

**ALPINE TOWNSHIP PLANNING COMMISSION
REGULAR MEETING
Thursday, December 15, 2005**

05-74 CALL TO ORDER/APPROVAL OF MINUTES/PUBLIC COMMENT

The Alpine Township Planning Commission held its regular meeting on Thursday, December 15, 2005, at 7:30 PM at the Alpine Township Center, 5255 Alpine Ave., NW, Comstock Park, MI, 49321, with due notice. Present were Chair Jason Rosenzweig, Vice-Chair Dick Sedlecky, Secretary Nelda Johnson, and members Kris Cassady-Gall, Jason Clauser, Max Dunneback, Greg Madura, Jim May, and Jim Townsend. Also in attendance were Township Supervisor Marta Brechting, Township Planning Director Brendie Vega-Mkhwanazi, and Recording Secretary Patricia Kolkman.

Rosenzweig called the meeting to order at 7:30 PM with the Pledge of Allegiance. Minutes of the November 17, 2005, Regular Planning Commission meeting were amended with an addition to page 4.

Townsend moved, with support from Cassady-Gall, to accept the minutes of the November 17, 2005 Regular Planning Commission meeting with the change requested.

Ayes: 9 Nays: 0 Motion carried.

Minutes of the December 1, 2005, Special Meeting regarding the Master Plan Review Process were also discussed, with Townsend requesting several explanatory additions and two corrections in text.

Madura moved, with support from May, to accept the minutes of the December 1, 2005, Special Master Plan Review Planning Commission meeting, with the changes noted.

Ayes: 9 Nays: 0 Motion carried.

Steve Shoemaker, 3025 6 Mile Rd., commented that he did not notice any reference to farm markets in the Future Land Use Map presented.

Rosenzweig confirmed for Shoemaker that the MP map addresses only future developments, not specific uses in each zoning designation. He also confirmed for Shoemaker that farm markets are a permitted use by right in the Agricultural Zone, and would be allowed, as they are at this time.

Sharon Steffens, 6690 Walker Ave., shared with those present that Governor Granholm is working to support farmers in Michigan by appointing an "Agro-tourism" committee to:

1. Promote Farm Markets
2. Review zoning standards in various communities.
3. Include promotion of "Agro-Entertainment", which includes Corn Mazes, Hayrides, and other activities associated with farming.

05-75 DISCUSSION: MARTA BRECHTING, TOWNSHIP SUPERVISOR

Rosenzweig introduced Supervisor Brechting who asked to address the Planning Commission at its last regular meeting of 2005.

Brechtling said that 2005 has been difficult for the Township and also the Planning Commission, especially with the relative inexperience of many commissioners. She commended all on their commitment to the Master Plan Review process, and said that while there has not always been complete agreement on all issues, she has great respect for the different perspectives each of them has brought to the planning process.

Because the Master Plan is not yet complete, and each member has contributed so much so far, Brechtling considered whether the PC should remain at its current 9 commissioners or be reduced to 7 again. She plans to recommend to the Township Board at its December meeting that all 9 members be reappointed at least for next year and hopes each commissioner is able to fulfill that commitment.

She added she hopes commissioners take advantage of the educational opportunities available through the Township. Sedlecky commented that Marta's previous PC experience resulted in her achieving a "Master" Citizen Planner designation. Brechtling recommends all commissioners, at a minimum, take the Zoning module of the Citizen Planner course, which will soon be available online. Marta and Brendie took the test module and found it very educational.

05-76 REVIEW OF MASTER PLAN UPDATE

Rosenzweig apologized to commissioners and the public about the late delivery of updated documents from Beckett & Raeder for the Master Plan review. He said he was not pleased the revised map still omits some of the corrections the PC requested, such as explanatory text for the zoning designations shown.

Rosenzweig added that he, Townsend and Sedlecky, who comprise the Sub-Committee that refined map details had met again to discuss some issues raised at the Special Meeting on 12/1/05. One topic they addressed was Ted Doorenbos' frustration at having the Mixed Use designation for future development from his parcel on Cordes. The committee agreed that since the Residential Mixed Use designation is not currently available, it should not appear on the future land use map. They felt this designation is still a reasonable one in certain residential or commercial zones and want it to be discussed in the text accompanying the Future Land Use map. They also agreed that when and if the M-PUD designation is reinstated, it should remain where it was shown on the 1998 Master Plan map.

Rosenzweig confirmed for those present that any borders shown for each development designation are suggested rather than absolute; that is, they can be reviewed and possibly adjusted if a property owner requests a rezoning.

