

**ADA TOWNSHIP PLANNING COMMISSION
MINUTES OF THE OCTOBER 28, 2009 WORK SESSION MEETING**

A meeting of the Ada Township Planning Commission was held on Wednesday, October 28, 2009, at 5:00 p.m. at the Ada Township Offices, 7330 Thornapple River Dr., Ada, Michigan.

I. CALL TO ORDER

Meeting was called to order by Chairperson Korth at 5:00 p.m.

II. ROLL CALL

Chairperson Korth called the roll. Present: Chairperson Korth, Commissioners Butterfield, Lowry, Paul and Trustee Rhoades. Also present: Planning Director Ferro. Absent: Commissioners Gutierrez and Easter

III. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

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

IV. UNFINISHED 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 stated that on October 15th a public hearing was held on these proposed amendments. These amendments were identified as a direction the Township wanted to pursue in the 2007 Master Plan. Early in 2009, the Commission created a priority list wherein these amendments were high priority on that list. Ferro noted that at the public hearing there were a lot of views expressed. There is a fair amount of debate in the local government planning field relating to large lot zoning in rural areas and whether it is or is not a good way of protecting agricultural land. This merits a lot of thought and discussion by the Planning Commission. Ferro passed out numerical analysis information on the current and proposed zoning relating to traffic considerations. He summarized the numerical and traffic analysis information for each of the areas comparing what exists to what would exist with the changes. He noted this is a rough analysis but gives some way of evaluating whether these changes bear much of a relationship to traffic volumes crossing the river and the limits of capacity restraints that may exist on the two bridges.

Korth asked Commissioners to set forth their feelings on these conclusions, taking into consideration their knowledge of our community.

Butterfield suggested that perhaps the zoning remain as dense as it currently is but change the way the major thoroughways would visually be affected by growth. She suggested our focus should be more on the aesthetics of new development design rather than on density.

Lowry spoke about the opinions in the literature noting that there is a lot more that can be resolved before changing lot sizes, such as PUD's, performance zoning and utilization, and he believes the Commission needs to take another look at what could be done before changing lot sizes. The last thing he wants to see is the farmland gone and thus broken up as a means for getting people into the area. Lowry also mentioned that the M-21 bridge and Knapp St. bridge need to be looked at individually, because of the fact that the M-21 bridge has 4 traffic lanes, versus 2 lanes on the Knapp St. bridge.

Rhoades stated it is difficult to propose changes in allowed densities. He stated that our PUD rules allow us to achieve a rural feeling in new development, by clustering homes away from the public roads. He stated that using our PUD rules may be preferable to changing the density rules.

Paul asked if there is information from MDOT regarding the traffic capacity of the M-21 bridge. Ferro stated there are similar bridges in the metro area with much higher traffic volumes on them. He also noted that the M-21/Pettis intersection configuration is more of a limiting factor than the bridge. Korth agreed with this.

Other topics of discussion included:

- Should they be removing residential uses in agricultural areas?
- Allowing versus mandating PUDs.
- Overall cost to the community of large lot growth.
- Use of bridges and amount of traffic.
- Value to owners of large lots versus smaller lots.
- Preservation of rural character, open space, farmland.
- Plans for surrounding communities (Vergennes, Cannon, Lowell) and possibly holding a meeting to discuss this. Ferro stated another option is to look at their master plans.

Korth stated he feels they need to mull over the idea of using PUD's as a way to manage changes. The PUD could be a framed PUD. Butterfield stated she would like to see regulation of lot depth ratios, creek corridors, and protection of natural features.

Ferro summarized the items he will continue to work on:

1. Look into bridge capacity input from the Road Commission and MDOT,
2. Pursue broader look at what plans provide for in the surrounding communities in the northeast corner area and possibly getting a joint meeting together with representatives of planning commissions.
3. Look into an approach in the rules that provides incentive and an easier process for achieving desirable design characteristics rather than making it more difficult for approval.
4. Research into areas in Michigan to see if this type of zoning is or is not being done in other areas.

Korth stated the Township Board approved another exception to the moratorium. Korth believes there are two ways to handle this: (1) they could have done a better job to begin with or rescind it to frame it up correctly, or (2) make exceptions where reasonable. The moratorium was put into place for five months.

Korth invited public comments.

Nevin Zolenski, 6151 Three Mile Road, spoke about vacant land adjacent to his property and how the density would be much higher if the proposed changes in zoning are not approved. He also spoke about traffic issues and how density puts tremendous pressure on the public infrastructure. He supports a 5 acre and 10 acre minimum should be adopted and moved forward. That was what was initially approved in the Master Plan. He noted he appreciates the Commissioners time put into this issue.

Ted Smith, property owner on McCabe Ave., stated the property values will go down dramatically if this is adopted.

Rich Bevak, 9020 Bailey, stated he has some ideas and concepts that might help. He asked what is being done to encourage people to hold onto their farm property or large parcels of land. Another possibility is going into different categories depending on the amount of acres owned, etc. This might reduce the splits but still maintain some ruralness. He next spoke about the moratorium and believes the Trustees are not really supporting it because there have been three exceptions. Why have it if it is not going to be followed? Don't make rules that can't be followed.

Gayle Eaton, Knapp St. resident, noted the Township could get some bridge traffic counts through the

state and then determine what percentage of east-siders are using the roads. Some people want to make changes at the expense of other people and use other reasons or excuses to create change.

Ken VanderWarf, 2350 Honey Creek, stated that this has cost their family a half million dollars. He feels this is ridiculous and it should be left the way it was and they would have had their property sold by now.

V. PUBLIC COMMENT ON ITEMS NOT ON THE AGENDA

None.

VI. ADJOURNMENT

Motion by Paul, second by Rhoades, to adjourn the meeting at 6:29 p.m. Motion passed unanimously.

Respectfully Submitted,


Susan Burton, Township Clerk

Rs:lm