

**ALPINE TOWNSHIP PLANNING COMMISSION
REGULAR MEETING
January 21, 2021
In Person and by Electronic Remote Access**

**21-01 CALL TO ORDER / APPROVAL OF REGULAR MEETING MINUTES OF
NOVEMBER 19, 2020 AND THE / PUBLIC COMMENT ON NON-AGENDA
ITEMS.**

The Alpine Township Planning Commission held its regular meeting on January 21, 2021 at 7:00 p.m. at the Alpine Township Center, 5255 Alpine Avenue NW, Comstock Park, MI 49321 in person and by Electronic Remote Access via Zoom. Present: Chair Mike O'Malley, Ron Cordes, Steve Thome, Lisa Frizzell, Dawn Swafford, Luke Arends (joined by electronic remote access partway through the meeting) and Gary Potter. Planner Susan Becker and recording secretary Barb Griswold were also present. Chair O'Malley called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. with the Pledge of Allegiance.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Frizzell moved, with support from Thome to approve the minutes of the Regular Meeting of the Alpine Planning Commission on November 19, 2020.

Ayes: 6 Nays: 0 Motion Carried

Chair O'Malley opened the meeting up for Public Comment on any non-agenda items. No comments were received.

**21-02 OLD BUSINESS, SITE PLAN AMENDMENT: GORDON FOOD SERVICE HAS
REQUESTED AN AMENDMENT TO THE ALLOWABLE NUMBER OF WALL
SIGNS TO ALLOW FOR ADDITIONAL SIGNAGE AT 4322 ALPINE AVENUE,
WITHIN THE C-2, COMMERCIAL ZONING DISTRICT.**

Planner Becker gave her review of the Site Plan Amendment and Signage request for Gordon Food Service at 4322 Alpine Avenue zoned C-2, Commercial. In January 2020, the Site Plan Review Committee granted site plan approval for construction of a 377-square foot building addition, a 224-square foot entrance canopy and general site plan changes. Due to a lack of communication between Gordon Food Service personnel, a sign request was not included in their site plan review request.

Jack Vos of Universal Signs originally requested additional signs for Gordon Foods on the March 2020 Planning Commission agenda. After the March meeting was cancelled, Gordon Foods decided to hold off their request to see how the economy fared and are now moving forward with a variation of their March 2020 request.

Becker stated the allowable size of a wall sign is dependent on the amount of lineal wall footage a building has facing the road. Gordon Foods will have 150 lineal feet of building wall footage facing Alpine Avenue after its new entrance addition; which allows for a maximum wall sign size of 145 square feet. Becker reviewed Section 20.13(b)(4) and said no wall may contain more than one sign unless additional signs are approved by the Planning Commission or Site Plan Review Committee. The Planning Commission must first determine that such additional signs will meet the intent of this Chapter.

Becker said the allowable wall signage after the entrance addition is 145 square feet and the applicant is asking permission to allow for two wall signs. If taken as whole, "Gordon Food Service, Open to the Public" is 144 square feet. The applicant would like to break the text into two signs. The square footage drops because there is no "blank space" between the two lines of text after separation. The "Gordon Food Service Store" would be 80.6 square feet and the "Open to the Public" would be 23.5 square feet, for 104.1 total square feet of signage. The "Gordon Food Service Store" would be located on the wall and the "Open to the Public" would be mounted on the face of the metal awning (and slightly stick up above it). One sign would be a wall sign and the other an awning sign and all of the letters would be internally lit.

Applicant Jack Vos of Universal Signs said they tried to stay within the rules of the ordinance and would like the "Open to the Public" verbiage added. He stated it is helpful for people to understand and know about Gordon Food Service stores.

MOTION: GORDON FOOD SERVICE SITE PLAN AMENDMENT AT 4322 ALPINE AVENUE

Based upon representations made by the applicant, Cordes made a motion, supported by Swafford to *approve* the elevation rendering dated Jan. 12, 2021 and the sign drawing dated February 27, 2020 drawn by Universal Sign Systems on property addressed 4322 Alpine Avenue (PP# 41-09-36-101-045) as the request *does* meet the requirement set forth in Chapter 20 of the Alpine Township Zoning Ordinance.

