

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

07-15 CALL TO ORDER/ APPROVAL OF MINUTES

The Alpine Township Planning Commission held its regular meeting on Thursday, March 15, 2007, at 7:30 PM 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 member Max Dunneback. Excused were members Dick Sedlecky, Jim May, and Jason Rosenzweig. Also present were Township Planning Director Sue Thomas, Planning Consultant Tim Johnson, and Recording Secretary Patricia Kolkman.

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

Johnson moved, supported by Dunneback, to approve the minutes of the Special Master Plan meeting of January 31, 2007, with one minor correction to spelling on page 2.

Ayes: 4 Nays: 0 Motion carried.

Johnson moved, with Madura's support, to approve the minutes of the Regular Planning Commission meeting of February 15, 2007, as presented.

Ayes: 4 Nays: 0 Motion carried.

07-16 PLANNING COMMISSION ADMINISTRATIVE ITEMS/ MASTER PLAN WORK ITEMS

No Planning Commission administrative items were offered.

Townsend said he had recently spoken with Rosenzweig, who could not attend this Master Plan meeting. Rosenzweig hoped that the deletion of the future road extension of Cordes Ave. north would be reconsidered, since any new development near the designated "Lamoreaux Dr. extended" on the Future Land Use map, as well as other planned road extensions, (such as Henze St.) will increase traffic on Cordes Ave. and Alpine Church St. significantly. This additional traffic will only add to the current difficulty of making a left (northbound) turn onto Alpine Ave. from Alpine Church St. Rosenzweig also felt that an extension of Cordes Ave. north of Alpine Church St. would direct this increased traffic to the east away from farmland, which would help farmers and complement Alpine's Master Plan objective of protecting Agricultural areas. He also hoped the PC would consider adding a Henze St. extension further west to Bristol Ave.

Madura commented that Cordes Ave. traffic will increase with any development and traffic on both M-37 and Alpine Church St. will therefore increase as well. After a brief discussion, it was the consensus of those present that the Cordes Ave. north extension should be deleted from the Master Plan.

Planner Thomas then provided some information to Commissioners regarding projects underway that impact Alpine Township:

- 1) Sparta Township officials have provided documentation to Alpine regarding changes to the Sparta Airport. This information and the accompanying maps were given to the Commissioners, and Thomas confirmed that the new approach required for the airport meets requirements and agrees with both Alpine's Zoning and Master Plan designations for it.
- 2) The 4 Mile Rd. Corridor Study group, Alpine Township, The City of Walker, and the Kent County Road Commission met and summarized details of planned road improvements. Four Mile Rd. will be widened at different points to increase the number of lanes. It will be increased to three lanes from Fruit Ridge Ave. to Cordes Ave. and to five lanes from Cordes to Alpine Avenues. Thomas added that one hundred (100) feet of right-of-way is required for these changes which are not slated to be complete until 2011.
- 3) There are also plans to add a non-motorized trail as part of the White Pine Trail in Kent County, and the Musketawa Trail in Ottawa County, although the exact location of the trail has not been determined. At least part of the 4 Mile Rd. right of way will be used but it is not yet known whether it will be on the north or south side.
- 4) Construction of a gravity sanitary sewer from Alpine Ave. west to the mid-point of Bristol and Cordes Avenues is scheduled for this year. Staking of the affected properties is evident and both residents and business owners' concerns are being addressed.

A *Force Main* (a sewer line under pressure to reverse the gravitational flow of sewage, but not available for direct connections because of its high pressure) will be installed from the previously noted midpoint west to Walker Ave. The force main will link the existing public gravity main to a new gravity sewer line planned for 2008. The new line is for a small portion of Alpine Township (Kenowa Hills Schools and Alpine Meadows Mobile Home Park) which will redirect sewage flow from the City of Grand Rapids to the North Kent Sewer System. The new line begins at Fruit Ridge Ave. and will continue east along 4 Mile Rd. to the Force Main described above.

- 5) The City of Walker has shared copies of its Future Land Use Map with Alpine Township giving us Master Plan information from all four of the communities adjacent to us. Wright Township, to our west, has recently engaged the services of MainStreet Planning, which Consultant Johnson administers. Johnson said he will supply a copy of their Master Plan for the Commission's review.

Johnson then asked Commissioners to review with him several areas in the Township from the 2007 revised Future Land Use Map.

- The 8 Mile Rd. / Alpine Ave. area

Johnson said that this review is necessary to confirm whether the revised map still reflects the Commission's view of the Township. Both Planner Thomas and Consultant Johnson after discussion felt that this area should reflect the existing uses in the area; i.e., if the land is being used now as Residential, it should be designated Residential; if currently used as Industrial, it should continue to be designated Industrial.

Commissioners agreed using this rationale for parts of the Township without public utilities. After a brief discussion, the PC agreed to use the development designations used on the 1998 Master Plan.

