

**ADA TOWNSHIP PLANNING COMMISSION
MINUTES OF THE FEBRUARY 18, 2016, MEETING**

Draft

A regular meeting of the Ada Township Planning Commission was held on Thursday, February 18, 2016, 7:00 p.m. at the Ada Township Offices, 7330 Thornapple River Dr., Ada, MI.

I. CALL TO ORDER

Meeting was called to order by Commissioner Leisman at 7:00 p.m

II. ROLL CALL

Present: Commissioners Butterfield, Easter, Heglund, Jacobs, Leisman, Lowry, Lunn
Absent: None

Staff Present: Planning Director Ferro, Planner/Zoning Administrator Bajdek

III. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Moved by Easter, supported by Lowry, to approve the agenda, with discussion of the Village Parking Study moved to Unfinished Business. Motion carried.

IV. APPROVAL OF MINUTES OF THE JANUARY 21, 2016 MEETING

Moved by Jacobs, supported by Easter, to approve the minutes of the January 21, 2016 meeting as presented. Motion carried.

V. UNFINISHED BUSINESS

Preliminary Parking Study Report, January, 2016 Draft

Ferro summarized the inventory, survey and analysis tasks that were carried by the parking consultant, and the findings and recommendations of the study.

Ferro stated key takeaways from the study is that it concludes there is not a current parking shortage in the Village overall, but there is a view within part of the business community that there is a parking shortage. Another key finding is that public parking areas in the Village are not well-identified with signage or directional signs, and are therefore not easy to find. Another finding is that based on the square footage projections that were provided to the consultant for planned future development in the Village, there will be a significant parking shortage unless a 2-level parking structure is constructed.

Ferro stated another important thing to consider is whether a parking structure located in the area of the current Thornapple Village center would effectively serve the core of the Village between Thornapple River Drive and Bronson, or whether additional parking should be provided in this part of the Village.

In discussion, the observation was made that whether or not a parking structure is constructed will have a large influence on the amount and scale of new development that occurs in the Village, since without the parking structure that is being considered, the projected square footage of new development will need to be significantly reduced.

VI. NEW BUSINESS - None

VII. COMMISSION MEMBER/STAFF REPORTS

1. Draft of Proposed Amendment to Sign Regulations, Pertaining to Signs in the C-1 and C-2 Zoning Districts.

Ferro stated the proposed amendments are prompted primarily by new development that is occurring that has characteristics that we haven't had in the Village in the past, such as buildings facing multiple street frontages. Ferro stated in 2002, changes were made in the sign regulations, including reducing the number of wall signs permitted from one per street frontage for each tenant to one per tenant, regardless of number of street frontages. Ferro stated one of the proposed changes is to go back to allowing one wall sign per street frontage for each occupant of a building.

Bajdek summarized the proposed changes to the sign regulations.

Ferro stated that the only action to be taken by the Commission at this point would be to schedule a public hearing on the proposed amendments. Ferro also drew the Commission's attention to signs that have been shown on elevation sketches of new building proposals that have recently been presented to the Commission, including the Heidi Christine Salon building, the River Valley Credit Union building, the Ortez insurance building and the First of Ada building. He pointed out that signs depicted on these plans were specifically excluded from the zoning approval for the new buildings.

Ferro stated the current 12 square foot limit for a wall sign in the C-1 district is suitable for the environment in the Village core along Ada Drive, with slow traffic speeds and shallow building setbacks, but not as well suited to the 55 mile per hour traffic speeds and deeper setbacks on M-21.

In discussion, Leisman stated it is difficult to evaluate these proposed changes in isolation, without seeing them as part of the entire sign regulations. He also suggested that a more comprehensive review of the entirety of the sign regulations may be needed, especially in view of a recent U.S. Supreme Court decision. Leisman also commented that we have had several proposed zoning ordinance amendments recently that were requested by a single party, and he is somewhat uncomfortable with that. Leisman stated there might be room for some accommodation, but Fulton Street hasn't changed, and the rules we have had are there for a reason.

Easter stated she generally agrees with Leisman's point; however, we also need to be open to the rules evolving in response to changed circumstances.

Ferro stated one concern he has is that a comprehensive review of the sign rules, even though it is needed, will take six months to complete. He stated the Heidi Christine Salon is ready to open, and the building permit application for the River Valley Credit Union was just submitted.

Leisman suggested tabling the proposed amendment to give staff time to respond to Commission input.

In discussion, the consensus of the Commission was to give the proposed amendment further study and consideration prior to setting a public hearing.

It was moved by Jacobs, seconded by Easter, to postpone action on the proposed amendment.

Motion passed unanimously.

2. Draft Master Plan Amendment – Change in Future Land Use Designation on Spaulding Ave Corridor from Ada Drive to Cascade Rd., and Incorporation of Envision Ada Plan into the Master Plan

Ferro described the proposed Master Plan text revision and Future Land Use Map revision pertaining to land on the east side of Spaulding Avenue, south of the Ada Meadows subdivision. He noted the proposed amendment also corrects a mapping error with regard to the existing Spaulding Avenue Office Park on the west side of the street, and changes the land use designation of that property from Medium Density Residential Use to Office/Service use. With regard to the east side of the street, Ferro stated the proposed

amendment to the text and Future Land Use map would designate that area for either office use or multiple family residential use.

Butterfield asked whether any data had been obtained regarding the vacancy rate of office space in the area. Ferro stated the applicant has sent him some information he has not had a chance to review yet. Ferro stated he has prepared an analysis of potential traffic generation rates for office use versus multiple family residential use, during peak traffic time. He stated the analysis indicates that office use would generate a higher number of trips during the peak afternoon traffic hour than 81 apartment units would generate.

Ferro stated the first step in adopting a Master Plan amendment is for the Planning Commission to refer the amendment to the Township Board, which has to authorize distribution of the amendment to adjacent communities for a 42-day comment period, after which the Planning Commission holds a public hearing on the proposed amendment.

Ferro presented the proposed amendment pertaining to the Envision Ada plan for the Village.

Leisman stated Commission members have had very little time to review the proposed revisions to the Plan. He suggested postponing action on both amendments to provide more time for review. He also suggested that copies of the current Master Plan be distributed to members.

In considering whether to schedule a special meeting, Ferro pointed out that there are two items scheduled for review at the March meeting, including the proposed addition to the Big Steps /Little Feet Day Care Center, and a request for a zoning ordinance text amendment, to allow drive-through restaurants in the Township.

Leisman stated he believed it was very unusual for a zoning ordinance to permit any party to request a zoning ordinance text amendment, and thereby require the Planning Commission to formally consider the amendment and hold a public hearing. He stated in his experience, only zoning map amendments are typically allowed to be requested by any party. He suggested that our zoning rules be amended to preclude text amendments procedures being initiated by any party other than the Commission or the Township Board.

The consensus of the Commission was to schedule the March 17 meeting to start an hour early, at 6:00 p.m., rather than 7:00 p.m., with the Master Plan amendment review scheduled first.

VIII. PUBLIC COMMENT

X. ADJOURNMENT

Motion by Easter, second by Jacobs, to adjourn the meeting at 9:00 p.m.

Motion passed unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,

Jacqueline Smith, Township Clerk