Ayes: 6 Nays: 0 Motion Carried

21-03 PUBLIC HEARING: THE KENT COUNTY ROAD COMMISSION HAS REQUESTED A FILL PERMIT OF 10,000 to 15,000 CUBIC YARDS FOR PROPERTY ADDRESSED 1845 4 MILE ROAD.

Planner Becker gave her review for a fill permit from the Kent County Road Commission at 1845 4 Mile Road. The Brechting Family Real Estate Company LLC (William Brechting et al) is the owner of the 32-acre farmland.

In the near future the Kent County Road Commission will be constructing their new offices and central yard across the street in the City of Walker at 1900 4 Mile Road. Typically, it's the excavator's responsibility to find appropriate locations for excess dirt. In this instance, the KCRC is lining up excess dirt location options for the yet-to-be-selected excavator.

Becker said the request also partially stems from the KCRC's desire to repair an area that has eroded as a result of storm water management changes from the 4 Mile Road widening project. The KCRC approached the Brechting Family about filling the low area of the farm, as it would fix the eroded area, make the southeast corner more farmable and would be a cost effective solution for placement of excess dirt.

An environmental assessment by Rose & Westra has been conducted on the property at 1900 4 Mile Road (the soil source). Of the approximately 40,000 cubic yards of excess soil, 5,000 are contaminated as a result of past orchard farming practices. The Township requires written assurance that contaminated soil will not be placed on 1845 4 Mile Road.

Becker stated the anticipated time frame for the fill operation would be mid-March to mid-May 2021 and would involve 2-3,000 truck trips directly across 4 Mile Road to move the 10-15,000 cubic yards of soil. The access point to bring the fill in will be determined by the KCRC. The fill will on average be 6 feet deep and will be topped dressed with 12 inches of top soil.

The land will be left suitable for farming and staff has heard that is the property owner's intention. Since the fill will not be compacted, it will not be suitable for construction. In regards to the future, the southern 500 feet or so of the property is proposed to be master planned for commercial purposes. Compaction of the soil will be necessary if buildings are constructed on the property.

The proposed fill does not appear to change existing drainage patterns, and it appears to be compatible with adjoining grades. A 5-foot wide level area will be left adjacent to the road for the required future sidewalk.

Becker reviewed Section 8 Standards of Approval from the Fill Ordinance for the Planning Commissioners.

Wayne Harrall, Deputy Managing Director of the Kent County Road Commission said KCRC approached the Brechting family looking for a place for excess fill. The closer they could find to the new KCRC building to deposit the fill, the less expensive trucking costs will be. There is a 2-acre spot on the Brechting farm that isn't being farmed due to a wet area and steep slopes and that is where the fill would go.

Mr. Harrall said KCRC has agreed to widen the 4 Mile Road curbside out about 10 feet with the potential for a future sidewalk. The fill would have to be on location by Mid-May so the area could be farmed in the 2021 growing season. KCRC would require erosion control on the westerly end of the fill site; it will create a swale but it would be farmable so the fill area would continue to drain.

Mr. Harrall explained if KCRC gets approval for the fill permit, there is no guarantee the fill will be placed on the Brechting property. They are looking at options to give their contractor that will be doing the earth work.

Frizzell said the future sidewalk doesn't call for compaction and she thought if you are going to build on something in the future, it has to be compacted. Becker said that would be a question for KCRC. Mr. Harrall answered whoever the contractor will be would compact the area with their dozing equipment and get it to the proper grade.

Motion made to open for public comments by Thome, supported by Potter.

Ayes: 6 Nays: 0 Motion Carried

John Gilchrist, Finance Director Kenowa Hills Public Schools asked if the fill will be transported up and down Baumhoff Avenue so they have an understanding if their transportation of buses will be interrupted. Mr. Harrall answered he would anticipate KCRC would require they haul it running perpendicular on 4 Mile Road. There would be some delays as trucks cross 4 Mile Road and KCRC would require the contractor to have a flagging operation. Mr. Harrall said he thinks there would be minimal delays and they would not be trucking on Baumhoff Avenue.

