

ALPINE TOWNSHIP PLANNING COMMISSION REGULAR MEETING
Thursday, June 18, 2009

09-23 CALL TO ORDER / APPROVAL OF MINUTES / PUBLIC COMMENT

The Alpine Township Planning Commission held its regular meeting on Thursday, June 18, 2009, at 7:30 PM at the Alpine Township Center, 5255 Alpine Ave., NW, Comstock Park, MI with due notice. Present were Chair Greg Madura, Vice-Chair Nelda Johnson, Secretary Jerry Byrne, and members Ron Cordes, Max Dunneback, Bruce Lee, and Matt Van Heulen. Also in attendance were Township Planning Director Sue Thomas and Recording Secretary Beth Alt.

Madura called the meeting to order at 7:30 PM with the Pledge of Allegiance.

The following changes to the Minutes of the May 21, 2009 meeting were proposed:

- Page two, last paragraph should read: *The Planning Commissioners took a five-minute break.*
- Page three, paragraph four, line three should read: They ~~can~~ generate *approximately...*

Byrne moved, supported by Cordes, to accept the May 21, 2009 Minutes as amended.

Ayes: 7

Nays: 0

Motion carried.

No public comment offered at this time.

09-24 DISCUSSION - ACCESSORY BUILDINGS

Planner Thomas prepared documents indicating proposed changes to the Zoning Ordinance and a proposed accessory building table for the Zoning Ordinance. Commission members were appreciative for an orderly document. Thomas stated the purpose for these revisions is to make the ordinance easier for the public to understand and use.

Thomas informed the Commission that attached accessory buildings have to meet the same setbacks as the principal building in the district that it is located. If a front yard setback would change in the future, the attached portion of it automatically follows the way it is currently written. However, as proposed in table format, the above-described link is not there. It is staff's opinion that the gain in ease of use and understanding with the table format outweighs the lack of direct link.

The general regulations do not address every use in the township yet, such as farm stands. Farm stands have separate setbacks because they are different than other uses.

A second issue is whether a principal building should be required in the Agricultural Zoning District. Farms are divided for many different reasons and this is a unique zoning district. The current ordinance is specific that you cannot build an accessory building without a principal use. This is a unique circumstance and legal advice will be obtained.

The third issue is the accessory building attached with a breezeway structure. Thomas has addressed this issue by inserting a maximum distance of twenty feet between the principal structure and the accessory structure. It is important to remember that this must remain as only one dwelling unit; any living space has to be an integral part of the dwelling unit.

On this issue, Commission members discussed fire codes and the special measures taken for rooms above a garage. Thomas will study all the loopholes and return to the Commission. Further discussion included whether an enclosure should be required. It was the consensus of the Commission that a roof would be sufficient.

The Commission discussed waterfront property and it was noted that Alpine Township does not have established water lines on its lakes. Alpine Township has enrolled with the National Flood Insurance Program from FEMA, but FEMA has not adopted formal maps for Alpine Township. Currently the Township is in limbo. Thomas plans to revise the definition of waterfront lot line.

Accessory buildings within the Rural Agricultural Zoning District will need to be revised. Discussion ensued on how to decide whether a parcel is a farm or a residence. Thomas was not proposing to change square footage allowances, but stated that she wished to make the ordinance easier to understand.

Commissioners questioned how many actual farms are in the RA District. It was the general consensus that the Commission did not want to require a resident to apply for a Special Use Permit. It was noted an additional layer may be added onto the current tier for a larger parcel of acreage for farm uses within the RA district and as always, the applicant has to prove that s/he is a farmer. Commission consensus was to encourage farming the property.

Thomas stated these issues will be addressed for the July meeting. In response to a Commission member's concern, it was noted that the 30% lot coverage rule applies to lot coverage, not setback distances.

Thomas noted that she will be removing the distinction between garages for vehicles and general accessory buildings because it will be easier to enforce. Another issue discussed was that "play structures" will not be enforced. Thomas wished to clean up the ordinance for better customer service.

09-25 PUBLIC COMMENT

Trustee Wallace complimented Thomas on doing a fine job.

09-26 COMMISSION COMMENT/COMMITTEE UPDATES

All Commission members complimented Thomas on compiling these ordinances and making them easier to understand.

Johnson reported on the Zoning Board of Appeals held a meeting on May 26, 2009. A variance was approved for loading spaces within a front yard at 7777 Venture Avenue in the I-2, General Industrial zoning district.

Dunneback inquired whether the Township could require mailboxes and press boxes to be located on one side of the road. He remarked trying to maneuver large farm machinery between the two on a road creates a challenge. It was noted that the Federal government regulates mailboxes.

09-27 STAFF UPDATE & ADJOURNMENT

The first one-third of the Park and Recreation plan was mailed out to Committee members. The surveys will be in the Harvester newsletter in July. The Park and Recreation Committee would like a new recreation plan to be ready next spring.

Thomas informed the Commission that a Community Development Block Grant has been recommended for Alpine Township and the Township is awaiting approval from the Federal government. The grant has been earmarked for sidewalks on the west side of Alpine Avenue and a roof-mounted wind energy system on a government building.

It was noted a rezoning request will be coming before the Planning Commission in July.

Thomas distributed reading material entitled "Beware of These Zoning Excuses" for the Planning Commission.

Lee offered a motion, supported by Byrne to adjourn at 9:00 p.m.

Ayes: 7 Nays: 0 Motion carried.

Jerry Byrne, Secretary

Beth Alt, Recording Secretary