

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

A meeting of the Ada Township Planning Commission was held on Thursday, November 17, 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 Lunn, Leisman, Heglund, and Butterfield

Absent: Jacobs, Easter, Lowry

Staff Present: Planning Director Ferro

Public Present: Paul Jones, Blimpie; Sarah Andro, Saburba; Jim Ippel, DDA Board member, Walt VanderWulp, DDA Board member, Noelle DiVozzo

III. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Moved by Heglund, supported by Butterfield, to approve the agenda as presented. Motion passed unanimously.

IV. APPROVAL OF MINUTES OF OCTOBER 20, 2016

Moved by Heglund, supported by Butterfield, to approve the October 20, 2016 Meeting minutes. Motion passed unanimously.

V. PUBLIC HEARING

None.

VI. UNFINISHED BUSINESS

Re-Consideration of Proposed Amendments to Sign Regulations/Report from Sub-Committee

Planning Director Ferro presented a revised draft of amendments to the sign regulations. He noted that the Township Board had referred the previous draft back to the Commission, with feedback from Board members. He pointed out that the revised draft presented this evening includes further revision from the most recent draft that was reviewed and approved by the Subcommittee. He stated that the revisions he has proposed include standards that would accommodate wall signs for up to 11 tenants in the approved 22,000 square foot "B-2" building that is now under construction. He stated that the earlier draft of proposed wall sign standards would only have permitted wall signs of about 4 square feet per sign if all 11 tenants wanted to have wall signs on both the Ada Drive and rear parking lot frontages of the building.

Ferro stated he doubted whether there would be any future buildings constructed in the Village any larger than the B-2 building.

Leisman asked about the Spectrum Health Building. Ferro noted it was about 20,000 square feet, with 10,000 square feet per floor, and it would be subject to the same wall size standards as the B-2 building.

Lunn asked how these rules would apply to other two story buildings.

Sarah Andro, owner of Saburba, stated the Commission should take its time in considering the proposed changes, to make sure they get it right. She stated she would like to know why she hasn't been able to put a sign up on Headley St., yet a sign was installed a few days ago identifying all of the businesses in the

shopping center. She asked what the maximum size of a second freestanding sign would be under the proposed amendment.

Ferro stated a second freestanding sign could be a maximum of 24 square feet in size, which is smaller than the existing Blimpie/Saburba sign on Thornapple River Dr. He noted that a previous amendment to the rules reduced the maximum permitted size after that sign was installed.

Jim Ippel, DDA Board member, stated it seems sign ordinances have not been enforced consistently for everybody; new sign ordinances are being adopted as new buildings go up, but owners like Sarah are being hurt by construction in Ada; yet there is talk about amending the sign ordinance for new buildings that haven't been put up yet.

Walt VanderWulp, Ada Barbershop, DDA Board member, stated both freestanding signs should be allowed the same amount of square footage.

Paul Jones, Blimpie, stated since the construction has started Saburba and Blimpie's have been adversely affected; added signage will help us re-coup what has been lost.

Noelle DiVozzo stated we should be a little more supportive of businesses that are here. Also, the liquor store sign is ugly, and the looks should be addressed as well as the size in the sign regulations.

Butterfield stated we talked about the type of sign and scrollable signs; is that something that is not wanted in the village.

Ferro stated the sign rules don't permit scrolling signs. With regard to allowing the same size sign for Saburba on Headley that they have on Thornapple, the one on Thornapple doesn't conform to the current rules, and the proposed new rules don't change the allowable size from the current standards; it allows the flexibility to have a second sign that conforms with the current 24 square foot limit. This amendment would permit some of the stores in the heart of the village to have additional signs at rear facing entryways, like the hardware store. When we started this process it was our intent to address the changing circumstances that apply to existing properties along Headley and future development.

Leisman suggested modifying the wall sign standards for buildings over 15,000 square feet, to provide that wall signs totaling 80 square feet may be permitted if approved by the Planning Commission at its discretion as a part of the special land use, PUD or PMV approval. That would allow a couple of large buildings additional signage, but it would be on a case-by-case basis.