Cordes asked what the hours of operation will be and Mr. Harrall said 8 to 5, Monday through Saturday as the project would have to be completed by Mid-May.

Motion made to close for public comments by Cordes, supported by Potter.

Ayes: 6 Nays: 0 Motion Carried

MOTION: KENT COUNTY ROAD COMMISSION FILL PERMIT AT 1845 4 MILE ROAD

Based upon the representations made by the applicant, Potter made a motion, supported by Thome to approve the requested fill permit for the placement of 10-15,000 cubic yards of soil at 1845 4 Mile Road (PP #41-09-34-400-026), as it *does* meet the Standards of Approval set forth in the Alpine Township Fill Ordinance with the following Findings of Fact and conditions of approval:

Findings of Fact:

1. That the proposed fill activity shall not interfere with existing drainage patterns so as to cause a negative impact on adjacent properties.
2. That the operation shall not result in hazardous traffic situations from vehicles entering or leaving the site.
3. That the proposed method of fill will result in the filled area being readied for farming.
4. That the proposed operation will be carried out in a manner that will not be detrimental to nearby persons or property by reason of excessive production of traffic, noise, dust, fumes, or odor.
5. That the fill material is not hazardous, toxic or otherwise a threat to the public health, safety, and general welfare, and complies with the type of fill permitted by this Ordinance.
6. That the restored elevation of the land will be compatible with elevations on adjacent properties.

Conditions of Approval:

1. The applicant shall provide written assurance that the fill placed at 1845 4 Mile Road is not contaminated.
2. The applicant agrees with all conditions noted in the Township Engineer's letter dated January 15, 2021.
3. The Township reserves the right to require the contractor to submit a \$10,000 financial surety and/or a certificate of insurance per Section 11 of the Fill Ordinance.

Ayes: 6 Nays: 0 Motion Carried

21-04 PUBLIC HEARING: SAM GRISWOLD HAS REQUESTED TO REZONE PROPERTY AT 413 7 MILE ROAD NW FROM C-3, COMMERCIAL TO R-1, LOW DENSITY RESIDENTIAL.

Planner Becker gave her review of the request to rezone property at 413 7 Mile Road from C-3, Commercial to R-1, Low Density Residential. The property is located on the north side of 7 Mile Road east of Comstock Park Drive where Mill Creek crosses 7 Mile Road.

The 0.46-acre property contains a home built in 1950 and a detached garage built in 1998. A tributary of Mill Creek runs east through the backyard into Mill Creek on the eastern edge of the property. The property owner is requesting the rezoning to R-1 to make the property easier to refinance his mortgage and to sell the property to future homeowners. It is difficult to obtain a mortgage and insure a non-conforming home (i.e. a home zoned commercial).

There are a half dozen homes between the applicant's and the Bel Aire Auto Repair shop to the west. At the end of Blowers Drive immediately west of the home is a commercial business (an auto parts delivery service and likely another business).

Becker said the request to rezone the property from C-3, Commercial to R-1, Low Density Residential is in conformance with the 2015 Alpine Township Master Plan Update's future land use designation of LDR, Low Density Residential. The LDR future land use designation is analogous to the R-1, Low Density Residential zoning district. Becker reviewed a rezoning analysis to assist Commissioners in making a decision on this matter.

Applicant Sam Griswold, 413 7 Mile Road NW said is asking for consideration to rezone and the property will not be used as a business. Mr. Griswold would like to take advantage of lower finance rates that are occurring right now and refinance the property. He thanked the Commissioners for their time and consideration for his request.

Motion made to open for public comments by Cordes, supported by Thome.

Ayes: 6 Nays: 0 Motion Carried

No comments received.

Motion made to close for public comments by Thome supported by Potter.

