

**ALPINE TOWNSHIP PLANNING COMMISSION REGULAR MEETING  
Thursday, June 17, 2010**

**10-19 CALL TO ORDER/ APPROVAL OF MINUTES/ PUBLIC COMMENT**

The Alpine Township Planning Commission held its regular meeting on Thursday, June 17, 2010, at 7:30 PM at the Alpine Township Center, 5255 Alpine Ave., NW, Comstock Park , MI 49321, with due notice. Present were Chair Bruce Lee, Vice-Chair Nelda Johnson, Secretary Jerry Byrne, and members Ron Cordes, Greg Madura and Matt Van Heulen. Absent was Max Dunneback. Also in attendance were Township Planning Director Sue Thomas and Recording Secretary Patricia Kolkman.

Chair Lee called the meeting to order at 7:30 PM with the Pledge of Allegiance. Before calling for a motion regarding the minutes of the May 20, 2010 regular meeting, Lee told the audience that if any of them required something to help with hearing, the Recording Secretary has small personal "sound boosters" available for their use.

**Madura then moved, with support from Cordes, to accept the minutes of the regular Planning Commission meeting of May 20, 2010 as presented.**

**Ayes: 6**

**Nays: 0**

**Motion carried.**

Lee then offered audience members a chance to comment on any items not on the agenda for this meeting, but no comments were made.

**10-20 PUBLIC HEARING: TEXT AMENDMENT REQUEST IN THE C-2, COMMERCIAL DISTRICT**

To add Outdoor Motocross/Recreational Vehicle Tracks as a Special Land Use in the C-2, Commercial zoning district.

Applicant: Jerry Williams of KT Fun Center

Chair Lee briefly summarized the process for public hearings and said if one individual is representing a larger group it is not necessary for others he represents to also speak. If someone in the audience agrees with a previous speaker, they do not have to repeat comments. Lee also said in the interest of time, he may limit comments to 3 minutes per person. He then directed Planner Thomas to provide her staff report.

Thomas introduced her staff report referencing the current Master Plan objectives and goals. The intent of the C-2 zoning district was also noted. She pointed out that there are two types of rezoning requests; map amendments and text amendments. In both cases, the Planning Commission reviews the request and makes its recommendation to the Township Board.

Thomas then summarized regulations on special land uses. She noted that while a formal site plan is not required for a text amendment, the applicant has provided one for this request. She reminded the Planning Commission that special land use approvals remain with the land, rather than the property owner. Should the Planning Commission choose to recommend approval of this request, adding this text amendment to the C-2 zoning district will automatically add it to the Commercial PUD and Business PUD districts as well.

Thomas then said that the Township's recently adopted Noise Ordinance prohibits race tracks, proving grounds, testing areas or obstacle courses from operating after 10 pm. For a

comparison of noise levels, she directed Commissioners to the copies of references used by them when reviewing sound levels for the Wind Energy Ordinance in 2009. She added that while two-stroke engines have a higher pitch than the newer four-stroke engine bikes, the lower pitch of a four-stroke engine carries further.

Thomas then summarized the specifics of this request as the applicant has explained it. She also provided a list of motocross tracks in Michigan, but asked that the applicant identify which tracks are similar to the one he proposes in Alpine Township.

Current zoning ordinance regulations which relate to this type of facility were noted. After reviewing this proposal in depth, Thomas recommends that the applicant provide additional information to the Planning Commission before a decision can be made. If after review the Planning Commission accepts the proposal, she also recommends that the text language he has presented be amended to identify if race tracks or are not acceptable.

The applicant has also brought an audio/ video example for Commissioners to review. The applicant has stated he plans to use the track for practice use only, not for racing. Adequate fencing and security for the site should be required if the request is recommended.

*Dunneback arrives at 7:47 PM.*

Jerry Williams, of KT Fun Center, presented his proposal and said that he wants this facility to train his own riders. Currently, he sponsors 10 motocross riders at a considerable cost. His track is designed and will be operated as a practice track only. He said he has already gotten trucks with sprayers to control dust levels. He will also sell the larger trucks and trailers used to transport vehicles, as well as select recreational vehicles themselves.

