

**ALMENA TOWNSHIP PLANNING COMMISSION**

**MEETING MINUTES**

**November 4, 2013 (preliminary)**

**Members present:** Chairman Ron Marvin, Matt Moulds, Mark Roman, Carol Himes, Brian Rumsey and Steve Manning, Mark Kruizenga. Nina Consolatti (alternate) and McKenna & Associates representative, Christopher Khorey, also in attendance.

**Members absent:** None

- I CALL TO ORDER** – The meeting was called to order at 7:00 p.m. by Chairman Marvin.
- II APPROVAL OF AGENDA** – **Motion** by Brian Rumsey to approve the agenda as written, **second** by Steve Manning. **Motion approved 7-0.**
- III CORRECTONS AND/OR APPROVAL OF October 7, 2013 PC MEETING MINUTES** – Three corrections were proposed by Mark Roman, including two typos and a confirmation on abstained votes to be included. **Motion** by Matt Moulds to approve the minutes of October 7, 2013 as amended, **second** by Mark Roman, **Motion approved 7-0.**
- IV PUBLIC COMMENT FOR NON-AGENDA ITEMS** – No public in attendance.
- V TOWNSHIP BOARD LIASION REPORT** – Mark Roman reported that at the last Township Board meeting there was approval of the agreement with Lewis Reed and Allen to be the township’s legal counsel. The township is in negotiations with Texas Township regarding their shared services agreement on use of their zoning administrator. The secretary for the PC Commission and ZBA has resigned. Until a replacement is found Mark Roman will assume her duties.
- VI UNFINISHED BUSINESS** –
- 1. M-43 Commercial Overlay with a view towards future development.** There was a review of the memo provided by Chris Khorey on different strategies to solicit public input on the issue and the advantages and disadvantages of each. There was ongoing discussion by multiple members on how responsive the public would be to surveys and public meetings and costs associated with different strategies. Chris Khorey pointed out that the biggest impediment to commercial development in the township is the lack of utilities. Regarding surveys he said it is important to get the wording and number of question right to ensure the detail wanted in answers wanted by the township. Ron Marvin stated that there seems to be an interest in development of commercial property on M-43. He likes the idea of a survey but stressed it would need clear wording/questions. Mark Roman agreed on getting the wording correct, and discussed online surveys and their capabilities and limitations. Carol Himes discussed the past survey and the effectiveness of using mailings in that instance. Brian Rumsey also made statements in support of this and pointed out that most requests seen for commercial use are by township residents and not those outside the township. Mark Kruizenga asked for the purpose and direction of a change in the overlay and pointed out that

commercial development in the township appears to currently be directed primarily for small businesses. And he pointed out several properties currently fitting that description that haven't sold. He suggested perhaps reducing existing restrictions in our ordinance for smaller commercial businesses. Steve Manning agreed and added that there are no incentives for businesses to move into the township. There was also a discussion of possible advertisement and promotion for the current properties the township has. Brian Rumsey agrees with a survey but believes it should be directed more towards a future master plan update. He stated it was in our best interest to get a more specific direction from the board, get a more specific goal or proposal and move forward from there. The board proposed that the Mark Roman return to the Township Board and suggest a subcommittee with members from both entities to hammer out a more detailed plan. The issue was then tabled.

2. **Storage Facilities.** The discussion began with a review of the memo from Chris Khorey on both a wording change proposal and a review of storage facilities in similar townships. The wording provided was originally to correct the ordinance to allow facilities in C-3. After much discussion regarding the square footage issue, possible blight, and the need for the detail of fitting storage facilities in the zoning ordinance, it was decided to adjust the proposed wording to account for some vague interpretations and include it in section 9.0.3 so that it applies to all commercial districts. Chris Khorey will provide the new wording for the next meeting. The issue was then tabled.
3. **Road Requirements for PUDs.** The discussion began with a review of the Van Buren County Road Commission's (VBCRC) escrow procedure provided by Chris Khorey. There was discussion on whether we should provide our own guidelines and how to best perform our due diligence in ensuring clear communication to contractors and homeowners on the ownership and maintenance of roads. It was decided the VBCRC had updated the standards on both roads and their escrow procedures since past development we are currently having issues with. It was not in the township's interest to codify and then maintain our road requirements above the expertise of the VBCRC. But we should include wording in our ordinance to require developers to provide a clear description of their plan to build and/or maintain new roads, that the responsibility for future maintenance be defined by the developer, and that these things be a requirement for site plan approval. Chris Khorey will provide proposed wording at the next meeting. The issue was then tabled.

**VII NEW BUSINESS** – There was no new business.

**IX ADJOURNMENT** – **Motion** to adjourn by Matt Moulds, **second** by Steve Manning. **Motion passed** 7-0. The meeting adjourned at 8:42 p.m.

Mark Roman, PC Secretary  
Almena Township Planning Commission

Attachment

Cc: PC (8)  
Twp. Board (7)  
ZBA (5)

Christopher Khorey  
Bill Henderson  
Attorney