

**ALPINE TOWNSHIP PLANNING COMMISSION  
REGULAR MEETING  
July 20, 2023**

**23-32 CALL TO ORDER AND APPROVAL OF THE REGULAR MEETING MINUTES  
OF JUNE 15, 2023.**

The Alpine Township Planning Commission held its regular meeting on May 18, 2023 at 7:00 p.m. at the Alpine Township Center, 5255 Alpine Avenue NW, Comstock Park, MI 49321. Present: Chair Steve Thome, Vice Chair Tom Griswold, Secretary Lisa Frizzell, Gary Potter and Dawn Swafford. Ron Cordes was absent. Planner Susan Becker and recording secretary Barb Griswold were also present. Thome called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. with the Pledge of Allegiance.

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

Griswold moved, with support from Potter to approve the minutes of the Regular Meeting of the Alpine Planning Commission on June 15, 2023.

**Ayes: 5      Nays: 0      Motion Carried**

**23-33 DISCUSSION: PRODUCE STORAGE BUILDINGS, MINIMUM ACREAGE**

Planner Becker said approximately a dozen years ago, the zoning ordinance was changed to limit produce storage, packing and processing facilities on a minimum lot size of 40 acres. While reviewing this section for a possible new produce storage facility, it came to light that more than 50% of such facilities are located on lots less than 40 acres in size.

There are 19 properties with controlled atmosphere produce storage buildings, excluding properties with packing lines, and of the 19 properties, 11 of them are less than 40 acres in size. Ownership records indicate that the buildings are individually owned or by several family members.

Becker reviewed the Produce storage, packing and processing facilities ordinance, Section 5.02 as follows: *Storing, packaging and processing farm produce, provided such activities are done on a farm consisting of a lot of at least 40 acers and that such storage, packaging or processing includes farm products grown on that lot. Building or structures in which such uses occur on a lot without any other building or structure, shall be considered the principal building on the lot for purposes of this Ordinance. Canning and freezing activities are prohibited.*

Prior to 2009, it read: *Storing, packaging and processing of farm produce, provided such activities are done on a farm consisting of at least 40 acres and that such storage, packaging, or processing include farm products grown on that parcel. Canning and freezing activities are prohibited.*

Becker said to note the above provisions do not apply to general farm equipment storage barns. The provision of a 40-acre farm was changed to a 40-acre lot because farms are inherently dynamic in size, as land is bought and sold all the time and farms often consist of non-contiguous parcels of land that may be located in several different municipalities.

Potter said a 2-acre parcel doesn't seem big enough for trucks to turn around in. Thome said most would not try to put a facility on a 2-acre parcel.

Griswold said he wouldn't want to create a hardship for farmers. Frizzell said it should be less restrictive for farmers and not limit it to product produced only on-site.

### **23-34 DISCUSSION: SELF-STORAGE FACILITIES**

Becker said self-storage buildings are purpose-built structures that typically can't be reconfigured into something else over the life of the structure. The form of the building strictly dictates the function of the building. In addition, self-storage facilities do not provide local jobs once constructed.

On July 17<sup>th</sup>, the Township Board put a temporary moratorium on new self-storage facility development to give the Planning Commission time to develop regulations. The police power ordinance moratorium needs to be followed up with a zoning ordinance amendment creating a zoning moratorium, so the Commissioners should expect to see that at the August meeting.

Becker suggested a limiting factor for future development would be to tie the number of storage units to the Township's population size as determined by the U.S. Census (either the Decennial Census or American Community Survey which are estimates released every 5 years). As the Township grows in population, so can the number of self-storage units.

Becker said parameters unique to self-storage facilities she has seen are distance requirements between facilities, maximum impervious surface coverage of 50%, one building per parcel, a minimum lot area, fencing requirements, architectural standards or all storage must occur within an enclosed building.

Swafford said she likes one building per parcel and that looks better than individual units.

Frizzell said to take storage-units out of industrial zoned properties, only in commercial zoned areas.

Potter said make them on side roads, not on main roads such as Alpine Avenue. Also set a minimum distance requirement off roads such as M-37.

Frizzell said she likes the idea of development based on the population and thinks there should be no development of self-storage facilities in PUD zoned parcels.

### **23-35 DISCUSSION: SOLAR ENERGY PROVISIONS**

Becker said there are two basic types of solar energy system. Accessory use systems primarily provide for the electrical needs of that particular property and are the primary use of a home or business. Principal use systems provide electrical grid, such as off-site use and they are the principal use of a property.

Alpine Township does not have any written regulations for any type of solar energy system. The Township has been allowing on-site solar energy systems as accessory to the principal use of the property for residential or business purposes. Most have been roof-mounted structures and a few have been for ground structure. Becker has been using the setback regulations for accessory structures for the placement of ground-mounted structures. The Zoning Ordinance needs to catch up with the changing technology.

Farmers in the area have been receiving lease offers for their land and Becker gets inquiries regarding the Township's regulations for utility-level solar energy systems.

Becker said on July 17<sup>th</sup>, the Township Board put a temporary moratorium on solar energy systems that primarily generate electricity for off-site use to give the Planning Commission time to develop regulations. The police power ordinance moratorium needs to be followed up with a zoning ordinance amendment creating a zoning moratorium, so the Commissioners should expect to see that at the August meeting.

Griswold said there is a lot of in-depth information to go through regarding solar energy. Decommission at the end of a solar project's life can be a big issue too.

Frizzell said agricultural preservation zoned areas should stay as agricultural preservation.

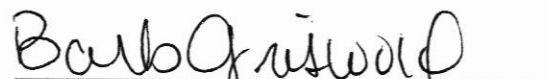
Griswold said a possibility is to allow a certain percentage of land can be used for solar energy.

Thome said the whole Planning Commission should be involved in the further discussion and not a sub committee for solar energy. He asked Becker to share ordinances that other Townships have in place for solar energy.

#### **ADJOURNMENT**

Griswold motioned, supported by Frizzell to adjourn the meeting at 8:50 PM.

**Ayes: 5      Nays: 0      Motion Carried**

  
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Lisa Frizzell, Planning Commission Secretary  
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Barb Griswold, Recording Secretary