

**ADA TOWNSHIP PLANNING COMMISSION
MINUTES OF THE SEPTEMBER 20, 2012 MEETING**

A meeting of the Ada Township Planning Commission was held on Thursday, September 20, 2012 at 7:30 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 7:30 p.m.

II. ROLL CALL

Present: Commissioners Easter, Lowry, Jacobs, and Treasurer Rhoades. Absent: Commissioners Butterfield (arrived at 7:33), and Lunn.

III. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Motion by Lowry, second by Butterfield, to approve the agenda. Motion passed unanimously.

IV. APPROVAL OF MINUTES OF AUGUST 16, 2012 MEETING

Motion by Butterfield, second by Jacobs, to approve the August 16, 2012 meeting minutes. Motion passed unanimously.

V. PUBLIC HEARINGS - None.

VI. UNFINISHED BUSINESS - None.

VII. NEW BUSINESS

Request for Revision to Site Plan Approval Conditions, Addition of Children's Play Area, Ada Place Townhomes, Ada Place Dr. SE

Planning Director Ferro stated the planning commission approved the site plan for addition of an outdoor children's play area at the Ada Place Town Homes, and the approval was for three optional locations for the play area. He stated one was the original proposed location proposed by the applicant, and two other locations within the condominium development. Ferro stated the approval conditions required the perimeter fencing around the play area at the applicant's preferred location have horizontal siding matching the siding on the adjacent garage building. He stated after the approval the condo association has looked into satisfying that condition, and due to several factors, desire to have an alternative approved that would not require the horizontal siding, and that would allow a vertical board fence stained a color to match the adjacent garage. Ferro stated he could not approve any change unilaterally, but would communicate the proposed change to the planning commission and ask if there were any objections to him signing off on that change; thus it was placed on the agenda. Ferro stated he requested Mr. Westover, condo association President, to prepare a proposal documenting the reasons for the requested change, and why they don't believe it's feasible to construct it as required by the conditions, and that correspondence is in the packets. Ferro stated there is an email message included also, from neighboring property owner Gail Saukas, dated September 11, 2012, communicating her input on the change.

Chris Westover, President, asked if anyone had any questions.

Rhoades stated he had recommended it should be placed between the buildings and the mail box locations, and asked why they decided to place it where they did.

Westover stated the proposed location is the safest for the children, provides the most area, a soft landing when they come off the playground equipment, and is the most visible to community members. He stated

the proposed playground between buildings would be an enormous cost to re-do, and the co-owners would never agree with it. Westover also stated there are mail boxes in this area that would not allow us to have a safe play area, and the postal service requires a certain distance away from the mail boxes in order to have access.

Lowry asked if after receiving this letter from the Saukas' whether this has changed their opinion on what they want to do.

Westover stated they are a growing community and control a large majority of the infrastructure adjacent to all of the outlots, including Gail and Ken's property. He stated an enormous amount of money is paid for landscaping and snow plowing that isn't charged to the neighbors. Chris stated while he appreciates the fact property values have gone down in all areas of all townships in all municipalities, we believe our inclusion of our play set and our fencing will increase our property value and in turn increase his. He stated he spoke with Ken Saukas at length about property values, and, unfortunately, it is a very difficult time to lease out office space. Westover stated in his last letter to Saukas he offered to help him out with his plight, and offered to plant some additional ornamental grasses in front of the proposed fence to soften the atmosphere and make it more appealing. He stated they have bent over backwards to meet the demands of the community.

Westover stated the association can't afford vinyl lap siding - it's three times the cost of a wooden fence. Westover also stated that they have had difficulty finding siding to match the color and texture of the existing siding in the development.

Butterfield stated it would seem reasonable that if they put in a very attractive barrier as proposed the fence would be a moot point.

Easter stated I agree, and they have demonstrated they take care of the property.

Jacobs stated the subcommittee visited the property, and you could tell that the property was very well maintained.

Rhoades asked how the snow storage conflicts mentioned in the Saukas correspondence would be addressed.

Westover stated he is constantly in contact with the landscaper and authorizes all salting on the property, which in turn benefits all of the people that come into our community. He stated twice in the last several years has snow been removed, which cost them less than \$3,000. Chris stated he talked with their snow removal contractor about this proposal to put the play set in that area well in advance of the decision to put it back there because of concern that he may be impeded with the snow plowing operations, and the contractor stated he was not concerned about it and would do whatever it takes to make sure we could have a safe play area for our children.

Rhoades stated that the vertical fence being proposed with a thick coated cover on it with landscape screening sounds like a good alternative.

Korth suggested that any motion should be very specific about what the expectations would be for the landscaping and the maintenance.

