

**ROSS TOWNSHIP
PLANNING COMMISSION
MINUTES
November 19, 2008**

Chairman Lauderdale called the regularly scheduled meeting of the Ross Township Planning Commission on November 19, 2008 to order at approximately 7:00 pm at the Ross Township Hall.

ROLL CALL OF MEMBERS

Those present were: Jim Lauderdale
 Russell Fry
 Diana Langshaw
 Robb Blain

Absent was: Sandra Kiger
 Jeff Price
 Garry Lane

Also present were: Bert Gale, AGS

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Lauderdale asked that item #7A “Budget” be added under New Business. On a motion by Fry, seconded by Langshaw, the agenda was unanimously approved, as amended.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES for October 22, 2008

On motion by Langshaw, seconded by Blain, the minutes of **10/22/2008** were unanimously approved with the following change:

1. Page 3, paragraph 1: change “Ag Definition” to “Ag Definitions”

PUBLIC COMMENT on non-agenda items – None

OLD BUSINESS

1) Ross Township Zoning Ordinance #180 – Discussion of the change from R-2 to R-1, Schedule 10

Lauderdale referred to documents in the meeting packet from Rebecca Harvey and Bruce Dean, and stated that he was pleased with the way Harvey structured the lot coverage standards memo, dated November 19th, in terms of discriminating between density and mass. He indicated that he is prepared to recommend proposal two (2) on the second page of Harvey’s memo (change R-1 coverage from 15% to 20%), but added that he would also be open to proposal one (1) (lot coverage standard of 20% for the AG, R-R,

R-1, and R-2 districts and maintain the 25% for the R-3). Either change would appear to address the concerns of the property owners within the pre-Ord #180 R-2 District.

Langshaw stated that she also likes proposal one (1) of Harvey's memo.

Lauderdale stated that he had compared the previous and current zoning maps to evaluate the R-1/R-2 change. There was discussion of the lot coverage rate in the respective residential districts, before and after Ordinance #180.

Fry stated that he has questions about the doubling of the coverage in the AG and the RR Districts.

Lauderdale listed the district lot coverage rates:

Old Ordinance			Current Ordinance		
RA	10%	>>>	RR	10%	
R-1	15%	>>>	R-1	15%	
R-2	20%	>>>	R-1	15%	
R-3	25%	>>>	R-2	20%	
R-4	30%	>>>	R-3	25%	

Lauderdale stated that with proposal one (1) in Harvey's memo the AG, R-R, R-1, and the R-2 would all be 20%. This would raise the percentage in the AG from 10% to 20%, the R-R from 10% to 20%, and the R-1 from 15% to 20%. He continued, restating the concern noted by Fry: This change would double the allowable coverage in the AG and R-R, and raise the allowable R-1 coverage by one-third, will this cause problems?

Lauderdale stated that the building height limitations and the setbacks would protect the concepts of light, air and view, as noted in the bottom paragraph of page 1 from Harvey's memo.

Fry asked about the old R-4, now R-3, and whether the coverage rate is reduced from 30% to 25%, a reduction of 5%.

Lauderdale confirmed this, and described the development types allowed in the R-3: single family, two family, multiple family not to exceed 8 dwelling units, business office within an apartment building, publicly owned and operated buildings, and uses including community public parks, play grounds, and other recreational uses.

There was discussion about what properties are located in the old R-4/new R-3 District.

Fry stated that based on Harvey's proposal the old R-3, now R-2, would decrease the allowable coverage from 25% down to 20%.

Blain stated that there appears to be no benefit, and no issues in the AG or R-R districts, so to increase those is not necessary and does not solve any of the problems that we are trying to solve. He added that modifying these districts might cause other issues, so by using proposal two (2) from Harvey's memo, only the two problem areas would be affected. Blain stated that he is leaning toward support of proposal two (2)

Langshaw stated that the proposal will increase allowable cover for the R-1, and added that there are only small areas within the old R-3, current R-2.

Blain pointed out that the R-1 would get relief and described the areas in the Township that are located within the R-1 District.

Lauderdale pointed out that the Township Board has expressed interest and concern that changes in the ordinance protect and enhance property values, which in turn protects and enhances the Township's tax base.

Fry indicated that proposal (2) two does not restrict anyone, but it restores properties previously zoned R-2, now R-1, to the previous 20% coverage, and increases the allowable coverage for property that remained in the R-1 District. Fry also noted that most of the issues that have been brought up by property owners have been related to previous R-2 lots that are now R-1 lots.

Lauderdale stated that there is intensity to the concern on the part of property owners that are affected by the change. They feel that their ability to construct homes that are commensured with the value of the land has been damaged. The Township needs to move forward with a recommendation in terms of change. He asked the members if they are ready for a motion, or is more discussion required?

Blain stated that with proposal two (2) the AG and the R-R would stay at the 10%. The R-1 would go back to 20%, which makes it equal to the previous R-2. The previous R-1 properties were at 15%, so they get some benefit from the change. The old R-3, which used to be 25%, is now R-2 and would be at 20%. So there is an impact to this group of properties.

Lauderdale stated that the members may decide to change the R-3 from 25%, back to the 30% rate. The Planning Commission has the opportunity to consider the appropriate rate for each district, and based on the information from Harvey, revision of lot coverage does not negatively impact the concept of density, and therefore, consistency with the master plan will be maintained. He stated that he feels very comfortable with a decision to change the existing R-3 lot coverage, as one of the objectives is to have a set of zoning ordinances that decreases the number of variance requests. Since the R-3 is a small area with higher density, it seems appropriate to allow a maximum coverage.