Williams plans to build a large building for the indoor practice track. He pointed out that the biggest hurdle drivers face in being successful in races is maneuvering corners. His practice track has been designed with multiple corners to give riders practice in successfully navigating them. He isn't interested in building a racetrack as insurance costs are prohibitive. There is not a track like this for riders within 40-50 miles. He said there are about 150 riders in this general area who drive this distance just to practice, so allowing this use would give local riders and their families an opportunity to practice locally and share the activity.

Williams also will sell and service recreational vehicles and trailers. The indoor track will be used during winter or inclement weather.

Madura confirmed with Williams that the vehicles he intends to sell and service are related to motocross bikes.

In response to a question, Williams said that because the track will have a clay/sand base, it must be watered to reduce dust. He plans to spray water after each class ends, but will do so more frequently if necessary. He hopes to eventually install an underground sprinkling system.

Commissioner Cordes commented that the practice vehicles will obviously be noisy, and asked Williams how that will be controlled. Williams responded that in addition to fencing and berms, he will do "whatever it takes" to minimize noise and agrees to any Planning Commission requirements to achieve that.

Chair Lee asked why 1200-cc engines were included in the proposal, if most motocross bikes are 450-cc or less. Williams said he wanted to cover snowmobiles as well, which are in the 1200-cc range.

There was spirited discussion about what the anticipated noise levels might be. Questions asked and answered included:

- How many riders will be on the outdoor track at the same time? A maximum of 7-8 riders would practice at a time.
- How many riders would be on the track for a race? Williams said there will be no racing but tracks that run races could have up to 50 riders at a time. He said because he sponsors riders, he wants to ensure they are properly trained, for both safety and success. His primary focus is teaching his riders cornering, which is the skill most required for racing and he requires his riders to use safety gear. The track is designed with many corners to promote riders' racing success. In all his years of training, he said he has had no injuries among his riders.
- Will 4-stroke silencers be used? Williams said yes.
- How will practice differ from racing? Dunneback said in his experience in sports, "you practice how you play", and he thinks racers who practice riding will naturally race. Williams said he controls who is on the track and what the focus of their practice will be. Riders are divided into classes by age, and each class trains separately. No *racing* will be done since riders will be practicing negotiating turns and corners.
- Will 4-stroke engines be used? Williams said while most vehicles will be 2-stroke engines, because they can be repaired right at the track, some 4-stroke engines will also be used.
- What will hours of operation be? Dunneback reminded other Commissioners that when concrete crushing was proposed for a site across M-37 from this one the Planning Commission required a condition that no crushing would be done later than 7 pm. Williams said that typically the track would be open and operational from 2-5 pm. All riders must also work for him. The indoor track he proposes will be for winter use, with the outdoor track used spring, summer and fall.
- What safety measures will be in place? Will there be ambulance availability? Williams reiterated that safety is his top priority, and that he has been in business for 35 years, and has not had a single injury. If the Township requires it, he will have an ambulance available. Individual flagmen will also be stationed at various points on the track to monitor a specific rider and to redirect other riders should there be a fall. The indoor track will also have a light system (red, yellow) to notify riders of a rider down ahead. Again, Williams said there will never be more than 5-7 riders on the track at a time.
- How large will the indoor arena area be? Williams said the indoor track will be approximately 175' x 260', with the higher end RV vehicles and trailers for sale as well.
- What did Williams know of a recent report that the EPA had banned 4-stroke engines? Williams disputed that report and claimed it not accurate.
- What will stop a practice track from becoming a racetrack? Williams said as owner he controls how it is used and since he is monitoring his riders he will make sure no racing is done during practice sessions.

Williams then played the video he had made (while standing on a track) of a 125-cc 2-stroke bike being ridden on an outdoor track. The video was first played on the projector, and then on a TV monitor, with the volume raised to 45.

