

**MINUTES
ALPINE TOWNSHIP
REGULAR MEETING
MARCH 21, 2005**

05-23 REGULAR MEETING

The Alpine Township Board met on Monday, March 21, 2005 at 7:30 p.m. at the Alpine Township Hall, 5255 Alpine Avenue, Comstock Park, Michigan. Board Members present were Supervisor Marta Brechting, Clerk Jean Wahlfield, Treasurer Jan Brechting, Trustees Ron Cordes, Jim May, Sharon Steffens and Ted Wallace.

Supervisor Brechting called the meeting to order at 7:30 p.m. with the Pledge of Allegiance.

Supervisor Brechting noted two changes to the agenda by stating that she will not be appointing a new Planning Commission member at this time and that Becky Dunneback, soccer liaison for the soccer league, requested to be removed from the agenda.

May offered a motion, supported by Brechting, to approve the March 21, 2005 agenda as amended. Motion carried 7-0.

05-24 CONSENT AGENDA

Treasurer Brechting offered a motion, supported by May, to approve the Consent Agenda consisting of: Regular Meeting Minutes of February 21, 2005 and Special Meeting Minutes of February 28, 2005, Consideration of Bills and Budget Amendments and receipt of correspondence. Motion carried 7-0.

05-25 PUBLIC HEARING - K & K MANUFACTURING - REQUEST FOR INDUSTRIAL FACILITIES TAX EXEMPTION CERTIFICATE

Treasurer Brechting offered a motion, supported by May to open the public hearing for K & K Manufacturing's request for an Industrial Facilities Tax Exemption. Motion carried 7-0.

Timothy Kidder owner of K & K Manufacturing explained that his current business was outgrowing the building. He originally planned on constructing an 11,000 sq. ft. addition that would serve as a storage building for racks, dyes and used parts. Kidder stated that he is exploring obtaining a 20,000 sq. ft. building to move and reassemble on his property. With a larger building he could add another press, laser trimmer and about 4,000 sq. ft. for restoration of vehicles.

Kidder stated that once the addition is completed, everything that is currently stored outside will be stored inside the new building and the property would be cleaned up. Kidder predicted that he would hire an additional two to five employees. In response to Board's questions, the smaller building will be 18 to 20 ft. tall and the larger building would be 15 ft. tall. Kidder also explained that if the larger building worked out, then he may rent a portion of space to someone else.

Treasurer Brechting noted that this parcel is in the abatement district and a previous abatement was granted in 1984 expired in 2004.

With no public comment offered Brechting offered a motion, supported by Steffens, to close the public hearing.

Motion passed 7-0.

**05-26 CONSIDERATION OF RESOLUTION #05-04 & AGREEMENT #05-06
 K & K MANUFACTURING**

Treasurer Brechting explained the terms of an abatement and noted that if K & K Manufacturing should leave the Township before the abatement has expired that K & K would be responsible for all previous taxes.

Steffens offered a motion, supported by Brechting, to approve Resolution #05-04 for K & K Manufacturing's request for an Industrial Facilities Tax Exemption Certificate. Motion carried 7-0.

Brechting offered a motion, supported by Wahlfield, to approve Agreement #05-06 for K & K Manufacturing. Motion carried 7-0.

No public comment was offered at this time.

05-27 COMMISSION REPORTS

Planning Commission - May: At the March 17th meeting Yorktown Center advised the Commission that they will be submitting a site plan change in light of what is being required by the Kent County Road Commission. A private road special land use hearing for Legend's Run Court was approved with conditions. The applicant will now seek approvals from the City of Walker for rezoning and private road approvals. The Doorenbos rezoning was tabled until the April 21, 2005 meeting in a 5-2 vote. There was a lengthy discussion regarding WHEN and IF a traffic study regarding the Doorenbos property rezoning would be necessary before or after the new Master Plan. May did not attend the March meeting and it was noted that Planning Commissioner Steve Gray will be moving out of the Township when his house is sold.

Zoning Board of Appeals - Wallace: One variance request was heard at the February 28, 2005 meeting which was received from property owners at 5075 North Division regarding their property on Star Gazer Lane. Two options were submitted and the second option which allowed for a 40 ft. radius at the end of a private drive was approved. Township attorney Jeff Sluggett conducted a training for the ZBA membership after the hearing. Wallace noted that he was not able to attend this meeting because the Township Board was holding a special meeting.

Historical Committee - Cordes: The Open House featuring the 1965 Tornado was a nice presentation and very well-attended. It was noted that the Grand Rapids Press had an informative article on the tornado and offered wonderful publicity.

