doesn't have anything to do with his application.

Jacobs stated she thinks we have to look at the precedents that were set previously.

Korth stated we previously gave the same degree of consideration to parking as we're giving now, so I don't know why we would do anything different.

Cook stated his intention is to have a full set of plans, including being ready to go to the building department before the next meeting.

Review/Recommendation Regarding Proposed Capital Project – Re-Construction/Relocation of Headley St.

Ferro stated the municipal planning law assign responsibilities to the Planning Commission in review and approval of public capital projects. He stated the DDA Board approved the layout of the proposed Headley Street reconstruction and relocation project, and the scope of that project is now being presented to the Planning Commission to review and approve following that procedure in state law. The design of the Headley project has undergone a lot of evolution since its original concept in the Envision Ada Plan, including slight relocation of the proposed intersection of Headley Street with Ada Drive. Our consultants working on the design of the project will give you an overview of the scope of the project and some of its key features.

Steve Teitsma, Progressive, 1811 Four Mile Road, Grand Rapids, stated the plan is the evolution of the Charrette, Master Planning meetings, a long time frame of public input, and a lot of work to get to where we're at today. This follows very closely with what the Master Plan shows now, in addition to the Envision Ada and the design Charrette with a few modifications. The main stretch of the road is from M-21/Fulton Street, creating a new signalized intersection opposite the Amway curb cut, and paralleling Thornapple River Drive to a new intersection with Ada Drive, and ultimately through to Thornapple River Drive. There would be some reconstruction of the old Headley Street. Now we're really starting to put rubber to the road with regards to what has been heard over the last several years in making this thing a reality.

Korth asked if there have been any conversations of a second pedestrian crossing mid-block; and asked Jim if there were any conversations about the space being used for the Rix Robinson monument.

Teitsma stated there has not because there is not anticipated to be any development on the other side of the road.

Ferro stated there is potentially a spot in the green space to relocate the Rix Robinson monument; there could also be a civic building over there in the future.

Korth stated he believes that stripes or marks for a pedestrian crossing should be provided at the intersection of current Headley St. and new Headley St. Also, we had the conversation about using stamped concrete instead of striping in the area between opposing lanes at the M-21 intersection – is that being provided?

Teitsma stated yes, and the Road Commission is on board with it, and the latest proposal has stamped concrete in that entire island, and at all the crosswalks. It will definitely be distinct.

Korth stated a lot of states have the law that you must stop for pedestrians crossing, but not in Michigan.

Ferro stated we have them in cities that control their own streets, such as downtown Grand Rapids, Grand Haven, and we have tried to convince the Road Commission to install signs at the Thornapple River Drive and Fase Street pedestrian crossing and they won't do it.

Teitsma stated we can take the comment back to the Road Commission.

Korth stated he does not think this Planning Commission should support this plan without the pedestrian crossing marked at the intersection of new Headley and current Headley, and he would approve the rest of this subject to there being a truly marked crossing at that intersection. He stated he recognizes that the Township Board could override this recommendation with a two-thirds vote, and that could happen.

Lunn suggested the possibility of approving the plan with a condition that the engineers ask the Road Commission about the matter.

Tim Hoffert, Moore & Bruggink, stated the schedule right now is for the Township Board to review and approve the plan June 8, with the project out for bids on June 10. Bid opening is scheduled for July 2nd. Amway is actually paying for all of this, and after the bids are open they will hold the contract. He stated we will be back in front of the DDA and the Township Board on July 13 to give an update after the bid opening, with construction starting mid-July through the end of the year. Hoffert stated the portion of Headley St. between Ada Drive and Thornapple River Dr. would not be let for bids and constructed until early 2016. Hoffert stated that traffic signals at Headley St. /Fulton St. and at Headley St./Ada Dr. will not be installed until the extension of the street to Thornapple River Dr. is completed.

Hoffert stated the idea is we'd like to be done by November 15th with the traditional road construction. He stated they are also exploring allowing the contractor to complete some of the work next year. Also, he stated until that second intersection is complete the signals at Ada Drive and Thornapple River Drive and Headley and Fulton won't go into place until that southern section is built next year.

Korth asked whether the portion of Thornapple River Dr. shown as one-way could be made two-way.

Hoffert stated that the fixed width of the Thornapple River Dr. bridge precludes installing a sufficient left turn lane on Thornapple River Dr. at that location.

Jacobs stated she agrees it would be great to have a crosswalk at the Headley location, but she does not want to hold up the project and the mid-block crosswalk is only 600 feet away. Korth stated the project has to go to the Road Commission anyway. He thinks it is a bad design to have a T-intersection with no crosswalks.

Ferro stated it would be preferable to have an unconditional approval on the project. Korth stated he felt we should take the opportunity to give as much weight to the desire for a crosswalk, especially since the Township Board can override the condition.

