

**ALPINE TOWNSHIP PLANNING COMMISSION
SPECIAL MEETING – MASTER PLAN REVIEW
Thursday, July 14, 2005**

05-34 CALL TO ORDER/APPROVAL OF PC MINUTES/PUBLIC COMMENT

The Alpine Township Planning Commission held a special Master Plan Review meeting at 7:00 PM on Thursday, July 14, 2005 at 5255 Alpine Ave. NW, Comstock Park, MI, 49321, with due notice. Present were Chair Jason Rosenzweig, Secretary Nelda Johnson, and members Kris Cassady-Gall, Jason Clauser, Max Dunneback, and Jim Townsend. Excused were Vice-Chair Dick Sedlecky and member Jim May. Also in attendance were Township Planning Director Brendie Vega-Mkhwanazi, Recording Secretary Patricia Kolkman, and Beckett and Raeder representatives John Iacoangeli and Woody Deloria.

Rosenzweig called the meeting to order at 7:00 PM with the Pledge of Allegiance.

Townsend moved, with support from Clauser to approve the minutes of the Special Planning Commission meeting of June 9, 2005, as presented.

Ayes: 6 Nays: 0 Motion carried.

Townsend moved, with support from Johnson, to approve the minutes of the Regular Planning Commission meeting of June 16, 2005 as presented.

Ayes: 6 Nays: 0 Motion carried.

There were approximately 35 Township residents present and Rosenzweig offered them the opportunity to comment on subjects not on the agenda but none were made.

05-35 PRESENTATION – MASTER PLAN UPDATE by Beckett & Raeder

To introduce the evolution of Land Use Scenario 3, and to provide those in the audience who had not been part of earlier meetings, John Iacoangeli summarized issues raised by residents and Planning Commissioners in those previous meetings:

- The initial “Neighborhood Meetings” identified increasing traffic, impact of development on local services, preserving open space, and protecting orchards and farms as concerns.
- A decision was reached to have Alpine Township direct its own growth rather than letting development direct the Township.
- An agreement was reached to use the existing water and sewer districts to define areas where the densest growth could occur. Participants acknowledged that by using them Alpine Township could recoup some of its earlier investment in that infrastructure.
- Participants identified a density that they (the PC and residents) feel comfortable with at 3 residential units per acre. A “buffer zone” of lower density would border the denser development area and agricultural areas.
- The PC agreed to using more realistic population projections from Claritas, which used both Alpine’s local land use policy and its actual

building activity to estimate future needs, rather than estimates from U of M, MSU, and GVMC.

- The Township would consider using a “Mixed Use” designation, utilizing various residential designs and commercial in a single development.
- Participants agreed to using “phasing” of development, with “Core” areas first and then the “Acceptance Area”. Then development (at a lower density) could extend to the area identified as “Development Reserve”, which acts the “buffer”.

Iacoangeli then displayed two maps for residents’ review and comments identifying the phasing plan and the revised master plan designations. The revised Master Plan map showed removal of an industrial area near Old Alpine and 9 Mile Rd., where primary development of single family residential has occurred. No additional commercial land was designated since too much commercially designated areas can add to “strip malls” and commercial vacancies. A “Mixed Use” designation was shown in the utilities district to allow for more flexible design of any future residential developments.

Iacoangeli said there is adequate land in the water and sewer districts to meet both the commercial and residential development needs of the Township for the next 30 years. He also provided details on changes made to the master plan:

- In the 1998 Master Plan, 12% of the Township land was reserved for RA development; the 2005 review reduces it to 8%.
- In the 1998 Master Plan, 66% of Alpine was designated as Agricultural Preserve; in the current review, that amount was raised to 70%.

