

**ADA TOWNSHIP PLANNING COMMISSION
MINUTES OF THE AUGUST 20, 2009 MEETING**

A meeting of the Ada Township Planning Commission was held on Thursday, August 20, 2009, 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 Vice Chairperson Gutierrez at 7:30 p.m.

II. ROLL CALL

Hoeks called the roll. Present: Commissioners Butterfield (joined the meeting at 7:31 p.m.), Easter, Gutierrez, Hoeks, Lowry and Rhoades. Absent: Chairperson Korth.
Also present: Planning Director Ferro.

III. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

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

IV. APPROVAL OF MINUTES OF THE JULY 16, 2009 MEETING

Motion by Easter, second by Lowry, to approve the July 16, 2009 meeting minutes as presented. Motion passed unanimously.

Gutierrez welcomed the newest member of the Commission, Board Liaison Norm Rhoades, Township Treasurer, who is replacing Trustee Sytsma.

V. PUBLIC HEARINGS None.

VI. UNFINISHED BUSINESS None.

VII. NEW BUSINESS

1. Proposed Zoning Ordinance Amendments – Revisions to Agricultural District, Creation of New Rural Preservation-1 and Rural Preservation-2 Zoning Districts, and Re-Zoning of Land to the New Districts.

Ferro handed out drafts of the Zoning Ordinance Amendments to the Commissioners. The proposed amendments are outlined in the pages from the Master Plan which describe the general recommended thrust of the changes and basically involve changing maximum density and minimum lot size rules in the Township's Agricultural (AG) District. Ferro stated that the future land use component of the Master Plan suggests the AG district be broken into 3 components – 1 unit per 3 acres, 1 unit per 5 acres, and an area of 1 unit per 10 acres. Included in the new AG district is a new statement of purpose, which is an important component. There is also a provision in the new AG district that establishes a maximum lot size as well as a minimum lot size. The purpose is to limit the extent to which large parcels get fragmented into smaller parcels. Ferro noted that the future land use chapter of the Master Plan provides more information on the rationale for these changes.

The Commission held discussion regarding the proposed changes. It was noted that a public hearing will have to be held on these amendments prior to any action.

Easter stated she believes the whole approach is anti-progressive and a little backwards. The community is stronger when people come together, create a higher tax base, create nicer schools, etc. She believes it is better to have neighbors you are close to, and she is not sure why this approach is being considered. She suggests working on bottleneck areas, but not precluding people from moving into the community.

Gutierrez stated that people in the Township are torn wherein 50% are anti-development and the other 50% want the open space. There was then discussion regarding development northeast of the river. Gutierrez asked if the public hearing could be held in September. Ferro suggests holding it in October because there may be some minor text changes in the Zoning Ordinance because of the addition of the two new districts.

Easter spoke about the natural order of things and noted that the Township's major growth was in the 1980's. Now these houses are getting older and people will be looking for new places to live and we need land that is affordable and realistic or residents will end up leaving Ada. She strongly believes we do not need one house sitting on 10 acres.

Rhoades spoke regarding how all of this affects the water and sewer system. Lowry talked about a past master plan meeting wherein a lot of the residents stated they wanted the larger lot sizes. He agrees that a big problem is the water and sewer situation.

Easter stated that no one is criticizing someone for wanting to live on a larger lot, but to require the larger lot sizes is not the way to go. Easter said that time needs to be spent on how to get water and sewer across the river.

Rhoades stated it is possible but it is not going to happen.

Gutierrez questioned how many more homes Ada Township can hold north of the river before it is full. Ferro stated approximately 2,000 more homes currently, but with the new zoning it would be about 700. Ferro mentioned that there are a lot of acres of wetlands that are not developable.

Butterfield asked what other communities are doing, through a planning perspective.

Lowry noted that many townships do not have the same make-up as Ada wherein Ada has the primary problem of crossing the ~~water~~ Grand River. Ferro stated the primary problem is not the water and sewer, but the major barrier would be the demand for roads that the additional housing creates. Putting a new bridge across the river would take forever and the environmental impact would be significant.

Ferro stated he does not believe we should rush the hearing process. He wants to make sure the public has plenty of notice.

Easter suggested waiting until Spring to have a hearing on this due to economic and other current conditions. It might be taken more favorably when circumstances are better.

Gutierrez stated he does not believe this is going to be a huge deal – he believes people on that side of the river want the large open space. The opposition may be mostly from developers.

Ferro concluded that he would have another draft available at the September meeting and then the public hearing can be held at the October meeting.

VIII. REPORTS FROM COMMISSION MEMBERS/STAFF

Gutierrez brought up the subject of wind energy and stated he believes the Township should get an ordinance in place before an application comes before the Commission. He noted that Holland has a good wind ordinance example (although very detailed). Ferro stated he would do some research and gather a few other examples that may be useful.

Ferro mentioned the planning conference being held in September in Mt. Pleasant and asked who is interested in attending. He said he previously emailed information on this to all Commissioners.

IX. PUBLIC COMMENT ON ITEMS NOT ON THE AGENDA

None.

X. ADJOURNMENT

Motion by Rhoades, second by Lowry, to adjourn the meeting at 8:38 p.m. Motion passed unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,

Susan Burton
Township Clerk

Rs:lm