

**ADA TOWNSHIP PLANNING COMMISSION  
MINUTES OF THE MARCH 17, 2016 MEETING**

A regular meeting of the Ada Township Planning Commission was held on Thursday, March 17, 2016, 6:00 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 6:00 p.m.

**II. ROLL CALL**

Present: Commissioners Butterfield, Easter, Heglund, Jacobs, Leisman, Lowry, Lunn (6:45 pm)  
Absent: None

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

**III. APPROVAL OF AGENDA**

Moved by Jacobs, supported by Easter, to approve the agenda, with review of the draft Master Plan amendment moved up to the first item under Unfinished Business. Motion carried.

**IV. APPROVAL OF MINUTES OF THE FEBRUARY 18, 2016 MEETING**

Moved by Easter, supported by Jacobs, to approve the minutes of the February 18, 2016 meeting as presented. Motion carried.

**V. PROPOSED AMENDMENT TO SIGN REGULATIONS.**

Leisman suggested referring the review of the sign regulations to a Subcommittee, including in the scope of the review addressing any issues raised by the “Gilbert” U.S. Supreme Court case. Leisman stated he had asked former Commission member Korth to serve on the Subcommittee, and that Commission member Lunn has also agreed to serve on the committee.

Easter stated that we need to be cognizant of keeping the process moving, and stick to a schedule. It was suggested that the Committee report monthly on progress.

Butterfield stated that focusing on the rules applied to the Village should be the top priority, as opposed to making changes Township-wide. Butterfield and Heglund stated they would be willing to serve as well.

Jacobs suggested having legal counsel prepare a summary of the Gilbert case. Ferro stated he had some literature regarding the case he would share with the Subcommittee.

Commission members concurred in referring sign regulation revisions to a Subcommittee of Butterfield, Heglund and former Commission member Korth.

**V. UNFINISHED BUSINESS**

**1. Review of Draft Master Plan Amendment.**

Ferro reviewed the draft Master Plan amendment, focusing first on the amendment pertaining to future land use map designation of land on the east side of Spaulding Ave., south of Ada Drive. Ferro stated the property owner is asking for the Master Plan to provide flexibility that would allow either office use or multiple family residential use of the property, which is located south of the permanent open space owned by the Kent County Drain district, and north of the office building at the Cascade Road intersection.

Ferro reviewed the office vacancy data he was able to find, as well as the traffic generation comparison he prepared based on transportation engineering national survey data, showing that office use would generate higher peak hour traffic volumes than residential use at 9 units per acre.

Ferro noted that the proposed amendment also corrects an error on the 2007 Future Land Use map that designated the existing Spaulding Avenue Office Park for residential use. The proposed amendment changes the designation to reflect the current office use of this property.

Leisman invited comment from the property owner. Brian Sikma, High Point Real Estate, stated he has represented the owner for a couple of years. He stated that the suburban office market is now competing with Downtown Grand Rapids for tenants, which is where everyone wants to be. He stated the party that was interested and ready for residential development has pulled back until the Master Plan is addressed. Sikma stated that this location will also be competing with Ada Village redevelopment for the office market.

Following discussion of the amendment, it was moved by Jacobs, seconded by Heglund to refer the proposed Spaulding Avenue amendment to the Township Board, for authorization to distribute for adjacent local government comment, subject to changing the maximum density limit for residential use to 9 units per acre.

Motion passed unanimously.

(Note: Lunn arrived at 7:45 p.m.)

Ferro reviewed the proposed text and future land use map amendments pertaining to incorporating the Envision Ada redevelopment plan for the Village area into the Master Plan. Ferro noted that the proposed future land use map amendment includes a change in land use designation for the residential neighborhood in the Village from “VP-1” to “VP-2,” which would narrow the land use designation to being a strictly an area of single-family homes, and not allow for future townhome and apartment development in this portion of the Village.

Lunn pointed out that we may want to re-consider the language in the plan suggesting that the Township may want to assume responsibility for administering erosion and sediment control regulations. He stated that this would require lots of resources due to the complexity of administering these rules.

Ferro stated that when the 2007 Plan was prepared, there was concern that the County was not adequately staffing the erosion and sediment control program, in part due to the very high level of development activity in the Township, but that this situation has improved.

Jacobs pointed out there is a need for more consistency in terminology when referring to the “Village Master Plan” and “Envision Ada Plan.”

The suggestion was also made to delete the sample images contained in the Plan, as they do not appear to be very representative.

Following discussion, it was moved by Heglund, seconded by Easter, to refer the amendment pertaining to the Envision Ada Plan to the Township Board for distribution.

## **VI. NEW BUSINESS**

### **1. Preliminary PUD Plan for Classroom Addition to Big Steps/Little Feet Child Care Center, 7030 Fulton LLC.**

Steve Witte, P.E., Nederveld, summarized the proposed plan.