Comments from the public regarding the presentation include:

- Dave Homrich commented on the future land use designation shown for 6103 Alpine Ave., the 76-acre farm (with farm market) that is owned by his parents. He asked that a memo he provided be entered into the record to correct and clarify statements he made at the May 5, 2005 Planning Commission meeting. While the family has no current plans to develop, he asks that the record reflect that the family prefers the farm be master planned as Commercial/ Industrial, since:
 - Both water and sewer serve the property along 7 Mile Rd. (west of M-37) and it is already connected.
 - 7 Mile Rd. at this location is a Class “A” road, serving several industries on 7 Mile Rd.
 - The southwest, southeast and northeast corners of 7 Mile Rd. and M-37 have already been developed as commercial and/or industrial and this designation would be more compatible with those.

In summary, because of these reasons, the Homrich family feels that commercial and/or industrial is a more logical designation than retaining it as agricultural in the revised land use plan at this time.

Members of the Planning Commission and John Iacoangeli discussed whether the Township could accommodate the Homrich family’s request at this time. While they confirmed that all adjacent development (except the land abutting the farm to the north) was already commercial and industrial, Iacoangeli was concerned because the Township already has a number of vacancies for commercial land and does not appear

to need more. He added that in his experience communities with an abundance of commercial land see “strip mall” development -- existing businesses merely relocating within the locality. Commercial uses also increase traffic without increasing revenue.

Commissioners sympathized with the family's wishes but agreed that reserving more land for commercial development could produce more vacant buildings. It was explained that since all master plans must be reviewed every five years under a new Michigan law, when the next review occurs this area would be considered again.

- Sharon Steffens asked if the Planning Commission considered using a TDR program to permanently reserve agricultural land. Rosenzweig said that this has been discussed in subcommittees and this program might also be used as an implementation tool in conjunction with PDR in the Master Plan.
- Dave Wiersum asked if the low density development area identified matches the current sanitary sewer district and was told it was. Further questions from the audience focused on whether Alpine Township's status as a sewer “customer” of Grand Rapids might affect development decisions along 4 Mile Rd. Steffens answered that whether Alpine Township remains with the City of Grand Rapids or becomes a “partner” in a North Kent Sewer Authority's future sewage processing plant, Alpine must construct a redirected sewer main flowing from Kenowa Hills High School and Alpine Meadows Mobile Home Park east along 4 Mile to the trunk line already there.
- Nick Creveling, who owns an 80-acre farm in Section 12, adjacent to the Mill Creek Sewer, disputed the designation used for his land especially since it abuts the “future” sewer district.
- Jackie Creveling, co-owner of the land, said she also disagrees with the master plan designation used. Her family has resisted the recent trend in the immediate area to develop it as large lot residential even though it is surrounded by homes. If the agricultural designation remains they will be unable to create additional parcels for family residential sites. She asked if limiting the number of splits a farmer can make really promotes farming. At the Solon Township Planning Commission she has seen how farmers resist development pressures while residential development takes place around them. Then the new residents vigorously support “protecting agriculture” because “that's what they moved to the country *for*” never noticing their land was once part of another farm. Then when the farmer tries to get money out of his land, he can't because “it is just agricultural”. The farmer then sells to a developer who buys it at a low (agricultural) price and rezones it for development, even though the farmer could not. Creveling added these development restrictions on agricultural land effectively deny a farmer his property rights (to divide land even if only for family use) while allowing a developer to develop as he wishes.

Rosenzweig, Iacoangeli, and Cassady-Gall all agreed that keeping the agricultural designation on the Creveling land was unreasonable and the future land use map should reflect RA (or Estate Residential) for the farm. An audience member observed that since borders of each zone were arbitrarily chosen anyway, this one should be changed. It was agreed that the Creveling farm should be shown as Estate Residential on the “Scenario 3” future land use map.

Residents in the Alpine Ave.—9 Mile Rd. area expressed their dismay over the industrial designation of their neighborhood on the original Scenario 3 map,

since new homes have been built recently, reflecting a residential rather than industrial neighborhood. Significant discussion took place among Beckett & Raeder representatives, the PC and audience members. At the conclusion, it was agreed that a mapping error had occurred which was later corrected when the map was reissued. This area will remain Low Density Residential, with the Carter Lumber site still shown as Commercial.

