

**Vergennes Township**  
PLANNING COMMISSION MINUTES  
March 4, 2002

A meeting of the Vergennes Township Planning Commission was held on March 4, 2002 at the Lowell High School Auditorium. At 7:00 PM the meeting was called to order by Chairman Jernberg. Also present were Commissioners Gillett, Mastrovito, Medendorp, Read and Nauta. Absent was Commissioner Richmond. Also present was Zoning Administrator Jeanne Vandersloot and Township Attorney Jim Doezema.

**APPROVAL OF FEBRUARY MINUTES:** Motion to approve minutes by Gillett. Seconded by Nauta. All approved.

**APPROVAL OF CHANGES TO MINUTES:** Motion by Medendorp to change the agenda to move item number three to item number two. Seconded by Nauta. All approved.

**OLD BUSINESS**

**1. PUD DEVELOPMENT: CARLSON FARMS PHASE II**

Pete Faber was present for the public hearing and still seeking approval for Phase II of the Carlson Farms project. Have received all approvals from Kent County Health Department and Kent County Road Commission.

Jernberg: Opened public hearing.

Jernberg: There were no public comments. Closed public hearing. Motion by Nauta for discussion questions of Planning Commission. There were no discussion or questions from the Planning Commission. Motion by Nauta to recommend approval to the Board for the private road and Phase II of Carlson Farms. Seconded by Read. All approved.

**2. ZONING ORDINANCE AMENDMENTS**

Jernberg: Amendment to the zoning ordinance. Jeanne: explained the amendment is for a height exception for church spires or steeples that they are exempt from height regulation in all zoning districts and not to exceed eighty-five feet in height.

Jernberg: Opened public hearing.

Jernberg: There were no public comments. Closed the public hearing. Motion by Nauta to recommend the board adopt the height exception amendment. Seconded by Gillett. All approved.

**3. REZONING REQUEST: LANDON COMPANIES**

Jernberg: Presentation by Landon Companies regarding their proposal for their rezoning request.

John Truscott, representing Landon Companies. Introduced Joe Katz of Katz and Associates and Jason Wagner, Landon Companies. They were here to seek rezoning approval of the property at Alden Nash and Vergennes for manufactured housing. Landon Companies is committed to developing high quality homes using the most advanced techniques to meet the needs of marketplace. Explained the project in order to dispel any misunderstandings by the residents. Presentation included pictures showing manufactured housing in previous years, but stated this is not the way it is done today. There will be no multiple dwelling units. Their purpose is to create affordable housing for young couples starting out and want to stay in the community. Also, will be affordable and economic for empty nesters and senior citizens. They believe this property is the best and only location for this manufactured home community. Their intent is to preserve the natural berming and open space and believes this is consistent with the Township's Master Plan. They do not plan to change the property and will preserve the trees. Will shelter the development from view of road. They are willing to work with developers to make sure the developments blend together. Because this is a high-density, residential area this project will meet needs of growth and help reduce the demand for other homes. Other sites in the area are unsuitable for several reasons such as the sites are too small, too close to the airport or railroad, and public utilities not

available. Recommends one development with a large number of homes in one area versus a lot of smaller ones throughout the community. This development will have a more traditional feeling of a residential neighborhood with porches, garages, street lights, quality-built homes with quality siding, energy efficient, quality roofing and appliances. These homes are built to top quality standards. Homes can be customized to meet the needs of the buyers. Gave an explanation of the process of building homes in controlled environment versus stick-built homes. Displayed pictures of what the homes look like on the inside. The cost of the manufactured homes are about half of a stick-built home. The average home site is approximately 5500 square feet. The development will have features of community. There are plans for a community center of 6000 square feet with a swimming pool, tennis courts and a gathering place for neighbors. Displayed pictures of one of their other community centers. The manufactured homes are anchored and drilled below the freeze line; includes skirting; stated homes exceed state standards and the planning commission's proposed standards currently under submission to the Mobile Home Commission.

