

**ADA TOWNSHIP PLANNING COMMISSION  
MINUTES OF THE AUGUST 21, 2008 MEETING**

A meeting of the Ada Township Planning Commission was held on Thursday, August 21, 2008, 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 Burton, Gutierrez, Hoeks Lowry and Sytsma. Absent: Commissioner Butterfield. Also present: Planning Director Ferro.

**III. APPROVAL OF AGENDA**

Motion by Sytsma, second by Burton, to approve the agenda with the removal of New Business Item 2, Request for Amendment of Special Use Permit Conditions, from RJM Design. Motion passed unanimously.

**IV. APPROVAL OF MINUTES OF THE JULY 17, 2008 REGULAR MEETING AND THE JULY 29, 2008 WORK SESSION MEETING.**

Motion by Hoeks, second by Lowry, to approve the July 17, 2008 regular meeting minutes and the July 29, 2008 work session meeting minutes as presented. Motion passed unanimously.

**V. PUBLIC HEARINGS**

**1. Special Use Permit, for 180-Foot Wireless Telecommunications Tower in the AG District, 1970 Pettis Ave., NE (Parcel No. 41-15-17-100-007), AT&T Wireless**

Marc Daneman presented the request on behalf of AT&T Wireless. Dan Mondrella of Centennial Wireless was also present on behalf of this request. The request is for a 180-foot monopole tower proposed on a 33-acre parcel. Daneman noted that revised photo simulations of the proposed tower had previously been submitted. Centennial Wireless also has provided additional maps showing existing and projected signal propagation within the overall service area. Daneman stated that Cingular Wireless, now AT&T, has previously pursued other potential sites in the area, and they have all been ruled out as unavailable, including co-location on the water tower or the Forest Hills Eastern campus. Daneman stated they are looking to serve the central part of the Township along the river valley wherein the signal is affected by the woods and topography. This area is critical for service needs for AT&T and Centennial customers. He also noted they already have approval to co-locate on the Alticor tower. The plan is to have a solid stockade fence around the equipment compound. Daneman stated there is room for at least four carriers, and possibly as many as 6 or 7, on this monopole. Daneman next went through how they have met the standards of the ordinance. Dan Mondrella of Centennial spoke basically confirming that Daneman has covered all aspects of this request.

Ferro stated that local government regulation of telecommunications facilities is affected by the Federal Telecommunications Act. There are some limits placed on local government authority in their zoning review of these facilities.

Andrew Felde of Drew Wireless was present on behalf of the Township as its wireless consultant. He noted that his assessment shows there is a demonstrated need for additional coverage in the area. The question is whether the need can be met by a lesser height of monopole than is being proposed. An option might be several shorter towers, as long as federal regulation is met. Ferro submitted an updated report, dated August 19, 2008, submitted by Felde. This updated report adds a paragraph regarding tower

heights and the number of carriers this proposed height can hold. His recommendation is that whatever is built should be able to accommodate a minimum of six carriers.

Korth stated a group of representatives from the Township recently had a meeting with Forest Hills Public Schools. He read a letter submitted by Tim Raymer, Assistant Superintendent for Finance and Operations. The school district does not feel it is their responsibility to address cellular communications needs in the Township, but they are willing to work with the Township. Korth stated what the Commission is trying to do is to find the best solution.

The public hearing was opened, with the following comments:

Donna Hall, 1990 Knollpoint, stated she would like Forest Hills Schools to revisit their willingness for co-location. Adding to the water tower would probably be the best solution.

Paul Kemmeter, 1995 Wellpoint Court, stated he would be looking at this tower from his front yard. He believes there is a need for the tower, but he wants it to be harmonious with the neighborhood.

John Koetsier, 1952 Knollpoint, stated that due diligence on the parties involved suggests we should look at potential impact on property values. What happens when a cell tower is put up and what happens to the value of homes, etc. He spoke about the visibility of the water tower and his concerns with having another tower near his property.

Joe Ditonto, 5985 Two Mile Road, asked whether putting towers on the rim of the valley would provide better coverage for the area.

The public hearing was closed.

Korth noted the following correspondence that was received:

1. Letter from Dr. Pamela Ditonto addressing health issues.
2. Letter from Tammy Prafke, noting her 100% disapproval of the tower and at Forest Hills school grounds.
3. Letter from Dan and Nancy Truer, have strong opposition to the tower.
4. Letter from Mike and Judy Reed, referring to the gravel pit and water tower and further diminishment of property values.
5. Letter from Corky Paul, Pettis Avenue, noting strong objection to tower location.