Lunn stated he would be looking for the plan to address pedestrian access continuity with the adjoining property to the east.

It was moved by Butterfield, seconded by Lowry, to schedule the plan for a public hearing at the April meeting.

Motion passed unanimously.

## **2. PUD Pre-Application Conference, Spectrum Health Integrated Care Facility, Spectrum Health Systems**

Ferro stated the proposed plan was being submitted as a PUD application due to the fact that it would likely require several departures from the PVM district to be considered using the PVM district process.

Jeff Myers, Spectrum Health Director of Real Estate Development presented the proposed plan. He stated the proposed facility would provide integrated care services including women's health, laboratory primary care, imaging including x-ray, ultrasound, mobile mammography, occupational health and physical rehabilitation services.

He stated the facility would be located on Unit 10 of the Ada West Commercial condominium. He stated construction would not be able to start until the River Valley Credit Union is re-located to their new building. He stated if they can begin construction in late summer or fall, they would target opening for summer or fall of 2017.

Myers stated that their intent is to design the look and feel of the facility to conform completely to the Envision Ada plan principles and intent.

Jack Barr, Nederveld, stated the facility would share parking with the rest of the Ada West Commercial center. He described the site layout, noting it would have a drop off area on the east side of the building with a few barrier-free parking spaces and other convenience parking. He stated the building is placed very close to the Fulton St. right-of-way, and fairly tight to the service drive easement to the west.

He stated they are conducting a traffic impact study that will be included in the full application package.

Ken Dixon, Dixon Architecture, stated the building fully embraces Envision Ada and PVM District guidelines. Dixon stated that to address the larger size of the proposed building, and still give it a historical look, the architecture of the building evokes the appearance of a large lodge, with a residential style. He stated they are looking at hiding mechanical equipment on hidden, flat portions of the roof, so that they would not be visible from the perimeter. Dixon stated that Spectrum's typical space layout program had to be modified somewhat to achieve the desired building appearance.

Jacobs asked whether there are sidewalk connections proposed to other buildings planned nearby.

Jack Barr stated they have not yet identified the exact routing, but they recognize the need to connect sidewalk to the rest of the center.

Ferro noted that the setback between the east-west service drive and the parking on Unit 10 has been increased, addressing the comments he had on the conceptual layout that was shown on the West Commercial condominium plan.

Jacobs asked whether parking supply would be sufficient with future buildout. Ferro stated the proposed medical office building parking demand was included in the design of the overall condominium parking

area. He also noted the condominium documents prohibit restaurant use, which will help keep parking demand within the supply.

Easter asked how the size of this building compares to others in the area. Ferro provided comparison footprint sizes within the center. He asked Jeff Myers to compare the proposed center to the one on the East Beltline at 3 Mile Rd. Myers stated the East Beltline facility is 120,000 square feet.

Easter asked whether the applicant had any thoughts on their signage needs. Myers stated the signage proposed would probably need to be unique to fit the building, and they would be consulting with their in-house sign design staff.

Leisman suggested the applicant stay within the current sign regulations.

Lunn asked whether the building would be LEED certified, and whether any innovative storm water management solutions would be used. Myers stated they generally use LEED principles, but would not necessarily be seeking certification. Barr stated conventional storm water storage chambers have already been designed for the condominium, which they would connect to.

Lunn asked how pedestrian continuity through the center would be achieved. Barr stated staff has indicated there needs to be an east-west sidewalk connection through the center, and they have not yet figured out the exact path.

Ferro stated that Village-style lighting would be carried through the entire center. Barr stated pedestrian scale lighting would go with the sidewalk.

Leisman asked what the building height was. Dixon responded 2-story, and the pitched roof would not have any finished space. Lunn asked whether there would be a backup generator. Shaun Easter, Spectrum Health, stated they have not yet located where the generator would be located. He noted it would be a small one, since there will not be urgent care in the building.

Leisman stated that there should be more landscaping provided between the parking and the road. He also asked whether Spectrum would be asking for tax-exempt status for the building. Myers stated they are a 501(c)(3) corporation. He stated he does not know whether they would apply for that, or whether it would be approved. He noted that they have a tax-exemption on some sites and not on others. He stated they cannot apply for tax exemption until the building is up and running, and he doesn't know whether it will be requested.

Lowery asked if the applicant has considered whether a building this large will be overpowering. Dixon stated he thinks having variety is a good thing, as long as there is a cohesiveness overall in the Village. He noted the building would not have direct adjacency to small buildings in the rest of the west commercial center. Ferro noted the building is fairly small compared to what is directly opposite on the other side of Fulton Street.

Leisman asked for other images that the Township has of the overall west commercial center to be provided next month.

