

Vergennes Township

PLANNING COMMISSION MINUTES

January 3, 2000

A meeting of the Vergennes Township Planning Commission was held on January 3, 2000 at the Township Offices. At 7:00 PM the meeting was called to order by Chairman Gillett. Also present were Commissioners Alger, Baird, Culross, Jernberg, Lenihan, Nauta, Warning, and Weber. No one was absent.

APPROVAL OF NOVEMBER AND DECEMBER MINUTES: Motion to approve by Nauta, seconded by Baird. All approved.

ELECTION OF PLANNING COMMISSION OFFICERS FOR YEAR 2000: Chairman: declining nominations were Gillett, Culross, Baird, Jernberg. Nauta was nominated and all approved. Vice Chairman: Gillett was nominated and all approved.. Secretary: Lenihan was nominated and all approved.

1. REQUEST AND DISCUSSION BY PETE FABER FOR CARLSON FARMS PUD (on the final development preliminary plan review): discussion items included the dimensions of the turnaround, where signage would be placed, that the conservation easement needs legal review, timing of the phases of development, what if the builder defaults with the development half-finished, need for some performance guarantee, specifics of the Master Deed exceeding Township ordinances (deemed allowable) and how covenants are enforced, how to handle runoff so as not to interfere with the Drain Commission's Lally Drain.

Because a lot of information came in late -- some of it the day of the meeting -- the commission agreed there was a need to take time to digest it.

Motion by Nauta, seconded by Baird (and all approved): Table the discussion for one month to give everyone time to review the materials. In particular, the commissioners want more information on or review of:

- the conservation easement
- some sort of performance guarantee
- the indemnification clause
- the Lally drain issue
- Jay Kilpatrick's review of the materials
- the Township Attorney's review of the materials, esp. the conservation easement

2. INFORMAL DISCUSSION WITH JIM WHITE (LOWELL AREA SCHOOLS) RE: AN AGRISCIENCE BUILDING (proposed to be built on the 80-acre parcel across from the high

school): Jim White, Director of Curriculum for Lowell Area Schools, wanted to give information and get feedback about the proposed project, an agri-science building where 80-100 students could come for agriculture, ecology, environmental studies and other pertinent course work. The building is being donated, and would also take advantage of the next-door Cridler/Wege/Land Conservancy property for nature studies. The center will be an excellent venue for FFA and 4-H projects, year-round. The center would also be open to the greater community, and is a chance to preserve this community's farming legacy.

Concerns of the Commission: they will need to apply for a Special Exception Use. Traffic flow would need to be studied, and a safe crossing across Vergennes implemented (extra traffic lane? Light? Pedestrian overpass?). Would there be a need for an accessible fire hydrant? Details about proposed signs needs to be given..

2A. INTRO TO NORTHERN TRAILS: Paula Wilbur, a township resident, is the local coordinator for the North Country Trail, a 4,000 mile trail (the longest trail in the nation), which is being pieced together from New York to the Dakotas, with the longest segment being in Michigan. Grand Rapids is the midpoint of the trail. Routing is done with the cooperation of volunteer landowners and use of public lands. The trail will come across part of Vergennes Township. Camping is allowed only in designated areas. For more information, see www.northcountrytrail.org on your computer. She looks forward to working with and educating residents about the exciting inclusion of Vergennes Township in this huge project, and is available any time to answer questions.

3. DISCUSSION OF PROPOSED ORDINANCE AMENDMENTS: (from Zoning Administrator and ZBA):

Stables: the committee formed at the last meeting found that township ordinances do not allow livestock in any subdivided area (regardless of zoning). In R-A with 3 acres, a person can have livestock, so why not on 3 acres in subdivided R-1 or R-2 (with attention to setbacks)? Large lots in R-1 may be eventually subdivided, and what would a person keeping livestock have to do then? They could not create a recommendation for the number of allowed animals - depends on the situation entirely. May need to continue requiring variance. (But should a 4-H-er have to pay \$300 for the variance? Fees aren't income-producing for Township... needs discussion. Requiring a Special Exception Use in R-1 would give the commission a chance for review and to hear neighbors' opinions).

The committee also felt the following might be in order:

- 401.404: change 5 acres to 3 acres
- 401-404(a): the 150-foot side setbacks make building a stable difficult on a 300-foot wide lot. Committee suggests 100-foot side setbacks.
- 401-404(b): recommend 5 acres changed to 3 acres with 100-foot side setback.

Also, some altering of the Ordinance could help:

- 201-305(b): (p.959) For R-1, use the uses allowed in RA (p. 956.1) but strike the first

4 permitted uses, then under #5 add parish houses, under #7 strike “and not involving conduct of a business,” strike #8 entirely, then add as permitted uses in R-1 the following: community building, parks, public recreation areas, cemeteries, and wildlife preserves.

Motion by Culross, seconded by Jernberg. Table this for further discussion by a subcommittee consisting of Culross (Chairman), Jernberg, Alger, Nauta, and Baird.

Minor Accessory Buildings: The Planning Commission was given a document titled “Amend Articles II and IV as Follows” (2 pages) with proposed changes noted. The only additional change would occur in section 201-402 (C). The paragraph should read as follows: “In all zoning districts, up to 2 minor accessory buildings shall be permitted per lot. Minor accessory buildings may be located in the side or rear yards but not closer than five (5) feet from existing lot lines. Minor accessory buildings shall not be located in the front yard. Minor accessory buildings shall not require a building permit, however a sketch detailing placement must be provided showing location of existing buildings and lot lines.” (As written in another document distributed to the Planning Commission, titled “To: Planning Commission From” Zoning Administrator, January 3, 2000 Meeting” (2 pages).

Motion by Lenihan, seconded by Nauta, to propose to the Township Board to accept the changes as written. All approved.

Mobile Home Dwelling Width: Regarding 201.306 (G): In the sentence that says, “No dwelling shall be less than twenty-four (24) feet in width as measured along the exterior front elevation of the dwelling” the Zoning Administrator recommends adding the following words to the end: “except for mobile homes the minimum width may be 22 feet.”

Motion by Nauta, seconded by Alger, to recommend to the Township Board to accept the changes as written. All approved.

Driveway Setback/parking & play areas: This is very difficult to enforce, and developers can create covenants for subdivisions.

Motion by Nauta, seconded by Alger, to recommend to the Township Board to do away with the idea of creating an ordinance for driveway and parking/play area setbacks. All approved.

4. DISCUSSION OF PROPOSED CHANGES TO PRIVATE ROAD ORDINANCE BY THE TOWNSHIP BOARD: Planning Commission referred to a 10-page handout titled “202.000 Private Roads,” and reviewed recommended changes as follows:

- p. 2: Minor language adjustment as noted.
- p. 6: Deletion of “Editor’s Note” as shown.
- p.7: Changes to item (t) and language rewording in paragraph number 2.
- p.8: Minor language adjustment.

○ p.9: Changes in paragraph (3).

Motion by Culross, seconded by Nauta to recommend to the Township Board to accept the changes as shown. All approved.

OTHER BUSINESS: There was a discussion about the definition of lot area, as written on the document with the Williams & Works letterhead handed out to the Commissioners titled "To: Jeanne Vandersloot, From: Jay Kilpatrick, Date: December 10,1999, Re: Lot Area Definition": Language adjustments have been recommended to make it clear that any portion of a lot in a public or private right-of-way is excluded from the calculation of lot area.

Motion by Jernberg, seconded by Culross, to recommend to the Township Board that the changes be approved as written. All approved.

The next meeting is February 7, 2000.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:45 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Kate Dernocoeur, Recorder