Sewer & Water - Supervisor Brechting: M. Brechting stated that discussion would be held later in the meeting.

Library - Clair: Alpine Township Friends of the Library purchased an "ABC Train" rug for the children's area. Two new members joined the Friends of the Library. Ten patrons attended the county-wide book discussion. There will be an up-coming Teen Poetry Contest and one winner will be picked from each branch to receive a \$50 gift certificate from Schuler's Book Store. Clair thanked everyone who attended the library tour and remarked that her door is always open if any others would like a tour. February 2005 had a 14.7% increase in visitors and a 9.3% increase in circulation. Clair also thanked the Board for the excellent job that Gary Potter has done with the snow-plowing and sidewalks.

05-28 REVIEW OF UPDATED REC COMPLEX RULES AND REGULATIONS

Supervisor Brechting stated that the polices are unfinished as she needs to discuss rules and regulations with other people and it wasn't possible. A copy of the soccer field usage request was distributed to board members which indicated a request for every evening and weekend. M. Supervisor told the soccer representatives that the request was too aggressive and asked them to look into other options. The soccer group also expressed concern over the condition of the fields and the Supervisor provided information to the soccer group that their requests will only be considered for the Spring season at this time as field repairs will be completed in the Summer. M. Brechting also explained that the fields will not be ready by April 1 because of the weather conditions and suggested that instead of requesting a field for an entire day that requests for field usage be made for time periods: soccer games and practices would be blocked out for one and a half hours and the 19-year olds would be blocked for two hours. It was also noted that restrooms will not be open until the weather gets warmer but portable restrooms could be provided in the meantime..

Softball charges will be as follows: \$20 for game which will include one practice, practices for non-leagues will be charged \$10. A tournament charge for all three fields will be \$500/day and payment for an additional dumpster. During board discussion, it was the consensus that school teams wishing to use the fields for baseball will be allowed to do so if they are at the younger ages for safety reasons. Supervisor Brechting will be working with the requests from the soccer and baseball teams for field usage and to set-up and maintain the schedule.

Steffens noted that Hispanics will be wanting to use the soccer fields also and one group was been approved in the past. It was noted that the parks are opened at dawn and locked at dusk by the gatekeepers. M. Brechting will look into rules and regulations for opening and running the existing concession stand.

05-29 RECEIPT OF UPDATED INFORMATION AND DISCUSSION - PROPOSED NKSA TREATMENT PLAN

Supervisor Brechting attended a NKSA meeting on March 3. The following three separate evaluations were:

1. A legal opinion related to various options confronting the authority at this time.
2. To convene a meeting of Treasurers from the 5 constituent communities to evaluate a new cost allocation model.
3. To initiate a comprehensive financial review of the wastewater treatment plant budget and the costs associated with the City of Grand Rapids contract.

Supervisor Brechting expressed her concerns that no definite total costs has been finalized noting that Alpine's share of the \$49.2 million cost for a new wastewater treatment plant would be approximately \$10.5 million over 30 years.

Other items that Supervisor Brechting would like to see addressed:

- Connection fees and how the billing would be handled.
- The costs associated with the Fruit Ridge line under the two scenarios at a cost of approximately \$2.9 million.
- Properties that need to be purchased for the NKSA across the site of the proposed sewer plant, four out of six properties have options with the others pending.
- That cost estimate for the proposed wastewater treatment plant is from July 2004 and may be outdated.
- The unknowns if a member of the Authority should drop out, who is responsible for that share or will the remaining members in the Authority pick up the cost? If someone does drop out, will they be a customer?

Supervisor Brechting stated that more information would be available this Thursday and she would like to have more information before any decision regarding property purchases is made. An option on one parcel is expiring on March 31, and the Board will have to decide how to proceed.

J. Brechting reported that the Treasurers of the NKSA communities met and she felt very confident with the spreadsheet that has been distributed to Board members. J. Brechting reminded the board that we are still awaiting for the legal opinion of whether or not we can legally proceed with NKSA or City of Grand Rapids if one of the municipalities decides to drop out of the Authority - the legal opinion will tell us one way or another if it is all or none.

J. Brechting explained that the Treasurers' discussed how each community was going to be charged and Alpine's percentage based on 22.4%. J. Brechting stated that the spreadsheet numbers are based on worst-case scenarios and she fully reviewed the information on the spreadsheet with the Board noting that the current bond payments have been included in the information presented. J. Brechting reminded the Board that if additional connections were made the costs would decrease further and that the numbers are based on the current actual 6,000 REU's for the Township. The projected cost per quarter would be \$62.

