

Ganges Township Planning Commission
Regular Monthly Meeting Minutes FINAL for June 26, 2012
Ganges Township Hall
119th Avenue and 64th Street
Fennville, MI Allegan County

I. Call to Order and Roll Call

Chair **VanLeeuwen** called the meeting to order at 7:04PM.

Roll Call: Chairman: Neil **VanLeeuwen** – Present Secretary: Phil **Badra** – Present
Vice-Chair: Jackie **DeZwaan** – Absent Commissioner: Roy **Newman** – Present
Commissioner: Charlie **Hancock** – Present Board Trustee: Barry **Gooding** – Present
Zoning Administrator Tasha **Smalley** was present.

II. Additions to the agenda and adoption

VanLeeuwen made a motion to accept the Agenda as presented. Seconded by **Gooding**. Motion passed.

III. General Public Comments – None

IV. Correspondence and upcoming meeting/seminars.

Letter was presented from Hudson Investment Company concerning the not allowed modifications that have been made to the “County” property ~~made available by their Michigan Pioneer family~~ across “from West Side” ~~the County Lakeside~~ Park.

V. Public Hearing

a. Special Land Use Application for a “Winery” from **Virtue Farms**, 2180 62nd Street.

VanLeeuwen started the Public Hearing by explaining how the hearing would be conducted, with the owners stating their plans, the PC discussion, and then public comments, first for and then against.

Gregory Hall was the first to speak, stating that they have produced their hard cider at St. Julian's for the first year, but would like to produce in their own facility. He and his father owned Goose Island Beer in Chicago and have just recently sold that business. Hard Cider is becoming more popular and they picked this area because of it's history for fruit growing. He has studied in England and France and a coastal climate is what is desired for this product. He spoke of three goals for their “Winery” which were: 1. To make a great cider, 2. Employ 20-30 in the next three years, 3. To use apples grown in this area. Mr. Hall then went over plans for the property. He stated that they want to replant orchards and that they would hope to bring more people to visit the area. **Mr. Hall** introduced his partner **Stephen Schmakel**, their attorney from **Miller, Campfield and Barry Bebart**, the Architect that prepared the plans.

the

Mr. Hall explained the process that can be used to make cider, using apples to make the juice and “which is” then fermented and the pumice “by product” can be used for feed. ~~using juice from out of state which is cheaper, but does not support the local growers, or use apple juice concentrate which also does not support local farmers.~~ “They would not use juice from out of state, etc.” **Mr. Hall** stated that their choice would be to use the first process, using locally grown apples. It takes about five weeks to ferment and then it is blended and carbonated and put into kegs. A bottling process would be introduced in the future. They will be using recycled materials to keep a low impact on the environment.

Hancock asked if there were any facilities close that would be similar to what **Virtue Farms** would be using. **Mr. Hall** stated that Uncle John's in St. John, and Macintosh, south of here use similar processes.

VanLeeuwen stated that he had a major concern being the facility on the farm where the fruit

is grown. There would be apples on the farm, but part of the plan says that it would be supplemented with fruit from Michigan. FennValley was given three years and they had to be self-supporting with the grapes grown on their farm, growing trees would take several years, and this plan did not appear to have the trees being planted in the first phase. **Mr. Hall** stated that given the time of year it would not be possible to plant at this time, but they would be looking at next spring. He stated that there was also the feeling that this would help local farmers that were having a hard time selling their crops. Even with the maximum amount of apples grown on the acreage of the farm production would probably exceed what could be grown on **Virtue Farms**. **VanLeeuwen** questioned if this was an appropriate location for this or if it was better placed in an Industrial area.

Gooding stated that the family fruit farms in the area have had trouble selling their crops and this could help them.

Badra stated it was not the intent of the ordinance to keep out his kind of business. It **could** “would” be hard to **do** “require” 100% growth of produce on the farm and “have it be profitable”. **it is a legitimate use**. He did question what would happen if the pumice was not sold, where would hazardous materials be stored and how would the waste water be disposed. Also, the house that is currently on the property, would that be used as a residence?

Mr. Hall stated that for now the house area has been cleaned up and it could possibly be used as a residence for staff at some point. He said that he had several connections that may buy the pumice if it were not sold locally. **Hancock** asked about air pollution. **Mr. Hall** stated that they would be using state of the art presses and that the pumice is dry so there is not a lot of smell to it. The pumice is then stored in apple bins. **Badra** asked about pesticides and fuel. **Mr. Hall** said that they would try to be as organic as possible and that storage would be in buildings 4 & 5. **Badra** stated that all of this is a concern since the Birdseye situation in Fennville. **Mr. Hall** said that they did not intend to irrigate, that the rinse water was used with a filter loop. It is a cold water process and a small amount of water would be used. **Gooding** stated that **Virtue Farms** would be regulated by Michigan State laws concerning sprays.

Public Comment:

Ron Clark-6176 122nd Avenue-stated that he felt this was good for the community, just regretted that he had recently pushed out his apple trees. He said that he knew there were apple growers on the Planning Commission and they are all familiar with the fact that it will be 7 to 8 years before any trees planted now would produce a crop. **Mr. Hall** said that they were looking at varieties that would produce quicker but he realized it will take time.

Pam Daly – 6223 122nd Avenue- she read a letter that she had written stating that she wanted quiet road to live on. They have had many cars that use their driveway to turn around, there are manure trucks that use 122nd on a regular basis. She also had concerns with the hours that the “Winery” would be in operation. **Mr. Hall** stated that the hours were as allowed in the ordinance. He also lives west of Scenic View so he is aware of the farm traffic. They had looked at the entrance being on 122nd Avenue because they admired the tree lined road and wanted a similar look as FennValley.