Bob Kullgren, Chair of the DDA, stated our board unanimously approved this at Monday's meeting, and our role is to participate in using current resources, floating a bond and servicing that bond to the tune of \$6.5 million; so this is a policy and detail matter for you, but for us it's a much larger issue. We did not have any concern at all about this design. He stated a condition would only invite controversy. He stated he would suggest that rather than create a condition you suggest to these gentlemen that they use their best efforts to go back to the Road Commission, but if they're unsuccessful just leave it at that, and if they are successful you've gotten what you want, but you haven't squelched a tremendous project for this community.

Bernie Veldkamp, 5580 Hall Street, President of the Ada Historical Society, stated there is a lot of interest in the Rix Robinson monument, and there is also a lot of community interest in preserving the old school house. The interest that has been expressed is to not move the monument far from the place where it is right now because that's where Rix Robinson's house presumably was; and gives us a huge opportunity to make that a park like environment.

Corky Paul stated in regards to the cross walk I think there would be a lot of support from everyone that that's probably necessary and should happen, but to attach it to this approval I don't know if that's what we should do. I would like to see somewhere in the Township that our entire crosswalks will be addressed.

Ferro stated, Tom, you've had a lot of good input on how this project has evolved, but I think we need to keep in mind the context of the state planning law, which states "the location, character, and the extent of the street, public way, open space, structure or utility". I think the context the Planning Commission should be looking at is the big Township-wide picture of where the street runs and what they connect to, does it fit the overall street pattern we want to see in the community. It's more a bigger picture view, rather than getting involved as a Planning Commission in the detailed design features of the project.

Motion by Lunn, supported by Jacobs, to recommend approval of the Headley St. reconstruction plan as presented, and to direct the engineers to seek approval from the Road Commission to install a crosswalk at the intersection of current Headley St. and new Headley St.

Motion passed by 4-1 vote, with Korth voting no.

VIII. COMMISSION MEMBER/STAFF REPORTS

Continued discussion of draft regulations for special event venues in rural zoning districts

Ferro stated the Planning Commission previously heard a request from a property owner who owns 95 acres on Pettis Avenue expressing interest in using his large accessory barn as a rental event venue for wedding receptions, non-profit events, and private meeting space. The Planning Commission concluded at that time that that type of use did not fit within the scope of our home occupation rules, and to authorize that type of use in a residential zoning district would require amendment to the zoning rules. The Planning Commission consensus at that time was, in the absence of the interested party, no further action be taken on any proposed rules. The interested party, Mike Bieker, is here now to express his interest in seeing that process move forward.

Ferro stated he knows of only one community in Kent County that has a barn event venue. In a lot of sample ordinances he has seen commercial activity is allowed only on a property that's used for agriculture as a way to supplement agricultural income. In other communities it's viewed as a way of preserving usefulness of historic barns. There's also a growing interest in barn weddings. Ferro stated he has received some complaints from the surrounding neighborhood that there are events going on at Mr. Bieker's property. He stated he has sent written communication to Mr. Bieker notifying him that the holding of any rental events there is not in compliance with the zoning rules.

Korth stated he thinks we should set the draft zoning regulations for a public hearing next month.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES OF APRIL 13 AND APRIL 30 MEETINGS.

Korth stated regarding Minutes of the April 13 meeting there was one correction on his comment at the top of the second page; one addition was related to the comments by Butterfield, and a correction of the time of the meeting.

Ferro stated he will correct that to “moved by Butterfield, seconded by Easter to adjourn at 1:30”; change the comment by Korth at the top of the page to state that the open space is “unnecessary given the need for density in this area, and the proximity to this neighborhood of large public riverfront green space”; and add a bullet point that states “Butterfield commented that a river front trail and the trail connection to the M21 bridge are not shown on the plan and are important.”

Motion by Jacobs, supported by Lunn, to approve the April 13th Minutes with additions/corrections as stated by Ferro.

Motion passed unanimously.

Korth stated regarding Minutes of April 30th, page 5, at the bottom, the very last motion, the vote should be noted as being 5-0, not 7-0.

Motion by Lowry, supported by Jacobs, to approve the April 30th Minutes, subject to correction of the vote on the Heidi-Christine’s plan from 7-0 to 5-0.

Motion passed unanimously.

IX. PUBLIC/BOARD COMMENT

No public comment.

Butterfield stated regarding Envision Ada and all that we’re going to be seeing over the next month/year, she is sure the planner is receiving items and arranging the agenda with things for us to see. She asked if there is a process in place for an email to be provided to us outside of our normal meeting date saying can we hold a quick special meeting to discuss this.

Ferro stated a special meeting would need to be called by the Chairman, and that he could discuss the need for any special meetings with the Chair.

Butterfield stated there are more of these that are going to happen and we need to be sensitive to some of the issues that are going to come before us; and just reading an application before our meeting is not enough time.

X. ADJOURNMENT

Motion by Lunn, second by Jacobs, to adjourn the meeting at 10:15 p.m.

Motion passed unanimously.

Respectfully Submitted,

Susan Burton, Township Clerk

SB/dr