Dunneback then asked for additional information on the 4 Mile Rd. construction plans discussed earlier: He asked where the additional land for the increased 4 Mile Rd. right-of-way would come from. Will each community (Walker and Alpine Township) provide an equal amount of land for the expansion? He added that he thinks the PC should include cross access planning (for sub-areas) and the increased 4 Mile Rd. right-of-way needs for 4 Mile Rd. land during this Master Plan review.

Planner Thomas then provided Commissioners the "overlay district" derived from the 4 Mile Rd. corridor study to assist them in planning for future development on 4 Mile Rd.

Townsend asked if the planned 5-lane portion of 4 Mile Rd. would extend further west. Thomas explained that the 100 foot right-of-way requirement is only needed from Fruit Ridge Ave. east to M-37 on 4 Mile Rd., but pointed out that no money has been allocated for acquiring the land for it. The Kent County Road Commission has suggested each community include this information in their planning documents, and to also include the additional right of way requirement during any development review.

Comments on several areas of the Township outside of the utilities' district continued.

Townsend then directed Commissioners again to their consideration of land north of 8 Mile Rd. Planner Johnson commented that this area has developed primarily as "large lot residential" (Rural Estate- RE) and it appears the trend in the area will continue. All Commissioners agreed this area should be planned as Residential Estate.

The Alpine Golf Course property at 7 Mile Rd. and M-37 was discussed extensively.

Thomas explained to Commissioners that the property owners had contacted the Township in December 2006, asking whether they could meet with the Planning Commission about changing the Master Plan designation for their property. Thomas had advised them that since the Master Plan Review process was underway, it was timely to do so. A letter from the owners asking for PC review was received in February of 2007.

Thomas said the golf course is owned by a partnership of two men, one a resident of Alpine Township, and the other living out of state. The local owner had a heart attack recently, which prompted the partnership to review all their options for the land before deciding whether to sell it. Presently they are considering a sale of the course with continued operation, or developing the land. Thomas commented again that since the Master Plan review process is nearing completion, this would be an appropriate time for a review of the land and its designation.

Thomas summarized that the golf course occupies approximately 120 acres of land northeast of Alpine Ave. and 7 Mile Rd. Most of the acreage is zoned Agricultural, although the clubhouse location along Alpine Ave., is zoned Commercial.

- The current Master Plan designation is "Public/Semi-Public", which presumes the golf course will continue operating.

- A review of utilities in the area shows that public water is available at both Vinton Ave. and 7 Mile Rd., and it could be extended to serve the property.
- Public sewer is installed along 7 Mile Rd. east of Alpine Ave., and while it could physically be extended north to serve the part of the golf course south of the creek, this would constitute an expansion of the sewer district. Until the North Kent Sewer System "Clean Water Plant" is fully operational, the overall sewer district will not be extensively reviewed by the NKSA members. The Township Board plans to review its sewer boundaries in November of 2008, after the Township sewer lines are directed to the North Kent Sewer System.
- The golf course also has a wetlands area just north of its clubhouse, which has been identified by the Kent County Drainage District.
- The Kent County Road Commission owns a narrow strip of land on the north end of the course and it is used for access to 8 Mile Rd. by both KCRC and the golf course maintenance crew. If future development is considered it is important to note that this access is not owned by the golf course.

Commissioners commented on what kinds of development might be appropriate for the area:

- Madura said that industrial development should *not* be considered, as it would negatively impact those homes bordering the golf course.
- Johnson pointed out that apartments and mobile home parks were inappropriate for this site as well.
- It was acknowledged that the western border of the Wahlfield Plat, along M-37 at Marway St. does already have some office development.

In response to questions from Commissioners, Planners Thomas and Johnson concurred that if the PC chooses a "Mixed Use" designation for the Master Plan map, it must also be defined in the Master Plan text. A mixed use could include both detached and attached dwellings. For illustrative purposes only, the Planners provided examples of what a Mixed Use development could contain: commercial uses such as those in the General Commercial designation, multi-family dwellings, and/or a senior housing development. Public water and sewer would also be required for these uses, however. Since access to M-37 is limited, no "big box" development or drive through uses would be permitted. The PC could decide to limit non-residential uses in a development to 25% or less of the entire 120-acre site.

In any event, Thomas made it clear that any development considered **must** be compatible with the pre-existing homes bordering it.

Dunneback then asked for further information regarding a "Town Center" development at this site, noting that 7 Mile Rd. is closer to the center of Alpine Township than other locations. Johnson explained that by definition, a Town Center would be a "mix of uses within a specific design", but that the community (Alpine Township) would decide what that specific design might be. A "Town Center" design would be developed as a Mixed Use PUD, so before it would be considered for development anywhere in the Township, the MPUD designation must first be re-introduced into the Alpine Township Zoning Ordinance. He reminded the Commission that this designation had been revoked by the Township Board several years ago. Johnson added that *any* development here should be done as a PUD since the Commission would then retain design control of the project.