Ferro submitted a comparison diagram showing the height of the proposed tower compared to the existing water tower and compared to the football field lights at Forest Hills Eastern campus.

Hoeks stated that more time should be taken to pursue possibilities on the water tower, along with other co-location possibilities.

Burton spoke about safety concerns and reliance on cell phones -- can people lose their signal when they need it most, such as in emergency situations.

Lowry stated that a tower at this site is not harmonious with the neighborhood.

Gutierrez stated that he uses his cell phone every day and he knows the importance of coverage, but believes the answer is to continue to work with Forest Hills for a compromise. This would be the best solution.

Sytsma stated she agrees with Gutierrez. She felt the school was very positive at the meeting and they seem willing to have future conversations. She stated the application is incomplete – no building plans, no landscape plans, etc. She also believes this is not harmonious with the character of the area.

Korth stated that the presence of other visual intrusions in the area is not a reason to justify messing up things even further visually. He stated he does not believe this is the right location for this tower and they need to come up with a better solution. There is mixed information on whether there is a need for additional towers. One possibility would be to rebuild at the WLAV tower site to be able to handle additional carriers. Daneman stated this location is too far north and the owner of the WLAV tower refuses to allow any changes. Korth suggested keeping the public hearing record open until the next time this item is on the agenda.

Motion by Lowry, second by Sytsma to postpone (with the public hearing record left open) AT&T Wireless' request for special use permit, for 180-foot wireless telecommunications tower in the AG District, at 1970 Pettis Ave., NE (Parcel No. 41-15-17-100-007), to the September 18, 2008 meeting.

Motion passed unanimously.

## **VI. OLD BUSINESS**

### **1. Request for Amendment to Zoning Regulations, to Add Provisions for Heliports, Paradigm Design**

Korth noted the first draft of this was submitted in December 2007. This has been before the Commission several times.

Ferro stated the February draft only permitted heliport facilities in the agricultural, rural residential and industrial zoning districts. The August 14 draft broadens the range of zoning districts. It reintroduces the idea of permitting, with special use permit approval, heliports in the residential zoning districts also., with some different standards from those in the AG, RR and Industrial district. Ferro reviewed the various standards proposed.

Ferro stated there has been a lot of discussion regarding what are appropriate locations for this type of facility and what the standards should be. He stated that he still believes that we need to find the right balance between protecting the overall public health, safety and welfare and allowing property owners to use their property in reasonable ways. He stated he does not believe the property right involved is a substantial one. He believes that the concerns with safety have been magnified by a local incident, and we should not let an emotional reaction to that drive our decision-making. He believes we should look at real data and information about aircraft safety, and also consider other impacts, including whether people perceive it is an imposition or an intrusion on their lives. Ultimately, there is no technically correct answer one way or another.

Ferro referred to information he provided the Commission on the relative risk of various activities, including every day activities such as driving a car, indicating that the risk of falling aircraft is very low.

Koth stated our task is to fine tune an ordinance that we feel we can live with, and recommend it to the Township Board, and he hopes we can come up with an ordinance that we unanimously support.

Hoeks stated he has agonized over this, and is at a loss. He researched the Ada Township Code and read a portion of the Code pertaining to our responsibility to best promote the health, safety and general welfare, including promotion of safety. Hoeks stated he does not want on his conscience that the Township allowed landing and taking off close to either churches or schools with large gatherings. His

tentative conclusion is that we should not allow heliports in residential areas. He stated that if residential areas were to be considered, he would suggest increased separation distances from churches and schools. (Hoeks stated that Commissioner Butterfield agreed with his comments and wanted this noted on the record). Hoeks stated he would consider heliports in the agricultural, industrial and light industrial districts.

Lowry also stated he would not want flights near schools and churches. He said he is a proponent of helicopters, but when they go down, they drop.

Gutierrez stated he likes the special use approach for this.

Korth stated the Township should have the authority to consider the proximity of heliports to churches, schools and other facilities when evaluating an individual application. He also stated that since our Industrial zones are in close proximity to residential areas, we should not have different standards for industrial zones than for residential zones. Korth stated that the rules might allow the Commission to limit operating times when school is in session, as a possibility. Korth questioned whether violations of conditions can be considered grounds for revoking an approved permit. Korth suggested setting a special work meeting to have Ferro incorporate discussions from tonight's meeting and get to a consensus to move this on to the Board of Trustees.

Kathleen Richter, Hall St. resident, stated she wondered if we could put something in the regulations requiring a heliport to be closer to the facility owner's residence than any other residence.

Sytsma asked Richter whether she would be willing to come to the work session meeting. She stated she would like to invite everyone in the public to attend the meeting, to send their recommendations in to the Planning Department, or come to that meeting and give feedback.