Lunn asked Ferro if he was aware of the shopping center sign referenced by Andro. Ferro stated he was, and that it was allowed to be installed because we are very sensitive to the disruption to access that has occurred and will occur next spring to businesses in the shopping center. He noted that one driveway access off Ada Drive has already been closed, and we recently added a new driveway access off Headley St. in anticipation of further driveway closures on Ada Drive next spring. He stated the sign was permitted to be installed to familiarize the public with the new access arrangements in advance of the construction on Ada Drive that will begin in March.

Heglund stated he believed that approach made sense.

Leisman noted that this is not a Planning Commission issue.

Ferro noted that the current sign rules already permit the use of a sandwich board sign by Saburba on the Headley Street sidewalk, adjacent to their access.

Leisman suggested that the concerns that have been expressed be passed on to the Township Board.

It was moved by Heglund, supported by Lunn, to recommend approval of the proposed amendments as presented by Ferro, subject to replacing the 160 square foot wall sign allowance with 80 square feet for buildings in excess of 15,000 square feet, and adding a provision stating “the Planning Commission, in its consideration and approval of a special land use, planned unit development or PVM district development plan application, may authorize maximum permitted area of all wall signs in excess of the limit specified above for buildings over 15,000 square feet in floor area.” Motion passed unanimously.

VII. NEW BUSINESS

Draft Amendment to PVM District Regulations, to Revise the Regulating Plan to Conform with the Ada Township Master Plan, 2016 Amendments

Ferro stated the revision changes the regulating plan designation of three areas from Village Center to Village Proper 1, and that these areas include the proposed site of the Bronson Street residential development south of the AGO site, as well as the planned residential area at the east end of the Village on the former Gilmore property along M-21. The third area is land along the south side of new Headley Street located in the vicinity of The Community church property.

Ferro stated he would have a full staff report regarding this change at the December meeting.

No action was taken by the Commission.

VIII. COMMISSION MEMBER/STAFF REPORTS

Ferro presented a concept plan developed by the Parks, Recreation and Land Preservation Advisory Board for a community entry sign that would be placed on a Township-owned open space site at the southeast corner of Grand River Drive and Knapp St. He stated that before proceeding with this project, the Advisory Board wished to hear input from other Township Boards and Commission’s regarding the proposed design.

Butterfield asked if there is any consideration of a similar sign along the Fulton Street corridor.

Ferro stated the DDA Board long range plans call for gateway signs at the east and west ends of the DDA District, by Spaulding, and as you approach the business district on the east side of the bridge over the Grand River.

Leisman stated this is in a rural part of the Township, and he thinks the sign may be too large for the setting.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Sarah Andro stated she appreciates that it’s not the Planning Commission’s issue with the sign rules not being enforced. We were moved off the main road, out of the main intersection, where we’ve lost 75% of traffic, and nobody has been concerned about putting a sign up for us. Jim’s point is a good one, but there appears to be a great deal of favoritism being shown. Also, as a DDA member we were told the parking structure is no longer a part of the plan, and the land is no longer allocated for a parking structure. She suggested the Township Board, the DDA, and the Planning Commission have an emergency meeting in the next 30 to 60 days to figure out what we’re going to do about parking.

Walt VanderWulp, DDA member, stated there should be a moratorium on any new projects until parking needs are addressed. Parking standards shouldn’t be relaxed.

Noelle DiVozzo, 7115 Bronson St., stated she also thinks there should be a moratorium on new development. We shouldn't forget the Speedway property; maybe they could purchase the Gilmore property on Fulton and move up there.

Jim Ippel stated he concurs with Sarah that there is a need for a joint work session between the Planning Commission, the Township Board and the DDA, because he doesn't think we're all on the same page. He stated parking is kind of the center of the issue that we're dealing with in the DDA, and that we're hearing about.

Leisman closed Public Comment. He stated he would like the Planning Department to give an update on parking at the next meeting. We'll put it on the agenda as #1 Unfinished Business.

Ferro stated Amway is no longer proposing a parking structure in the block referred to as Block A, the portion of the shopping center closest to Headley Street. He stated this will require a downward reduction in square footage. There are also some changes being looked at along River Street involving using head-in parking instead of parallel parking, to increase the future parking supply. He stated Geld, Llc has not yet provided him with revised square footage numbers as to what they anticipate, but they are looking at rethinking the square footage at this time.

ADJOURNMENT

Motion by Heglund, supported by Lunn, to adjourn at 8:08 p.m. Motion passed unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,

Jacqueline Smith
Ada Township Clerk

JS/dr