Thomas stated that if the Planning Commission wished to approve a special land use conditionally, it could add specific conditions of approval such as limiting track use to "Practice Only". Any condition of approval would remain with the property and govern future owners as well as Mr. Williams. Additional conditions, such as limiting the hours of operation could also be added to a special land use.

Dunneback expressed his concern that if this activity is included as a Special Use in the C-2 zoning district, it may interfere with "orderly and concentrated development on M-37" as detailed in the current Master Plan Objectives.

Williams said in his opinion this is a "family oriented activity" since whole families do participate, and it will also add jobs to the Township.

In response to a question from Cordes, Williams said several methods of buffering sound could be employed such as the addition of berms, installation of slats in the proposed fencing, and limiting the riders to a maximum of 7 at a time.

Thomas commented that 2-stroke engines generate a higher pitched sound but it doesn't travel as far as the lower pitched 4-stroke engine which can carry a couple of miles. Madura added that the Strawberry Pines Condo development is a "retirement community" about one-half mile away.

In response to questions about how the business runs, Williams said riders must sign a disclaimer before using the facilities and parents must sign for minors. Fees are \$750 per person, per season. He has invested over \$55,000 in his 10 riders.

**Johnson then moved, with support from Cordes, to open the public hearing.**

**Ayes: 7**

**Nays: 0**

**Motion carried.**

Mike O'Malley, 700 Strawberry Valley Ave. identified himself as the spokesperson for the Strawberry Pines Condos Homeowners Association. There are 95 homes in the development, reflecting the significant investment each homeowner has made in their home, and which provides considerable taxes to Alpine Township. Residents are comfortable with the Zoning Ordinance regulations as now written and administered. They are very concerned about the impact this zoning change could have on existing businesses and residences nearby. Strawberry Pines residents oppose a change to the special uses allowed in the C-2 district and feel the addition of motocross is not compatible with existing uses in the area. They ask that the Planning Commission not set a precedent by recommending its approval to the Township Board.

Bob Galbraith, 4006 Baumhoff Avenue, stated he is both a resident of Alpine Township and a business owner of the properties north of the Township Center. The Goodwill Building is at the north end of his land, and is adjacent to the site in question. Galbraith chose M-37 as the location for his development based on the uses within the C-2 District. This request concerns him as he thinks the dust and noise are not compatible with the existing businesses invested in this area. Galbraith said he is familiar with motocross "first hand", and is aware of the level of noise, dust, and odors generated. He fears he may lose tenants and asks the Planning Commission how it can control not only the noise, but also the number of bikes on the track. As both a Township resident and business owner, he opposes allowing this use in the C-2 District.

Martin Brechting, 1307 6 Mile Rd., said he is a farmer on land adjacent to the property in question. He has extensive experience with motor bikes, and knows very well how much noise they create. He also opposes allowing this use in Alpine Township.

Margaret Brechting, 1275 6 Mile Rd., said that even with trees, sound can carry beyond the immediate area. She thinks the sound of motocross vehicles is not only irritating, but will probably interrupt nearby businesses and other activities in the area.

Lorraine Nelson, 711 Strawberry Valley Ave., reminded those present that motocross bikes may be outdoors during the spring, summer and fall months, but winter will bring the snowmobiles which have 1200-cc engines.

**Byrne then moved, with Cordes' support, to close the public hearing.**

**Ayes: 7**

**Nays: 0**

**Motion carried.**

The Commission then began its discussion, inviting comment from Williams. He said all riders will practice based on age and class with no more than 10 riders per class. The track will remain a "practice only" facility as the cost to insure a track for racing would be prohibitive. In response to comments made by Mr. Galbraith, Williams said he has personally spoken with all of the tenants in the buildings adjacent to his site, and none of them raised any concerns.

Thomas asked Williams to clarify how much winter use there would be at the outdoor track, and Williams said no more than 2 snowmobiles at a time.

