

# Vergennes Township

## PLANNING COMMISSION MINUTES

June 4, 2001

A meeting of the Vergennes Township Planning Commission was held on June 4, 2001 at the Township Offices. At 7:00 PM the meeting was called to order by Chairman Nauta. Also present were Commissioners Alger, Gillett, Jernberg, Read and Richmond. Alger left at about 7:25 for family emergency.

**APPROVAL OF MAY 7, 2001 MINUTES:** Motion to approve by Gillett, seconded by Read. All approved.

**APPROVAL OF AGENDA:** Motion to approve by Gillett, seconded by Richmond, adding discussion about Commercial Businesses to Old Business. All approved.

### OLD BUSINESS

**1. MASTER PLAN UPDATE – COOK REZONING REQUEST.** Jay Kilpatrick reviewed his memo dated May 2 re: updating a Master Plan to expand the commercial zone, esp. since it's early in the cycle from when the current Master Plan was adopted. Expressed the need to have congruence between Master Plan and land use/zoning map.

Current U.S. census shows Vergennes population at 3,611, up from 2,400 10 years ago, making it one of fastest growing communities in the area. It's cause enough in his opinion to reopen Master Plan; it could be that we under-provided for commercial uses. Had a lot of input at the futuring session re: retaining rural character and there was not a lot of support for an expanded commercial area. If we have one it would probably need to be pedestrian-friendly, as opposed to allowing for a sprawling commercial area. Would want to consider building in a basis for doing it that way. Need to consider what language in current plan would support broadening commercial zone and how to outline a statement of policy to support that. Need to look at the Master Plan for areas inconsistent with that language. Next step = public input via a public hearing or informational meeting. Planning Commission would then adopt the amendments into the Comprehensive Plan.

This is a precise amendment, not a broad-based change, so the big thing is to find policy support or via information from the community, including input of property owners as their property is already zoned.

At least a 60-day process minimum.

Vern: asked for consensus about whether the Planning Commission is interested in pursuing this? General agreement. Will try to hammer it out for the next steps, beginning in July.

## **2. ORDINANCE AMENDMENTS.**

1. Re: Article II - Definitions, 201.202 (Specific Terms): two clarifications, one correction (“assess” to “access”) and one added definition (for “transitional landing”) – all intended to reduce confusion and build clarity in the ordinance language.

2. Re: Article III - Zoning Districts, 201.307 “FR” Flat River District: various changes as noted in documentation submitted by Jeanne Vandersloot. One suggestion re: what about building stairways to building code/wouldn’t work re: code rise & run. Wouldn’t follow slope of hill. DNR wants people to follow terrain as closely as possible. Discussion about manure run-off re: barns, stables, silos.

Re: discussion about operations such as canoe livery (see section 4, “Access to and Use of Property for Recreational Purposes”) re: opportunity for problems. Conditional land use requires a predictable entity to make a decision to approve uses; the current stipulation allowing property owners to approve is too vague. A livery would require a special election of people in that area. There is no clear mechanism how something like that fits into the approval process. The old intent was probably not to prohibit that type of operation, but to create a high hurdle, but having a 2/3rds vote of people in the area is not a good way to do this. Would be better to come up with specific standards for approval. Eliminating the language about commercial use in that district would mean that use would not be permitted. Recommends taking the language out about the 2/3rds vote portion.

3. One recommended change not noted in the document, re Article III 201.307 “FR” Flat River District, section E: Jeanne had a question about 20,000 square feet minimum lot size named in that section. Not clear. Recommends taking out the last three lines, so this section will now end with “...use is proposed.”

4. Re: memo from Jay Kilpatrick dated March 29: Industrial Districts – Use and Site Plan Review. Need clarification of who is the approving body on site plan reviews. Recommends Section 201.502 D be amended to add a paragraph 4 which specifies that the Planning Commission shall review site plans for all permitted uses in the Industrial District and shall recommend site plan approval to the Township Board.

**Motion:** by Gillett, seconded by Jernberg, to schedule a public hearing for the Flat River ordinance and Industrial ordinance changes. All approved.

**3. PROPOSED CHANGES TO COMMERCIAL BUSINESS ZONE.** Scott Jernberg has been researching, presented Ada’s information as a model. Village atmosphere. Green space. Low light levels. Earth berms. Regulations on hours, noise and light levels – all congruent with what the township residents seem to want and still provide a commercial area. Using the village concept would be congruent with the Master Plan alterations being considered, per Jay Kilpatrick. Permitted uses and special exception uses are two ways to regulate what’s allowed. Jernberg handed out two documents to show what other communities

have been doing in this regard: 1) Ada Township Neighborhood Commercial Zoning, and 2) Community Commercial Zoning Standards (Texas Township). Kilpatrick pointed out the advantage Ada has regarding size limit of 8,000 sq. ft. of each building. The goal of the screening, side yard setbacks, etc. would be intended to retain rural/green appearance desired by residents while also accommodating more commercial area. Kilpatrick: Ada has sewer system, here commercial systems might need a community system or something appropriate for the area and soil type.

Discussion about preserving greenbelt open space and also lighting to preserve night skies (esp. using yellow light) and site signage at low levels. Create an atmosphere that is village-like. Wants to create an increase in commercial zone along with honoring what people voiced as priorities in the Master Plan.

Recommendation: Jay Kilpatrick should put some sample ordinance language together. Wants to know how detailed to get. Sentiment: be specific.

Reminder: Nauta encouraged commissioners to go the Citizen Planner series at the Wittenbach Center on Thursdays. Also Joint Meeting of Planning Commissioners June 13, Lowell Township Hall, 7-9 pm.

Motion to adjourn by Gillett. Seconded by Jernberg. All approved.

The next meeting is **[note change!]** July 9, 2001 (second Monday, re: holiday)

The meeting was adjourned at PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Kate Dernocoeur, Recorder