

**ALPINE TOWNSHIP PLANNING COMMISSION
REGULAR MEETING
November 18, 2021
In Person and by Electronic Remote Access**

**21-49 CALL TO ORDER / APPROVAL OF REGULAR MEETING MINUTES OF
OCTOBER 21, 2021 AND THE / PUBLIC COMMENT ON NON-AGENDA
ITEMS.**

The Alpine Township Planning Commission held its regular meeting on November 18, 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: Vice Chair Luke Arends, Ron Cordes, Lisa Frizzell, Steve Thome, Dawn Swafford and Gary Potter. Mike O'Malley was absent. Planner Susan Becker and recording secretary Barb Griswold were also present. Vice Chair Arends called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. with the Pledge of Allegiance.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Cordes moved, with support from Potter to approve the minutes of the Regular Meeting of the Alpine Planning Commission on October 21, 2021.

Ayes: 6 Nays: 0 Motion Carried

Vice Chair Arends opened the meeting up for Public Comment on any non-agenda items. No comments were received.

**21-50 PUBLIC HEARING: ZONING ORDINANCE TEXT AMENDMENTS TO
ELIMINATING FARM VS NON-FARM DWELLING LANGUAGE IN CHAPTER
1, DEFINITIONS AND CHAPTER 5, AGRICULTURAL ZONE AND CHANGE IT
TO SINGLE FAMILY DWELLING.**

Becker gave the review for the proposed changes to the provisions for dwelling units in the Agricultural zoning district. The Zoning Ordinance currently differentiates between houses for people that earn their living as a farmer and houses for people that earn their living doing other things. It doesn't make sense to classify or restrict property ownership by profession of its occupants. The language is proposed to shift to *Single-Family Dwelling Unit*, which indicates the use of the structure not the occupation of its occupants. The only exception, which exists now, is Farm Labor Housing and that is regulated by the Michigan Department of Agriculture.

Becker said proposed changes to the Definitions chapter include: changed the definition of *Agriculture* to include animal husbandry; deleted the definition of *Dwelling Unit*, *Farm*; deleted the non-farm language from the definition of *Dwelling Unit*, *Nonfarm* or *Single-Family*; deleted the farm or non-farm language from the definition of *Farm Buildings* and further clarified dwelling units of any kind are not considered to be *Farm Buildings*; added the qualifier of "Agricultural" to the definition of *Labor or Work Camp*.

Becker said proposed changes to the A, Agricultural zoning district include: substitutes single-family dwelling units for all references to non-farm dwelling units and farm dwelling units; moved the restriction of one dwelling unit per lot from the Definitions chapter to Section 5.02; Section 5.04(d)(3) are the provisions that require an Agriculturally-zoned parcel to be deed restricted for FARMING USES ONLY if all Agricultural Sliding Scale land divisions have been used up. This is only substantive proposed change to the ordinance. Currently the ordinance allows the

construction of a FARM dwelling on deed restricted land. The proposed changes would eliminate the option of constructing a dwelling unit.

There are 13 known agricultural properties that have been deed restricted from farm uses only (whether the owners followed through with recording a deed restriction or not). Per the spring 2020 aerial photos, none of the 13 properties have structures of any kind located on them. Six of the 13 properties aren't buildable for a home anyway since they don't have enough road frontage or any road frontage at all.

Thome said he owns one of the 13 properties that have been deed restricted and some have the ability to now build a house; however if this passes he could not put a house on the property. He stated why do property owners have to give something up?

Arends asked how many properties would have the ability to build a house currently and Becker answered 7 properties in total.

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

Ayes: 6 Nays: 0 Motion Carried

Marty Brechting, 1307 6 Mile Road, said he thinks this is a sham. The property owners weren't notified they may give up the ability to build a home, just because a lawyer suggested it.

Jill Brechting, 1307 6 Mile Road asked for the names of all the property owners this would effect and Thome read the names of the property owners.

Marta Brechting, 1275 6 Mile Road, said this is impacting people and you haven't notified them and that is wrong. The Township should be concerned with looking out for people and should look at the greater good.

Joe Warren, 5063 Baumhoff Avenue, said people representing the Township were elected to do what is best for the community and wants to know how this would benefit the community.

Jason Lovell, 3738 Walker Avenue, said more thought should have gone into this and also contacted the property owners who this will effect.

