

**ALPINE TOWNSHIP PLANNING COMMISSION  
SPECIAL MASTER PLAN WORK SESSION  
Wednesday, February 28, 2007**

**07-14 MASTER PLAN WORK SESSION: Future Roads Discussion**

The Alpine Township Planning Commission held a special meeting on Wednesday, February 28, 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 and Dick Sedlecky. Excused was Jim May. Absent was Jason Rosenzweig. Also in attendance were Planning Director Sue Thomas and Planning Consultant Tim Johnson of Mainstreet Planning. Also present was Recording Secretary Patricia Kolkman.

Townsend called the meeting to order at 7:05 PM.

Consultant Johnson said this meeting will cover the Township's future road planning. He added that a Future Land Use Map should identify a community's future roads and land use categories so future developers are made aware of the Township's vision of traffic management.

Townsend said he did not recall that Beckett & Raeder had included any future road discussions in its meetings with the Planning Commission, and would appreciate some background on the history and rationale used during roadway planning, since Alpine Township is a community committed to Agricultural Preservation.

Johnson said he will provide the background information requested, but asked first if Commissioners would begin by reviewing and confirming designations used on the final Land Use Map done by Beckett & Raeder. Several areas need to be clarified before the PC begins discussing future roads.

- 4 Mile Rd. and Fruit Ridge Ave. This area is identified as "Sub-Area #2" in the 1998 Master Plan and is used commercially at the present (the Hofacker property) and is planned for Commercial uses in the Master Plan as well. Details include a recommendation to change access from 4 Mile Rd. to Fruit Ridge Ave., also noting that future intersection improvements are planned at the Fruit Ridge Ave. and 4 Mile Rd intersection in both the City of Walker and Alpine Township. Johnson commented that considering the currently pending plans for development in the City of Walker, and anticipated 4 Mile Corridor road improvements, this designation still seems appropriate. He added that the most recently provided information illustrates a small portion of 4 Mile Rd. to be widened to 5 lanes (near future Walker development) while the balance will widen to only three lanes. There are also plans to realign the intersections at Walker Ave. and 4 Mile Rd. and Bristol at 4 Mile Rd. Planner Johnson commented that since there are definite plans to widen 4 Mile Rd., the Planning Commission might consider drafting an Ordinance amendment that will increase building setback requirements for 4 Mile Rd. development since the wider road will likely impact development plans.

- Other Sub-Areas in the 1998 Master Plan. Johnson then addressed two other areas in the Township which are defined as “Sub-Area #1” and “Sub- Area #3”. One area, along 4 Mile Rd. from just west of Walker to Baumhoff Ave. is currently zoned Commercial and also planned for commercial development is identified as “Sub-Area #1”. Johnson explained that a sub-area is generally more than a single parcel, but for purposes of development, common design standards are used such as access management techniques. In this case, a Baumhoff Ave. drive is recommended rather than continued use of one on 4 Mile Rd. The Master Plan also recommends only limited parking areas in front (4 Mile Rd.) with the balance to the rear of any new structure. Landscaping is also recommended to “soften” the site’s appearance to the rear and buffer residential development adjacent to it. Service drives within the area should also be used as part of the design, to connect different businesses within the site and direct traffic.

“Sub-Area #3” is the area including the Rasch home site at 930 Six Mile Road, extending easterly to the West Central Storage site, then southerly to include the mobile home sales business lots, the Gregware Equipment lots, the Oasis Hot Tubs property and the Van Luster home site. This area was added to the Master Plan in 2003. There are approximately 20 acres in this part of the Township, now divided into 8 lots. Again, cross connection between lots and sharing of driveways is planned to reduce traffic into and out of the area onto Alpine Ave. Landscaping planted to the rear will also provide a buffer to any future development.

Uniform setbacks could also be defined for all three “Sub-Areas” and could become part of the controlled design for these development areas. Johnson added that these three sub-areas concepts are still valid.

Dunneback said that since this Commission is aware that future road work will be done to widen 4 Mile Rd., this is the right time to make any change in setbacks to this 4 Mile Rd. area, before any additional commercial development takes place. He said that 30 years ago, the PC didn’t anticipate the amount of growth Alpine Township has had and didn’t increase setbacks along Alpine Ave. before it was widened.

