

**ADA TOWNSHIP PLANNING COMMISSION
MINUTES OF THE AUGUST 12, 2010 MEETING**

A special meeting of the Ada Township Planning Commission was held on Thursday, August 12, 2010, at 7:30 p.m. 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

Present: Chairperson Korth, Commissioners Butterfield, Easter, Gutierrez, Lowry, Paul and Treasurer Rhoades. Also present: Planning Director Ferro.

III. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

IV. PUBLIC HEARINGS

**1. Proposed Amendment to Industrial District Building Height and Area Regulations,
Proposed by Ada Township**

Ferro stated that he initiated this proposed amendment after Amway Corp. submitted a building height variance request. He noted that he foresaw a high likelihood of denial of the request, based on the Zoning Board of Appeals' strict adherence to the proper legal criteria for granting variances. Ferro stated that he believes that an ordinance amendment to address the needs of projects such as the current one proposed by Amway is a more appropriate solution. He described the proposed manufacturing process installation proposed by Amway, and the building height that is needed to enclose the manufacturing equipment that is proposed to be re-located here from its current out-of-state location.

Ferro presented the proposed amendment to the building height and area provisions of the Industrial zoning district. He explained that the proposed changes delete the current maximum building height limit of 45 feet in the Industrial district, and substitute a maximum allowed building height of 65 feet, with the addition of greater setback requirements for any portion of a building which exceeds 45 feet in height. Ferro stated that the proposed change is based on the premise that the larger a property is and the further away a building is from the property lines, the less visual and mass impact that a tall building has on its surroundings.

Ferro also noted that the proposed amendment removes from the Industrial district provisions that require landscape screening adjacent to residential zones. The reason for this proposed deletion is that these provisions are duplicative of the more detailed landscaping standards that were enacted in 1995, and should have been removed at that time.

Chairman Korth opened the public hearing.

Tom Smith, Fishbeck, Thompson, Carr & Huber, on behalf of Amway Corp., thanked the Commission for holding the special meeting. Smith stated that Ferro's description of what Amway is trying to do here is accurate. He stated that they have a very aggressive construction schedule, hopefully starting in late September-early October, with demolition. He noted they are already in the process of looking at the equipment out in California. The height of the equipment installation requires the height of building that is proposed.

Korth closed the public hearing.

Ferro noted that the fact that several building height variances have been approved for buildings on the Amway campus in the past is an indication that building heights greater than 45 feet are acceptable. He

noted, however, that the zoning variance process provides no certainty as to what the rules are, and it invites inconsistency over time.

Easter noted that she agrees with Ferro's suggested approach.

Gutierrez requested clarification regarding how the proposed relationship between building height and setbacks would work.

Rhoades noted that this would probably help in the long run, by providing a clear rule to be followed.

Korth asked Ferro how the public was notified of the proposed amendment and the hearing.

Ferro stated that the notification was in the form of a publication in the newspaper. He stated that no individual property owners were notified.

Korth asked whether the proposed amendment could result in any development proposals that would significantly affect the residential neighborhood south of the Industrial district between Fulton St. and the railroad.

Ferro stated that there may be a few properties that are of sufficient size to accommodate a building height of 50 feet instead of 45 feet, but it is unlikely that any would qualify for a building height of 65 feet, based on inability to comply with the setback requirements.

Korth asked what the height of the Amway Catalog Distribution Center on Spaulding Ave. was.

Ferro responded it was in the 50-55 foot range, and it is in a different zoning district – Light Industrial, than the Amway complex on Fulton St. Ferro pointed out that the Light Industrial district has language that uses the same approach of linking required setback to building height.

Paul stated that it is important for us to address this issue by establishing a standard that meets current needs, instead of relying on a 1960's standard. Rhoades pointed out other examples of manufacturing processes that require high equipment heights.

Korth asked Smith whether he believes from Amway's perspective that the proposed changes are realistic and useful for the company. Smith stated he believed they were.

Commissioner Paul stated that it is clear that the 45 foot height limit is obsolete, and a change is warranted.

It was moved by Lowry, seconded by Rhoades to recommend approval of the proposed amendment.

Motion passed unanimously.

Easter asked what the impact would be of the proposed project on employment at Amway. Sam Lampe, Amway Corp. stated that there would initially be 50 new employees, and they are projecting volume growth of 5%-8% per year.

V. MEMBER COMMENT.

Korth stated he wished to have a broad discussion regarding the Commission's goals for the Village, in view of potential multiple development proposals coming before the Commission in the future. He stated that we need to take a broad perspective regarding the future of the Village, and not just take individual site plans as they come before us, with no coordination or interconnections between the sites. Korth also

suggested that we need to thoughtfully consider the possibility of having some vehicular and/or pedestrian connection between the proposed day care center site and the Township Fire Station property.

Easter suggested that Commission members should walk the area to become more familiar with the conditions.

V. PUBLIC COMMENT

There was no public comment.

Korth read a letter that had been given to him by Mr. Dan Vos at the start of the meeting, concerning the proposed Thornapple Homes project.

VI. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at approximately 8:43 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Susan Burton, Township Clerk
Rs:jf