Lynn Bowers, 730 Hachmuth, said that the residential area to the east of Alpine Avenue along 4 Mile Rd. is shown as having a density of 3 units per acre, but that it is actually closer to 2 units per acre. An anonymous audience member said she did not favor any development of any type in the Township.

Norris Brookens, 8054 Vinton Ave., asked how the Township views industrial development versus residential.

- Iacoangeli said that this master plan revision has allocated 570 acres of land for industrial development, which is more than adequate for Alpine Township's estimated growth.
- If additional industrial development is expected it should be along M-37 with its road design for heavy truck traffic and access to the rail line system.
- Brookens pointed out that the industrial development on Comstock Blvd. east of M-37 is reached from 7 Mile Rd. which is not a class "A" road at that location. He added that several businesses in the area are closing and vacancies will soon occur.
- Dave Homrich added that 7 Mile Rd. west of M-37 is a Class A road.

There was considerable discussion between audience members, Beckett & Raeder representatives and the PC regarding what residential vs. commercial development costs the Township. The accepted rule used by planning professionals is that for every dollar of government services consumed by residential development, eighty cents (.80) is collected. For every dollar consumed by commercial development, \$1.30 is collected. This is one reason a balance between commercial and residential development is needed.

In summary, a community must recognize that increasing commercial development increases traffic, with heavier (truck) traffic as well. With close to 900 acres now designated for commercial, Alpine appears to have adequate land for commercial development, but as the population grows, commercial development should be added to support it. Ted Wallace said that the commercial development already in the Township needs some new residential development to help support it.

Reñe Whitaker, 3920 Walker, asked why the Master Plan is under review now since previous plans were done in 1988 and 1998. Rosenzweig responded that a 2003 State law now requires all communities with formal master plans to review them every five years. Whitaker said he didn't agree that growth of any type should be planned if the Township is truly committed to preserving farmland.

Dave Wiersum, 3787 Baumhoff Ave., said he understands and agrees with the logic of restricting future development to areas that already have infrastructure (water and sewer), but asks whether Alpine really favors this based on the resistance to past

regular newsletter but she has not seen one in a long time. She was advised to contact Supervisor Brechting with her comments since she is responsible for it.

Townsend said he is pleased with the progress made on the master plan so far, but he still has some concerns about the land at the northwest corner of Section 26. The land owned by the Korhorns is currently zoned Agricultural and was designated Low Density Residential in the 1998 Master Plan. Scenario 3 now shows the northern half of this 75.65 acre parcel is designated for Agricultural and is adjacent to planned Estate Residential even though it is in the currently approved sewer district.

Dave Homrich pointed out that his family farm at 6103 Alpine was designated as commercial in the Master Plan adopted in the 1970's.

Reñe Whitaker commented that both the Alpine Township and Beckett & Raeder websites must be updated. He also asked if the maps provided this evening could also be put out at the library for public review.

Rosenzweig said a letter had been received from a resident regarding the proposed industrial land use area near Carter Lumber in the most recent master plan map. The letter will be recorded with the minutes.

There were no committee updates.

05-37 STAFF UPDATE/ ADJOURNMENT

Vega said that only one item is on the agenda for the Regular PC meeting of July 21, 2005; a public hearing on amendments to the Zoning Ordinance. They are amendments to Chapters 7, 12, and 20, for grammar changes and reference corrections, as well as further discussion and possible adoption of adding senior housing as a Special Use designation in the R-1 Chapter.

Vega also said that our summer intern, Blake Terhune, has been creating many maps for use by the Township and its residents. The maps have been formatted as PDF files, and can be emailed if desired. Each copy is \$5.00 if printed by the Township.

The Yorktown Center project received its provisional MDOT and KCRC permits for driveways and building permits were issued. MDOT approved a full service drive for the development onto Alpine Ave. (M-37).

Cassady-Gall moved with support from Townsend to adjourn at 905 PM.

Ayes: 6 Nays: 0 Motion carried.

Nelda Johnson, Secretary

Patricia Kolkman, Recording Secretary