

**ALMENA TOWNSHIP PLANNING COMMISSION**

**MEETING MINUTES**

**March 2, 2015**

**Members present: Chairman Ron Marvin, Greg Babik, Mark Roman, Matt Moulds, Steve Manning, Carol Himes, Jim Horton, Christopher Khorey, and **Nina Consollati (Alternate)****

**Members absent: None**

- I. **CALL TO ORDER** – The meeting was called to order at 7:00 p.m. by Chairman Ron Marvin.
- II. **AGENDA CHANGES/APPROVAL** – **Motion** to approve the agenda as written by Mark Roman, **second** by Steve Manning, **Motion approved 7-0.**
- III. **CORRECTIONS AND/OR APPROVAL OF February 2, 2015 MEETING MINUTES**  
February meeting. **Motion** to approve minutes as written by Steve Manning, **second** by Carol Himes. **Motion approved 7-0.**
- IV. **RESIGNATION OF BRIAN RUMSEY**
- V. **INTRODUCTION OF JIM HORTON AS NEW MEMBER**
- VI. **PUBLIC COMMENT FOR NON-AGENDA ITEMS** – No comments were made.
- VII. **REPORTS**
  - a. **Township Board Liaison Report**  
The Township Board reappointed Ron Marvin and the alternates, Sue Wiegand and Rich Wyrwa, to the ZBA for three year terms. The budget suggestions made by the Planning Commission were accepted by the Board.
  - b. **M-43 Commercial Overlay Committee Report**  
No meeting was held and action will be taken to present a report for the April meeting.
- VIII. **PUBLIC HEARING** – Verizon Wireless' Special Use Permit
  1. The Special Use permit requested by Verizon Wireless to construct a cell tower at 31234 45<sup>th</sup> Avenue was presented. New paperwork which pertains to the height of the tower was distributed to the Planning Commission members and Chris Khorey, Professional Planner.

2. Christopher Khorey presented his letter of review for the application. The application and review included requirements listed in the ordinance for Wireless Telecommunication Facilities (Section 23.11). The new information presented at the meeting resulted in changing his review in the sections as noted. #7 will have the tower height changed from 185' to 165' due to FAA regulations and the correct number of co-locations was questioned. FAA and MDOT approvals should be a condition of the special use permit. Signed letters were received for #8 and #9 meeting the requirements. In #10, the geotechnical sub surface report should be a condition of the special use. In #13, the balloon test will have to be repeated at the new height and in #17, new maps showing the coverage area will have to be generated.
3. Fred Low of Chaille Tower Consultants and Attorney Steve Etsy of Dykema Gosset represented Verizon Wireless. The new paperwork presented by Verizon contained the FAA notice of presumed hazard; updated documents including a letter to the Planning Commission, site plan, construction drawings, propagation map, and signed letters for Sections I and J. Mr. Low informed the members that three co-locations is typical for cell towers, a geotechnical study will be done before applying for a building permit, the new height meets MDOT and FAA requirements, and all electric will be through Consumer's.
4. **Open Public Hearing**

Dr. James DeMoss owns property on ~~CR-653~~ 32<sup>nd</sup> Street is not a resident. He does not have trouble with his Verizon service and feels the cell tower will take away from the beauty of the property.

Matt Kurzann lives off of CR 653. Mr. Kurzann feels the tower will ruin the views and reduce property values.

Allan Hughes has lived off 45<sup>th</sup> Street for 37 years. Verizon did not submit a photo showing the view for ~~the~~ at least 10 neighbors that will have a clear view of the tower. Mr. Hughes had concerns about the access road and if it will need an approval from the Road Commission. Emergency landings, of which Mr. Hughes remembers two in the township, may be hindered by the cellular tower.

Joe Thorstenson, a township resident and pilot, is concerned about the end of the runway and the distance from the tower.

Sheri Manning, airport owner and township resident, is mainly concerned with the safety of the airport. The Crop Dusters that fly in and out of the airport are very heavy and fly low and she feels the tower will blend with the sky. The RF (Radio Frequency) for the airport traffic was also not addressed.

Marvin Flick of 32<sup>nd</sup> Street has poor Verizon cellphone service and is in favor of the construction of the tower.

Chris Nelson is concerned the special use application does not fit in the main criteria of the township's Zoning Ordinance or with the residents' perception and needs for Almena Township.

Wendy Nichols, a township resident for 33 years, appreciates Verizon's concern to improve service but in turn, Verizon should appreciate our concerns to stay a rural community.

All citizens' concerns were addressed as they were raised by Verizon representatives or the township planner; whichever was appropriate to the concern.

5. **Discussion and Consideration of Action by the Planning Commission**

Concerning coverage in Almena Township, the Township Board gets consistent requests for better internet and cell phone coverage. The propagation maps illustrate the better coverage with another tower. The town hall meeting held at the end of last year with the hope of getting fiber optic cable and high speed internet in the township had standing room only. The latest information presented by Verizon addressed most of the concerns in the special use application. Without a determination from FAA and MDOT, the consideration to approve the special use was tabled. Verizon will submit the paperwork for the approvals but there is no guarantee they will be complete for the next meeting. Applications to the FAA and MDOT are public filings. Residents can watch for the public filings.

The township requires the soil test, FAA approval, MDOT approval, the balloon test, photo shop images, security bond, and the location of the access road along with contacting the Road Commission. Verizon will supply all information requested by the township.

**Motion** by Ron Marvin to table the special use application request until the April 6, 2015 Planning Commission meeting. **Second** by Mark Roman. **Motion approved 7-0.**

IX. **UNFINISHED BUSINESS** – None

X. **NEW BUSINESS** – None

XI. **ADJOURNMENT** – **Motion** to adjourn by Mark Roman, **second** by Carol Himes, **Motion passed 7-0.** The meeting adjourned at 9:06 pm.

**Minutes Approval Date:** April 6, 2015

Lia Will  
Almena Township Deputy Clerk

Cc: PC (8)  
Twp. Board (7)  
ZBA (5)  
Christopher Khorey  
Bill Henderson  
Attorney