

**ADA TOWNSHIP PLANNING COMMISSION
MINUTES OF THE SEPTEMBER 20, 2007 MEETING**

A regular meeting of the Ada Township Planning Commission was held on Thursday, September 20, 2007, 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, Butterfield, Gutierrez, Hoeks, Lowry and Sytsma.
Also Present: Planning Director Ferro.

III. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Motion by Sytsma, second by Butterfield, to approve the revised agenda as presented. Motion passed unanimously.

IV. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Motion by Hoeks, second by Butterfield, to approve the August 16, 2007 meeting minutes, with the following revisions:

- On page 2, under item 1, the 4th paragraph, change to “was proposed to be constructed” and “the Township should possibly bear some of the planning and architectural costs”.
- On page 3, in the third main paragraph, the 3rd line should read: “Each of the cul-de-sacs will have a separate name”.
- On page 4, in the 3rd paragraph up from the bottom, add in the third sentence: “frontal appearance” of a mini community of garages.
- On page 5, under proposed amendments to billboard regulations, in the third paragraph down, change “alternative” to “alternatives”.

Motion passed unanimously.

V. PUBLIC HEARINGS

1. Ada Township Master Plan Update, 2007.

Ferro gave a short overview of the master plan update process and the purpose of the master plan. He went over portions of the Vision Statement, noting that the overall sense of direction for the community is expressed in the Vision Statement. Ferro also highlighted some of the major changes from the 1995 plan as follows:

- a reduction in planned density from what is allowed by the current zoning, in some areas north and east of the Grand River;
- in the northern portion of the community, the plan identifies a rural development area and two rural preservation areas, with planned densities ranging from 1 unit per 2 acres to 1 unit per 10 acres;
- text has discussion of land on north side of Fulton Street, west of Carl Dr. as being a potential area for higher density residential development (up to 4 units per acre range);
- vacant land on Fulton Street adjacent to the cell phone tower site east of the river is identified as having potential for some type of retirement housing facility;

- the area south of M-21 is recognized as predominantly single-family housing, and acknowledges potential for future redevelopment of existing neighborhood between Ada Drive and Cascade;
- area in the Pettis Avenue corridor is designated for commercial use;
- MDOT planning to place replacement M-21 bridge over Grand River – will include pedestrian bike paths;
- many street improvements and redesign projects planned in the Village, pursuant to the Ada Village Design Charrette Final Report;
- potential new traffic signal locations are identified on M-21.
- Need for a feasibility study for extension of sewer across the river to serve the existing development in the immediate vicinity of the M-21/Pettis Ave. intersection is identified.

The plan also references two other planning documents – the 2007 Open Space Plan and a Wireless Infrastructure Analysis, which identifies areas of need for better wireless communication coverage.

The next step in the process is to hold the public hearing, followed by possible revisions and refinements before adoption by the Planning Commission (which is a recommendation to the Township Board).

The public hearing was opened and the following comments were made:

Bill Papke, 8400 Bailey Dr., set forth concern about the reduction in density lying north and east of the river and questioned the reasoning behind this.

Todd Urbanski, 201 Rollingbrook, spoke about density near his neighborhood. He would like to have it kept similar to what it is now, not such a high density. He also commented on water and sewer issues with an existing private drive – who pays for pavement repair, etc.

Jon Forslund, 95 Taos Ave., stated he reiterates what Mr. Urbanski commented on – bringing higher density further away from the Township center – seems like it would be better to have it closer to the center, not in the rural areas.

Brian Bestrom, 252 Rollingbrook, stated he appreciates the details of the plan and the work put into it. He would like the Commission to look at the 30% growth population in the Township – he questioned the infrastructure handling the growth. He noted that there are students in classes of 25 students in 2nd grade in the Forest Hills Public Schools district.

Randy Walter, 186 Taos Ave., said he feels that the plan is reasonable overall except for the high density housing proposed west of Carl Drive. The complete neighborhood is developed rural residential. He believes this is being driven by the greed of a few at the cost of many living in that neighborhood.

Gary Clark, 25 Rollingbrook, stated his property overlooks the proposed high density development area. He feels this is a bunch of double-wides, one on top of the other. This is not what they signed up for when they moved into the neighborhood.

Mark Thomas, 300 Rollingbrook, thanked the Commission for all of their work. He spoke about preservation of the existing natural corridor and compatibility between any high density development. He believes that it is important to maintain the mission.