Jaclyn Alcumbrack, 4480 Walker Avenue, asked how the Township was contacting people because she didn't know about the meeting until a neighbor told her about it. Arends answered the meetings are publicly noticed by Planner Becker. Ms. Alcumbrack said this is a big ticket item and wanted to know why she wasn't notified. Arends asked if she was referring to the discussion item on the agenda for the development of Gracewil Country Club and Ms. Alcumbrack said yes. Becker added all public hearings are published in the Sunday paper 15 days prior to the meeting date and 15 days before the meeting all property owners and occupants living within 300 feet of the property that will be discussed are notified by mail.

Don Armock, 2728 Schindler Drive, said this seems like it could do harm to people and be illegal and is not in anyone's best interest to take out rights from property owners.

Leon Brechting, 4190 Baumhoff Avenue, said what was the purpose of bringing up migrant camps, and was it just so the Township lawyer looks like he is doing something to earn money?

Becker responded by law, the Township can't regulate or control the employment of the occupant who lives in a building; she can't differentiate between a house for a farmer and a house for a non-farmer.

Motion made to close for public comments by Thome, supported by Swafford.

Ayes: 6 Nays: 0 Motion Carried

Thome said he understands the text amendment is a housekeeping issue, but it does effect other farmers and is taking something away that they currently have.

Cordes said he agrees with Thome and this matter needs to be looked at deeper and understood better.

Thome made a motion, supported by Cordes to TABLE the text amendments to eliminate Farm versus Non-Farm Dwelling language.

Ayes: 6 Nays: 0 Motion Carried

21-51 DISCUSSION: HOWIE HEHRER REQUESTS TO REZONE 206 ACRES FROM R-1, LOW DENSITY RESIDENTIAL TO OSN-PUD, OPEN SPACE NEIGHBORHOOD PLANNED UNIT DEVELOPMENT ON PROPERTY ADDRESSED 2555 4 MILE ROAD.

Becker gave the review for the request from Howie Hehrer of GWCC Holdings LLC to rezone the 206-acre property addressed 2555 4 Mile Road from R-1, Low Density Residential to OSN-PUD, Open Space Neighborhood Planned Unit Development. The property is commonly known as Gracewil Country Club. The applicant is requesting a work session with the Commission and perhaps the Township Board to go over desired ordinance changes prior to the public hearing.

The property contains a 36-hole golf course, a country club building, various support buildings and Indian Mill Creek. The Township's Gracewil sanitary sewer lift station is located just east of the golf course driveway off 4 Mile Road and there is a 100-foot wide Kent County Drain Commissioner easement for the Indian Mill Creek Drain.

The northern edge of the golf course is the northern edge of planned development in Alpine Township, along the northern edge of where the public water and sewer may extend. The property is Master Planned Low Density Residential and the master states *LDR areas could also be developed as Open Space Neighborhoods.*

Becker reviewed Section 14A.01, Purpose and Section 14A.03, Eligibility Criteria for the Commissioners.

A rezoning to the OSN-PUD provides the developer the opportunity to construct a variety of housing types including duplexes, triplexes and fourplexes. There is also the opportunity for flexibility in the design of lots and roadways. The most important aspect of an OSN-PUD is the preservation or creation of open space (a minimum of 35% of the property) as a key design feature that is accessible to all in the new neighborhood.

The general layout of the proposed neighborhood works well. There is good road connectivity and various housing options are proposed. Open Space is located throughout the development and contains pedestrian pathways.

The applicant has indicated a desire for several Zoning Ordinance changes to the OSN-PUD. The request involves allowing 2-story fourplexes, pie-shaped lots, and some sort of modification on what is considered to be a Primary Conversation Area.

Becker reviewed Section 14A.08, Minimum Open Space Requirements and an OSN-PUD shall provide and maintain a minimum of 35% of the gross parcel area of the application site as Dedicated Open Space. The Planning Commission shall determine the actual amount of open space required, and may require more than 35% of the site to be dedicated open space. As calculated, 36% of the site is open space.

Other than adjacent to the creek, most of the open space land is located in back of homes. The applicant does not propose to create berms or grade along the west edge or the north edge where narrow peripheral bands of open space are illustrated. Instead, the applicant proposes to retain the existing tree line in these areas to provide buffers to the adjacent farm fields and a couple existing homes.

