

**ALPINE TOWNSHIP PLANNING COMMISSION
REGULAR MEETING
Thursday, December 21, 2006**

06-67 CALL TO ORDER/ APPROVAL OF MINUTES

The Alpine Township Planning Commission held its regular meeting on Thursday, December 21, 2006, 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 Jim Townsend, Secretary Nelda Johnson, and members Kris Cassady-Gall, Max Dunneback, Greg Madura, Jim May, and Dick Sedlecky. Also in attendance were Township Planning Director Sue Thomas, Planning Consultant Tim Johnson, and Recording Secretary Patricia Kolkman.

Rosenzweig called the meeting to order at 7:30 PM with the Pledge of Allegiance. He then asked that the next two agenda items be addressed in reverse, and commissioners agreed.

Sedlecky and Townsend requested several minor text changes, and **May moved, with support from Dunneback, to approve the minutes of the November 16, 2006 Regular Meeting with the changes noted.**

Ayes: 8

Nays: 0

Motion carried.

06-68 INTRODUCTION OF NEW PLANNING DIRECTOR

At the request of the Chair, Sue Thomas then introduced herself personally to each commissioner and at the podium to those present giving a brief synopsis of her education, past experience and a list of the communities with which she has worked. She went on to say she has spent recent weeks getting acquainted with the Zoning Ordinance, Planning Department records and Township historic documents. She also asks commissioners to ask her to speak up when necessary, as she has a soft voice and she knows the hearing impaired rely on the speaker system in the room. She concluded by saying she is eager to work with the Commission on not only the Master Plan, but on a thorough review and update of the Zoning Ordinance once the Master Plan is adopted.

06-69 OLD BUSINESS: Continuation of discussion on Zoning Ordinance amendments to Chapter 20, Signs, and related amendment to Section 2.40.

At the request of Chair Rosenzweig, Planner Johnson presented "Version 3" of the Sign Ordinance, reflecting changes requested by the Commission at the last meeting. He added that he had met with Townsend to go over his suggested text changes that clarify grammar and use more common language.

Townsend asked if in the interest of time, he could present those changes first, so that members could then discuss their questions and comments on them. Commissioners agreed and Townsend noted each, stating he ~~hopped~~ hoped to simplify meaning and support legal intent. After his review, Chair Rosenzweig asked Commissioners if they had considered prohibiting portable temporary signs having a black background and

neon colored letters. Seven of eight Commissioners agreed these signs should be prohibited.

Planner Johnson then continued through the ordinance, citing additions, deletions, and text changes. Significant discussion took place regarding the changes to Section 20.09 (e) Non-Conforming signs and whether a business owner could repair a sign. Johnson clarified that a pre-existing non-conforming sign could be repaired if the repair brought the sign into conformance, but repairs exceeding 50% of the sign's value would not be allowed. In that case, the sign must be replaced with one meeting current standards in that zoning district and location. The PC agreed the intent of this section was not to keep an owner from *eliminating* an unsafe condition, nor to allow a dangerous structure to be a hazard, but rather to encourage the owner to replace the damaged sign **and** to bring the site into compliance concurrently.

Commissioners also asked that all references to flag signs in the ordinance specify that when displayed on the same flag pole as the U.S. flag, it must be flown below the U.S. flag.

There was also some discussion on whether the ordinance should limit signage by "lot" or by "parcel". While there was discussion supporting each of the word choices, it was ultimately decided that "lot" remained the most appropriate choice, since multiple parcel numbers could exist on the same lot, such as commercial condos or PUDs.

Planner Thomas then noted that since some proposed changes to the Sign Ordinance also relate to Chapter 2, Section 2.40 (e) Home Occupations, a public hearing is necessary for those changes.

May moved, with support from Townsend, to set a public hearing for the January 18, 2007 Regular Planning Commission meeting to discuss proposed amendments to Section 2.40 (e) Home Occupations, of the Alpine Township Zoning Ordinance.

Ayes: 8 Nays: 0 Motion carried.

Commissioners then briefly continued the corrections and editing presented for Chapter 20, Signs, and **Madura moved, with May's support, to recommend to the Township Board approval and adoption of the proposed amendments to Chapter 20, Signs, as revised at this meeting.**

Ayes: 8 Nays: 0 Motion carried.