Mary Ellen Curren, 170 Taos, spoke regarding how Ada is a beautiful place and she appreciates the developments that have come in. She stated she does not mind the high density with a beautiful development plan.

Brian Papke, 454 Bailey Dr., stated he is looking for clarification regarding planned land use on the Pettis corridor.

Jim McKay, 5222 Rollingbrook, supports and echoes what his neighbors have said. He asked the Commission to not focus on the quantity of life in Ada Township, but instead focus on the quality of life.

Rob Cumming, 5680 Grand River Dr., spoke regarding the vision statement and access to utilities. He feels the corridor coming into Ada Township is extremely important. He believes with proper planning and administrative direction, there can be a good mix of residential developments with diversity if done in the right way. He stated he understands the insight by the Rollingbrook residents. He thanked the Commission for the time into the plan.

Betsy Ratzsch, 584 Ada Drive, stated the language in the presentation spoke of vibrant businesses in the Township. She believes it is important to have these businesses in Ada. Need to consider how planning and regulations can be shaped to help the businesses.

Phil Engelsman, 5655 Far Hill Dr., set forth his concerns about placement of multi-family residential units. He said he has asked for the exact text in the Master Plan and when this would be available for reading. Ferro stated the exact text of the Master Plan is on the website and at the Township offices.

Jamie Ladd, 6300 East Fulton, thanked the Commissioners for all of their work and effort in the Master Plan. He focused on Chapter 7, projected population and projected land use, and noted his concern with the decreased density contemplated in the rural residential area, and the resulting greater consumption of open land that would result. He also spoke about the Township's efforts to preserve open space, and expressed the view that lowering planned density runs counter to those efforts.

Marlis Jacoby, 1000 Paradise Lake Drive, said she is concerned about open space preservation and the area between Ada Drive and Hall Street. The concerns are for quality of life, traffic, population density, water concerns, and preservation of outstanding natural land in Ada Township.

Sara Torrey, 5643 Far Hill Dr., set forth concerns regarding water runoff from the new development and the additional traffic.

Colleen Walter, 186 Taos, addressed comments on proposed text regarding density noting that she is opposed to this. She feels the text is inconsistent – need to focus on the concerns of the resident's rights.

The public hearing was closed and Board discussion commenced. Ferro commented that there have been significant comments that need to be discussed and considered and thus he suggested not taking any action at this time. Ferro said he received a call from the Preserve Ada Township citizens's group expressing concern that there was not much public awareness of the proposed plan and hearing, and would like to have an opportunity to communicate to residents about the proposed plan. He suggested that the Commission consider continuing the hearing to a later date, so that more public awareness steps can be taken by the Township.

Korth spoke about the amount of land in Ada, issues regarding the floodplain, landowners in the community who consume a lot of land to the south and the west (with no intent of developing), and the fact that our hands are tied. He spoke about concerns over traffic coming from other townships and the Pettis Avenue corridor between Knapp and Fulton. Korth thanked all for their public comments and how important those comments are, as well as comments from the 2004 survey.

Gutierrez spoke about the change from 3 to 5 acres relative to the busy traffic on Knapp and Pettis in the morning. Korth suggested extending the public hearing to next month as well. Hoeks noted that the October meeting will be held on October 25th instead of October 18th due to Commissioners attending the Michigan Planning Association Conference.

The consensus of the Commission was to continue the hearing to the October 25 meeting.

2. Proposed Amendment to Zoning Regulations, to Add a Prohibition on Off-Premise Signs, or Billboards, proposed by Ada Township Planning Commission.

Ferro stated he previously submitted an analysis to the Commissioners of several different alternatives for amending the Township's billboard regulations. The Commission then directed to advertise a public hearing on the alternative that would prohibit additional billboards in the Township. Ferro summarized the proposed amendment.

The public hearing was opened, with the following comment:

Jamie Ladd, 6300 E. Fulton, stated he is in support of the amendment.

The public hearing was closed.

Ferro next noted that in his analysis, he cited studies that indicate a connection between accident risk caused by billboard distraction, and he believes that the aesthetic impact of billboards in the community is perceived by community members to be negative. Ferro stated this proposed amendment would not affect existing billboards. Ferro quoted the following language from the amendment: "The negative visual impact of additional billboards along the Fulton Street Corridor within the community would be directly contrary to maintaining the important and valued elements of the community's character that are identified in the master plan survey and the draft master plan itself".

Motion by Sytsma, second by Gutierrez, to recommend approval of the proposed zoning ordinance text amendment prohibiting off-premise signs, or billboards.

