

**ALPINE TOWNSHIP PLANNING COMMISSION REGULAR MEETING
Thursday, November 20, 2008**

08-43 CALL TO ORDER/ APPROVAL OF MINUTES/ PUBLIC COMMENT

The Alpine Township Planning Commission held its regular meeting on Thursday, November 20, 2008, at 7:30 PM, at the Alpine Township Center, 5255 Alpine Ave., NW, Comstock Park, MI 49321, with due notice. Present were Vice-Chair Greg Madura, Secretary Nelda Johnson, and members Jim May and Jason Rosenzweig. Excused was Dick Sedlecky. Absent was Max Dunneback. Also in attendance were Planning Director Sue Thomas and Recording Secretary Patricia Kolkman. Several Township residents were in the audience.

Madura called the meeting to order at 7:30 PM with the Pledge of Allegiance. He first commented that he had heard that Plainfield Township is considering extending sidewalks along the east side of Division Ave. between 6 and 7 Mile Roads, referencing the resident requests mentioned on pages 1 and 3 in the minutes of the October Regular Planning Commission meeting. He then called for a motion to accept the minutes of the October 16, 2008 Planning Commission meeting.

Dunneback arrives at 7:32 PM.

Rosenzweig moved, with May's support, to accept the minutes of the October 16, 2008 Regular Planning Commission meeting as presented.

Ayes: 5

Nays: 0

Motion carried.

Madura then informed the audience they could comment on items not on the agenda, but none were offered.

08-44 PUBLIC HEARING: Wind Energy Systems Ordinance

Madura then asked Thomas to introduce her revisions to the proposed Wind Energy Systems Ordinance, but first to provide the information she had gotten on decibel levels and shadow flicker, as requested by the Planning Commission.

Thomas began by referring to the charts provided in Commissioner packets about noise levels, stating that human hearing acuity varies at different frequencies, and that individuals have different sensitivities to sound. To better understand the definition of "ambient sound", (sound levels occurring naturally in a specific environment, prior to installation of a WES) she introduced a chart which described various sound levels in lay terms. Meters measured each sound in decibels, (db) which were then "weighted" to show variations in frequencies. While Thomas said she was unable to obtain an actual decibel meter, she did download several "sound bites" from a popular website to provide examples of "shadow flicker" and the sound of moving blades, which have been said to be a problem for some nearby residents. She played the two samples for the Commission, stating that although she could not verify that neither were altered, they seemed to be somewhat objective.

Thomas then told Commissioners that if they were interested in visiting a nearby WES, the closest utility-grade turbines are in the Cadillac area, but some individual turbines have been installed on buildings in both Muskegon County (the Fruenthal Center) and in Grand Rapids at Calvin College.

Thomas also spoke with managers from Traverse City and Mackinaw City who have local experience with wind energy systems, and they have not had problems with:

- Ice Shedding, which Commissioners had said they were concerned about. In fact, Traverse City Power and Light holds annual auctions for “tower climbs”, with no incidents of ice shedding in the winter; or
- Noise complaints, which Commissioners had also questioned. In Mackinaw City, local managers discovered an inverse relationship between level of sound and the size of the turbine: i.e., the *smaller* the turbine, the *louder* the sound. This is likely due to the speed the blades must rotate to produce power. In the two years that Mackinaw City has been monitoring sound levels on their commercial grade turbines, managers have not been able to discern turbine blade noises, but have recorded birds and tree rustling.

Thomas then asked Commissioners to review the latest revision of the Wind Energy System ordinance in their packets. She said that much of page one had been devoted to the definition of a lot, since the State Land Division Act specifies that leases exceeding one year become lot splits, and treated as land divisions. She and the Township attorney are investigating whether another method of land identification can be used for the leased land. There may also be Township Zoning regulations regarding access to and lot lines used for these new “lots”. These issues must be resolved before the proposed ordinance can be recommended by the Planning Commission for adoption by the Township Board. Rosenzweig suggested that perhaps a Land Division Application for the leased area should be submitted before the Special Land Use for a WES can be reviewed by the Planning Commission.

There was some discussion on whether leasing Agricultural land for agricultural purposes is affected, but Thomas said that she believes such leases for agricultural uses are exempt from this long term lease provision in the State Land Division Act.

Madura asked each Commissioner for comments on the proposed draft ordinance.

May said he thought the ordinance covered all necessary items very well, but said he also recognizes that it’s impossible to please everyone.

Dunneback said he was pleased with the proposed ordinance so far.

May moved, with Rosenzweig’s support, to open the public hearing.

Ayes: 5

Nays: 0

Motion carried.

With no comments provided, **Rosenzweig moved, with Johnson’s support, to close the public hearing.**

Ayes: 5

Nays: 0

Motion carried.

Rosenzweig commented that because of the unresolved concerns on land divisions for long term leases he didn’t think the Planning Commission should proceed further, and

moved that the Planning Commission postpone further discussion and its final recommendation on the proposed Wind Energy System Ordinance until legal counsel has resolved these land issues to the Township's satisfaction.

Ayes: 5

Nays: 0

Motion carried.

**08-45 COMMISSIONER COMMENT/ COMMITTEE UPDATES/ STAFF UPDATE/
ADJOURNMENT**

Madura asked for comments or updates from each Commissioner:

- Johnson provided a summary of a recent ZBA meeting which approved a variance request for an enclosed porch in the front yard setback on Bertha Street.
- Rosenzweig asked whether a church was an allowed use in a Commercial district, and Thomas said it was.

Thomas then reviewed her memo regarding selection of Planning Commissioners, which had been drafted for the Township Board. She then provided an additional summary of Commissioner characteristics to Commissioners. Because Alpine Township briefly expanded its Planning Commission to nine during its Master Plan process and then reduced it afterwards back to seven members, an adjustment of Commissioner terms is now necessary.

Thomas then gave updates on:

- The 4 Mile Road non-motorized path
- PARCC Side wastewater treatment plant
- Connection of Rusche and Comstock Park Drives
- Transition to new Township Engineers
- And several related activities in the area that Planning Commissioners may wish to participate in.

No public comment was offered.

Rosenzweig moved, with Mays' support, to adjourn at 8:50 PM.

Ayes: 5

Nays: 0

Motion carried.

Nelda Johnson, Secretary

Patricia Kolkman, Recording Secretary