

**ALPINE TOWNSHIP PLANNING COMMISSION  
REGULAR MEETING  
Thursday, February 15, 2007**

**07-08 CALL TO ORDER/APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

The Alpine Township Planning Commission held its regular meeting on Thursday, February 15, 2007, at the Alpine Township Center, 5255 Alpine Ave., NW, Comstock Park, MI, 49321, with due notice. Present were Chair Jim Townsend, Vice-Chair Greg Madura, Secretary Nelda Johnson, and members Max Dunneback, Jason Rosenzweig and Dick Sedlecky. Excused was Jim May. Also in attendance were Township Planner Sue Thomas, Planning Consultant Tim Johnson, of Mainstreet Planning, and Recording Secretary Patricia Kolkman. Township Engineer Bob VanderMale, of Prein and Newhof was also there to represent both Plainfield and Alpine Townships.

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

**Sedlecky moved, with support from Madura, to accept the minutes of the January 18, 2007, regular Planning Commission Meeting as presented.**

**Ayes: 6**

**Nays: 0**

**Motion carried.**

**07-09 PUBLIC HEARING: Rezoning request, 3780 Walker Ave., NW**

A- Agricultural to RA- Rural Agricultural

In compliance with the 1998 Master Plan

On the Chair's direction, Planner Thomas provided a summary of the applicants' rezoning request:

- Lisa Monroe and Linda Kline jointly own the 16.34 acre site which has a single-family home on it.
- The parcel has approximately 100 feet of frontage on Walker Ave. (It is a non-conforming parcel since the AG district requires each lot to have 330' of road frontage.)
- There is a stream at the western end and associated wetlands that lie north and south. A residential driveway crosses the stream.
- Adjacent properties are zoned AG and RA to the north, AG, RA and C-2 to south, and AG and RA to the east. The Gracewil property to the west is zoned RA.
- Single-family homes are situated to the north, south, and east, with the Gracewil Golf Course to the west.
- The area is currently master planned RA, and several surrounding parcels have been rezoned to RA.

Thomas added that with the property's current dimensions, no land divisions could occur unless a private road were built, but private roads are not allowed in the AG district. In the RA district, however, a lot must be at least 1.5 acres with 165' of road frontage on either a public or private road.

Since the request is in compliance with the Master Plan, harmonious with adjoining and neighboring uses, as well as consistent with rezoning trends in the area in recent years, Staff recommends the rezoning request be granted.

Chair Townsend asked either the applicant or a representative to explain their rezoning request to the PC.

Steve Monroe, spouse of Lisa Monroe said he and his wife now live in Standale. Lisa and her sister Linda Kline own the property, now occupied by their mother and grandmother. The sisters hope to divide the property in the next few years to return to Alpine Township and build a new home.

**Sedlecky moved, with support from Madura, to open the public hearing.**

**Ayes: 6**

**Nays: 0**

**Motion carried.**

Phil Brunger, 4647 Fruit Ridge, asked if building a private road in the RA district would provide the road frontage necessary for multiple land divisions and was told it would as long as other RA land requirements are met. Brunger said he was interested since he owns a similarly configured piece of land.

**Johnson moved with Madura's support to close the public hearing.**

**Ayes: 6**

**Nays: 0**

**Motion carried.**

After confirming with VanderMale that there were no engineering concerns, Townsend asked if Commissioners had questions and/or comments. Sedlecky, Johnson, Rosenzweig, and Dunneback were in favor of the request, agreeing it is in compliance with the Master Plan. While Madura said he had no problems with the rezoning he pointed out that the owners may have difficulty getting a road built with the creek crossing required.

