

**GANGES TOWNSHIP PLANNING COMMISSION**  
**Special Meeting Minutes FINAL for January 16, 2007**  
**Ganges Township Hall**  
**119<sup>th</sup> Avenue and 64<sup>th</sup> Street**  
**Fennville, MI, Allegan County**

Chairman **Gooding** called the meeting to order at 7:01 PM.

Roll Call: Chairman Barry **Gooding** – present  
Secretary Jim **Birkes** – present  
Commissioner Jackie **DeZwaan** – absent  
Commissioner Sally **Howard** – present  
Commissioner Ed **Reimink** – present  
Commissioner Dawn **Soltysiak** – present  
Board Trustee Terry **Looman** – absent

**PUBLIC COMMENTS**

Jan Schroeder, 6944 Lakeshore Ct., read to the Planning Commission (PC) and public a letter to the PC from Philip and Judy Willson, 1840 Morning Glory Road North. In the letter, the Willsons urged the PC to do everything possible to preserve what we have while striving to maintain “damage control,” referring to the PUD ordinance draft. They propose limiting development west of Blue Star Highway, stating that drilling for water along the lakeshore is risky and that further development will affect the natural rain water ground saturation, causing surface water flooding and bank erosion. The Willsons recommend: increasing residential lot sizes from ¾ acre to five (5) acres; limiting residential lot depth to no more than four (4) times the public road frontage; making the minimum PUD size twenty (20) acres; and leaving wetlands out of the open space and density PUD formulas. They contend that small parcels encourage greater density if they are too small, and request the PC to consider preserving Ganges Township’s natural, cultural, and economic features as they develop the PUD ordinance. The Willsons also suggested that the professional planner contact them to assist by sharing information with those in charge of maintaining community water systems along the lakeshore.

Susan Pierson, 6944 Lakeshore Ct., read the letter that she had written to the PC, stressing how Ganges Township’s present high-density zoning is a threat to coastal homes and to preserving the natural environment. She thanked the PC for their hard work and time, and commended them on a well-written PUD ordinance draft, but disagreed with the formula for calculating open space. Pierson supports leaving any unbuildable land, primarily wetlands, out of the formula. She pointed out that wetlands serve as a breeding ground for fish and wildlife, replenish ground water, and store rain water and snow, all helping to prevent soil erosion and ground water contamination. She concluded with offering to share information from a workshop she attended that might assist the PC in their planning and zoning.

**CORRESPONDENCE**

Letter dated January 10, 2007, from Susan Smith to **Birkes**, commending the PC for addressing the PUD ordinance, and supporting increasing the minimum PUD size to 15 to 20 acres. However, Smith encourages the PC not to include wetlands in calculating open space of a PUD. She states that wetlands are critical for the survival of a healthy water supply by trapping sediment, cleaning polluted water, preventing floods, recharging aquifers, and protecting shorelines.

Letter dated January 10, 2007, from Kathleen Schwegel to **Birkes** thanking him for the work on the PUD ordinance. She finds no fault with the draft except to recommend not including wetlands as part of the open space requirements.

**BUSINESS SESSION**

**Approval of the Agenda**

**Soltysiak** requested to add *Technical Review of Zoning Ordinance* to *OLD BUSINESS* as number 1, shifting each subsequent discussion issue back by one number. **Howard** moved to approve the special meeting agenda of January 16, 2007, with the addition as noted (above); **Soltysiak** supported; motion carried.

**OLD BUSINESS**

**Technical Review of Zoning Ordinance (ZO)**

**Soltysiak** reminded the other PC members that the township Board had already given the PC approval to have Greg Milliken of McKenna Associates do a technical review of the ZO. She suggested that the Master Plan public hearing be considered regarding the timing of the ZO review, since the results of the review could provide direction for the PC. Discussion ensued and the PC came to a concensus, with **Birkles** moving that, given the board's authorization for the funding, the PC authorize McKenna to proceed with the technical review of the ZO, to receive it back no later than March 1, 2007; **Soltysiak** supported; motion carried.

### Master Plan Development

The issue of getting updated information regarding Ganges Township's climate and available gas utilities remains open still. Neither **Howard** or **Birkles** has had any success in obtaining the information, and if none has been acquired by the time the Master Plan goes to press, the date of the last update will be noted in the plan.

### PUD Ordinance

**Howard** first asked what the goal is in addressing the PUD issue. **Gooding** responded that the current PUD ordinance is very vague and that it is difficult knowing what the process is to get authorization. This PUD draft would set standards and do a better job of protecting the environment. **Soltysiak** offered to give **Howard** copies of three (3) past PUD ordinance committee reports, to help explain the goals and objectives of the ordinance and the processes and progress up to now.