Becker said only strips of mature trees exist on the golf course. The disbursement of mature trees in strips makes it very difficult to preserve. The applicant has committed to saving trees along the property's borders and wherever a few specimens may fit into the design.

Becker reviewed Section 14A.05, Permitted Uses and the uses are single family dwellings and two-family dwellings. The two-family dwellings shall not constitute more than 15% of the total dwelling units in an OSN-PUD, and the proposed has 15.8%.

The units per building and the building shall not be more than one story in height and multi-family dwellings shall not constitute more than 15% to the total dwelling units in an OSN-PUD, the proposed has 14.1% as fourplex townhomes.

The proposed has a clubhouse (currently Country Club facility), outdoor pool, pickleball courts, a punting green, fenced dog run area, a gazebo, two benches and walking paths in open space.

Becker reviewed Section 14A.04, Density Requirements for a proposed OSN-PUD. *To determine the maximum number of dwelling units which may be constructed within an OSN-PUD, the permitted density from the Density Table shall be multiplied by the total acreage of the site, excluding those areas indentified as Primary Conservation Areas in Section 14A.8(d) as well as acreage within pre-development public road rights-of-way.*

However, this maximum density may not be feasible when the 65' lot width minimum noted in Section 14A.07 and the required 35% of gross acreage Dedicated Open Space noted in Section 14A.08(a) are applied to the actual PUD lot layout plan. Therefore, the actual lot yield plan may be less than the permitted maximum number of dwelling units.

Becker said the Planning Commission and the Township Board may, based on the criteria contained in this chapter, require fewer dwelling units than would otherwise be permitted by the maximum density calculation noted in this Section to better protect the public health, safety and

welfare. There are 592 dwelling units proposed, divided by 187.1 acres would equal 3.16 dwelling units per acre. For comparison purposes: 562 dwelling units divided by 187.1 acres equal 3.0 dwelling per acre. Adjustments to lot widths may impact the overall number of single family home sites. The ordinance only lays out provisions for the Planning Commission to reduce the maximum allowable density of 3.0 dwelling units/acre, not increase it.

Becker reviewed Section 14A.07, Development Requirements and Section 14A.09, Design Standards for Residential Lots or Units. The applicant requested changes to the OSN-PUD zoning district and desires to retain pie-shaped lots, something that is already partially available in other zoning districts.

The applicant states front setbacks have been reduced (from the typical R-1, development standards) to activate the space. A people-activated space is ideal for any community. Houses with doors and porches activate the area near sidewalks with people and garages that stick out far into that space don't activate it.

Becker reviewed Section 14A.10, Design Standards for Streets and stated the proposed development creatively uses "eyebrows" along streets to add interest and a midway walkway is proposed.

The proposed access roads on 4 Mile Road, Peach Ridge Avenue and Walker Avenue have been reviewed by the Kent County Road Commission. Per the KCRC, a dedicated left turn lane is needed on 4 Mile Road and will likely be needed on Peach Ridge and Walker Avenues. A traffic study is in the process of being developed.

Road stubs to the west and north are shown. The road stub to the north is not inappropriate even though it is the northern edge of the area master planned for development since things may change in 50 years. This road stub should have fencing across it to prevent residential and recreational vehicles from entering the farm field. Conversely, farm vehicle traffic does not belong in residential areas either.

The internal road system is predominately public roads. Private roads and alleys are located in the condominium areas, the illustrated loops are not labeled public or private. Some Villas and Fourplex townhomes are rear loaded, meaning their vehicular access is from a rear 18-foot wide alley.

Becker stated the proposed development contains pedestrian connections between cul-de-sac road ends across the communal open space. A walking path circuit with great views has been provided along the creek and a similar path with a gazebo overlooking one of the storm water ponds is located at the south end. There is a midblock pedestrian facility connecting Road C to Loop Q1 and all of this works well.

A 4 Mile Road pedestrian facility is required within the public road right-of-way. A sidewalk Agreement was previously signed by the property owner some time ago for the installation of sidewalks along 4 Mile Road. In addition, the 2015 Transportation Plan (a part of the Master Plan) indicates a non-motorized trail along the north side of 4 Mile Road. The applicant shall install public sidewalk across the 4 Mile Road frontage as originally planned years ago.