**Sedlecky moved, with Madura's support, based upon representations made by the applicants at this meeting, to recommend to the Township Board approval of the requested rezoning for the parcel at 3780 Walker Ave., NW, (Permanent Parcel # 41-09-34-300-054) as publicly noticed from Agricultural to Rural Agricultural as the request does comply with the recommendations of the 1998 Alpine Township Master Plan and the uses allowed in the Rural Agricultural zone would be compatible with nearby existing land uses.**

**Ayes: 6**

**Nays: 0**

**Motion carried.**

**07-10 PUBLIC HEARING: SPECIAL LAND USE- INSTALLATION OF GENERATOR**

4536 Alpine Ave., NW

Applicant: Plainfield Township Water Dept.

At the Chair's request, Thomas summarized her Staff Report, explaining that this address is one of two water towers in Alpine Township, and is commonly known as the Westgate Elevated Storage Tank. Plainfield Township is requesting approval for the installation of a permanent generator to provide an alternate source of power for its monitoring equipment in the event of a power outage. This equipment allows them to monitor tank functions and water levels remotely and will also provide an alternate source of power to the Fire Department's radio repeater antenna.

The tower is located north of Westgate Bowl and is accessed from an easement on the Westgate Bowl property. Westgate Village Townhomes (High Density Residential R-3) is to the north, and Westgate Bowl (C-2) is to the south. To the east are Westgate

Condominiums (R-3), and the Westgate Subdivision (R-1). Bear's Auto and the Lake Michigan Credit Union (C-2) are to the southwest.

Thomas reminded Commissioners that they can allow a special use for an essential public service structure in any zoning district if it is necessary for public convenience and service, provided it is designed, erected and landscaped to be harmonious with the district. The location must not cause a detriment to the area, and another reasonable location isn't available.

The generator is approximately 3.5 ft. by 2.5 ft. by 3 feet high (about the size of a doghouse) and is described as being very quiet with a 70-decibel noise level (comparable to a running car or a vacuum cleaner) when in use, measured from 23 feet away. This kind of generator is also installed to homes, and has a housing that reduces sound and an exhaust silencer, with the exhaust facing non-residential uses. Water Plant personnel will visit the tower once a month to test the generator on weekdays during normal business hours.

Thomas added that the Township Engineer has reviewed this request and notes the site would be subject to the recently updated Storm Water policy, requiring a stormwater fee of \$3500 per acre which equals \$290 for this site. While a Storm Water Permit application should be submitted, no \$100 administration fee need be charged.

In response to a question from Townsend for more information, VanderMale said that the Westgate tank serves the Intermediate Pressure District, and since it is the westernmost tank in that system, it is considered the most critical. Using a large Water District map, he pointed out the locations of water mains and the storage tanks that supply them. Currently, during a general power outage, a small gas-fired generator is installed but must be monitored in person every two hours or so. The proposed generator has an automatic transfer switch and would get its power via a direct feed from the natural gas main on the site. The Fire Department's radio repeater antenna is already mounted on the tank, and would also be powered by this generator during a power outage. The new generator also requires a small cabinet with a heater to prevent valves from freezing during inclement weather. Al DeWitt, the Plainfield Township Water Distribution Superintendent said the proposed generator will provide an "uninterruptible" source of power to both the water plant monitors and the emergency communications equipment.

**Sedlecky moved, with support from Rosenzweig, to open the public hearing.**

**Ayes: 6**

**Nays: 0**

**Motion carried.**

There being no audience members who wished to speak, **Madura moved to close the public hearing with Sedlecky's support.**

**Ayes: 6**

**Nays: 0**

**Motion carried.**

Sedlecky favors the request, and complimented the Water Department on how quickly they respond to water main breaks. He then reconfirmed that the monthly testing of the generator will be done during the week during business hours.

Madura asked if the generator noise might disturb the neighbors as he thought 70 decibels was too loud. Townsend said it is unlikely any resident would be close enough

to hear it, as the 70-decibel level was measured at a distance of 23 feet, and he was certain the sound would be lower from further away.

DeWitt and Assistant Superintendent Don Petrovich confirmed for Commissioners that in addition to the sound insulation on the generator itself, the 60' x 60' site will also add a wooden fence to the outside of the chain link fence. This should further muffle the sound.