Ayes: 6 Nays: 0 Motion Carried

MOTION: REZONING THE PROPERTY ADDRESSED 413 7 MILE ROAD NW

Cordes made a motion, supported by Thome to recommend to the Alpine Township Board to *approve* the requested rezoning for the property addressed 413 7 Mile Road (PP# 41-09-13-377-029) as publicly noticed from C-3, Commercial to R-1, Low Density Residential.

Findings of Fact:

Based upon representations made by the applicant during rezoning review and upon the standards found in Chapter 7 and 24 of the Alpine Township Zoning Ordinance and the 2015 Alpine Township Master Plan Update, we find that the proposed rezoning:

- 1) Is consistent with the Low Density Residential future land use recommendation of the 2015 Alpine Township Master Plan Update.
- 2) Does ensure compatibility with adjoining land uses and zoning types.
- 3) The location is appropriate for all the allowed uses in the R-1, Low Density Residential zoning district.
- 4) Is consistent with the allowed uses of the R-1, Low Density Residential zoning district.

Ayes: 6 Nays: 0 Motion Carried

21-05 PUBLIC HEARING: 4 MILE ROAD MASTER PLAN AMENDMENT

Planner Becker gave her review for the 4 Mile Road Corridor *Subplan A*, a Master Plan Amendment. The general purpose of a subplan is to guide and accomplish development that, among other things, considers the character of the Township and its suitability for particular uses, weighing local trends in land and population development.

Within the 2007 Master Plan and the 2015 Master Plan Update, Sub Areas 1 and 2 along 4 Mile Road corridor were developed for areas that have been zoned for commercial uses since the 1960s. There was a concern that if proper access management and other design criteria were in place, the areas could develop as strip commercial in such a way as to negatively impact the surrounding area. *Subplan A* absorbs the aforementioned Sub Areas 1 and 2 and expands the planning area to include the north side of 4 Mile Road from Fruit Ridge Avenue east to Bristol Avenue.

Becker explained Alpine Township decided to expand the planning area to help ensure there wouldn't be development pressure for intensive large-scale land uses that would negatively impact the Township's residential development goals on land near and adjacent to 4 Mile Road or negatively impact its farmland preservation goals on land further to the north (north of 5 Mile Road). Currently, the land to the south of the City of Walker is developing and is planned to continue to develop for mostly industrial uses.

The Township is looking ahead to provide opportunities for small-scale less intense uses that support neighborhood-scale needs and provide support services to the industrial uses to the south. The planned uses along 4 Mile Road are intended to serve as a buffer to the planned residential and agricultural uses further north of 4 Mile Road.

4 Mile Road is a three-lane country primary road and sees an Average Daily Traffic (ADT) volume of 12,000 vehicles per day near M-37 and a low of 7,000 vehicles per day near Fruit Ridge Avenue. Traffic will continue to increase because of continued development at the I-96 / Walker interchange in the City of Walker, continued industrial development along Northridge Avenue in the City of Walker, the location of Kenowa Hills Middle and High Schools and the general development of land along the corridor in both Alpine Township and the City of Walker.

Becker reviewed the Future Land Use Designations as they appear west to east along 4 Mile Road: Commercial, this area was known as Sub-Area 2 in the 2007 Master Plan and 2015 Master Plan Update. This parcel consists of about 30 acres and has been zoned for

commercial uses since the 1960s. The majority of the property is vacant and has potential for development.

Public Park, this designation recognizes the lack of public recreation facilities in the area and seeks to plan an area for such adjacent to Alpine Meadows and nearby residential development to the east. A public park would act as a buffer to the industrial uses planned to the south.

Institutional, this designation acknowledges the investment Kenowa Hills School District has made to the Middle and High School campuses at this location.

Commercial PUD, this designation recognizes a small portion of the site was utilized until recently by Roth Trucking, a trucking business at the north east corner of 4 Mile Road and Hendershot Avenue. The balance of the area is mostly vacant and has potential for future commercial development. All future development or redevelopment will have specific design and operational criteria with a PUD so that any future commercial development does not negatively impact the adjacent school campuses or residential development.