Motion passed unanimously.

VI. UNFINISHED BUSINESS

1. Request for Extension of Preliminary PUD Approval, 36,000 Square Foot Mixed Use Building, Parcel Nos. 41-15-34-126-009 and 010, 490 and 496 Ada Drive, Scott Gregory.

Ferro submitted correspondence from the applicant which states that the applicant does not have plans to carry out the project, and requests withdrawal of the request for extension.

Motion by Burton, second by Butterfield, to decline Scott Gregory's request for extension of preliminary PUD approval for 490 and 496 Ada Drive, and to accept the applicant's request for withdrawal.

Motion passed unanimously.

2. Preliminary PUD Plan, 76 Attached Condominium Units on 18.78 Acres, 5584 Ada Dr. and 5595 Hall St., Parcel Nos. 41-15-31-426-016 and 41-15-31-476-008, Covenant Developments, LLC

Ferro gave a brief history of this application noting the applicant has added two small parcels on Hall St. to the proposed development and has modified the layout.

Korth stated he is invested in a company that owns the home at 5580 Hall Street and requested the Commission to consider whether this constituted a conflict of interest for this agenda item. The consensus of the Commission was there was no conflict of interest.

Peter Engles of Covenant Development presented the plan. He noted this is the fourth and most dramatic revision of the plan, wherein an additional parcel of land on Hall St. has been acquired and added to the proposed development. This has allowed an increase to the tree preservation area on the site.

Jason VanderKodde, Nederveld & Associates spoke next. He addressed questions from the previous presentation. He informed the Commission that they have staked the property, to delineate the approximate clearing limits on the site. He prepared a couple of drawings showing coverage percentages for the proposed development compared to potential development under the current zoning, which also included percentages for tree preservation. Another request of the Commission was to re-evaluate the front loaded garages. The applicants have revised the plan with side loaded garages.

Korth stated the next step is to set a public hearing on this plan. He stated that because this is a PUD and a non-traditional plan, he is sensitive to insuring that the surrounding homeowners are engaged in this process.

The applicant stated they have contacted every single person on the notification list with a letter and/or a phone call. He noted they did that immediately with the adjoining landowners and have met with approximately 20 of the existing landowners.

Korth spoke about the uniqueness of this due to the number of properties affected and because it is a dramatic deviation from the current zoning -- of which there are benefits. He stated it would be important for the applicants to give another full-blown presentation prior to the public hearing. Korth suggested holding a special meeting for the site visit, ideally before the public hearing.

Engles stated they would be happy to organize a presentation, but noted that one of the current landowners has requested that the public not be allowed on their property. There was discussion over the current zoning and what the current plan could be. Engles suggested visiting the live working model in Wyoming, which is their existing development with units identical to the proposed development.

Ferro gave an overview of what the current R-2 zoning allows, with little discretion by the Township over details of the design. He then stated that under PUD zoning, the specific development plan is subject to the discretion of the Township as to whether or not to approve it, and conditions can be put on the approval. He said the Planning Commission is carefully weighing the features of this plan compared with what could be there under the existing zoning.

Ferro suggested that to maintain the Planning Commission's objectivity, it would be best for Planning Commissioners to visit the site without either the applicant or neighbors present. Korth suggested having a special meeting at the Wyoming development wherein the public could be present.

It was concluded that the public hearing will be held at the October 25, 2007 Planning Commission meeting. Planning Commissioners will conduct site visits in groups of 2 or 3 members, not constituting a quorum.

VII. NEW BUSINESS

None.

VIII. REPORTS FROM COMMISSION MEMBERS/STAFF

1. Request to Change Date of October Meeting from October 18 to October 25

Motion by Hoeks, second by Sytsma, to approve changing the October meeting from October 18 to October 25, 2007. Motion passed unanimously.

2. Communication from Cannon and Lowell Townships – Notice of Intent to Plan

Ferro reported correspondence received from both Cannon Township and Lowell Charter Township informing Ada Township that they are initiating the master plan update process and welcome participation by submitting comments.

Korth noted that the next Open Space Committee meeting, where public comment is taken, will be October 11th at 4:00 p.m.

IX. PUBLIC COMMENT ON ITEMS NOT ON THE AGENDA

None.

X. ADJOURNMENT

Motion by Sytsma, second by Hoeks, to adjourn the meeting at 10:09 p.m. Motion passed unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,

Deborah Ensing Millhuff, CMC
Ada Township Clerk
rs:lm