Traverse City has the newest plant in the Midwest using the MBR technology which is up and running. Information has been obtained from this plant comparing their actual costs to estimated costs projected during their planning process and the numbers were on target with the engineers' projections. Four other communities using the Traverse City treatment plant have indicated that everything is working well for the 4.5 mgd. Information has been obtained regarding operation and maintenance.

A discussion continued with Supervisor Brechting commenting that she doesn't want to see Alpine use all of its sewer reserves on the treatment plant project. Steffens pointed out that the Grand Rapids projections did not include the Fruit Ridge line. She advised that either way we should build the 4-Mile line. It was noted that some members want final costs before making a decision on building a wastewater treatment plant and other members felt that a decision should be made. Supervisor Brechting commented that by not spending any more money, Alpine would be making a statement that we want to see a plan in place first. Several other pros and cons were discussed which included connection fees and engineering costs for the proposed NKSA plant and that the City of Grand Rapids does not have a 30-year capital cost projection available.

May offered a motion to have everything put on hold until final costs are obtained from both the NKSA and the City of Grand Rapids and get clarification of the audits.

Additional discussion ensued with Wallace suggesting a joint meeting with the City of Grand Rapids and/or a meeting with the residents and businesses in Alpine that pay sewer fees. J. Brechting clarified that Courtland, Cannon and Plainfield Townships have voted to go with the NKSA plant, and depending upon the attorney's opinion Alpine could end up being a customer.

Wallace expressed concern over spending taxpayers' money unwisely and **supported May's motion**. Wallace was informed that taxpayer money not be would used for the proposed plant project, it is paid for by the sewer users.

Wahlfield expressed concern about the "head-tax" in the City of Grand Rapids contract and that it has not yet been formally removed from the document. Supervisor Brechting stated that the City intends to have eliminated the head-tax, adding that all these items must be taken into consideration before making a final decision. Steffens pointed out that the City of Grand Rapids will naturally increase their prices as improvements to their system will be needed and that they are passing these costs from their own customers to the suburban customers.

Cordes pointed out that buying the property would not jeopardize or commit the Township to anything adding that property can always be resold and generally make a profit. Cordes suggested that an amendment be made to the motion on the floor to authorize the purchase of the property and refrain from allocating any further money toward the NKSA plant until the issues discussed by the Board are addressed.

May amended his motion to state: that the Township participate in the purchase of the property needed for the flood plain shelf for the proposed NKSA wastewater treatment plant and refrain from allocating any additional funds until concerns and issues can be further addressed regarding the NKSA plant and the City of Grand Rapids contract costs. Motion carried 6-1, with Wallace dissenting.

05-30 UPDATE ON MCCONNELL HOUSE AND FAGAN REQUEST

A memo has been received by Building Inspector Mark Fleet informing the Board that Mr. Fagan withdrew his request to move the McConnell house and he also thanked the Board for their support.

Wahlfield noted that after checking with Consumers Power, the electric to the house has been disconnected and the meter socket removed. Cordes stated that his original verbal agreement with the Township was to clean up the remains after the house was burned and to only remove the basement as a donation to the Township. His offer did **not** include any type of dirt work, restoration work or re-grading of the property. Supervisor will verify with the Fire Chief that the house may be used for a practice burn and report back to the Board.

05-31 PLANNING DIRECTOR REQUEST FOR SUMMER INTERN

A request has been received from the Planning Director to employ a summer intern for this year. The intern would be responsible for a specific project along with working on a new filing system and assisting with some administrative duties. It was noted that without having a full-time zoning administrator, the additional help would be beneficial. Steffens suggested that the position be advertised soon and include Grand Valley State University for advertisement. The Board discussed that a stipend of \$1000 would be appropriate.

In a motion offered by Steffens, supported by Cordes, to advertise for an internship for the Planning Department and allocate \$1,000 as a stipend for the Summer of 2005. Motion carried unanimously.

05-32 UPDATE ON MEETING WITH KENT COUNTY PARK DIRECTOR

The Supervisor noted that the Kent County Parks Department has received a grant (the original grant was applied for in 1999) and Alpine Township was named on the application along with the County, Alpine is responsible for a \$20,000 commitment which has been billed to the Township. In addition, the final payment of \$25,000 for the Wahlfield Park project is due and the County has agreed to defer this payment. Wahlfield noted that if Alpine is named on another grant application that we be notified before it is submitted by the County Parks Department.

