

**Planning Commission Meeting**  
Vergennes Township  
February 2, 2015

The meeting was called to order at 7:00 pm by Scott Jernberg.

Roll call – Jernberg, Mastrovito, Post and Rosema were present. Gillett was absent

Approval of minutes from January 5, 2015 - Post motioned to approve minutes; Rosema seconded. Motion passed.

Approval or changes to the agenda –No Changes to the agenda as presented.

Jernberg welcomed Andy Moore, Williams and Works, as our new planner for the Township.

**1. Public Hearing – Faulk & Foster – Cell Tower Application (SEUP)**

Blake Conklin spoke on behalf of Verizon Wireless. They are proposing a 150 foot monopole tower with a 7 foot lightning rod on top at 900 Fero Avenue. Explosive growth in wireless technology is creating capacity problems and the need to update to the latest technology. Each cell tower can only accommodate so many users. Verizon found there to be issues such as dropped calls, no service available, poor indoor coverage and slow internet speeds. New wireless infrastructure is needed to accommodate increased usage and future growth.

Verizon first looked to co-locate on an existing tower but there were none in the low/no coverage area. FAA clearance was received indicating the tower did not need to be lit. They are set back from Fero Avenue by about 550 feet. They are near electrical transmission lines which lowers the aesthetic impact. When looking at impact, you have to weigh not having the services available to looking at the tower in the distance.

Public comment was opened at 7:09 pm.

Randy Allaben of 2555 Oakwood SE, Grand Rapids, MI. He is one of three owners of a property just south of the proposed site (822 Fero). His mother lives at the property. He is concerned about the power lines near the proposed cell tower. What if the tower blows down somehow? Is it too close? What about transmission interference with the power lines. Bailey Lake is just to the east of this location. There is bird and sensitive wildlife in the area. Have any environmental impact studies been done? Has Verizon shown there is not a better location for this tower? Suggested the Wilcox property as a possible alternate location. Aesthetics are an issue also. The power lines significantly reduced the property values. Will the cell tower do the same?

Tim Wittenbach – 13005 3 Mile Road, Lowell. Is there going to be fiber near there? Will it support wireless high speed internet? Did the studies show the tower needs to go in that location because of dead areas or geographic highs and lows? He lives between a radio tower and a cell tower. There is also another cell tower to the east that he cannot see. There are towers and antennas popping up all over. He said it has not impacted his property values. It would be great if more fiber was available in the Township. He is not opposed to the tower.

Mr. Conklin addressed some of the issues. The tower is 483 feet away from the easement of the transmission lines. There is no fall danger. They are a FCC licensed provider and must do a NEPA (National Environmental Policy Act) study on wildlife, plants, etc... They must produce a report before they can build. Verizon works with a consultant to obtain necessary reports. If it's not approved, no building of the tower will occur.

The plan is to have fiber running from the lines on Fero to the tower. There will also be a 12' x 30' equipment structure next to the tower. The entrance to the building will be lit for safety reasons. They are aware of our lighting ordinance.

Co-location on another tower is preferred but one is not available. Shorter towers need to be closer to each other. The lowest on the tower they can transmit from is about 90 feet, depending on area.

Nick Dewey – 900 Fero, Lowell. He is owner of property tower will be located on. There will be no trees cut down in the building of this tower. He has had many people contact him regarding this tower. They are all in favor of it. He wants to be a good neighbor. The tower and the building will be shielded by crops and the fence row tree line. Corn is expected to be planted there this year.

Conklin – Verizon is willing to screen the building with two rows of arbor vitae.

This tower will accommodate the latest technology available. LTE (long term evolution) can handle up to 6-8 gigs. Current technology is at 4 G. Range of the tower is approximately 3 miles. The next tower would probably be in the Lincoln Lake area.

Susan Seime – 822 Fero. Does anyone receive compensation from this tower? Does the Township benefit? Wittenbach indicated the township gets tax money and the property owner said he is compensated for having the tower there.

Timeframe to have tower up is sometime in 2015. There are many factors that come into play as to when it will be built.

Post said screening the building is probably not going to make a difference. Also, making the NEPA report a condition of approval is probably redundant. If we approve the tower and NEPA says no, it is not going to be put up anyway.

This will go before the Township Board at their February 16 meeting. Per Andy Moore, there is legislation that states if the municipality does not act upon the request within 60 days, the request is automatically approved.

Rosema makes the motion to recommend the approval of the tower to the Township Board. Mastrovito seconds the motion. Motion carried.

## **2. Zoning Ordinance Amendments – timing of overlay district and Noise ordinance.**

Vandersloot – The noise ordinance has been tabled for a while. The commission should think about when they would like to get it back on the agenda for review. The overlay district is for

the Little Farms Plat. It is getting close to when the requests for 4H animals and the like start coming in. It should probably get reviewed at the next meeting which will probably be in March. The Alden Nash Development said they would probably be ready for a March meeting discussion. Even though it is not on regular schedule, plan on meeting in March to discuss both ordinance amendments and the development.

If a noise ordinance is implemented, what does that entail? Examples of other noise ordinances were sent to the Commission members previously. Please look at them and decide what parts would work here. Ordinance would cover things like excessive barking, quad/motorbike noise, music. If the sheriff is called due to a complaint, they can talk to resident to resolve. If it persists, a ticket can be issued and they have to appear in court but only if an ordinance is in place.

### **3. Elect Officers**

After some discussion among the members, it was decided to keep officers as they are. Motion by Post to keep officers as follows: Jernberg, chairperson, Post, vice-chair, Mastrovito, secretary. It was seconded by Jernberg. Motion carried.

### **4. Plan for hosting Joint Planning Commission Meeting**

A month and several dates in that month need to be suggested to Lowell Township and the City of Lowell in order to set a date. The last meeting was in September at Lowell Township. It was decided to keep it in September. The 7<sup>th</sup> is Labor Day and Lowell City Planning Commission meets on the 14<sup>th</sup>. It was agreed to try September 15, 28 or 29 as possible dates. Jeanne Vandersloot will contact the other commissions and see if a date can be agreed on.

### **5. Any other business**

No other business.

**General public comment time** – none

The meeting was adjourned at 8:06 pm.

The next meeting is March 2, 2015, if the housing development is ready.