General discussion among commissioners continued, with all agreeing that only valid development designations should be reflected on the new map. They also agreed that the accompanying text should address the possibility of considering this development style. Rosenzweig pointed out that using a PUD designation could give a developer this mixed use option, since both the Planning Commission and Township Board retain more control over the development. After discussion, commissioners agreed that the Residential Mixed Use designation might be developed in either a Residential or a Commercial zone.

Rosenzweig then addressed the concerns raised in a letter received from Karl and Mary Schulte, of 4905 Peach Ridge Ave. The Schultes point out that their 3 acre parcel of land is surrounded by working farms which should continue to be protected from development. None of the farmers in Section 28 has asked that the future land use designation change from Ag to RA. The Schultes also point out that even though there are a number of smaller residential parcels in the Peach Ridge and 6 Mile Rd. vicinity, these are AG related and

changing them would not contribute to preserving Agricultural land. The Schultes ask that the future land use designation for this area remain as shown on the 1998 Master Plan.

Madura agreed that the request received from the Schultes was reasonable and should be adopted. Commissioners then discussed several other areas on the future land use map which merit further review and change. May added that there are also a number of businesses in Section 6 on Fruit Ridge south of 10 Mile Rd. that are designated Industrial but are all AG related. May said this designation should be changed to Agricultural since the businesses are all allowed in the AG zone. Vega agreed to review and confirm the current zoning of the parcels in question.

Sections 19 and 30 on the revised map also reflect as Residential Estate the smaller parcels on both sides of Stage. May confirmed that during a past presentation by Beckett and Raeder, he had disputed their claim that additional land had been preserved as AG, saying some of those parcels they had designated AG were actually residential parcels along Stage in Sections 19 & 30. He had asked that these parcels be changed to reflect their actual use. It was agreed those parcels already zoned RA would not be changed, and those being farmed would remain AG. Commissioners agreed there was no need to make significant changes to the map, recognizing that not all residents will agree with the designations chosen for all parcels.

Phil Brunger, 4647 Fruit Ridge, said that some parcels in Section 30 were rezoned to RA in 1989.

Sharon Steffens, 6690 Walker Ave., pointed out there may be some property owners who had planned to rezone their AG land to RA, but would not be able to do so if the Master Plan for this area is changed. She also wanted to remind the PC that the "sliding scale", used for land divisions of AG land, would prevent a farmer from dividing any parcel 10 acres or less.

Commissioners continued discussing how this area should be designated on the 2005 Future Land Use map: Cassady, Clauser, and Sedlecky thought it should remain as it was shown on the 1998 map. Sedlecky added that if a parcel was not previously master planned RA, it should not change, and if shown as AG now, they should remain AG. Dunneback, Madura and May preferred this part of the map (Stage Ave.) should remain AG.

May said he was displeased with the slow response of Beckett & Raeder to PC requests and the remaining members agreed.

Townsend said that he wanted the Planning Commission to finalize their review of the future land use map and refer it to the Township Board for additional discussion. Cassady-Gall observed that at each Master Plan meeting, some other area is re- reviewed.

Harold Thome, 2137 7 Mile Rd., said that as a farmer, he thinks it is not wise to identify small parcels as AG. He reminded the PC that at the onset of the review process, the public had been told that the map should bring future zoning designations more in line with the actual use of parcels. He pointed out that by designating smaller residential parcels as AG, the owners would then be allowed to "do anything they want" with the land.

Rosenzweig again summarized the revisions discussed and agreed upon for Sections 6, 19, 26, and 30. He also said that the Master Plan process is not complete with the approval of the map. The accompanying text must still be drafted, and that this complete package (map and text) must be considered again at the Township Board.

Sedlecky moved, with support from Dunneback, to accept the Future Land Use map as presented, with the amended sections as noted.

Ayes: 9 Nays: 0 Motion carried.

05-77 DISCUSSION: SIGN ORDINANCE (Chapter 20)

At the request of the Chair, Vega presented introductory remarks about Chapter 20. She said that the chapter is lengthy, contradictory, inconsistent and confusing. There have been a number of conflicts with business owners regarding electronic reader boards, inflatable signs and banners. During her tenure, it has been difficult to administer the ordinance and prefers not to rely on interpretation. She has used previous decisions made by past Zoning Administrators to determine the intent of the Ordinance and identify possible precedents.

