

**ALPINE TOWNSHIP PLANNING COMMISSION REGULAR MEETING  
Thursday, January 15, 2009**

**09-01 CALL TO ORDER/ APPROVAL OF MINUTES/ PUBLIC COMMENT**

The Alpine Township Planning Commission held its regular meeting on Thursday, January 15, 2009, 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 Jerry Byrne, Ron Cordes, Bruce Lee, and Matt Van Heulen. Absent was Max Dunneback. Also in attendance were Township Clerk Jean Wahlfield, Planner Sue Thomas, and Recording Secretary Patricia Kolkman.

Madura called the meeting to order with the Pledge of Allegiance at 7:30 PM. He then called for a motion regarding the minutes of the December 18, 2008 Regular Meeting minutes.

**Johnson moved, with support from Cordes, to approve the minutes of the December 18, 2008 Regular Planning Commission meeting as presented.**

**Ayes: 6**

**Nays: 0**

**Motion carried.**

Madura then asked if there were any comments regarding items not on the agenda and none were offered.

**09-02 WELCOME NEW COMMISSIONERS/ OATH OF OFFICE**

Thomas then introduced the new members of the Planning Commission, and presented a Certificate of Appreciation to member Van Heulen for his service to the Township on the Zoning Board of Appeals. She then asked each member to offer a brief background of themselves.

Van Heulen acknowledged the certificate for his years on the Zoning Board of Appeals, stating he had enjoyed that opportunity very much. He said he has lived in Westgate for 10 years, and is a self-employed contractor in heating and cooling.

Lee said he lived in the Westgate area on Montauk, and is a retired General Motors skilled tradesman of 34 years, originally from Kalamazoo. He now enjoys retirement by caring for a young great-granddaughter.

*Dunneback arrives at 7:37 PM.*

Johnson is a retired paralegal who ~~is now involved with Kenowa Hills Public Schools,~~ lives near *Kenowa Hills* High School, and is also a lifelong Alpine Township resident. She has also served on the Township Board, the ZBA and on the Planning Commission during the 1998 Master Plan review.

Jerry Byrne offered that he has lived in the Township for 18 years, works for the Kent County Road Commission, and has been active in Holy Trinity School activities. He looks forward to working on the Planning Commission.

Cordes stated that he is a lifelong resident of the Township and operates a utility contracting business, in addition to serving on the Township Board.

Dunneback said he too is a lifelong resident, and a dairy farmer. This is his second term on the Planning Commission.

Madura has been a Township resident for 18 years, lives in the Westgate subdivision with his family and has taught in the Wyoming Public Schools system for 28 years. This is his second term on the Planning Commission.

Thomas then introduced Jean Wahlfield, Township Clerk, there to administer the Oath of Office to all Commissioners.

Wahlfield first offered her appreciation on behalf of the Township for the service they will perform. She wished them luck on processing the varied projects they will be reviewing during their terms, thanked them in advance for all their efforts. After administering the Oath of Office to all Commissioners, she asked them to sign the document provided, and again wished them luck.

Dunneback then asked if the minutes from the December meeting had been reviewed, and pointed out a change he wished to recommend on page 5, substituting the word "fertilizer" for "chemicals". **Johnson then moved, with support from Dunneback, to amend the earlier motion regarding the minutes of the December 18, 2008 Regular Planning Commission meeting, to add "with the requested text change".**

**Ayes: 7**

**Nays: 0**

**Motion carried.**

#### **09-03 PLANNING COMMISSION ADMINISTRATIVE ITEMS:**

a. 2008 Year End Report

Planner Thomas presented the summary of Planning Commission work in 2008. The Planning Commission had decided early in the year to eliminate special meetings of the Zoning Ordinance Review Committee, choosing instead to conduct Zoning Ordinance Review work during regular Planning Commission meetings.

Chapter 14B, the Mixed Use PUD (MPUD) Ordinance, was developed as recommended in the 2007 Master Plan. The Planning Commission completed its work on this chapter by August of 2008, and it has since been adopted by the Township Board. Additional ordinance work included the drafting of two new ordinances: the Wind Energy Systems Ordinance, and the Outdoor Furnaces Ordinance. These were both recommended to the Township Board for adoption before the end of the year. The Outdoor Furnaces Ordinance was adopted in 2008 and the Wind Energy Systems Ordinance is scheduled for the February 16, 2009 Regular Township Board meeting.

The full Planning Commission also reviewed several Special Land Use requests and their related Site Plans. An early Special Use request sparked interest in amending the Ordinance at a later date to clarify "fueling stations" (gasoline and/or propane) and establish conditions for allowing such stations in specific zoning districts.

Thomas also shared a summary of work done by the Zoning Board of Appeals in 2008, along with Ordinance Enforcement work completed by the Township's Zoning

Enforcement Officer. Staff work and a synopsis of permits issued under various categories was also noted.

b. 2009 Work Plan

Thomas made several suggestions to the Planning Commission for items to place on the 2009 Work Plan: First, ordinance review and drafting of possible amendments to accommodate Senior Housing and related medical care facilities in multiple zoning districts, whether by right or as a special use; second, a complete review of the Zoning Ordinance as related to accessory buildings; and lastly, a review of landscaping provisions. Thomas commented that Senior Housing had been discussed during the Master Plan process and was identified as one of the Plan Objectives (Number 5) to be achieved by the Township.