Cordes suggested that the Planning Commission take a field trip to an operating practice track before it makes a decision on whether to approve or deny this request. Madura said he was at a racing facility with up to 12 bikes, and knows the noise and dust levels. He said he called Willowood Golf Course, which is separated by woods from an adjacent motocross practice facility similar to the one proposed. This motocross course allows up to 7 riders on its practice track, and the golf course states it has experienced no ill effects

Johnson asked whether the text amendment as presented would allow racing, and if so, whether it could be made more restrictive. Thomas confirmed with Williams that he is not averse to altering the text to prohibit racing.

Madura then said he had read about a motocross track that was required to close due to the number of complaints on both noise and the impact that had on residents' peace of mind.

Lee commented that several motorcycles driven in the Westgate area already conflict with the Noise Ordinance. He agreed that a field trip to a practice track would give the Planning Commission a better chance to identify sound levels before making a decision. He thinks these questions must be answered before making an informed decision about the track. Thomas offered to coordinate a field trip for all members and stated it would be considered an open meeting which would require posting, and the public could also attend. She suggested that all members of the Planning Commission attend.

**Byrne moved, with Cordes' support, to table the request until the Planning Commission has the opportunity to visit an operating outdoor motocross track.**

**Ayes: 3**

**Nays: 4**

**Motion failed.**

**Motion for Text Amendment in the C-2, Commercial zoning district**

Dunneback then moved, with support from Van Heulen, to recommend to the Township Board to deny the requested text amendment to Section 12.03 in the C-2, Commercial zoning district to add outdoor motocross / recreational vehicle tracks as a special land use provided the following conditions are met:

- (1) The engine size of vehicles used on the track shall not exceed 1,200 cubic centimeters.
- (2) The track shall be completely enclosed with a fence or wall and locking gate, as publicly noticed with the following FINDINGS OF FACT:

Based upon representations made by the applicant during the text amendment review and upon the standards found in Chapters 12 of the Alpine Township Zoning Ordinance and the 2007 Alpine Township Master Plan, we find that the proposed text amendment:

- 1) Is not consistent with the Commercial future land use designation of the 2007 Alpine Township Master Plan.
- 2) Is not consistent with the intent of the C-2 zoning district to provide for an orderly and concentrated commercial development as designated in the Township Master Plan.
- 3) Does not ensure compatibility with adjoining land uses and zoning types.

**Ayes: 5** (Dunneback, Johnson, Lee, Madura, Van Heulen) **Nays: 2** (Byrne, Cordes)  
**Motion carried.**

*Lee called for a short recess at 9:05 pm, with the meeting resuming at 9:10 pm.*

**10-21 SITE PLAN REVIEW: Alpine Immanuel Baptist Church**  
692 7 Mile Road NW  
Church building addition

On direction of the Chair, Thomas presented her staff report regarding the Site Plan Review request. The Alpine Immanuel Baptist Church plans to build an approximate 14,000 square foot addition to its church building, which will require demolition of the residential structure closest to 7 Mile Rd. Currently, the property has soccer fields, garages, the church, and the parsonage, in addition to a storm water pond. The church has been at this location since 1928 and is zoned C-2. The addition would have a gymnasium, classrooms, a kitchen and rest rooms. A pre-existing well is also on the site. Thomas confirmed with the applicant that it will remain for underground sprinkling.

Pavement will be removed, "replaced" with new impervious building roofs, but the new parking area, planned for bus parking will be pervious, so the new construction will have no net impact on storm water management. The Township's Engineer will not require a Storm Water Permit, but discovered during his review that the 6-inch restricted outlet pipe to the detention pond, which was part of its original design, is now missing and must be reinstalled to have the pond function properly. Currently, storm water flows through pipes along the western edge of church

property into the Fables Drain detention pond, and eventually under M-37 into the Vitality Drain on the west side of Alpine Avenue.

While sidewalks are shown on the site plan, the applicant prefers not to install them at this time, but to sign an agreement for future installation. Existing grades on the site, especially at the northeast corner, are particularly challenging for sidewalk installation. A dumpster is already in the parking lot, but a new concrete pad will be installed for both a new dumpster enclosure and a paper recycling bin. Thomas reminded the Planning Commission that the ZBA has already granted a variance request to reduce the front yard setback for this addition.