Low Density Residential, this designation acknowledges the existing residential uses in the area on both sides of 4 Mile Road and plans for its future residential expansion if Gracewil Country Club redevelops in the future.

Commercial Border, a part of this area was known as Sub-Area 1 in the 2007 Master Plan and 2015 Master Plan Update. The former Sub-Area 1 portion lies from just west of Walker Avenue east to Baumhoff Avenue and was a depth of about 500 feet from the right-of-way line. This approximate 30 acres of land has been commercially zoned since the 1960s. Within *Subplan A* the commercial area has been enlarged to stretch from just west of Walker Avenue east to Bristol Avenue and its depth has been adjusted in spots to recognize existing property lines. However, most of the area is again planned for commercial to a depth of 500 feet from the right-of-way line. This area is envisioned to provide support retail, commercial and office services for the industrial development area to the south. Envisioned uses are to be much less intense in use and scale as compared to those on M-37. To minimize the potential negative impacts of strip commercial development, access management provisions limiting the number and locations of driveways will be required. In addition, drive-through establishments such as restaurants and oil change businesses will not be permitted since the operations of such are disruptive to adjoining planned residential areas. Currently there is no public gravity sanitary sewer serving this area. When gravity sanitary sewer becomes available to this area, all existing businesses must connect to the public sanitary sewer system.

Office, this area is located between the Bristol and Cordes Avenue intersections and is planned for office uses to a depth of 500 feet from the right-of-way line. Office uses were chosen because office uses are a good transitional use between the more intensive uses planned to the south in the City of Walker and the residential uses planned to the north in Alpine Township and because there is very little opportunity for office development elsewhere in Alpine Township. This area is envisioned to develop with either offices or live/work office units. All live/work units must be single integrated building, not two separate buildings. Live/work units must have an office component open to the general public and attendant parking spaces. Currently there is no public gravity sanitary sewer serving this area. When gravity sanitary sewer becomes available to this area, all existing businesses must connect to the public sanitary sewer system.

Motion made to open for public comments by Swafford, supported by Frizzell.

Ayes: 6 Nays: 0 Motion Carried

John Frueh, 3505 4 Mile Road asked about the area that is designated as Public Park and why it was given that designation. Part of it is his property and he lives there and farms it. O'Malley answered when these plans are done, the use could be 20 years in the future. Currently the property is used residentially, and no one would be forced out of their home. O'Malley added the future land use is a "dream sheet" and the thought of being next to a school, a park would be a good idea.

Mr. Frueh has concerns about the traffic coming from Kenowa Hills High School from Hendershot Avenue onto 4 Mile Road. He said it can be a 20 minute wait to get out of his driveway and the students drive too fast. He has spoken with the Kent County Sheriff's Department; however nothing seems to be done about it.

Mr. Frueh asked about building retirement homes in that area and asked if the Planning Commission would consider retirement homes there. Cordes said Mr. Frueh would have to talk to with Planner Becker regarding it and then ask the Planning Commission to rezone the property to accommodate such.

Motion made to close for public comments by Thome supported by Cordes.

Ayes: 6 Nays: 0 Motion Carried

Arends joined the meeting via Zoom from the City of Grand Rapids.

MOTION: 4 MILE ROAD MASTER PLAN AMENDMENT

Cordes made a motion, supported by Potter to *approve* the proposed *Subplan A*, a text and map amendment to the 2015 Alpine Township Master Plan Update.

Ayes: 6 Nays: 0 Motion Carried

21-06 PUBLIC HEARING: ZONING ORDINANCE TEXT AMENDMENT TO MODIFY THE DEFINITIONS FOR ANIMALS AND THE LANGUAGE CONCERNING THE KEEPING OF ANIMALS.