Thomas added that she has provided a valuable article from a planning publication which gives suggestions for work Planning Commissions should consider during an economic downturn, when new projects are not being presented. It is an opportune time to make plans for a future "boom time."

Thomas then asked for input from Planning Commissioners regarding additional items they may wish to add to the subjects noted. Lee asked if any plans have been presented regarding Senior Housing, as he thinks the topic is timely and we are all getting older. Thomas responded that no formal plans have been presented to the Township. In addition, Lee asked if there are any plans to connect the two existing trails already in place in West Michigan. Thomas said that there is Federal money available until September to be awarded for this connector, and the Kent County Road Commission is reviewing the feasibility of this along 4 Mile Road, although a decision on the project has not been made. Johnson requested that fueling station regulations be added to the work plan.

**Lee moved, with support from Van Heulen, to adopt the 2009 Planning Commission Work Plan as presented, including a review of the Zoning Ordinance regarding Senior Housing, accessory buildings, and fueling stations.**

**Ayes: 7**

**Nays: 0**

**Motion carried.**

In addition to Planning Commission work, Thomas noted that she has been asked to revive the Parks and Recreation Committee and facilitate a review and update of the Township Parks and Recreation Plan. A current (less than 5 years old) adopted plan is required before Alpine Township can be eligible to apply for grant monies. She will also be amending the Zoning Ordinance as required by the Michigan Zoning Enabling Act and the Michigan Planning Enabling Act. Planning Commission bylaws must also be updated to comply with the new laws.

c. Election of Officers, Committee appointments

The following Officers were elected for 2009 after nominations:

Chair:	Greg Madura	Ayes: 6	Nays:1 (Dunneback)
Vice-Chair:	Nelda Johnson	Ayes: 6	Nays:1 (Dunneback)
Secretary:	Jerry Byrne	Ayes: 6	Nays:1 (Dunneback)

Committee Appointments included:

- Site Plan Review/ 4 Mile Corridor Committees:

**Lee moved, with support from Johnson, to combine the 4 Mile Corridor and Site Plan Review Committees.**

**Ayes: 7      Nays: 0**

**Motion carried.**

Madura, Dunneback, Cordes agreed to serve with Lee as Alternate.

- Zoning Ordinance Review Committee:

**Lee moved, with Cordes' support to continue full Planning Commission review of Zoning Ordinances.**

**Ayes: 6      Nays: 1 (Dunneback)**

**Motion carried.**

- Zoning Board of Appeals liaison:      Johnson term continues through December 31, 2010.

#### **09-04 PUBLIC COMMENT/ COMMISSIONER COMMENT/ COMMITTEE UPDATES**

No public comment was offered.

Commissioners provided the following comments:

- Van Heulen is looking forward to working with the other Commissioners and plans to take advantage of training opportunities.
- Lee said he is also pleased to be on the Planning Commission.
- Byrne stated he is happy to serve his community.
- Cordes had nothing to add.
- Dunneback advised the new Commissioners to vote their conscience on issues and not feel compelled to go along with the majority. He also asked those present to keep Phil Brunger in their prayers as he had some serious health issues.
- Johnson reported that the ZBA did not meet in December.

#### **09-05 STAFF UPDATE/ ADJOURNMENT**

Thomas distributed updates for some Commissioner's Zoning Ordinance books.

She commented that it is "a new year and a new Commission" and offered suggestions about the job of a Planning Commissioner for new members, as well as reminders for experienced members of the Commission:

- Read through PC packets before a meeting. Background information and staff review can assist in reaching a decision on a project.
- Visit the site of a project whenever possible, as valuable information can be obtained with first hand knowledge of the location.
- Do not participate in "ex parte" (literally, one sided) conversations with the applicant or any others about an application or project to be reviewed by the Planning Commission. This includes meetings and/or discussions with other Planning Commissioners, whether a quorum is present or not.

Decisions must be considered and made in an open meeting, with all parties present.

- If the full Planning Commission wishes to visit a site as a group, contact Thomas and she will arrange for the property owner to expect the group and properly post the meeting.
- Advise the Planning Office if you are unable to attend a meeting, so Thomas can ensure a quorum is available.
- Remember that the Planning Commission and each Planning Commissioner represents Alpine Township, the image of the Township is often determined by that of its representatives. Each applicant and his or her representatives are speaking to the Township whether addressing the Planning Commission in writing or in person in meetings.
- Show respect—for one another, for the public, for the applicant and for staff.
- Listen to public comment that is offered.
- Continue to follow the formal procedures for meetings. All comments or questions should be directed through the chairperson. The framework already in place can assist in keeping the discussion on point and move the meeting along.

Thomas said she would continue to forward information on learning opportunities to Commissioners as they arise. Madura commented on his experience with the online Citizen Planner course.

In response to Madura's question, Thomas said that the February regular meeting will include a review of extending two Special Land Uses for sand mines. The first is the DeBoer-Feedback mine at 5 Mile Rd. and Baumhoff, the second is the Cordes mine on Alpine Ave.

Madura advised members of the Commission to utilize the expertise of Township staff, as he has found Thomas *and Kolkman* to be both knowledgeable and helpful.

**Dunneback moved, with Lee's support, to adjourn at 8:35 PM.**

**Ayes: 7**

**Nays: 0**

**Motion carried.**

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Jerry Byrne, Secretary

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Patricia Kolkman, Recording Secretary