Johnson cited the "Village Center" development currently underway In Cannon Township as an example of a PUD. This 40-acre design includes Commercial uses along a major road, a "walkable" downtown area, single family homes, a "Rain Garden", which contains plant species able to absorb rainwater and sustain a habitat with indigenous wildlife.

Commissioners questioned what the density of any residential uses could be in a mixed use development. Planner Johnson confirmed that structures of up to 8-units could be allowed, and could include a mix of both apartments and condos. Some Commissioners were concerned about adding more rental units to the Township, but Thomas advised them that the Township cannot legally dictate ownership. It was suggested that the building types would first match those of the closest existing uses, (single-family detached homes) and then gradually expand to include other housing types.

Johnson and Thomas reminded Commissioners that the PC will choose the designation for this location and then expand the text to describe what Commissioners think that Alpine Township wants to have there in its future. As has been stated in the past, the final decision to adopt the revised Master Plan remains the Township Board's.

Townsend asked if any other reasonable designations could be considered for the golf course and Johnson and Thomas said Commercial, Single Family Housing, or Office might also be considered. Townsend asked if the Commission should postpone a decision on selecting the Mixed Use PUD designation for the course. Dunneback, Secretary Johnson, and Madura all agreed that the MPUD designation was the "most appropriate" designation to use for this 120 acre site. Planner Johnson explained to Commissioners that the text accompanying the Master Plan can be written to explain the Commission's choice for this site. Secretary Johnson said that the MPUD designation will keep the Township's options open when looking at potential development designs. Dunneback stated he did not think the PC should postpone a decision and **Madura moved, with Dunneback's support, to designate the land now occupied by the Alpine Golf Course as MPUD on the revised Master Plan map.**

Ayes: 4

Nays: 0

Motion carried.

07-17 PUBLIC COMMENT

Townsend then offered members of the audience an opportunity to comment on the Planning Commission's discussion. He asked that comments be limited in length, and that speakers not duplicate their comments so everyone who wished to speak would have the chance to do so.

Dan Baldwin, 6584 Wahlfield, said he lives 200 yards from the railroad tracks, and his windows rattle whenever trains pass by. He thinks additional homes are not appropriate for the area, and also is concerned about the low areas which hold water.

Mark Wretschko, 636 Marway, asked the Commission to consider the Township's need for parks and green space. He has lived at the Marway address for 20 years, with the golf course there in the summer, and the open space when snow is on the ground. He said that when snow is on the ground the course is used for cross country skiing and walking. He urged the Township to keep it (the course) as open space.

Ray Bekins, 6131 Vinton, has lived in the Township for 42 years, works at the golf course, and walks to work. He said there has been serious damage to parts of the

course due to flooding, and thinks developing the course for residential uses would cause more flooding and damage to the homes on Vinton. He also said that if this part of M-37 develops, and if 4-plex residential units are built, the area could become another York Creek Apartments. While he said he isn't opposed to development, he did not think that multiple family dwellings in this area would be good for the Township.

Sharon Steffens, 6690 Walker, reminded Commissioners they should not automatically rule out the possibility of the course remaining in operation. She also noted that there were some environmental issues to consider, and now Michigan has more golf courses than any other state.

Mr. Wretschko (636 Marway) added that his rear yard collects a lot of water on a regular basis.

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

Ayes: 4

Nays: 0

Motion carried.

Townsend observed that the Commission should give serious consideration to the comments made regarding potential development.

Dunneback pointed out that the golf course already has designated wetlands, and no construction could be done there anyway. He added that the wetlands themselves could not be moved.

Madura agreed that the 120-acre site has a lot of very low land, and that any developer would have to work closely with both the MDEQ and Township Engineers to address wetlands issues and storm water management. He added that the storm water management will add significant costs to any development considered for the site, and that those costs would be the developer's, not the Township's.

07-18 MASTER PLAN REVIEW ITEMS

Planner Johnson commented to Commissioners that the Township does not **build** new developments, nor does it **plan** new developments. The Township does try to anticipate where the *possibility* of new development might occur. He didn't think Alpine Township would have any problem with the golf course continuing at its location 50 years or more.

Johnson added that the Planning Commission, during its review of the Master Plan, is preparing the Township for when a developer proposes something other than a golf course for the site. That developer would be responsible for presenting a plan that will solve the problem areas discussed by the Commission. Planner Thomas added that the Township has had no indication that the golf course will not open in 2007.

Madura said that he has no interest in seeing any more apartments in the Township, that there are plenty already. He thinks that a mixed use development here would be reasonable.

Townsend added that the text being drafted should be specific in what uses would be allowed on this 120-acre site. He added that using the MPUD designation for development would give the Planning Commission oversight of the design.

