

ALGOMA TOWNSHIP PLANNING COMMISSION
SPECIAL MEETING MINUTES
Tuesday, September 18, 2007

The Algoma Township Planning Commission held a Special Meeting on Tuesday, September 18, 2007, at 7:00 P.M. The meeting was held at the Township Hall located at 10531 Algoma Ave., Rockford, MI 49341.

Chairman Witham called the meeting to ORDER at 7:01 P.M. and led in the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag.

PRESENT: Chairman Witham, Vice-Chairman Newberger, Members Bigney, Ensley, Heminger, and Lecceadone.

Absent: Secretary Poolman.

Also Present: Site Plan Review Committee Members Bates and Sjogren, and 5 citizens.

AGENDA APPROVAL:

Member Bigney motioned to APPROVE the agenda, as presented, seconded by Vice-Chairman Newberger. The motion PASSED.

PUBLIC COMMENTS:

There were no public comments given.

CORRESPONDENCE SENT & RECEIVED:

A letter was received from Scott and Diane Long of 3939 Russell Road NE, dated September 10, 2007, regarding The Grand Rapids Press request.

PUBLIC HEARINGS:

There were no Public Hearings.

NEW BUSINESS:

**SITE PLAN #0707(R) - (MAJOR CHANGE TO AN APPROVED SITE PLAN)
BERGIN ENTERPRISES / THE GRAND RAPIDS PRESS
3836 Russell St. Mailing Address:
Cedar Springs, MI 49319 P.O. Box 639
Parcel #41-06-11-400-007 Rockford, MI 49341**

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Mike Bergin of Bergin Enterprises was present along with Brad Becker and Martha Hines from The Grand Rapids Press. He said he owned the property and intends to lease a portion of their 2002 building to The Grand Rapids Press as a distribution outpost. He said currently Bergin Enterprises stores raw materials for manufacturing projects in the building but plans to add on for their own needs and The Press needs a new way to distribute their papers. He said the additional building space is in the long range plan and they are not dealing with that at this time. He said they are currently building the new office building for Target Construction and moving them from Northland Drive onto this site. He said The Press would bring papers in bulk in a couple of straight trucks and the carriers will arrive to take papers out for distribution.

Brad Becker, with The Grand Rapids Press, said they need the building as a distribution area for carriers to assemble the papers together and currently this is happening on street corners but they have had to change and acquire similar sites throughout Grand Rapids and Kentwood. Their north-end drops that are at Rosie's, Little Sack, Cedar Springs and Rockford would be eliminated to this one drop and all carriers would go to this space and deliver.

Member Bigney asked what size trucks were they using and approximately how much traffic were they talking.

Mr. Becker said they use 24' or 26' straight-trucks. They have typically 45 carriers or less, plus the trucks as outlined on the sheet that was submitted.

Chairman Witham pointed out that the road was not paved and seemed to be a concern with the neighbors.

Martha Hines, Circulation Director for The Press, stated this is the last distribution center scheduled that they want completed before the end of the year and before winter arrives because a change always brings a turnover of carriers and this move just makes good business sense. She stated they appreciated the Commission's consideration and said they did go and speak with the neighbors (Longs) before they came to the Commission. She said

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The Press has a good image and hopes this location works for them. She said this kind of move does away with paperboys and this was a tough decision for them but with Michigan's economy, there are adults being hired now in the Cedar Springs, Sparta, and Rockford zip codes.

Member Lecceadone asked about the assembly of papers.

It was explained that there are two main packages. Inserts are printed for certain zones and then the main addition, along with a 2nd addition, is printed as news comes in. All of this comes in and the two different sections are then assembled by the carriers on tables and housed there until all the papers are ready to go.

Member Heminger asked about arrival times and was told that information was submitted on the sheet. This was reviewed.

Chairman Witham asked if this was the only building dedicated to The Press for distribution.

Mr. Bergin said a portion of that building would give them 5,200 Sq.Ft. for The Press. The other buildings were for their own production work, storage, and office.

Vice-Chairman Newberger said his only comment was concerning the gravel road and having increased traffic on it. He didn't know where the neighbors across the road were located but this Change of Use would have some different hours and additional traffic on the road, including operating 7 days a week. He said he didn't know the condition of the gravel road and the concern is a legitimate point but he thinks it's a good idea to have a distribution center in this area and it's a reasonable plan. He said the facility is already here and it is only a short gravel road.

