

Vergennes Township
Planning Commission Meeting Minutes
April 12, 2004

Draft

A meeting of the Vergennes Township Planning Commission was held on April 12 at the Township Offices. Vice-Chairman Gillett called the meeting to order at 7:07 pm. Also present were Commissioners Kropf, Medendorp, Richmond and Zoning Administrator Jeanne Vandersloot and Township Planner Jay Kilpatrick. Commissioners Nauta, Jernberg and Mastrovito were absent. Vandersloot explained a phone call with Mastrovito, still on work assignment in out of state job, hopes to be back in July, has been reading his packets, came home last week hoping to go to meeting but was changed to tonight for spring break.

Approval of March 1, 2004 minutes: Motion to approve by Richmond, seconded by Kropf. All approved.

Approval of/changes to agenda: Motion to approve as presented by Richmond, seconded by Kropf. All approved.

1. Public Hearing: mini warehouse parking formula

Vandersloot noted memo outlining Jim Cook's phone conversation concerning comments for the proposed amendment. Jim was present and explained that the business is by appointment, rarely need more than a couple parking spaces, industry organization association suggests 20 feet of building separation due to preventing people from backing up in a T formation to the cubicles and blocking the traffic lanes. He has about 2 feet of cement slab, so a 20 foot aisle would actually be about 24 feet between buildings. As he has just the two buildings, one person already has backed up and dented the roof. In and out is by punch pad so have to be on one side or the other for ease of ingress and egress. Cook's mini storage is already approved so this does not effect them unless they add more buildings than previous approval. No other public comment.

Planning Commission discussion included reason for 30 foot separation suggestion was for building code fire walls if less than that, number of parking spaces and industry suggestions and reasons. Motion by Richmond to change the proposed language from 5 spaces to 2 and require building separation of 24 feet and remove last part of sentence about fire separation and recommend to Township Board adoption of the revised proposed ordinance amendment. Seconded by Kropf. All approved.

2. Public Hearing: Keyhole development and lake access regulations

Alan Rumbaugh of 4361 Causeway Dr spoke for the Murray Lake Association. He stated that this ordinance will go with the dock ordinance and complete preferred ordinances for the lake that are nearly identical with Grattan Twp side of the lake. Same ordinance in Grattan has worked well for over 10 years. Discussion included thoughts that it was somewhat restrictive/is there a problem with a development using a limited amount of lake frontage? Jay explained that in section F a special use permit could be allowed for more dwelling use if the ordinance permitted it/would require an ordinance amendment to permit it, but would be possible then. Motion to recommend to the Township Board adoption of the ordinance as presented by Richmond, seconded by Kropf. All approved.

3. Public Hearing: Animal restrictions and permits in residential areas

It was noted that the animal permit ordinance is a “stand alone” or “general law” ordinance and the other part is in the zoning ordinance and that they are related to each other. Richard Riley of 925 Flat River Dr was one of the people who had animals several years ago and had to remove them (was for 4-H). He asked how the fee structure would be/per animal or application? What about pre-existing barns that are within the 75 foot setback for animal shelters? They may want some chickens and a feeder calf in the barn, they have 4 acres, but the barn is within 75 feet of the property line but over 75 feet to a neighboring house. Is the permit restricted to 4-H projects only?

Answers given were that the Township Board will need to set a fee, is typically an application only fee, not high. The ordinance is not restricted to only 4-H projects but anyone desiring an animal. Vandersloot has permitted animals in existing barns regardless if within 75 feet but all new animal buildings must adhere to the 75 foot requirement. There was some general discussion about the ordinance. Motion by Medendorp, seconded by Kropf to recommend to the Township Board adoption of the stand alone permit ordinance and the amendment to the zoning ordinance companion language. All approved.

4. Public Hearing: Change in building occupancy for commercial and industrial districts

Jay Kilpatrick explained that businesses coming and going need a streamlined way to know what they must do to move into an existing building. A review by the zoning administrator can tell if they are a similar permitted use as the previous tenant, see if they need a special use permit, and check if any change in the previous site plan is needed and do parking formula calculations. This is helpful to future tenants and to the Township for records of ownership, use, etc. There was some discussion by members. Motion to recommend language to Township Board for adoption by Medendorp, seconded by Richmond. All approved.

Private Road Discussion

Vandersloot explained previous proposed amendments, joint meeting minutes, and added that some ordinances require a cleared vegetation area of 28 feet; most problems are with the 4-5 lot jump in road spec. She mentioned phone conversation with Mastrovito as he lives on a private road. He said his road is about 18 feet wide, is adequate for passing, not much need for a shoulder. Friends of his complain about excessive speed on their private roads requiring speed bumps.

Kilpatrick said that the ordinance does allow for Board modifications to the ordinance, so any road width could be proposed and considered. The homeowners association would enforce a clearance width. Kropf said he thinks safety first if essential. Prefers to keep the 22 feet for visibility and safety. A relative who is a fireman showed him the fire code that states that a 20 foot unobstructed road width is essential. He drove some of the private roads. Medendorp said that in Kentwood recently they got an 80 unit condo site approved with a 20 foot road, partly because the fire department was using an 18 foot road with no problems to access their station.

General discussion about curves, safety, Township Hall tree on corner that was removed, Kent County Road Commission is keeping their standards, notation that many are going to less width roads, costs are not that great for wider, and other pros and cons. It was suggested to have the local fire department advise us on width preferences and problems. There was some discussion about the road on Burroughs that prompted the original ordinance. Motion by Medendorp, seconded by Richmond to table the ordinance and gather more information such as fire department advice. All approved.

PUD zoning ordinance amendment

Kilpatrick explained that in a previous review by the Township Attorney, he noted that the public hearing at the Township Board level was removed. The Township Zoning Act requires that the approving body of a PUD hold a public hearing. The proposed language adds that after a preliminary review of a site plan and a recommendation is sent to the Board, at that point then the Board holds the public hearing. The developer would come back to the Planning Commission for a final review and approval later. This would satisfy the Act. Gillett asked if any PUD's were in the works. Vandersloot said none right now but some on drawing boards. Medendorp motioned, Richmond seconded to place the proposed language on the next meeting agenda for public hearing. Vandersloot said that as this meeting was late, there might not be enough time, so it may have to wait until the June meeting.

General Public Comment Time

Lori Riley looked into splitting their land and asked the Road Commission about its standards. She was told that they did away with the gravel standards and left them hanging. Alan Rumbaugh said the RC might have meant that they do not want to accept any gravel roads onto their public system. Tim Wittenbach and Gillett both said that the RC does not want any private roads. She asked who reviews a private road then? Tim said that her engineer would create construction plans and the Township Engineer would review them. She thanked Vandersloot for remembering their situation with the 4-H animals and sending them the proposed ordinance in the mail ahead for the public hearing.

Motion to adjourn by Kropf, seconded by Medendorp. Motion carried. The meeting was adjourned at 8:21 pm. The next meetings will be May 3, 2004.

Respectfully submitted by:

Jeanne Vandersloot

Jeanne Vandersloot, Substitute Recorder