Façade design was intended to blend the appearance of the existing structure with the addition. Windows facing 7 Mile Rd. include elevated windows necessary for the gymnasium. The applicant proposes the addition of limited landscaping which includes new shrubs and perennials. The Planning Commission should consider if the shrubs and perennials noted are sufficient to meet landscaping requirements. At the property's northeast edge is a residentially zoned lot with woods, adjacent to the parsonage. Because the two uses are compatible, an additional greenbelt may not be necessary, though the Commission should consider whether: 1.) sidewalks should be installed at this location now; and, 2.) if additional landscaping should be planted concurrent with the new construction.

Architect Jeffrey Parker, on behalf of Alpine Immanuel Baptist Church, presented the church's request. Parker addressed the concerns raised by Planner Thomas during her staff report. The church prefers to delay installing sidewalks as the grade at the northeast corner is severe and not conducive to foot traffic.

Parker then addressed the Township Engineer's comments regarding the regional detention pond. He believes the pond is owned by Kent County and asks whether the church can work on something owned by Kent County. Thomas agreed to review the question further, but said that since the missing pipe has been reported, it must be repaired / replaced whether or not new construction takes place. She will investigate to determine who may make the repairs and how this should be done.

Parker provided samples of the brick for the addition. The brick choice was made to complement rather than match the existing building since the brick cannot be duplicated and this choice should pull all construction together in a unified way. He pointed out that after the construction is complete, internal traffic flow to various parts of the building will also improve.

Madura would like at least one new tree. Commissioners commented on the original sanctuary, confirming that the north end of that building has the old entrance, but that it will be converted to a fire exit only for better pedestrian flow. The flow of vehicular traffic will not use 7 Mile Road as a "drop-off" point for children's activities.

Commissioners complimented the church for the many child-focused activities they provide to children in the Alpine Township area. This volume of child-centered activities have expanded and now the church needs these building additions and alterations to accommodate them.

Lee asked Commissioners for their input on the plan presented before voting. All felt the plan was a good one, with Dunneback specifically stating he thinks a signed sidewalk agreement makes more sense than requiring one be built now.

After further discussion, Commissioners agreed additional landscaping should be planted at the northeast corner; including at least one ornamental tree added and 7 shrubs.

**Motion for Alpine Immanuel Baptist Church Site Plan  
Building Addition at 692 7 Mile Road  
PP# 41-09-24-101-038**

Johnson then moved, with support from Madura, based upon representations made by the applicant, to approve the requested site plan dated May 28, 2010 and drawn by Roosien & Associates for a church addition at 692 7 Mile Road, PP# 41-09-24-100-038 as it does meet the standards set forth in Chapters 12, 18 and 19 of the Alpine Township Zoning Ordinance with the following **CONDITIONS OF APPROVAL**:

1. The applicant shall revise the landscape portion of the site plan to include a total minimum of seven new shrubs and one ornamental tree to be planted along the 7 Mile Road frontage.
2. The applicant shall supply the lighting fixture cut sheets to the Township for review and approval.
3. All conditions outlined in the Township Engineer's letter dated June 11, 2010.
4. All conditions outlined in the Township Fire Chief's letter dated June 10, 2010.
5. The applicant shall enter into a site development agreement with the Township that addresses the aforementioned items.
6. The applicant shall enter into a sidewalk agreement with the Township, which is an agreement to participate in a future sidewalk Special Assessment District.

**Ayes: 7**

**Nays: 0**

**Motion carried.**

**10-22 PUBLIC COMMENT/ STAFF UPDATES/ COMMISSIONER COMMENT/  
ADJOURN**

There was no public comment.

Thomas said the Commissioners will begin reviewing information regarding Medical Marijuana dispensaries at their next meeting, as the moratorium expires in August.

**Madura moved, with support from Dunneback to adjourn at 10:15 PM.**

**Ayes: 7**

**Nays: 0**

**Motion carried.**

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Jerry Byrne, Secretary

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Patricia Kolkman, Recording Secretary