Ferro suggested addressing whether there are any plant materials in addition to grasses that are desired by the Commission. Ferro also stated he did not believe our goal should be to totally hide the fence from view, but simply to enhance the appearance of the area. He stated we should keep in mind that the purpose of the fence is to screen the play equipment and the kids from view.

Korth asked how long the fence is.

Chris stated one portion is 34 feet long, and the adjacent 90 degree fence that runs north to south in an L-shaped fashion is only 23 feet long.

Ferro stated we have the same vertical treated wood fence for a much longer distance along the entire west perimeter of the children's play area at the daycare center across the road from this.

Motion by Easter, supported by Butterfield, that the perimeter screen fence be six foot high solid dog-ear fence as shown on Exhibit A submitted by the applicant, with landscape plantings in front of the fence using ornamental grasses and other planting consistent with the existing landscaping of the condominium development, with the final design to be approved by the Planning Director.

Motion passed unanimously.

VIII. STAFF/COMMITTEE/COMMISSION MEMBER REPORTS

1. Recommendation to Township Board Regarding Boards and Commissions Term Limit Policy

Ferro referenced materials in the packet, including his memo, Commission and Township Board minutes from 2009 when the term limits policy was last addressed, and minutes from the Zoning Board of Appeals from 2010. He stated the ZBA considered the same issue at their last meeting and decided not to take any action on it. Ferro stated there were no objections to changing the policy expressed, but the ZBA members didn't want to make a recommendation as a body. Ferro stated one member stated he felt it was not a matter for the ZBA to opine on because it was outside of their normal area of responsibility.

Lowry stated they also said they weren't asked to vote on it, and that he had expressed the view that whatever they do, the rules should be the same for the ZBA and the Planning Commission.

Easter stated she can understand the reasons for term limits, but on the other hand, we serve at the pleasure of the supervisor and if the supervisor wants to release someone of their responsibilities he can do it at any time.

Ferro stated not at any time, just at the end of a three-year term. He stated he does not believe a planning commissioner can be removed during their term without some cause, and there is specific language in the planning commission ordinance that addresses cause for removal of a member.

Easter questioned why we have terms limits, if the supervisor is under no obligation to reappoint commission members at the end of a 3-year term.

Butterfield suggested possibly adding language calling for an annual review of a Commission member after three consecutive terms.

Ferro stated that would probably require an ordinance amendment. He also suggested staying away from an annual review process, as it would require developing review criteria, and could become very complicated.

Korth suggested a simple provision that would say that after three consecutive terms the terms are just annual.

Ferro stated he believes this would require a change in the ordinance that creates the planning commission because the ordinance says "the planning commission members, other than the ex officio member, which is Norm, shall serve for terms of 3 years each", and two subsections down it says "a planning commission member may serve in successive terms subject to any limits imposed pursuant to a resolution of the township board". Ferro stated the term limit policy is in a separate Board resolution, it's not part of the ordinance, but the ordinance says terms are for three years.

Ferro stated this doesn't necessarily prevent you from going in that direction, but he wants the Commission to know it would take a little ordinance tweaking to do that.

Motion by Butterfield, second by Easter, to recommend that the term limit policy for Planning Commission and Zoning Board members be revised to provide that for any member who has served consecutive terms of 15 years or more, appointed terms of office thereafter shall be for periods of 1 year.

Motion passed unanimously.

Easter stated for the record Tom Korth has done a great job, and also two of our current commissioners would like to continue.

Master Plan Update Schedule and Process

Ferro presented a flow chart identifying tasks and a schedule for completion of the Master Plan update process. He stated most of the timeframe for completion is taken up by statutorily required timeframes starting in March with distribution of the Plan to surrounding communities for their review and comments. Ferro stated all the community profile data tables that have demographic and socioeconomic data, at least to the extent it's available from the 2010 Census, have been completed, but that the accompanying narrative still needs to be prepared. He stated there are some other inventory items that ought to be updated, such as information on community facilities, parks and recreation and traffic data.

Ferro stated even if we aren't changing much policy-wise there are still sections of the text that need to be updated. Ferro suggested a joint work session with the township board be scheduled early in the spring.

Korth suggested having a joint work session before we start drafting, and also suggested involving the Open Space Advisory Board.

Ferro stated we could try to schedule something this fall if you'd like. He stated there may already be a Planning Commission/Board work session this fall on the Capital Improvements Plan.

Korth suggested merging the two meetings.

IX. PUBLIC COMMENT

None.

X. ADJOURNMENT

Motion by Easter, second by Lowry, to adjourn the meeting at 8:39 p.m. Motion passed unanimously.

Respectfully Submitted,

Susan Burton, Township Clerk

SB/dr