Becker said when staff met with the prospective property owner and prospective applicant; it came out in discussions that sidewalks would be installed on both sides of all roads. Staff was surprised in reviewing the provided drawings that approximately half of the streets only have sidewalks on one side. The plans must be revised to include sidewalks on both sides of public streets.

The 2015 Township Master Plan states all public streets shall have sidewalks located on both sides on the street. The Township strives for the construction on new Complete Streets or the retrofitting of existing streets into Complete Streets. A Complete Street is a street that contextually provides facilities for all legal uses of a street (pedestrians, bicyclists, and transit). Sidewalks on only one side of any public street is not in conformance with the Master Plan.

The Township has historically required new developments to put sidewalks on both sides of all public streets and treatment of private streets vary. The recently approved *The Range at Alpine* development was required to have sidewalks on both sides of all public roads and the last subdivision approved in the Township (Berry Grove Estates) was required by the Planning Commission to have sidewalks on both sides of the public street.

Becker added the following suggestions on the layout and items for future review: recommend bike racks and additional benches; consider playground instead of putting green or in one of the other open spaces; consider a driveway to maintain dog run area; show all existing road culverts on Peach Ridge and Walker Avenues as storm water flows west to east through the site; address the interface between the existing north farm field and proposed homes; review guest motor vehicle parking; school bus stop coordination with Kenowa Hills Public Schools; mailbox bank locations per U.S.P.S.; reconfiguring of access easement at sewer lift station; verification of turning radii of streets for fire apparatus; aeration of storm water ponds; street lights and landscape plan and the fate of the Country Club's liquor license.

Applicant Howie Hehrer of GWCC Holdings LLC, said the proposed request utilizes the Open Space Neighborhood Planned Unit Development zoning standards to transition an existing 208-acre golf course into a distinctive, pedestrian-oriented residential neighborhood in Alpine Township. The proposed neighborhood will host single-family lots (305 lots), detached single-family condos (109 dwelling units), attached single-family condos (94 attached dwelling units in 47 buildings) and attached single-family townhomes (84 attached dwelling units in 21 buildings).

The vast majority of the anticipated 592 single-family dwellings directly border open space, which accounts for approximately 36% of the overall site. Those that do not directly abut an open space are connected to these shared spaces via the ample sidewalks that line the neighborhood's streets. Paved walkways weave through residential units, allowing residents to visit neighbors, walk through naturalized prairie, take one's dog to play at the dog park or relax at the numerous seating areas overlooking one of the neighborhood's three ponds. A club house will host activities including a pool, pickleball courts and a putting green.

Mr. Hehrer stated the 2555 Four Mile Road PUD leverages the flexibility afforded through the OSN-PUD Zoning District regulations to create a blend of housing that advances the Township's goals, fulfilling the needs of a broader array of residents compared with that is allowed by the site's current R-1 zoning designation. The reduced setbacks and expansion of residential use, allowing for up to four-unit buildings allows the PUD request to reach financial feasibility

required to provide quality homes at this scale while preserving large expanses of communal open spaces.

Mr. Hehrer said although the proportion of two-family units is slightly higher than what is required, he believes that the amount of attached two-unit buildings allows the development to appropriately respond to market conditions and provide a desired housing mix for the community.

The existing pond and sections of Indian Mill Creek that flow along the southeast and northeast portion of the site will be preserved as a Primary Conservation Area and will allow for the waterways to re-naturalize, benefitting both the onsite and downstream health of the creek. Grading will be limited, whenever possible, within existing stands of trees along the borders of the property to enhance the feeling of privacy among the existing adjacent residents and future 2555 4 Mile Road PUD residents.

Mr. Hehrer stated a blend of unit types proposed would diversify the housing options with Alpine Township. A reoccurring sentiment of residents expressed in the Township's Master Plan was the need for more single-family housing options and specifically options for seniors. The proposed plan provides a diversified mix of housing options that suit the needs for people at various stages of life. All the housing types will be for sale for potential owners to buy and there will be no rentals. The proposed development is something the community can be proud of and not a "run of the mill" type subdivision.

Mr. Hehrer said there will be 1 master association for the development and then 6 separate associations within the development. He also stated he is receptive to doing double-sided sidewalks in the development on all public roads. He has learned over the past 6 years of developing neighborhoods residents like the option of single-sided sidewalks; they like the options of sidewalks but not necessarily in their front yards because they don't want to deal with the maintenance that is associated with it.