- Future Roads in Alpine Township. Johnson then directed Commissioners to their copies of the 1998 Master Plan which illustrates possible paths for additional roadways within the Township. He said that the objective is to connect points at the west end of the Township with locations at its eastern portion. These new roads would also intersect with the Township’s north/south roadways. Cul-de-sacs would not be built.
  - Johnson identified Henze St. as the most southern planned road which will run east and west. ~~Townsend confirmed that there is also a plan to direct traffic south within the Township across now-open land.~~
  - Johnson explained that Fruit Ridge Ave., for example, is already identified as a “County Arterial” road, directing north/south traffic for local travelers. He added it is important for Commissioners to recognize that roads are

“not planned through farmland.” Sedlecky commented that only developable land would be considered for future connector roads.

Planner Johnson pointed out, as an example, that navigating one’s way through the Westgate Subdivision is not simple since many cul-de-sacs were included when the subdivision was developed. At that time, cul-de-sacs were used to reduce through traffic, while today’s philosophy is to reduce the number of cul-de-sacs and provide connectivity.

- A second east/west road is planned to the north of Henze, and it is shown from the north of Menard’s property extending westerly to Bristol Ave. Planner Johnson said this is an area where future residential growth is planned. He added that more roads will be needed when more residents move into the Township, as its internal traffic will require redirection.

Madura concluded that when that residential development occurs, it is the developer who builds the new roads and extends utilities. He pointed out that straighter roads would allow the developer to build a system of roads and utilities at a more reasonable cost than a “meandering” design would. He added that he didn’t have a problem with four (4) new east/west roads in the Township.

- Planner Thomas informed the Commission that there are plans to add traffic signals to the 4 Mile Rd. and Bristol Ave. intersection as well as the intersection at Walker Ave. and 4 Mile Rd.

Johnson said that a formal motion to adopt the east/west roads in Alpine Township was not required, although all Commissioners present favored keeping them on the map. There was then considerable discussion among Commissioners and Planners about the location of a planned north/south road connecting Alpine Church St. and 6 Mile Rd. Johnson commented that the property in litigation on the south side of 6 Mile included a north- south roadway as part of its design, which could have connected with Cordes Ave., if it were extended. He restated that there has never been a plan to disturb the Holy Trinity Cemetery on Alpine Church St. , and that connecting the two areas would bypass the gravesites. It was decided to remove this future road (Cordes Ave. extended) from the plan.

Townsend requested that Johnson include discussion of roadway plans in the text he is drafting to accompany the Master Plan map.

Johnson then continued discussion of road planning relative to the Master Plan. He referenced a point east of M-37 (at approximately Alpine Church St. which extends east to Westshire Dr.) where a public road is being planned presently. He added that the Zoning Ordinance specifies that vacant land cannot be used for a new structure if the Master Plan designates a future road there.

- Land Use Designations

Johnson then asked Commissioners to review the Land Use map with him for corrections:

- 1) Churchill Place Apts. and Westgate Village Townhouses are incorrectly labeled Commercial, when they are HDR (High Density Residential).
- 2) One mobile home park east of Alpine Ave. is labeled LDR (Low Density Residential) when it should be shown as MHP (Mobile Home Park.) while the Strawberry Pines Condo development is incorrectly labeled LDR instead of condominiums. He asked that Commissioners review the rest of the map to verify its accuracy and then provide corrections.

A new Sub-Area (Sub Area 3) was added to the Master Plan text in 2003, and it includes the Rasch home site at 930 Six Mile Road, extending easterly to M-37, (the West Central Storage site) and then southerly to include the mobile home sales business lots, the Gregware Equipment lots, the Oasis Hot Tubs property and the Van Luster home site. These lots are now planned for future commercial development, to be linked by a service road system and limited access drives. Public water and sewer is available and would be required for any development.

Johnson then briefly summarized two other designations on the 1998 Master Plan which Commissioners should confirm are still appropriate; the "Under the Pines" farm market at the northwest corner of 7 Mile Rd. and M-37 is now planned for Commercial development, and Vitality Dr. to still be shown as a future road extension to the west. Commissioners agreed these designations should remain.

Planner Thomas informed the Commission that the Rusche Dr. extension north to Comstock Park Dr., now shown as a future road on the Master Plan, looks like it will be constructed. The previous hurdles to completing the road have been overcome, as the Railroad has given its approval for a railroad crossing.

- Use of Proper Designations on the Land Use Map

Johnson then asked Commissioners to confirm that the proper color coding has been used for several designations: "Public Uses", such as the Maranatha Camp on Division Ave. south of 6 Mile Rd., The Township Hall, and the 7 Mile Rd./ Alpine Baptist Church property. Johnson added that for example, the land along M-37 just west of the Wahlfield Plat residential area and fronting on M-37 at Marway St. is actually zoned and used as Commercial.