Fry asked to confirm that based on this discussion, AG would stay at 10%, R-R would remain at 10%, R-1 would move to 20%, R-2 would go to 25%.

Lauderdale stated that based on the current discussion the R-2 would stay at 20%.

Fry summarized the effect of the changes being discussed as: R-1 changes to 20%; R-2 remains 20%, which was the old R-3 at 25%; the R-3 changes to 30%, which was the old R-4 at 30%. There is no impact to the AG, R-R or R-1, but the current R-2 would see a 5% reduction in those properties currently called R-2, which used to be R-3.

Lauderdale confirmed that this reflects the discussion so far, and reminded the members that the recommendation from the Planning Commission goes on to the Township Board and ultimately to a public hearing.

Fry asked if the matter should move forward with some of the board members absent.

Lauderdale stated he is comfortable moving ahead tonight.

Blain asked if there are other impacts to be considered, particularly setbacks and secondary building percentages in the old R-2.

Lauderdale confirmed that the recent variance request included accessory building lot coverage.

There was discussion of the “sliding scale” and applicable setbacks.

Fry moved to change the current R-1 lot coverage from 15% to 20%, and to change the R-3 lot coverage from 25% to 30%, based on these changes being consistent with the existing zoning districts, the master plan and density goals. Blain seconded the motion, and the motion was unanimously approved

2) Adjust Master Plan and Zoning Ordinance – New Wording

Lauderdale referred to the document prepared by Harvey incorporating changes to Section 7 of the Master Plan. The changes acknowledge the partitioning of the previous agricultural-residential (R-A) district into two districts, expressing within the plan the goals and objectives served by this change. He also noted the correction of references to the MSU properties.

Blain stated that the information sounds fine, and reflects the prior discussions.

Lauderdale stated that he is very comfortable with it.

Langshaw moved that the proposed changes to the Master Plan be approved. Blain seconded the motion, and the motion was unanimously approved.

NEW BUSINESS

Planning Commission Bylaws

Lauderdale referred to the letter from Attorney Rolfe (11-06-08), which was included in the agenda packet. Rolfe is working on the bylaws, no action required at this time.

Budget

Lauderdale stated he could not recall consideration of the Planning Commission budget by the Planning Commission in the past, however, he has been asked to respond to the Township Board by December 3, 2008, regarding the 2009/2010 budget. He stated that based on his research the PC is on budget through October 2008, and asked if he could get direction from the members tonight, or should he forward additional information electronically for their review and response.

Fry asked if the basic approach would be to take the existing 2008 budget and cast it forward.

Lauderdale stated that essentially this already been done, but not by him. The information came to him with the 2008/2009 budget information, without year-to-date figures, requesting information for 2009/2010.

There was discussion of appropriate adjustments for inflation, if no other changes are required.

Langshaw stated that the areas such as workshops, salary increases, or any increase in use of service from the planner, are the key issues.

Lauderdale stated that the current budget includes: Salaries of \$5040, Professional services (Planner) \$3000, Printing and Publication \$1000, and Attorney \$5000.

Fry proposed that the figures from 2008/2009 be used.

Langshaw stated that the schedule for the coming year should be considered in terms of how the PC will be using the planner and attorney.

Following discussion of the general topics the PC has identified for consideration this coming year (green energy, M-89 landscaping zone, hotel/motel bed and breakfast, outdoor wood stoves and Ag definitions), Fry suggested that no changes be made to 2008/2009, with the idea that much would be completed in the first half of the year.

It was the consensus of the members to maintain the same budget as last year.

PC Members agreed that Lauderdale could respond to the Township request for the 2009 Budget for the PC, using as guideline the PC discussion, to meet the December 3, 2008 deadline since the PC would not meet again prior to that date.

REPORTS

ZBA

Lauderdale described the request of Steven and Patricia Kucera, property at 7296 Stoney Creek Drive. The proposal was for an attached garage, and the variance request was because of a side yard setback issue. The ZBA granted their request in accordance with Section 6.9(A) and the primary finding was they did not build the house so they nothing to do with were the house was planted, and the only place they could put a garage was in the proposed location. Alternative locations were limited based on the septic system in the front yard and reserve area in the opposite side yard, low areas in front of house, and destruction of trees behind the house, so the ZBA granted the variance with unanimity.

Township Board

Langshaw provided information on a meeting with the Kalamazoo County Road Commission, consideration of a new fire truck and upgrades to the fire barn, a special meeting regarding police protection, \$500 additional funds appropriated for the household hazardous waste program, new fencing to be placed around the Day Cemetery, and review of the signs at the Township Cemeteries. There will be a budget meeting the first Saturday in December.

Fry asked if there was any feedback regarding road grading from the road commission for the wintertime due to budget cuts.

Langshaw stated that the whole board was present for the discussions with the road commission. Based on information from the road commission, the roads will not be cleared as often, and they would be using more sand. They are hoping to keep up with it like they have in the past.

Workshops

None

COMMISSIONER COMMENTS

Fry stated that he has been unable to reach Jeff Price by e-mail regarding work on the dock language.

Lauderdale indicated that he is aware that Price's computer has not been working, but he is getting it replaced soon.

Langshaw asked if a different meeting night should be considered so we can get more people to come. Is Wednesday night not a good night?

Lauderdale stated that the PC has always met on Wednesday, and that no other night had been considered while he has been on the commission.

Fry and Blain both stated that Mondays would be better.

Lauderdale stated that he would place discussion of changing the meeting night to Monday on the agenda for the next meeting.

Fry commented that there will be no meeting in December.

ADJOURNMENT

On motion by Langshaw seconded by Blain and unanimously approved, the meeting was adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,

Bert Gale, AGS