VanderMale reminded the PC that this a "residential grade" generator designed for installation next to a home. Rosenzweig stated it wouldn't be any louder than a neighbor using their lawnmower and shouldn't be a problem.

**Madura then made the following motion, with Sedlecky's support:**

**SPECIAL LAND USE MOTION**

Based upon the representations made by the applicant, I make a motion to approve the special land use permit request for the gas-powered generator, as it meets the standards set forth in Chapter 21 of the Alpine Township Zoning Ordinance, with the following FINDINGS OF FACT:

1. The addition of a gas-powered generator as proposed will enhance the delivery of an essential public service;
2. The special use will not be detrimental to any persons, property, or the general welfare by reason of excessive production of traffic, noise, smoke, fumes, glare, or odors;
3. It will be harmonious with the character and use of the immediate vicinity, the elevated storage tank facility, and was designed in such a manner as to mitigate any negative effects.

**Ayes: 6**

**Nays: 0**

**Motion carried.**

**SITE PLAN MOTION**

Sedlecky then moved, with support from Johnson, Based upon representations made by the applicant and their representatives tonight, to approve the site plan dated January 2007, drawn by Prein & Newhof Engineers, with the following CONDITION OF APPROVAL:

The applicant agrees to all items in the Township Engineer's letter dated February 1, 2007;

and the following FINDINGS OF FACT:

1. The site plan meets the standards set forth in Chapter 18 of the Alpine Township Zoning Ordinance, and
2. The generator's proposed location will not increase any of the site's non-confirming setbacks.

**Ayes: 6**

**Nays: 0**

**Motion carried.**

**07-11 PUBLIC HEARING: SPECIAL LAND USE- INSTALLATION OF GENERATOR**

1094 Boysenberry Court, NW

Applicant: Plainfield Township Water Dept.

Planner Thomas then summarized her staff report on the second Special Land Use request from Plainfield Township. The generator proposed for placement at this site is

identical to the Westgate Tower generator just approved. The exhaust from this generator will also be aimed away from residential uses.

The water tower on Boysenberry Ct. was built before any homes in the Berry Grove Estates subdivision, which is now adjacent to the tower to both the north and west. It is not currently fenced, and lies on an approximate half-acre parcel, 150 feet by 150 feet, is zoned C-2 and owned by Plainfield Township. Access is provided via an easement at the east end of Boysenberry Court.

Surrounding uses include a communications tower and woods to the north; commercial development to the south; woods, storm water facilities and commercial uses to the east; and single family homes to the west, north, and south. The 1998 Master Plan calls for only Low Density Residential (LDR) development to the west, with LDR and Commercial to the north, south, and east.

Plainfield plans to pave a new 12-foot wide access drive as part of site improvements, to prevent yard and sprinkler damage like that done in 2005, when a private antenna co-location on the tower was added. To further limit vehicular traffic to the site, an access gate will also be installed.

*An audience member mentioned that the Berry Grove Estates protective covenants require that all driveways be paved.*

Vander Male then presented the plans for this water tower, explaining it is one of two in the Alpine Ave/Pine Island High-Pressure district, and since it the furthest west is considered a "control tower". A 6-foot high security fence will also be installed as recommended but it has been upgraded from the standard galvanized steel chain link to black "PVC coated" after getting input from adjacent property owners. Three-strand barbed wire will also be added at the top as added protection against unlawful entry. The tower will then have the more typical security measures recommended for a public utility.

The primary access to the site has always been from an easement to the west, off Cordes Ave. which was later paved to become part of the road system in the subdivision. Paving the access drive to the tower will eliminate truck damage to the grassy areas on adjacent land. VanderMale added that Plainfield Township must determine what material will be used for the drive and will also rebuild the drive approach, as it is inadequate for trucks at only 4" thick.

There was considerable discussion among commissioners and VanderMale about the relative merits of the various paving materials for the drive. Audience comments were also offered, which included a fear that property values might diminish if concrete were used. One commissioner noted that concrete is stable and "does not melt" as other material might in extremely high temperatures.