Planner Johnson agreed to draft a description of the MPUD designation Commissioners have suggested, and will provide it at their next meeting. He reminded Commissioners that the MPUD designation offers an option to the developer. The Town Center designation, however, is a design that the Township wants to see at a specific location. If the Township really wants a Town Center somewhere in the Township, the Commission must be more specific on its design and general location.

Dunneback and Townsend agreed that while neither of them thought a Town Center was a requirement for the Township, the Commission should at least select an appropriate general location for one.

Townsend asked Johnson if he could discuss the "Development Phasing Map" that was proposed at earlier Master Plan meetings with Beckett and Raeder. He recalled that the concept had been withdrawn after being introduced, but ~~wonders~~ asked if it could ~~even~~ be reasonably administered.

Johnson summarized for Commissioners that development in Alpine Township has already been limited to only certain parts of the Township. General development areas were identified for development, rather than specific properties. If a project were presented for a site within a designated development on the Master Plan it would be processed. The Township has no control over which parcel is developed first, since outside factors would determine that, such as when the owner is ready to sell, whether an acceptable offer is made and accepted, if a developer can meet utility and road requirements, etc. Not all landowners in a given development area ~~would~~ are likely to sell at the same time, making ~~managing~~ management of a ~~ny~~ phased development plan ~~would be~~ very difficult. All commissioners but Townsend agreed that a phasing plan should not be included in the Master Plan.

Planner Thomas then provided utilities information to Commissioners. A map showing the boundaries of the current sewer district was displayed for review. Thomas went on to say the sewage disposal contract between Alpine Township and the City of Grand Rapids expires in November of 2008. The Township Board has not yet addressed the boundaries for the North Kent Sewer Authority in Alpine. The Planning Commission may want to consider making its recommendation to the Township Board regarding the Township's development plans.

Madura confirmed that the **Township** does not generally extend utilities. Extensions typically occur during development in a utilities district and are built at the developer's expense. Thomas added that in certain situations, Townships may pay to extend sewer lines to areas where septic systems have failed and the residences face condemnation. Even then, the Township is reimbursed by those who connect to the new sewer line. Thomas suggests to the Planning Commission that they consider including a "proposed" sewer district map in the Master Plan.

Trustee Steffens then spoke briefly about plans to separate the Alpine Township sewage flow from the Grand Rapids System, which will involve redirecting the flow of the Kenowa Hills Public Schools buildings as well as the Alpine Meadows Mobile Home Park flow (via a lift station) toward M-37 along 4 Mile Rd. She added that the PC should also consider the needs of residents in the Wahlfield Plat when drafting a "suggested/proposed" sewer district to the Board. Residents there are experiencing failed septic

systems, and in the past the Board requested that Grand Rapids allow an extension to serve the area, but the request was denied.

After considerable discussion, it was determined that there were several engineering issues to be resolved before sewer could be extended to serve the Alpine Golf Course land. Providing public sewer to both Wahlfield Plat and future development on the golf course land would require building a lift station. PC members agreed that a joint Township Board/ Planning Commission meeting is needed with the Township Engineer to address these issues and consider the possibilities for them. Townsend requested that two sewer maps be provided, one defining the existing system, and one covering proposed changes within the Township. Townsend asked that the sewer issues be addressed at the same time as the joint meeting for proposed changes to the Sign Ordinance.

07-19 COMMISSIONER COMMENT/ STAFF UPDATE/PUBLIC COMMENT

Site Plan Review Committee: Dunneback reported that two site plans had been approved; one for the Golden Corral Restaurant, and one for a new retail development adjacent to it.

ZBA Johnson said that the ZBA met , elected officers, and introduced a new alternate, Roger Parent.

Staff Update Thomas advised the Commission that several new site plans have been submitted for review and will be presented to the Site Plan review Committee in the coming weeks.

Townsend and Madura had no further comments, and Townsend asked if any audience members had comments to make.

Jerry Kamis, a resident of Charlottesville, Va. introduced himself as one of the two partners who own the Alpine Golf Course which was discussed earlier in the meeting. He thanked the PC for taking the time to review the course options now. He commented that there is "magic in design" so he appreciates the details offered as it will help him consider possible developers, if that is the decision the partnership ultimately makes. He added that they will be open within 2 weeks and plans a full 2007 season. Plans are to continue operating the course at least until the right development option and the right developer for Alpine Township comes along. He asked anyone who hasn't played the course to speak to Bob Nash in the office for a tour so they can see the land up close

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

Ayes: 4

Nays: 0

Motion carried.

Madura moved, with Dunneback's support, to adjourn at 9:25 PM.

Ayes: 4

Nays: 0

Motion carried.

Nelda Johnson, Secretary

Patricia Kolkman, Recording Secretary