**06-70 DISCUSSION ITEM(s): 2007 Planning Commission Work Plan
Master Plan Update**

Planner Thomas stated the primary project on the 2007 Work Plan will be to complete the Master Plan process. Concurrent with that work, the Alpine Township Zoning Ordinance will require a total review and update where necessary, along with any changes needed as a result of the Zoning Enabling Act, which became effective July 1, 2006.

Once the Master Plan has been finalized and adopted, Thomas plans to review the complete Ordinance as staff time allows. She pointed out that a total Zoning Ordinance update is a multi-year task, so it will not be completed by the end of the year.

Townsend suggested that the PC set priorities for which chapters should be reviewed and updated.

Planner Johnson then summarized the sequence of remaining items to complete the Master Plan, reminding commissioners that the Master Plan's new Future Land Use map as recommended for approval by the PC is finished, so the balance of Master Plan work will focus on accompanying text:

- The "Goals and Objectives" in the text must be reviewed and approved by the Planning Commission,
- "Community Influence" portion must be updated, citing any development since the last Master Plan, and providing data on Building Permits issued.
- The "Community Description" section will require that population data is reviewed and updated. Rosenzweig commented that development which has been approved in the City of Walker should also be noted, since it will have an impact on Alpine Township.
- The PC should also plan on completing an analysis of land use, which will include an assessment of vacant commercial and industrial land in the Township.
- The PC should reconvene to review the documents from Beckett & Raeder's part of the Master Plan.
- Johnson asked commissioners to consider whether an "Implementation" chapter should be included in the Master Plan text.
- The PC will need to hold joint meetings with the Township Board regarding the status of the Master Plan review.
- Following completion of a draft text, communities must now have a 65 day review period so the County and adjacent communities (The City of Walker and the Townships of Plainfield, Sparta, and Wright in Ottawa County) can consider the impact, if any, to their own municipalities.

Johnson suggests that a January meeting be scheduled to begin the Master Plan process anew. After discussion, Commissioners agreed to meet January 31, 2007, at 7 PM. Johnson suggested the Commission consider limiting the meeting to two hours.

May commented that many projects, such as WalMart, generated many extra meetings, and several large rezoning requests had consumed much of the PC's time in 2006. Now that those have been decided, it should be easier to complete the Master Plan.

Rosenzweig said that recently the State of Michigan passed a Farmland Preservation Act which provides tax credits to farmers who agree to continue farming at least another 20 years. May responded that Alpine Township will not be able to participate in this program because its Master Plan is not current.

Planner Thomas then shared a letter received this afternoon from a large property owner in the Township. The landowner (the golf course at 7 Mile and M-37) requests the PC reconsider future land use designations of its land when reopening Master Plan discussions, as the health of one of the partners has caused them to rethink their long range development interests. Before this, they planned to continue operating the golf course indefinitely. Thomas asked that the letter be entered into the Planning Commission records.

06-71 PUBLIC COMMENT/ COMMISSIONER COMMENT/ COMMITTEE UPDATES

No public comment was offered.

There were no committee reports provided.

Cassady-Gall said she hopes another large development project does not interfere with finalizing the Master Plan review. She also said she was sorry to note that she was just informed that this is her last meeting with the PC, and she has enjoyed working with the PC on the variety of projects they have handled. She added that she would have liked to remain on the Commission to complete the Master Plan. She noted that she was disappointed she had to find out that her term was up in the newspaper.

May wished all fellow Commissioners and the others present Happy Holidays.

Sedlecky agreed that Cassady-Gall's notice of the end of her tenure was not handled as it should have been and also that all PC members should have been advised of the reduction in Commission size in advance. He added that he recently attended a meeting with Kendra Wills, who asked him to share with Commissioners that the Citizen Planner program is once again looking for participants for the 7 session course.

Rosenzweig agreed he feels bad that Kris had to learn of her term expiring in the newspaper, and recalled that he had been told that the PC was expanded to nine members to complete the Master Plan. He said that Kris has been an important member of the Commission in all of its activities during her tenure, and the PC will miss her presence.

06-72 STAFF UPDATE/ ADJOURNMENT

Planner Thomas reiterated for Commissioners that she will gladly handle making arrangements for participation in any training sessions they are interested in. She also added that she hopes all have a safe and happy holiday.

Rosenzweig commented that the Township website needs to be updated soon.

May moved, with Townsend's support, to adjourn at 9:10 PM.

Ayes: 8

Nays: 0

Motion carried.