**Sedlecky moved, with support from Madura, to open the public hearing.**

**Ayes: 6**

**Nays: 0**

**Motion carried.**

Karen Hoekstra, 3800 Brambleberry, did not agree a generator is needed since she has never lost power at her home. There are several dead trees (arborvitae) which need replacing after being planted over a year ago. She said her family moved to this area in part because of the beautiful view of downtown Grand Rapids which would be blocked

by the new fence. She also was concerned about using barbed wire since the children in the neighborhood sled on the hill and also play on the open space near the tower.

Gerrit and Jamie Bush, of 1097 Boysenberry Ct., live adjacent to the tower site and they are in favor of a new driveway, since both their yard and sprinkler system were damaged during the private antenna co-location. They think installing concrete will improve access and support Plainfield Township's plan. Mr. Bush pointed out that power outages usually happen during heavy rains, and without a concrete drive, trucks sink into the mud and create ruts, which must be repaired by neighbors. The Bushes also agree the added fencing is necessary but that barbed wire seems dangerous to the children who play near the tower.

Doug Pointer, 1123 Brambleberry, said the cell tower already has a fence, but agrees with adding the generator to the water tower. He thinks more trees should be planted to disguise the fence, and suggests the Water Dept. access the water tower from the radio tower site.

**Madura moved, with Sedlecky's support, to close the public hearing.**

**Ayes: 6**

**Nays: 0**

**Motion carried.**

Al DeWitt, of the Water Dept., said that the second access to this site actually belongs to the radio tower, with whom Plainfield Township had an informal agreement until the Berry Grove subdivision was developed.

In response to a question from Townsend, VanderMale explained the driveway is now the only access to the tower. Another easement would be required for a second access.

Sedlecky had several comments:

- Security fencing is now a requirement. Homeland Security guidelines now require that vital public services are protected. He said that even though he understands parents' concerns about safety and barbed wire, he thinks it is necessary so adequate measures are used to deter saboteurs.
- He said that unlike Berry Grove residents, he has experienced power outages in Westgate and thinks a consistent power source to the water tower is necessary.
- Replacing the dead shrubs should provide adequate screening of the new fence.
- He prefers using concrete and thinks a shared access for the water and radio towers makes sense.

Commissioner Johnson said the Township needs to practice preventive maintenance of its critical sites, and not wait until a problem occurs to address it.

Rosenzweig agrees installing the generator is a good idea, and commented that the neighborhood children should not be playing on private property.

Dunneback prefers concrete to upgrade the driveway, and doesn't think it lowers property values. Because of the size of vehicles which go in and out of this site, he thinks concrete is the best material to use.

**SPECIAL LAND USE MOTION**

**Sedlecky then moved, with support from Johnson, based upon the representations made by the applicant, to approve the special land use permit request for the gas-powered generator, as it meets the standards set forth in Chapter 21 of the Alpine Township Zoning Ordinance, with the following FINDINGS OF FACT:**

1. The addition of a gas-powered generator as proposed will enhance the delivery of an essential public service,
2. The special use will not be detrimental to any persons, property, or the general welfare by reason of excessive production of traffic, noise, smoke, fumes, glare or odors, and
3. It will be harmonious with the character and use of the immediate vicinity, the elevated storage tank facility and was designed in such a manner as to mitigate any negative effects.

**Ayes: 6**

**Nays: 0**

**Motion carried.**

<b>SITE PLAN MOTION</b>
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**Rosenzweig moved, with Madura's support, Based upon representations made by the applicant and its representatives tonight, to approve the site plan dated January, 2007, drawn by Prein & Newhof Engineers, with following CONDITION OF APPROVAL:**

**The applicant agrees to all items in the Township Engineer's letter dated February 1, 2007.**

**And the following FINDINGS OF FACT:**

**The site plan meets the standards set forth in Chapters 12 and 18 of the Alpine Township Zoning Ordinance.**

**Ayes: 6**

**Nays: 0**

**Motion carried.**

**07-12 PUBLIC COMMENT/MASTER PLAN WORK ITEMS**

No public comment was offered.