The PC decided to review the draft page by page. Suggestions, questions, and concerns will be forwarded to Milliken, with issues that require more in-depth discussion by the PC to be discussed later, after having gone through the entire draft. The issues to be discussed later in more detail are:

1. Parcel size; Section 7A.02 A.1. (page 2)
2. Qualifying conditions; Section 7A.02 (page 2)
3. Public/private road access; Section 7A.02 C. (page 3)
4. Rezoning, and when; Section 7A.03 (page 3)
5. Residential standards (multiple family); Section 7A.03 D. (page 6)  
(same issue with mixed use PUD, Section 7A.03 E.1.b.(2). (page 7)
6. Commercial size limitation (25%) in mixed-use; Section 7A.03 E.1. (page 6)
7. Commercial design standards; Section 7A.03 E.3. (page 7)
8. Industrial PUD buffer size and design standards; Sections 7A.03 F.3. and F.4. (page 8)
9. Minimum standards with two (2) districts involved; Section 7A.04 A.1. (page 8)
10. Zero lot line; Section 7A.04 B.2. (page 9)
11. Open space (25%--100%) and other issues; Section 7A.05 B. (page 10)
12. Shoreline frontage and common open space; Section 7A.05 E.4. (page 12)

Suggestions, questions, and concerns are:

- Delete the word *height* in Section 7A.01 A. (page 1)
- Make 3.A. of Section 7A.02 A. two (2) separate conditions (page 2)
- Add *meet or* and correct typographical error of *of* in Section 7A.03 C. to read: *To be eligible, a proposed PUD development must meet or exceed one of or more of the requirements . . .* (page 5)
- Ask Milliken the rationale for *a minimum of twenty-five percent* in Section 7A.03 E.1. (page 6)
- Replace *Township Board* in Section 7A.03 F.3., fourth line, with *Planning Commission* (page 8)
- Delete the entire last sentence in Section 7A.03 F.3., *The Residential District . . . screening wall.* (page 8)
- Ask Milliken the origin of Section 7A.04 B.2., zero lot line setbacks (page 9)
- Remove Section 7A.04 B.3. (page 9)
- Designate a heading for Section 7A.04 E. (page 10)
- Replace *Township* in Section 7A.04 E., seventh line, with *Planning Commission* (page 10)
- Add *All roads shall comply with Article 7F* to the end of section 7A.04 E. (page 10)
- Ask Milliken about the landscape buffer in Section 7A.04 H; recommend replacing the last part of the last sentence in the same section, . . . *evergreen trees . . . on center* with . . . *a continuous tree line no less than six (6) feet tall* (page 10)
- Ask Milliken the origin of the required open space percentages for each type of PUD district in table 7A.1 (page 4)
- Delete *visible and* in the first sentence of Section 7A.05 E. (page 11)
- Replace *Township Board* in Section 7A.05 E.5., third line, with *Planning Commission* (page 12)
- Replace *Township Board* in Section 7A.05 F., second from last line, with *Planning Commission* (page 12)
- Add *excluding agricultural uses* to the end of the sentence in Section 7A.05 H.2. (page 12)
- Delete H.3 entirely in Section 7A.05 (page 13)
- Delete H.6. entirely in Section 7A.05 (page 13)
- Add *in the covenants covering the PUD* to the end of the first sentence in Section 7A.05 I. (page 13)

**Howard** expressed concern that the qualifying conditions in this PUD ordinance draft would discourage building PUDs because it are too limiting in the standards and requirements that it sets. She stated that it seems “you have to solve a problem” in order to build a PUD. **Howard** supports PUDs as a better use of land aesthetically as opposed to individual home sites and stressed that flexibility is needed in building PUDs.

In response, **Birkes** stated that the qualifying conditions are not discouraging PUDs, and that there are certain conditions right for PUDs and some for conventional development. He also stressed that the PC is not trying to en- or discourage one way or the other regarding PUDs.

The PC also discussed how rezoning would be approved if a PUD were developed in phases. And **Soltysiak** suggested that mixed-use PUDs would be only in the Glenn and Ganges hubs as overlays. She also questioned if the commercial portion of a mixed-use PUD could be limited. **Reimink** contended that mixed-use PUDs, are not consistent with Ganges Township’s Master Plan, which encourages clustering of commercial use along the Blue Star Highway and M-89 corridors.

