

ALAMO TOWNSHIP PLANNING COMMISSION

Minutes for February 2, 2010

A Regular Meeting of the Alamo Township Planning Commission was held Tuesday, February 2, 2010.

Chairman Goyings called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. with the pledge of allegiance. The following members were present: David Veenstra, Al Sweitzer, Helen Goyings, Karen DeVries and Belden Smith. Also attending were Robert Vlietstra, Barbara Fisher, and Robert Alway.

AGENDA

No additions. One rearrangement; agenda items VI and VII, LUP Presentation to come before Agricultural lot sizes.

MINUTES

D. Veenstra spoke to correct the Jan. 5 minutes, pointing out that P. Baker, and not he, was originally appointed as Planning Commission representative (along with R. Feniger) to meet with the Parks Board regarding a definition of the term "Park". With that correction minutes of the previous meeting held January 5, 2010 were approved as amended on motion by K. Devries, seconded by A. Sweitzer. CARRIED.

MOTION

Members Ron Feniger and Paula Baker were excused from this meeting on motion by member Sweitzer, seconded by Member DeVries. CARRIED.

CITIZEN COMMENTS

None.

OUTDOOR WOOD BURNERS

Chair ~~Goyings~~ **Goyings** then introduced Mr. Robert M. Alway, Environmental Quality Analyst with the Air Quality Division of the State of Michigan Department of Environmental Quality. At Chair ~~Going's~~ **Goyings'** request, Mr. Alway made himself available to the commission as a resource in our deliberation over construction of regulations addressing outdoor wood burners used to heat water for use in heating other nearby structures. Before taking questions Mr. Alway presented information from the DEQ and discussed the fact that there is "often a smoke problem" associated with such boiler installations. The DEQ has not established state wide regulations specifically for these stoves but State and Federal Air Quality standards (US EPA, National Ambient Air Quality Standards) are in place. Unfortunately these thresholds are "difficult for us [DEQ] to deal with" because there are already so many burners and too few personnel and resources to go around. Testing procedures and equipment are designed to monitor effluent from major industry, not home furnaces. Mr. Alway fielded commissioners questions for well over half an hour.

Commissioners went on to discuss various issues related to regulation, and decided to move forward expeditiously by further reviewing existing regulations in other rural communities, and selecting the most commonly recognized and basic standards as a point of departure for our own attempt to anticipate and mitigate land use conflict caused by use of outdoor wood burners. Chair ~~Goings~~ **Goyings** and secretary Smith will attempt to draft a minimal or basic set of regulatory standards for commission consideration at the next meeting.

LAND USE PLAN

Chair ~~Goings~~ **Goyings** ~~admonished~~ **urged** the commission to press ahead with completion of the Land Use Plan Review, pointing out that even after we finish our work it will take a considerable amount of time before the commission can take final action to adopt the update. A basic but completed review soon is better (at this late date) than an ambitious draft. This is especially true in as much as all indications so far support the contention that land use activity in the township is pretty much in line with that anticipated in the original 1998 plan as well as the review already undertaken in 2003

AGRICULTURAL LOT SIZES

~~A spirited~~ discussion then ensued regarding the advisability of changing the maximum residential lot size in the agriculture district. ~~There has been some concern among township officials~~ **It was an observation among the Planning Commission** that restricting the lot size for residential use has had the unintended consequence of attracting would be residents to the smaller and therefore less expensive building sites. ~~There seems to be a related concern that the smaller acreages correlate with less expensive and less attractive homes, which then do not support potential assessment and detract from the value of existing homes and farmsteads near by.~~

Smaller sizes can lead to congestion.

It was pointed out by the designated Agriculture representative on the commission that the far more important consequence and intention of preserving farm land has been well served. ~~An increase in allowed lot size would invariably lead to greater conversion of tillable land to residential land.~~

The matter was tabled with the idea that in the near future we hope to have as our guest a ~~professional planner from the county~~ **members from the home builders association**. At that time we will seek their advice on optimal Ag district lot size requirements.

Returning to the topic of the Land Use Plan Review; Chair ~~Goings~~ **Goyings** pointed out that in the recent survey trash and blight was mentioned by many as the chief negative factor in the township. She felt that we should address this concern and include blight relief as an objective in the LUP update.

PARK DEFINITION

Chair ~~Goings~~ **Goyings** presented the most recent wording for a definition of “Park” to come from the Joint Parks/Planning Commission.

Park: a tract or parcel of land not maintained, supported or overseen by the Township, used by the public for active or passive recreational purposes, conservation and/or preservation, on a profit or not-for-profit basis.

There was some discussion regarding the consequences of this wording. The matter was tabled for further consideration at our next meeting.

CHANGE IN BY-LAWS

At Chair ~~Goings~~ **Goyings** suggestion Section 1. OFFICERS part a. Selection and Tenure, the first sentence, of the ALAMO TOWNSHIP PLANNING COMMISSION BY-LAWS was amended to read

“At the first regular meeting each January, the Planning Commission shall select from its membership a Chairperson, a Vice Chairperson and a Secretary.”
(change being from February to January)

The motion to change was made by A. Sweitzer, seconded by D. Veenstra.

The motion carried by positive voice vote, with no opposition, of all five members present, a majority of the membership.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned on motion by H. ~~Goings~~ **Goyings**, seconded by K. DeVries.
CARRIED 9:31 p.m.

~~Submitted in Respectful memory of Ernst Lauer~~

Belden Smith
Secretary