Richter asked whether property owners would be notified of this.

Sytsma stated it would be posted on our web site. Korth pointed out that a direct notice would only be sent if an ordinance was approved in the future, and a specific application was submitted.

Motion by Sytsma, second by Burton to postpone the request for amendment to zoning regulations to add provisions for heliports (by Paradigm Design), to a special meeting to be held on September 9, 2009 at 3:00 p.m. Motion passed unanimously.

## **VII. NEW BUSINESS**

### **1. Site Plan Review, 3,100 Square Foot Office Addition and Paving Existing Parking Area, 6060 East Fulton St. (Rippling Dr.) (Parcel No. 41-15-29-420-004), Erhardt Construction Co.**

Joe Erhardt presented the site plan request. Ferro gave a summary of the request and handed out an aerial photograph showing the location. This is a general contracting business. The proposal is for a single-story office addition to their 2.7 acre facility located at the end of Rippling Drive, off Fulton. This addition is proposed to use the space currently used for employee parking. Thus, the applicant is requesting expansion of the paved parking area into an existing unpaved area which is currently being used for storage. Ferro discussed storm water management, noting the Township Engineer has reviewed the plan and has approved the provisions for the storm water runoff. Ferro recommends the additional of some green space and trees along the north property line and in one of the proposed new parking islands. Ferro stated that care should be taken during construction to protect the existing honey locust tree located near the northwest corner of the parking area. Ferro noted that if any exterior lighting is installed in the

future, it should have cut-off style fixtures. Ferro concluded noting he recommends approval subject to conditions.

Sytsma said she visited the site and would like all vegetation near the creek to remain and more vegetation added to the property. Sytsma stated she is also worried about the amount of impervious surface being proposed. Korth suggested creating a no-disturb setback of 10 feet which will create an additional filtering zone.

Motion by Sytsma, second by Gutierrez, to approve Erhardt Construction Co.'s site plan for a 3,100 square foot office addition and paving existing parking area, at 6060 East Fulton St. (Rippling Dr.) (Parcel No. 41-15-29-420-004), subject to the following conditions:

1. A landscaped island and shrub shall be installed in the vicinity of the sewer manhole.
2. A deciduous tree shall be installed in the island on the south side of the parking area.
3. Two deciduous trees shall be installed between the pavement and the north property line.
4. Any new exterior lighting shall be cut-off style fixtures.
5. The applicant is to walk the property with the Township Planner to determine the setbacks and possible fencing from the drainage corridor at the east end of the property.

Motion passed unanimously.

- 2. Request for Revision to Special Use Permit Condition, to Allow Increase in Height of Standby Security Lighting at Private Cemetery from 12 Feet to 16 Feet, 7100 Ada Dr. (Parcel No. 41-15-33-426-004 and 013), RJM Design**

This agenda item was removed.

- 3. Revised Final PUD, Re-Configuration of Clubhouse, Parking and Swimming Pool, Villas of Ada, 5584 Ada Dr., Covenant Development**

Rick Pulaski of Nederveld Associates was present on behalf of the Villas of Ada, presenting a minor revision to the clubhouse plan. This proposed reconfiguration relocates the parking to front on the internal access road, instead of on Ada Drive. Also, the clubhouse is turned 90 degrees to now face the internal road and parking area, instead of facing Ada Drive. They believe this is a positive change because it results in the parking area being further from and less visible from Ada Drive. Sytsma suggested that the contractors keep watering during construction to lessen dust and sediment in the area.

Motion by Sytsma, second by Gutierrez, to approve the revised final PUD for reconfiguration of clubhouse, parking and swimming pool for the Villas of Ada, at 5584 Ada Dr. Motion passed unanimously.

## **VIII. REPORTS FROM COMMISSION MEMBERS/STAFF**

Korth asked if the Commissioners would want to add the Memorial Gardens request to the September 9th meeting due to their request for an early hearing date., or to have a special meeting on their behalf. Commissioners declined this request.

Korth spoke about the status of the July special meeting regarding trying to formulate a meeting with the Village to review the Charette findings, etc. The administrative committee supported the idea and, subsequently, a tentative date has been set for the Village meeting of September 16th at 7:00 p.m.

**IX. PUBLIC COMMENT ON ITEMS NOT ON THE AGENDA**

None.

**X. ADJOURNMENT**

Motion by Sytsma, second by Burton, to adjourn the meeting at 10:32 p.m. Motion passed unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,

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Deborah Ensing Millhuff, CMC  
Ada Township Clerk  
rs:lm