He acknowledges the proposed development is not ready for a public hearing and will need their traffic study back yet and has requested a work session with the Planning Commission and Township Board to fine tune items, get additional feedback and make it a development that works for everyone. He added they are the builder and developer, so they care about the long term health of the development and are passionate about it.

Swafford asked about the 1 pool for the entire complex and if it is big enough for the size of this development. Mr. Hehrer answered it is sufficient enough and residents will have the ability to install their own pools in the single-family portion of the development. Swafford asked what the capacity will be for the pool and Mr. Hehrer said it is a fairly large pool with a large pool deck, but they do not have the exact specifics on how large it will be.

Swafford said she realizes Mr. Hehrer will be getting a traffic study, but looking at the possibility of 1,184 vehicles based on the number of dwelling units and the potential of 800 vehicles going to work with only one entrance doesn't seem like it would work. Mr. Hehrer said there are three entrances in and out of the development at full build out and a traffic study will tell a lot the locations too.

Mr. Hehrer said the development will take 20 to 30 years to fully develop, depending on how the economy goes, so it will be a slow and long process. The earliest development would start will be 2023 and it will stay a 36 hole golf course next year and 2 years minimum after that, will go to a 18 hole golf course.

Swafford asked what the price ranges will be for the different style homes. Mr. Hehrer said townhomes will be \$270,000 to \$330,000; front facing villas will be \$300,000 to \$450,000; the slab on grade condos will be \$325,000 to \$450,000; the rear facing villas will be \$290,000 to \$400,000; and the single family homes will be \$300,000 to \$450,000.

Potter asked about the back alley ways and wondered if they are wide enough for a fire truck to get there and if the Fire Chief had looked at the plans. Mr. Hehrer said the Fire Chief had looked at the plans and felt comfortable with the widths. There are 10 feet minimums for the back alleys and the plans show 16 feet. Potter thinks it will still be a problem to get multiple fire trucks in the alley areas.

Thome asked who will maintain the open space strips between the single family home lots and Mr. Hehrer said the associations will maintain them. He said the intention is not to mow it and be left as a buffer area. It will also help minimize rear yard property disputes.

Thome asked if they are the only builder and not selling the lots. Mr. Hehrer said they are not interested in selling lots to anyone and will be the only builder for the development. They are a local company and not from out of state.

Arends said a lot of the open space seems to be in backyards and the development is highly dense. He asked when the traffic study will be finalized and Mr. Hehrer said the end of November.

Arends asked if they were going to develop different areas at a time or all one area at a time initially. Mr. Herher said they plan on starting with the condos in the southeast corner and much of the development will depend on sanitary sewer routing. The second component will be to start the single family homes and from there even development with what the market demands.

Arends said a work session is a good idea with the Township Board and Becker said she will ask if Township Board members are available for December, and if not, will set a date in January for a work session.

21-52 PUBLIC COMMENT

Marta Brechting, 1275 6 Mile Rd said if Thome had not brought up the farm dwelling ordinance the Commissioners would have voted to approve it and that isn't right. She thinks the proposed development is way too big, not good for Alpine Township and big developments like this will keep happening.

Jason Lovell, 3738 Walker Avenue said he just purchased his house and is across the street from the golf course and now a development might be coming in. The farmers of this community are going to have to ask themselves if a developer approaches them, would they sell their land? The lots should be bigger to keep traffic down.

Christine Gavin, 4049 Peach Ridge Avenue is concerned with the roads. Peach Ridge and Walker Avenues are very narrow and if you try to walk on those roads, you can fear for your life because drivers are going too fast. The people who live in the area now need to be addressed first because the roads currently are not working and have more traffic than can be handled.

Steve Herr, 3625 Peach Ridge Avenue said there have been 3 accidents at the 4 Mile Road and Peach Ridge Avenue intersection in the last 6 months. Traffic is an issue now and only will get worse if this development goes in.


21-53 COMMISSIONER AND STAFF UPDATES / ADJOURNMENT

Becker said she will poll the Township Board regarding a possible work session in December.

ADJOURNMENT

Arends motioned, supported by Potter to adjourn the meeting at 8:45 PM.

Ayes: 6 Nays: 0 Motion carried



Lisa Frizzell, Planning Commission Secretary



Barb Griswold, Recording Secretary