Planner Becker gave her review for proposed changes to the zoning ordinance changes concerning animals. The proposed change mirrors the goal of prohibiting the keeping of exotic or wild animals. The secondary goal is to generally update the ordinance. The changes include domestic animals, farm animals (includes animals raised for commercial profit or consumption) and wild animals. The ordinance does not address the types of farm animals allowed in residential districts and prohibits farm animals from living in residential dwelling units. The ZBA determines if a particular animal falls into one of the three classes of animals; domestic, farm or wild.

Becker said Section 2.06, Farm Animals in Residential Districts addresses the keeping of animals and requires 1.5 acres for the first farm animal with 1 acre per farm animal for a maximum of 5 farm animals (therefore 5 farm animals requires 5.5 acres).

The RA, Rural Agricultural zoning district is considered to be a residential zoning district; although farms are permitted by right also. The minimum lot size in RA is 1.5 acres. There are existing provisions for private stables in RA allowing 1 horse per acre.

The proposed language to be added to Section 2.06 acknowledges the difference with respect to number of horses per acre in this unique zoning district. In the RA district, horses may be kept on non-farms with at least 1 acre per horse. This differs slightly from the current regulations for farm animals in residential districts in Section 2.06. The proposed language is: *In the R-A, Rural Agricultural zoning district, the above applies to properties that are not farms as defined in this ordinance. For the keeping of horses in the R-A, Rural Agricultural zoning district, see Section 6.02(g).*

Becker asked the Commissioners to discuss the types of poultry and it was agreed upon that poultry is primarily focused on provision of meat and eggs.

Motion made to open for public comments by Arends, supported by Swafford.

Ayes: 7 Nays: 0 Motion Carried

No comments received.

Motion made to close for public comments by Thome supported by Potter.

Ayes: 7 Nays: 0 Motion Carried

MOTION: ZONING ORDINANCE TEXT AMENDMENT TO MODIFY THE DEFINITIONS FOR ANIMALS AND THE LANGUAGE CONCERNING THE KEEPING OF ANIMALS

Frizzell made a motion, supported by Cordes to adopt the proposed ordinance change to ordinance 21-02 concerning farm animals and a recommendation to the Township Board.

Ayes: 7 Nays: 0 Motion Carried

21-07 PLANNING COMMISSION ADMINISTRATIVE ITEMS

Becker gave the 2020 year-end report including the Planning Commission, the Zoning Board of Appeals and Planning and Zoning Administration items. Becker suggested the 2021 work plan be zoning ordinance changes to implement *Subplan A* of the Master Plan, Composting Facility provisions, Solar Provisions, Communication Tower updates and short-term rental provisions. Also in 2021, the Township should review the entire Master Plan.

Election of Officers:

Chair: O'Malley

Vice-Chair: Arends

Secretary: Frizzell

Ayes: 7 Nays: 0 Motion Carried

Site Plan Review Committee:

Chair: O'Malley

Members: Frizzell and Cordes

Alternative: Thome

Ayes: 7 Nays: 0 Motion Carried

Capital Improvement Plan Committee:

Whole Commission as members

Ayes: 7 Nays: 0 Motion Carried

Becker discussed with the Planning Commission the minutes from the July 16th, 2020 meeting and the motion to rezone property at 730 Marlene Street. The motion was made and approved per her notes, but was left out of the minutes. Becker asked for a motion to amend the minutes from July 16, 2020 to include the motion for the rezoning.

Frizzell made a motion, supported by Thome to amend the minutes from the Planning Commission Meeting on July 16, 2020 to include the approved motion for rezoning property addressed at 730 Marlene Street from R-3, High Density Residential to C-2, Commercial.

Ayes: 7 Nays: 0 Motion Carried

21-08 COMMISSIONER AND STAFF UPDATES / ADJOURNMENT

Becker said the Township has updated the video equipment in the meeting room. The upgrade will make it more efficient to have remote Zoom meetings.

ADJOURNMENT

Frizzell motioned, supported by Potter to adjourn the meeting at 9:00 PM.

Ayes: 7 Nays: 0 Motion carried



Lisa Frizzell, Planning Commission Secretary

Barb Griswold, Recording Secretary