Member Bigney stated it was a public road and the County would be responsible for it.

Member Lecceadone agreed saying the zoning was Industrial.

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Neighbor Scott Long said when the frost left the road this past spring it was impassible for vehicles.

Member Bigney asked if the operation made noise.

Mr. Bergin said Target Construction works with sheet metal and they make more noise than The Press would.

Mr. Beck said the carriers arrive to get in and out; not there to hang around.

Neighbor Scott Long requested the road be paved to control dust and avoid creating a mess during the winter and spring months.

There was discussion that there were 4 homes on this street, it was zoned I-2 (Industrial) the entire length on the south side and what it would cost to pave a County road.

Mr. Bergin stated they own the house to the north across the street from the business. He said they would have no objections to help with paving the road and said it would be advantageous for all concerned to have it paved but it would depend on what it cost.

Member Bigney said the township would like to help improve the road but it might not be the highest priority to improve it and the township is caught in the middle.

Mr. Bergin agreed that the road does get messy when it thaws in the spring but said they have never, not been able to drive down the road. He said they had more trouble with ice storms and the road being gravel. He said the County does treat the road for dust and will grade it once in awhile.

Chairman Witham stated that a County road is not the Planning Commission's problem, it is a public road and the County will take care of it.

Member Lecceadone questioned why Industrial zoning would be located on a gravel road.

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Member Heminger questioned whether paving the road should be a condition of approval of the site plan.

Member Lecceadone stated the zoning has been Industrial and with that comes traffic patterns; it is part of the territory.

Mr. Bergin stated their business brings steel down the road.

Member Ensley asked if the road has ever been closed to traffic.

Mr. Bergin said they have been there since 1989 and in their history the road has never been closed.

Member Bigney said the County has ways to keep the dust down.

Vice-Chairman Newberger stated they have one required condition to consider under the Industrial zoning and that is if there will be any adverse conditions. He said the only concern is that there will be additional impact from traffic.

Chairman Witham told neighbor, Scott Long, that dust can be handled by the County and if they need dust control, he needs to call the township. He said the Planning Commission does not have the authority to tell the County what to do with their roads. He said this will have an impact on the road but the Commission does not have an easy fix for the concern. He said if there are problems, he is to call the Township Supervisor and then the Supervisor calls the County to fix it. He concluded the discussion regarding the road and asked to address the Site Plan Review Committee's report dated September 11, 2007.

Mr. Bergin, regarding number 4 of the report, stated that his new office building will have septic and bathrooms for the carriers to use. They were not putting any bathroom facilities in the warehouse where the distribution was taking place.

Mr. Beck stated there were no plans for signage for this business because there would be no solicitation here; it is not open to the public.

Mr. Bergin said, regarding lighting, there were existing wall packs on the buildings and the new office would have wall packs

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that will totally light up the lot. He said there would be no flood lights put up. They have sufficient lighting.

Member Bigney motioned to APPROVE Site Plan #0707(R), seconded by Member Lecceadone.

Discussion: Member Lecceadone asked if a traffic study would be warranted if the Supervisor receives complaints.

Vice-Chairman Newberger asked what a traffic study would show.

Member Lecceadone said it would show that paving should be accelerated for down the road to make it more of a priority.

Vice-Chairman Newberger stated it is not necessary to count the cars but it is the condition of the road that is the concern and the Township Board could pave it without a traffic study.

Chairman Witham stated the Planning Commission deals with this traffic subject every time they deal with a large development and the Commission cannot tell the County what to do with a public road then either. It is a County road and the County has to fix it.

Vice-Chairman Newberger agreed but asked what the recourse was for the neighbors when this will result in more traffic.

Chairman Witham said the recourse is already in place. When neighbors call the Township Supervisor, the Supervisor calls the County Road Commission.

Member Lecceadone told Mr. Long that the Commission does care about neighbors but this is zoned Industrial.

Member Bigney said the township can order more gravel.

Mr. Bergin said the County has been very cooperative and he has called them himself and they have done nicely by them.

The motion to approve Site Plan #0707(R) PASSED with four in favor of the motion and two opposed.

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ADJOURNMENT:

Member Bigney motioned to ADJOURN the meeting at 7:48 P.M. The meeting was ADJOURNED.

Jack Witham, Chairman

Julie M. Sjogren, Recording Secretary