Brechtling offered a motion, supported by Wahlfield, to allocate \$20,000 for the park line-item in FY 2005 and commit the final payment of \$25,000 in FY 2006. Motion carried 7-0.

05-33 SUPERVISOR'S REPORT & BOARD COMMENTS

Supervisor Brechtling expressed concern over the progress of the Master Plan study being conducted by Beckett and Raeder and feels that they have not fulfilled the obligations of the contract. The status report is overdue and still has not been received. Brechtling will be working in conjunction with our Planner to contact Beckett and Raeder and will keep the Board informed on this topic.

Steffens read a prepared letter requesting better communication between the Supervisor and Board and Staff. (A copy of the letter is attached.) In the letter Steffens also expressed concern regarding lawsuits and referendums that directly involve family members of the Board.

Steffens offered a motion, supported by Wahlfield, that a formal legal opinion be solicited from the Township Attorney Jeff Sluggett regarding what procedures should be taken when presented with lawsuits caused by referendums that involve family members of the Board as it may present a conflict of interest when discussing strategies or options and so that the Board is prepared on how to proceed. Motion carried 7-0.

Wallace responded to Steffens comments stating that by having the previous Supervisor leave early, the transition was not smooth. Treasurer Jan Brechting offered that the Clerk and Treasurer's doors have always been open for the Supervisor. May agreed with that the new Board needs to work together.

Wahlfield reminded the Board about the Kent County Road Commission dinner. Due to Elections Consolidation the voting locations for some voters have changed, new ID cards have been sent out and to double check your polling location.. The Federal government has provided new voting equipment which will be used for the May 3rd Election.

In response to Wahlfield's question, Supervisor Brechting stated that the Planning Commission member who was going to resign, is committed to attend the April Planning Commission meeting. It was noted that the next Township Board meeting will be held before the next Planning Commission meeting if a new member should need to be appointed.

05-34 PUBLIC COMMENT

Greg Madura, 4655 Westgate NW, expressed concerns about the proposed treatment plant and how the sewer costs will increase for the residents. Board members responded to his question "*Why is the Township against Grand Rapids?*" Steffens explained past history that the original contract had been shifting costs from their (GR) customers to suburban customers, the head-tax, the fact that there is little representation on that utility board of which Grand Rapids retains 51% ownership. Gravity flow and lift stations were also explained in addition to the fact that the Grand Rapids sewer plant is getting older and will possibly need to be upgraded and/or adding the "membrane system" which the charges will be passed along to customer. Madura felt that an article should be in the Harvester and it was noted that several articles have been published over the years. In response to Madura's question about the McConnell house, it was noted that the Township is responsible for \$120,000 CDBG grant payback. The Board was able to dispel many of the rumors that Madura had heard.

Tim Corner, 2012 6-Mile, had questions about several issues. The following was the response of the board: The sewage at Fruit Ridge is metered at the boundary, the state will not provide any monies toward the NKSA project and at the current time, the sewer district boundaries extend to Bristol due to the 4-Mile line for Kenowa Hills.

Fritz Wahlfield, 730 Marlene, explained that there is pending regulation to charge homeowners \$300/year to maintain a septic tank. Wahlfield noted that he pays for sewer on five properties on the public systems and he would gladly pay an double for three or four years to become independent of Grand Rapids and construct the NKSA plant. Wahlfield remarked that he would give anything NOT to be a resident of Grand Rapids and pay their city income tax. Wahlfield commented that he enjoyed attending Township board meetings.

Susan Douthett Remelts, lived at 4775 Coit, (currently lives at 5480 Alpine Avenue NW) brought photos of the flood plain property which has already been purchased by NKSA which were passed to Board members. She inquired whether or not this property would become another Robinson Township due to flooding. Treasurer Brechting stated

that the engineers have addressed the required flood way “shelving system” and Steffens added that this property was purchased to replace the wetlands property and the treatment plant will not be located on property in question.

Harold Thome, 2137 7-Mile, commented that the former Board should be congratulated for going forward with the North Kent Sewer Authority project . He noted that the City can dump sewage into the river and farmers have a problem with a flood in their feed lot and get fined. He asked “Where is the justice?” Thome stated that with either Grand Rapids or North Kent, sewer charges are going to increase. He maintained that the Board should work together and use common sense.

Tim Kidder advised the Board that typically options on property can be extended, however it was noted by the Treasurer that the agreement was written limiting option extensions.

Steffens encouraged the Board members to respond to Kathy Coffee’s letter regarding Farmland Preservation.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:30 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Jean Wahlfield
Clerk

Marta Brechting
Supervisor

Beth Alt
Recording Secretary