Linda Wilcox – 6274 122nd Avenue – feels this is a good use, but does have several concerns: 1. location of visitor access drive-has very poor visibility, 2. Phase 2 functions-retail items not made at the “winery”-would it consist of cigarettes, etc.?, 3. She had concerns about the production waste water management., 4. Apple pulp containers-how long would remaining pumice be left on the property and where would it be stored. **Mr. Hall** stated that the pumice would be stored in apple crates, like spent grain. At this time there is no long term plan, and in the short term it could be sold to local farms as feed for dairy, pigs or sheep.

Mr. Hall asked if there was opposition to making the corner of 122nd Avenue and 62nd Street

four-way stop? Those present stated that they had tried to do this but had not been successful. He understands that semi traffic is a concern and wants to be good neighbors, so they will look at possibilities.

Kathleen Schwegel-6385 120th Avenue- agreed that the intersection at 122nd Avenue/62nd Street is dangerous, but otherwise supports the “winery”.

special use just for **Fred Bueltmann**-6181 122nd Avenue – Questioned the Planning Commission as to the use. He stated that the PC needs to make sure the Ag portion is followed through not **Virtue Farms** but for similar requests in the future.

Mr. Hall stated that this is something that he wants to pass on through the family, a family owned business here for generations to come. **Mr. Bueltmann** said if there is a change in use of the land it needs to be done carefully and asked where the check points are. **Ron Clark** asked about the use of juice. **Mr. Hall** stated they would not be using juice, that they would be using 100% pressed apples in their operation. There was still a lot of concern by the Planning Commission and Public attending about the entrance on 122nd Avenue and the lack of visibility there. It was also asked if there was any possibility of relocating that entrance to 62nd Street.

The Public Hearing was closed at 8:10PM.

VI. Approval of prior minutes – May 22, 2012

May 22, 2012 – Motion by **Gooding** to approve the May 22, 2012 Regular Meeting minutes with corrections. Seconded by **Badra**. Motion passed.

VII. Old Business – None

a. An additional comment on **Marie DeZwaan's** issue discussed last month was not addressed as Vice-Chair **DeZwaan** was not present.

VIII. New Business

a. Deliberation and decision on **Virtue Farms'** SLU application.

Badra stated that there are too many worries concerning the road situation, **Ag issue**

it He mentioned conditional rezoning based on particular use as right now it would be more a commercial use. **Newman** asked if they could come up with a solution to the road issue with both the entrance and exits being on 62nd Street. **Mr. Hall** was asked if it would be possible to make those changes. He stated that he was interested in what was best for the community. **Badra** asked what the capacity would be for the “Winery”. Capacity would be approximately 5-10 million pounds of apples. They are currently selling hard cider in Chicago. **Gooding** said that he liked the approach of using local apples with so much juice coming in from China. **VanLeeuwen** stated he is in favor of the “winery” but feels is in opposition of the ordinance. He would be happier with 75% of raw product grown on site. He again sited FennValley as an example. What is being proposed is an industrial operation similar to Michigan Fruit Cannery. **Badra** stated that this sort of commercial use is not allowed in the Commercial Zone. **Mr. Hall** asked about FennValley's percentage grown on site, which is 100%. He stated that Cider does not sell at the same price as wine, and they would not be able to get to that scale within this acreage. **Smalley** asked about if **Virtue Farms** were to own other properties near this operation and stated that they would need good signage. **Badra** asked about lighting. **Mr. Hall** stated that it would follow the requirements of the zoning ordinance.

Badra made a motion to approve the Special Land Use Application for **Virtue Farms** cider mill/winery with the condition that the entrance and exit drives are on 62nd Street only. A roll call vote was taken:

Hancock – No

Newman – Yes

Gooding – Yes

Badra – Yes

VanLeeuwen – **Yes** “No”

Motion carries.

This would deal with all phases. **Mr. Hall** stated that they would be planting trees as soon as possible in 2013 because of the calendar year it would not be possible to plant now. **Smalley** suggested that they will need to bring in the site plan with the driveways moved before they are put in. Phase 1 would be Building 4 and the drive, Phase 2 would be planting of the orchard and second building.. **Virtue Farms** would go on record as to taking out the drive on 122nd Avenue. Their Attorney stated that the Phases are for construction plans, what is being approved it the Site Plan. The drive on 122nd Avenue will be crossed off and then signed. When the new Site Plan is submitted with the official changes in the driveways that also will be signed.

b. Final approval of Master Land Use Plan before submission to the Township Board

VanLeeuwen made a motion to approve the Master Land Use Plan as presented and send to the Township Board. **Badra** seconded the motion. Roll Call vote:

Hancock – Yes

Badra – Yes

Newman – Yes

VanLeeuwen – Yes

Gooding – Yes

Motion carries. It will now be sent to the Township Board.

IX. Administrative Updates

a. Township Board: **Gooding** reported that there was a meeting held on June 12. They approved the new Budget, discussed graveling and chip & seal plans on several roads, and approved the purchase of hard/software for the new assessor.

b. Zoning Board of Appeals: **Newman** stated there was nothing to report.

c. Zoning Administrator: **Smalley** reported that she had received a call wanting to bring a food truck into the Township. They did not give a specific location and she told them it was not allowed.

X. Future Meeting Dates – July 24

The July meeting will be held on Tuesday, July 24th at 7:00PM at the Ganges Township Hall.

XI. General Public Comments

Linda Wilcox -6274 122nd- thanked the Planning Commission and Virtue Farms for considering safety first.

Pam Daly – 6223 122nd – stated that she appreciated the considerations made concerning the road safety issue.

XII. Adjournment

Motion was made by **Newman** and supported by **VanLeeuwen** to adjourn. Motion carries unanimously. Adjourned 9:00PM.

**Respectfully Submitted,
Diana VanDenBrink
Ganges Township Recording Secretary**