Butterfield asked if a sidewalk was planned along the Fulton Street frontage. Ferro noted that the completed portion of the parking lot already has a bike trail installed on that frontage, which will be continued as the center is completed.

Ferro stated he likes the building placement close to the Fulton Street right-of-way, because of the wide right-of-way width. He stated MDOT may be willing to issue a permit for low growing landscaping in the right-of-way.

Jack Barr asked if Ferro could provide information on the layout of the bike path that is in front of the Heidi Christine site. Ferro stated he would provide this.

Easter suggested that we strongly encourage and suggest the use of design practices that adhere to the principles of LEED or other environmental certifications, without necessarily requiring going through the certification process.

### **Request for Zoning Ordinance Text Amendment, to Allow Drive-Through Restaurants in the C-2 District, American Gas & Oil**

Ferro stated the application originally submitted did not propose specific amendment language that would change the current prohibition on drive-through restaurants. He stated the applicant had more recently submitted a letter suggesting alternative approaches that could be used, including a contract type of zoning that would involve the applicant offering a specific set of conditions under which the use could be approved, that would apply to the subject property only.

Ferro noted he has provided Commission members with historical background from 1994 when the prohibition was put in place, including Planning Commission minutes and the approved ordinance amendment, which includes the rationale for the proposed amendment. Ferro stated he has not drafted specific amendment language.

Leisman pointed out that the Planning Commission in 1994 made specific findings as to why the prohibition was being established. Leisman questioned how we could hold a public hearing without the applicant proposing specific wording. He stated he is not willing to draft language for the applicant.

Lunn asked if we re-looked at the findings from 1994, whether they would change. Ferro stated that the difference in traffic generating rates for drive-through restaurants compared to drive-through banks is probably greater now than it was in 1994.

Jacobs stated she was curious that there was no public comment on the 1994 amendment, and she wondered what prompted the change if there was not a public request for it.

Commission members discussed the implications of changing the prohibition, with respect to whether it would open the possibility of multiple drive-through restaurants.

Steve Witte, Nederveld, stated they purposely left the specific amendment language open, to accommodate multiple possible solutions. He stated the applicant was open to a conditional rezoning or a use variance.

## **VII. COMMISSION MEMBER/STAFF REPORTS**

Ferro noted building permit applications have been received from the Ortez Insurance building and the River Valley Credit Union, and he expects one soon for the Dixon building. He noted Ken Dixon has proposed shifting the access easement through his property to the west, centered on the property line, which would open up the possibility for another building being added in the future at the sidewalk frontage. He stated he is proposing to approve that change administratively. Commission members had no objection to the change being approved by staff.

Ferro also reported the DDA Board is studying the possibility of expanding the head-in parking on Bronson Street. Items needing to be addressed include railroad approval, Road Commission approval and evaluating what trees should be preserved.

### **VIII. PUBLIC COMMENT**

Steve Witte, Nederveld, representing American Gas & Oil, stated their hope was to get feedback tonight to assist in drafting amendment language. He stated nearly all communities nearby allow drive-through restaurants by special land use approval or by right, and he has reviewed special use standards from other communities, which he incorporated into the list of possibilities.

He stated he also hoped to get feedback regarding the possibility of a conditional rezoning process as an alternative to a text amendment.

Ken Berg, McDonalds franchise owner, stated he opened the existing restaurant with his father 22 years ago. He stated his father retired 4 years ago, at which time he bought out his father's interest. He stated a year after he acquired the franchise, Amway purchased the property, and let him know the property would be leveled. He stated he is high in debt, and can't just leave. He stated he is moving to Ada Township by the end of the month. He stated he is trying to find a way to stay in town, and not lose his business.

Jason Berris, American Gas & Oil, stated they purchased the property from Amway about 15 years ago. He stated the site needs to be "scraped" and rebuilt. He stated the site could have a drive-through dry cleaner on it under the current zoning. The site is currently vehicular-oriented. He would like to work with the Township to make the proposal work.

Easter suggested the possibility of a subcommittee to meet with the applicant. Leisman stated we need to see specific proposed amendment language before we can have a dialogue with the applicant.

Brian Sikma, Highpoint Real Estate, stated he thinks there is some logic in an approach that does not open up the whole area to drive-throughs. He stated he would like to see the AGO site improved as a "front door" to Ada.

Lunn stated he is inclined to stay with the prohibition on drive-throughs. He questions why the site can't be laid out without a drive-through, but with pedestrian connectivity.

### **X. ADJOURNMENT**

Motion by Easter, second by Lunn, to adjourn the meeting at 8:50 p.m.

Motion passed unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,

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Jacqueline Smith, Township Clerk

Note: Approved additions and deletions to draft minutes indicated by underscore and overstrike marks.