Planning Consultant Johnson then asked Commissioners to move to a conference table to better view the Future Land Use Map changes that were made by Beckett & Raeder after PC discussion. Johnson thought members should confirm that the changes made still reflect their preferences for the Township. He added that he has provided each of them with a summary of the future land use categories already agreed upon by the PC at its last Master Plan meeting.

**❖ Future Land Use Categories as Determined by the Planning Commission**

Johnson asked commissioners to review the definitions for each of the designations they have chosen. Several changes were requested: for LDR, change "proposed" to "required", and Mixed Use Planned Unit Development, line three, add "on" before "compatibility." Further discussion on the Mixed Use PUD category focused on how to clarify the proper balance of commercial and residential uses in this kind of a development. Planner Thomas suggests greater detail be added to the narrative which clearly defines the target amount of both the residential and commercial development

the Township wants to see in this type of development, expressed in a percentage of each.

❖ **Future Streets**

Consultant Johnson asked that commissioners review the summary document provided which identifies new roads that were confirmed by the PC during the **1998** Master Plan process. He noted that some of these roads had also been shown on **1988** Master Plan maps. The summary document for streets explains the rationale and directions each future street will resolve.

Some Commissioners had concerns about the planned route for the future extension of Cordes Avenue because Holy Trinity's cemetery is on the proposed route. Johnson reminded the PC that roads are shown as a dotted line to reflect the "shortest distance is a straight line" connection of two general areas but is not intended to reflect the exact location of that road. Plans are to avoid Holy Trinity's cemetery during road construction.

No plans for any future roads will be made until a development proposal is submitted to the Township. That is when road construction costs and the exact road location are determined, with the Township recognizing that developers have paid for road construction in the past. By identifying future roads on the Master Plan map, developers will know that new roads will be required when development occurs in these areas.

❖ **Future Land Use Map and Zoning Designations**

Johnson told commissioners he had reviewed the minutes from the December, 2005 regular PC meeting, when commissioners presented the map they felt reflected their view of the Township's future. Townsend confirmed with Johnson that map designations could still be amended if the PC wanted to make changes.

Johnson focused on land use designations made for several parts of the Township, citing the following areas:

- 6 Mile Rd. and Stage Ave. area. Several smaller lots, not suitable for farming, are shown as Agricultural for future development. Commissioners recalled that during the Master Plan discussion, there had been discussion about how this area should be designated, since most of this area is being used as residential and the lots were in fact too small to farm. The PC had however wanted to increase the amount of AG land in the Township. Commissioners agreed this area should be shown as RE (Residential Estate) on the 2007 Master Plan.
- Southwest quarter of the Township. There was significant discussion regarding the letter sent by Karl and Mary Schulte about their preference for their property's designation. The PC agreed land in this general area should continue to be designated for AG use on the Future Land Use map.

An audience member recalled that some long term Township residents had been afraid that changing their land use designations on the Future Land Use map from AG to RA would increase their taxes. Sedlecky pointed out that even if the Future Land Use designation was changed, the existing zoning of the property would not change unless the owner requested it.

Planner Johnson suggested Commissioners discuss where to draw the line for the land designation border between RA and AG along Peach Ridge in Section

28; whether at 6 Mile Rd. or the creek. Johnson, Dunneback, and Madura preferred using the creek for the dividing line, while Rosenzweig and Sedlecky chose 6 Mile Rd. Townsend abstained from voting, although he said he saw no good reason to use the creek. Planner Johnson reminded commissioners that the borders used are *suggested borders only*, but with good reasons provided by an owner, rezoning could still be considered. The consensus was to show the AP designation north of Indian Mill Creek as was proposed in the 1998 Plan.