She recommends that in 2006, the Zoning Ordinance Review Committee or full Planning Commission review the Sign Chapter for suggested amendments. Several areas meriting immediate review are:

- Temporary signs. Vega is in favor of the PC considering these as a way to assist local businesses who might benefit from added advertising.
- Electronic Reader Board signs. The PC may decide to limit the number of text changes in a 24-hour period. They might also decide to ban flashing lights, which some feel are a distraction to drivers.
- Flag signs. This is a frequently requested advertising type that is not now allowed.
- Vehicle Signs. Several businesses north of 6 Mile have been cited for banners which have been placed on vehicles which are parked in the right of way. Alpine Township allows vehicles as signs if not parked in the Right of Way, and which use a securely placed sign (such as a magnetized sign on a door) that still allows the vehicle to be driven safely. The State of Michigan determines the Right of Way along M-37 and Alpine Township determines the size and height of allowed signs. After discussion, commissioners agreed:
 - Local Agricultural businesses need additional signs to promote local products and farm markets, giving drivers better directions. Marty Brechting said he has just begun researching this, but has found these signs can be costly and also require a State Highway Permit if placed in the right of way on M-37.
 - Reader boards should be allowed in the Township. Text change frequency should be determined after careful review.
 - Signs for limited seasonal use (Holiday decorations) should also be allowed, with maximum display time clearly identified in the Ordinance. Residential areas should not be limited.

Vega suggests that the PC solicit input from business owners in the area to consider their needs. She prefers the PC revise the chapter rather than rewriting it, after they consider regulations in other communities. Clear, concise definitions are required so that regulations can be enforced without compromising the Township's appearance.

Rosenzweig asked that this chapter be included in the 2006 Work Plan. Commissioners are encouraged to provide their thoughts and Vega agreed to research sign ordinances in other communities. She will also request that the Township's Code Enforcement Officer provide some data for the PC to review.

05-78 STAFF UPDATE/COMMISSIONER COMMENTS

Vega said the next two PC agenda will be very full. The Special meeting scheduled for December 29 includes two rezoning public hearings; one for Wal-Mart that is not in compliance with the 1998 Master Plan, and one for Ted Doorenbos that is in compliance.

The January Regular PC agenda is already full: Annual Administrative items include the election of officers and selection of members to the various committees of the Planning Commission. These include the Ordinance Review Committee, Site Plan Review Committee, and the 4 Mile Rd./ Alpine Traffic Committee which includes representatives from the City of Walker and Kent County Road Commission.

Vega said that Wal-Mart is requesting an expansion and relocation of their store to create a "Super Center" which is approximately double the size of the current site. The conceptual site plan will be included in the rezoning packets to be provided to commissioners. Outlots remaining after the demolition of the current store will then be sold for other developments.

Vega said the PC should ask Wal-Mart representatives what Wal-Mart can offer to the Township. May was very concerned with overburdening Alpine's resources, such as Fire and Rescue because more people will visit the store. Cassady-Gall said she wants Wal-Mart to extend Henze Dr. to Cordes Ave., which should alleviate some of the congestion on M-37 south to 4 Mile Rd.

Vega reminded commissioners that Jeff Sluggett will be attending the Wal-Mart meeting for guidance and Tim Johnson is providing planning assistance.

The January regular meeting will include a review of the Wal-Mart site plan, and a rezoning request from the Jaspers on Peach Ridge, who wish to rezone from AG to RA. There may also be a public hearing required for a new Industrial development on Rusche Drive for Ambassador Steel.

Rosenzweig asked if Alpine should begin holding two regular Planning Commission meetings a month, to keep the agendas to a manageable size. No other PC members wanted to increase the number of regular meetings.

Commissioners offered their wishes to all for a Merry Christmas and safe and happy holidays. Sedlecky added that he was very pleased that this major step in the Master Plan process was complete.

05-79 PUBLIC COMMENT/ ADJOURNMENT

Harold Thome, 2137 7 Mile, said he sees no problem with seasonal signs on a temporary basis. He also voiced support for ordinance changes which help farmers by helping people find farms and farm markets, but the signs should be high quality.

Marty Brechting said he thought Sharon Steffens may have some REAP materials for signs in AG zones.

Leon Brechting, 4190 Baumhoff, said that with more commercial development on M-37 between 6 and 7 Mile Roads, the access roads to the businesses should be extended. Rosenzweig said that the Township's Access Management Plan requires any new commercial development to extend cross access as part of their Site Plan approvals.

Madura moved, with support from Townsend, to adjourn at 9:45 PM.

Ayes: 9 Nays: 0 Motion carried.

Nelda Johnson, Secretary

Patricia Kolkman, Recording Secretary