As the PC continued reviewing the PUD ordinance draft, the extent of flexibility versus setting specific standards resurfaced. It was argued that the flexibility a PUD would offer would give the PC leeway to allow modifications and thereby reduce Zoning Board of Appeals (ZBA) involvement. It was also argued that this PUD draft has too many variables in it, and that an ordinance, by its nature, should set standards.

At this time, Chairman **Gooding** opened the floor to the public for their comments and questions.

Susan Pierson, 6944 Lakeshore Ct., questioned how Section 7A.04 E (page 10) related to the parallel plan section preceding it. In this same section, she disagreed with the second to last sentence, *If a road of an existing development terminates at the boundaries of the proposed development, the proposed road network shall connect*. Pierson stated that it cannot be done, and recommended that this sentence be removed.

**Birkes** responded to Pierson’s first concern, stating that the PC had earlier discerned that Section 7A.04 E. has no connection to the previous section, 7A.04 D; the PC is recommending to Milliken that this last section have its own heading to correctly identify the subject.

Rick Vorel, 2315 Forest Trail Circle, agreed with Pierson’s concern regarding the connecting of a PUD road to an existing development’s road, relaying personal experience.

Frank Alfieri III, 2394 Lakeshore Dr., advised the PC to go with a larger parcel size of 20 acres, especially since it will give a developer more leeway with respect to set backs and buffers. He stated that he wrote a letter to **Birkes** last week regarding wetlands not being considered part of the open space formula, that they have a unique, natural characteristic and cannot be classified as anything else. Alfieri concluded by expressing appreciation for the PC’s hard work.

Jan Schroeder, 6944 Lakeshore Ct., also thanked the PC for their hard work.

Susan Pierson, 6944 Lakeshore Ct., asked if a big box store or truck stop could come into Ganges Township via a commercial or industrial PUD. She expressed concern about how these larger operations could affect local smaller businesses, and suggested limiting the square footage of the buildings to prevent an undesirable situation from occurring. Pierson then suggested having language in an ordinance that does not allow overnight accommodations/showers in an effort to prevent truck stops with 24-hour parking and lights from coming in.

Don Karas, Jr., 2025 Brookhill Dr., posed a scenario depicting the loss of control the PC would have because of the land division act if a larger parcel were platted. He described a 15-acre parcel, split off into several smaller parcels with One larger parcel remaining, incidentally on a commercial site. He warned that a truck stop could go in and, without provisions in the ZO, the PC would not be able to block it. The PC would have some control over a PUD, however, and remove it from the influence of the land division act. He advised that the PC may have to scale down the parcels to a certain size lot or offer bonus points to encourage developers to build PUDs, ultimately giving the PC more control.

**Soltysiak** acknowledged that Karas has a valid point and that the PC needs to discuss lot sizes. She stated that the PC has the right to change its own ordinances to supersede the land division act.

Jan Schroeder, 6944 Lakeshore Ct., expressed support for the 15 to 20 acre minimum PUD lot size.

Susan Smith, 6247 122<sup>nd</sup> Ave., requested clarification, asking that if a PUD is developed in a residential area and then wants a storefront, could the zoning be changed into commercial just for that one spot, even if the Master Plan advocates residential only?

**Birkes** responded that the PUD ordinance would allow a rezoning if a PUD with a commercial application is approved. The rezoning would be a PUD classification (allowing the commercial operation) and overlay, or supersede, the zoning already in place.

Smith then asked if the township would not be losing ground then by allowing spot commercial zones (with PUDs) to occur where the township does not want commercial. She expressed concern that the PC would “bend over backwards” for the developers and ignore what the surrounding residents want. Smith requested that the PC be cautious with how much leeway they give with rezoning when a developer applies for a PUD.

Rick Vorel, 2315 Forest Trail Circle, asked if it would not be better to go with an overlay as opposed to having a mixed-use PUD.

There were no other public comments/questions, and the PC resumed the detailed review of the PUD ordinance draft. The PC ended the review this evening on page 13, to pick up again on Tuesday, January 30, 2007, starting with Section 7A.06, PUD Application, Review, and Approval Procedure.

Tonight’s questions, concerns, and suggestions will be sent to Milliken, allowing the PC to receive as many responses/answers as soon as possible.

**PUBLIC COMMENTS**

None.

**ADJOURNMENT**

**Howard** moved to adjourn; **Birkes** supported; motion carried unanimously. Meeting adjourned at 10:03 PM.

Respectfully submitted,  
Elaine I. Troehler  
Ganges Township Recording Secretary