Truscott introduced Joe Katz to discuss the financial impact on the school district. Katz stated his firm was engaged by Landon Companies to do a financial impact study on Vergennes Township and the school district. They identified the projected revenue that would accrue to the Township and school district as well as the costs that would be incurred. Copies of the Financial Impact Study were available to the Planning Commission. Katz presented the study showing that the estimated revenues generated by this development would cover the estimated costs. The study indicates the Sheriff's Department and Fire Department would incur no costs for the services provided to the development. It is projected this development would generate an additional 225 students.

Truscott: Landon Companies is willing to work with Planning Commission towards rezoning. Asked to have financial questions or comments directed to Katz first because he must leave shortly due to family obligations.

Jernberg: Opened public hearing.

Alan Rambaugh, Causeway Dr.: Questioned the math used to calculate property taxes for mobile homes versus his own property tax. Will the residents have to pay more later? Katz responded that he would only be paying seven mills for the school district. Rambaugh asked what the \$75,000 mobile home owner pays in property taxes? Katz responded that the mobile home owner pays no property tax, but all the improvements made to the property could be included in tax assessments, and the park owners will be paying property taxes. The school operating costs are paid for through the state sales tax under Proposal A. The 225 proposed new students generated from the mobile home park would bring \$6500 revenue for each student to the school district.

Jim Telman, Attorney, represents Economicology LLC. Requested to speak for more than the three minutes allowed. Jernberg granted time. Represents owners south of property in question. Introduced a binder of information concerning the rezoning. The information presented states reasons why the Master Plan does not support the proposed rezoning. He presented the following: the project will be developing into wetlands and creek bottoms; property can be used for other things as presently zoned; there is other property throughout the community currently zoned for this type of project; not currently served by public sewer and not enough sewer capacity due to other projects already committed and on the books for future development; road will cut through the wetlands; soil maps show larger area of sand and muck than the project shows; area cannot handle increased traffic generated. On behalf of his clients, submit that the project is inappropriate and asked the Planning Commission to decline the application for rezoning.

Robert Coffey, 580 Forstrom: Challenges that there is a lack of affordable housing in this area. There is a lot of affordable housing in Grand Rapids and within driving distance. Question if figures are appropriate. Questioned if they drive by high school in the mornings. States it is a traffic nightmare and is getting busier in that area. The existing roads are inadequate and this type of project would require new roads. Questioned who would pay for the new roads. Would it be homeowners and tax payers? And if the property owners and taxpayers were picking up the balance, what would the development contribute? Not sure it's consistent with the Master Plan. Asked the Planning Commission to think hard

before moving forward.

Brett Kincaid, 433 Alden Nash: Does not oppose development but opposes the way they are going about it. Concerned for water quality; some are still using well water and are not on city water. Additional traffic concerns, currently use the road for walking children and dogs, joggers and cyclists. There will be increased cost to widening the roads. Low-income housing should be spread throughout the community to create a more diverse community. Asked the Planning Commission to stick to the Master Plan and deny the application.

Dean Alger, 13401 Three Mile Road: Question is the development attached to the current sewer system? If it is the Attorney Telman's calculations are correct and there is no additional capacity. Do you have a Plan B? If so, what is it? Is there a plan or calculations to determine what the run-off will be after winter and rainstorms? If there is going to be additional run-off what will be the disposition of the water?

Peter Gustafson, 12213 Bailey Drive: President of the Board of Education for the Lowell Area Schools. Urges the Planning Commission to consider the tax implications. The school district Board of Education has not considered or addressed this project and it was not discussed with the Board of Education. The developer did not contact Gustafson or any other board member. This project is not in accordance with the Master Plan and does not follow the resident's wishes. The school has not planned for this type of student increase. The school neither gains a benefit nor suffers a loss for new students. Asked for a show of hands from the audience who have questions about the project and would like Vergennes Township to adhere to the Master Plan. Asked to have the record show that over 90% raised hands in response to question.