- 10 Mile Rd. and Fruit Ridge Ave. Planner Johnson said that a parcel in this area is currently zoned and master planned as Industrial, though all surrounding land is master planned for AG Preservation. Commissioners recalled the land in question had at one time been used as an agriculturally related packing facility and a migrant farm worker field office, but since the land is low and wet it is unlikely to be developed as another industrial facility. If the PC changes its Master Plan designation to AP, an agriculturally related use would still be permitted. Johnson commented that the PC could either acknowledge its current zoning (Industrial) and leave it industrial or state its preference with a designation change on the Future Land Use Map. Commissioners agreed to change the Master Plan designation from Industrial to Agricultural.

Townsend then recognized an audience member, Kathy Kennedy, and asked her to provide input about the land use designations selected for her family's land.

Kennedy, who lives in Grand Haven, said she represents the few remaining members of the Jost family, who own land at 4605 and 4823 Baumhoff Ave. NW. The southernmost parcel, 4605 Baumhoff, has been designated as Rural Estate development, while 4823 Baumhoff, adjacent and immediately north, was shown as remaining Agricultural when this review began. She and her family prefer the Rural Estate designation be used for both, as it will give them more flexibility when it is time to sell or develop the land.

The family had written to the Planning Commission stating its preference, and asked their attorney to approach Beckett & Raeder and Township representatives at the Master Plan Open House in October of 2005, where he had been assured that both lots would be identified for future residential development. At that meeting, it was confirmed that because the land was in the Sewer District and adjacent to Alpine Elementary School, it was an appropriate designation. Kennedy said the map now being reviewed reverts to the earlier designations (RE and AG) and the family would like the land to be all RE.

Rosenzweig recalled that there had been a decision during Master Plan discussions to "swap" land use designations between those in Section 12 for the AG designation used for the Jost land. He remembered that it had been decided to keep the Jost land master planned for AG preservation. Considerable discussion went on between the Planning Consultant and Commissioners about the borders for the current Sanitary Sewer district. After additional review of the Sewer District map, it was confirmed that it terminates at Alpine Church and Baumhoff Ave., without extending further west. The Jost property is therefore outside of the utilities district. A possible explanation was given that since Beckett & Raeder had assumed that any land within ½ mile of existing sewer lines was also "in the district", they used that rationale with the Jost land, since sewer was built to serve Alpine Elementary School which is just across the street from them.

Sedlecky recalled discussions about the borderlines for zoning designation areas when it was agreed that roads should not be used as borders to separate designations. He suggests that the north parcel continue to be shown as AG Preservation, with the understanding that if the owners are able to provide valid reasons for a rezoning to RE, a rezoning could still occur, i.e., a rezoning from AG to RE, that is NOT in compliance with the Master Plan.

A poll of Commissioners present showed that **all** favored retaining the Agricultural Preservation designation for the north (4823 Baumhoff Ave.) parcel owned by the Jost family.

Planner Johnson reminded Commissioners that the balance of Master Planned Roads that will be discussed at the next Master Plan meeting are not exact locations for construction, but are areas to direct internal Township traffic between sites.

### **07-13 STAFF UPDATE / COMMISSIONER COMMENT/ ADJOURNMENT**

Planner Thomas reminded Commissioners that the next meeting is February 28, 2007, from 7 PM to 9 PM for a Master Plan Work Session.

Rosenzweig commented that the Township web site has still not been updated.

Madura asked if the Township Board had given details to Thomas about their concerns with the Sign Ordinance amendments the Planning Commission had recommended. Thomas said she will ask for additional information which she will pass along to the PC. The discussion on this item was tabled until the March Board meeting.

Sedlecky commented that "cement" is an ingredient in "concrete" and the correct term should be used during plan review discussions.

Thomas advised Site Plan Review Committee members that their next meeting had been rescheduled to Thursday, February 22, 2007, at 2 PM.

**Rosenzweig moved, with Dunneback's support, to adjourn the meeting at 10:15 PM.**

**Ayes: 6**

**Nays: 0**

**Motion carried.**

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Nelda Johnson, Secretary

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Patricia Kolkman, Recording Secretary