At this juncture, Townsend asked if a revised map could be provided to Commissioners for further detailed discussion, and Johnson said he would try to have another made.

Several other parts of the Township should be discussed in greater detail:

- The owners of the public golf course at 7 Mile Rd. and M-37 recently contacted Staff about the land use designation for their property. They ask that the Planning Commission reconsider it during this Master Plan review, since one of the partners has had recent serious health issues and the other lives out of state. The partnership is now reviewing its long range plans and wants to have as much information about the site's future to effectively plan ahead.

The partners have no plans to sell the golf course at this time, although they recognize that a partnership dissolution might occur. They also want the PC to know that they plan to continue operation, and haven't been approached to sell the land.

After limited discussion, Commissioners agreed to defer any further discussion until topographical and utilities maps are available for reference to the site.

- Johnson then asked Commissioners to review the area of the Township which is east of M-37 and north of 8 Mile Rd. The area is currently used and master planned for Rural Estate (RE) uses. The PC confirmed they prefer it continue with that designation on the 2007 Master Plan map.
- The area east of M-37 at 10 Mile Rd. currently has several parcels that are zoned R-1 and used for Low Density Residential as well. Johnson noted that there was a rezoning request recently for the R-1 parcel at the southeast corner to C-2 Commercial, which the PC had denied. The request was not in compliance with the 1998 Master Plan, and there are neither public utilities nor plans to extend them to this location. Commissioners agreed the Future Land Use Map for this area should remain with an R-1 development designation.
- The Carter Lumber site at 7474 Alpine Ave. is zoned C-2 and also shown as being master planned for C-2 Commercial. Members of the Commission noted that one reason Carter Lumber chose that site is that it has direct access to the railroad tracks directly behind it for deliveries. All Commissioners agreed that the site should continue with its present zoning and future designation as C-2.
- The DuCharme property, a vacant approximately 62-acre parcel, having an address of 1190 10 Mile Rd., with frontage on M-37 and a small access strip at 10 Mile Rd., is now zoned C-2 and adjacent to land zoned Industrial at the end of Venture Drive. Both parcels are under common ownership. Planner Thomas reviewed the history of the parcel and reported that it had once been zoned Low Density Residential in the 60's, but was rezoned by the Township in 1977 to Commercial. She and Johnson told Commissioners that even though the land has M-37 road frontage, obtaining access from MDOT via M-37 is unlikely. In addition, significant wetlands exist on the property with no utilities available now or planned for any future commercial development. After Commissioners discussed wetlands considerations and the limited possibility for extending utilities, they agreed that neither the Commercial nor the Low-Density Residential designations used in the past were reasonable. They preferred using the Rural Estate (RE) designation used on the Master Plan for this general area.

Johnson said that further information about utilities in the Township as well as any plans for utility extensions are needed before further discussion of long range development can take place. He hoped to have this information by the next PC meeting.

o Additional Master Plan Discussions needed

Planner Johnson indicated that the Commission should address several land use designations at its next meeting, and should decide whether they will be used in the 2007 Plan:

- o CPUD (Commercial Planned Unit Development) Text on this designation is still in the Zoning Ordinance. Johnson noted for Commissioners that this PUD designation grants the Planning Commission more control in the site design of a new commercial development, and he doesn't recommend that Commissioners eliminate it.
- o MPUD (Mixed Use Planned Unit Development) This designation is no longer in the Zoning Ordinance, having been revoked in 2003. Two areas in the Township, however, have been designated for MPUD development on the Future Land Use map. One is at 4 Mile Rd., west of Hendershot Ave., and the other is the portion of the Doorenbos property on the east side of Cordes, south of the creek.

Johnson explained that a Mixed Use PUD would combine a mixture of compatible commercial and residential uses with appropriately designed pedestrian and vehicular traffic within it. Access points would be limited, and a service road system within the development would direct traffic efficiently.

In responding to questions from Commissioners, Johnson said that a "Town Center" is only one type of design for a Mixed Use development, but not the only one. He added that a Town Center development design could be used not only when redeveloping older areas of a community, but could also be the design of new development, such as the Village Center under construction in Cannon Township.

**Dunneback moved to adjourn at 8:58 PM, with support from Madura.**

**Ayes: 5**

**Nays: 0**

**Motion carried.**

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Nelda Johnson, Secretary

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Patricia Kolkman, Recording Secretary