

VERGENNES TOWNSHIP PLANNING COMMISSION MEETING

January 5th, 1998

The meeting was held in the Lowell High School Band Room because of anticipated citizen interest. It began at 7:02. All Commissioners were present. Also present were township attorney Jim Doezema and planning consultant Steve Langworthy.

Motion to approve the Nov. 24, 1997 special meeting minutes, Wilcox/Weber, the regular Dec. 1, 1997 minutes, Pfaller/ Weber, and the Dec. 8, 1997 special meeting minutes, Pedley/Howard. All approved.

Chairman Gillett began by reading the Goal & Purpose statement developed by the commission concerning the proposed Home Occupation/Home-based Business ordinance. This statement of purpose will be included in the ordinance.

He then explained the 3 different categories addressed by the ordinance.

- Home Occupations with & without accessory buildings

- Home-Based businesses (operation of actual work occurs off-site, equipment stored on premises)

- Rental storage (existing farm buildings only)

Intent of the meeting was to answer questions that were submitted in December. The Planning Commission had categorized these questions and addressed them one by one. As each topic came up, Gillett recognized questions from the audience.

It was suggested that the Zoning Compliance fee be waived for the first year after the ordinance is adopted, and in the case that a ZBA hearing is needed, that fee also be waived for a year. The Commission felt that this would encourage more widespread compliance.

Gillett explained procedures - Zoning Compliance permit required - no inspection necessary to obtain. Inspections could occur when a complaint is received, and Zoning Officer needs to investigate. Should the permit be denied based on the requirements of the ordinance, the applicant may apply to the ZBA for a variance.

A question concerning the reference to "noise, vibration, glare....detectable to the normal senses". PC is looking at it. They agreed it needs some clarification.

George Kazemier, who stated he has 4 tractors, and 12 trailers in his trucking operation, was concerned that the parking formula would not fit his requirements. After some rough mathematics, it was determined that there would probably be room for him to park the amount he asked about.

Gillett pointed out that one of the reasons the ordinance is needed is so that a business owner has guidelines to watch for as their business grows, and can judge when it is time to move to a Commercial or Industrial District. Once capital investment is made, it's hard to move.

Langworthy was asked about the feasibility of using sliding scale for parking and setbacks. He replied that we can look at graduated scales for parking to be included as part of the permit process - the scale can be revised or permit revoked at the time of a split.

He was also asked about traffic - how do you judge? He stated that there is no good way to assess volume, and it would be up to the zoning administrator. If there is a disagreement, it can go to the ZBA.

The point was made that when this ordinance is in place (permits issued, etc.) property may be assessed differently. Jim Cook mentioned the situation where, if a property is classified Ag now, it will lose that status if a business other than farming is taking place.

There was a question on the separate parcel issue for rental storage - PC is working on language for this.

Comment from a residential non-business owner who appreciates the ordinance and does not want to see, hear, smell or feel the businesses.

There was some concern about the language relative to flammable materials - intent is to discourage flammable/hazardous materials from being stored. Doezema suggested adding "in such volume as to constitute a hazard to the building or surrounding area". A representative of the Lowell Fire Department stated that he felt the language is needed, and it is necessary to make the reference to hazardous materials.

In other business, Walt VanderWulp asked the Planning Commission to advise him on his request to add to his building in the Lincoln Lake Industrial Park. The commission told him he needed to apply for an amendment to his special use permit.

Mari Stone, Recorder