Gary Knottenerus, 11900 Vergennes: Questioned the numbers presented for police protection to the new neighborhood and disagrees with the cost of zero. Believes the cost would be more around \$200,000 for one car, and will probably need two cars for that area. Would prefer to pay an additional millage to pay for a legal fund to fight this. Wants the Planning Commission to do the right thing.

Fred Meyers, --- Alden Nash: Home would overlook mobile home park. Asked the developers if they lived in a mobile home park? Truscott: lives in normal residential neighborhood in Lansing. Meyers: This project will decrease his property value 15-20%.

Tim Fitzpatrick, 11055 Vergennes: This is not wanted and not needed. Does not like vision of Vergennes changing with trees being removed and expanding roads with turning lanes, increased traffic and increased crime. Urged the Planning Commission to seriously consider to decline. Recommends putting up duplexes instead to help low income families.

Roger Odell, Bailey Drive: Thanked Attorney Telman for his presentation. Encouraged the Planning Commission members to refer to binder when considering this project. Does not object to development but this type is absurd. The ordinance is current and encourages the Planning Commission to stick to it. The project is inconsistent with Master Plan. A survey of Vergennes Township shows it is its character that residents like. Manufactured home owner don't pay property taxes. Asked the Planning Commission to stick to the master plan.

Tate Thomas, 12470 Vergennes: Has lived there for over twenty years and does not want to see houses developed around his land.

Marcia Wilcox, Bailey Drive: Is a member of the citizens committee to preserve open space in township. Encourages the Planning Commission to ask for an environmental assessment to determine the value of soil and wetlands.

Daryl Thomas, 12480 Vergennes: Does not mind development if it is done correctly. The infrastructure in this area will not handle this. Enjoys the Vergennes area. Questioned the berming in the developer's

proposal.

Carol Lee, 34 Lincoln Lake Avenue: This is not consistent with Master Plan and does not preserve rural character. We don't want the city coming out to Vergennes. There is a high volume of traffic by the high school. This would create a tax burden on the residents and asked the Planning Commission to deny rezoning.

Glen Hendricks, 11636 Bailey Drive: Calculated that this development will create a 35% increase in residents. Urged to deny.

Eric Nelsen, 12920 Vergennes: Noticed that homes currently being remodeled and are not being remodeled to look like manufactured homes. Driving down Alden Nash there is a lot of nice homes and nice fields. Cannot envision a trailer park in this area and it will not look good. Consider the quality of life for the people of Vergennes.

Jerry Rosema, 511 Alden Nash: Thinks Cook still owns the property where the proposal places the berm. Wants to know where the school exit is there.

Truscott: Asked to respond. Jernberg approved. Truscott: Thanked everyone for opportunity to present here. Information presented was based on information available to them. Intends to work with all as this process moves forward.

Attorney Doezema suggested the Planning Commission reject the preliminary site plan because if they don't act on it, it could be deemed approved based on the Mobile Home Commission Act. Also needs to address that the Township Planner has a conflict of interest and a new planner needs to be hired. Recommends tabling this until the Township hires a planner to review these issues.

Motion by Gillett to recommend denying approval of the preliminary site plan because it does not comply with current township ordinance. Seconded by Mastrovito. All approved.

Motion by Gillett to table the rezoning request until they have time to review the information have further discussion; also request the Township to hire a new planner. Seconded by Nauta. All approved.

Jernberg: closed public hearing.

Discussion continued regarding the Landon application. The Commission expressed a desire to implement the master plan for the area south of Vergennes Street to the midlines of Sections 33 and 34, west of the railroad tracks, and east of the High School. Motion by Gillett to rezone all existing RA to R1 in Section 34, and also in the northeast quarter of Section 33 except the school property, in compliance with the master plan. Seconded by Nauta. All approved.

Motion to adjourn by Jernberg. Seconded by Medendorp. All approved.  
The next meeting is April 8, 2002.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:30 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Cindy Sullivan, Recorder