

MINUTES OF THE SPARTA TOWNSHIP PLANNING COMMISSION
Regular Meeting of February 11, 2020, 7 PM
Sparta Township Hall, Sparta MI

Present: Chairperson Terry Hartman; Township Clerk Marcy Savage;
Commissioners Linda Anderson, Tim Driscoll, Ken Humphreys,
and Mark VanderWerff
Also Present: Attorney Cliff Bloom; Fresh Coast Planning Associate Emma Posillico, AICP;
Township Supervisor Dale Bergman; and Recording Secretary Toni Potes
Absent: Commissioner Don Doyle

I. / II. Call to Order / Pledge of Allegiance: Chairman Hartman called the meeting to order at 7 PM, followed by the Pledge of Allegiance.

III. Additions or Corrections to Agenda: Planner Posillico requested additions to the agenda to (1) discuss change of the Planning Commission's March regular meeting date; and (2) under Old Business, discuss the Township Board's proposed change to the text of the Migrant Housing ordinance.

IV. Minutes of January 14, 2020: Planner Posillico requested clarification be added to Item VIII, showing Supervisor Bergman asked her to be present at the Township Board's February meeting. Motion by VanderWerff, second by Savage, to approve the Minutes with the change. Motion carried unanimously.

V. Public Comment: No public comment.

VI. Business Items: Business Items A. and B. were combined for discussion and decision. Commissioner Savage excused herself from the panel for Business Items A. and B.

A. Public Hearing for South Sparta's LLC's proposed "Hidden Prairie" development at 9029 Alpine Ave. NW, Sparta MI. Parcel #41-05-35-201-002. Revised preliminary plan approved November 2019 (with requirements for final plan submission).

1. Consideration of OS PUD rezoning and site plan
2. Consideration of special land use request for mineral extraction required for pond

B. Discussion of South Sparta's LLC's proposed "Hidden Prairie" development at 9029 Alpine Ave. NW, Sparta MI. Parcel #41-05-35-201-002. Revised preliminary plan approved November 2019 (with requirements for final plan submission).

1. Consideration of private road request
2. Consideration under Site Condominium Ordinance
3. Consideration of proposed PUD rezoning ordinance

Applicant John Bitely presented notes to be inserted on page 2 of the Revised Site Map dated January 9, 2020. The side-yard dimensions need clarification by the Planning Commission: 7.5 feet minimum, 15 feet total. Applicant Bitely also distributed a letter from the Kent County Health Department dated February 11, 2020, showing completion of their review of the proposed condominium project.

Public Hearing opened at 7:29 PM

Nicholas Rohloff purchased land near the development. He was concerned what it would do to his land investment. He thinks Mr. Bitely wants to just make money, but it may be too late to give his opinion.

Betsy Pelkey has concerns of the home sale price first disclosed and what the developer is saying now. She wondered about a septic for the outhouse by the pond; placement should be considered. What could the new technology be for failing septic systems in 15 years? There are no sidewalks. Mailboxes are at the front of the development, and children will be picked up and dropped off there: there is no parking for the mailboxes and pickup.

MaryBeth Dame said the setting in the Village is nice, but not in the Township. She is concerned about well and septic. Other communities are having well and septic problems. Mr. Bitely won't care if the development's systems fail. She said Mr. Bitely has a lot of vision for more development. The streets are narrow; there are many problems.

Kristina Horrigan is concerned about the lot sizes and the number of large homes.

Mike Savage has PUD-idea concerns. Regulations are already in place. He's concerned about houses crammed in with farmland, and he doesn't know how this will all work. What regulations and accountability are there for that? No room for parking and for kids. All of this seems to be a disaster.

Marcy Savage distributed documentation of her concerns to the Commissioners, which included buffer and screening requirements, narrow roads and no sidewalks, lack of specifications why the farmland qualifies as open space and is not accessible to the residents, a time limit needed on the sand mining request, lack of documentation from County departments, small limiting lots for pole barns and pools, and maintenance of a pond and outhouse.

Barb Johnson of 9210 Alpine Ave lives across from the development. She inquired if the roads are narrower—no, the same. Firetrucks and ambulance can't get through. There are too many homes; this is a town setting and a recipe for disaster. Septic fields and narrow lots will have problems. This will ruin her water. She questioned if the DEQ looked at this. This will set precedence. She is praying that the Planning Commission will consider her concerns. They (the current residents) need to keep by the same restrictions; Mr. Bitely should too.

Public Hearing closed at 7:46 PM

Attorney Bloom reviewed his draft of 11 Possible Conditions, dated January 16, 2020, to an approval recommendation of the applicant's requests to the Township Board, which should also include a time limit on mining.

Applicant Bitely addressed the public's concerns: The neighbors will work together to remedy overflow parking. There will be room for four cars in front of each home, besides the garage. Regarding home prices, the lot sizes have changed since the original plan. Cost to

build is also rising. These will be middle-range priced homes. Today's price point is \$250,000 to \$350,000. Septic is a sealed vault, not a septic system. Attorney Bloom suggested a fail-safe alarm system. Mailboxes are a challenge. The postal service does not extend rural routes; all developments are dealing with this. Attorney Bloom suggested the mailboxes be put in an out-of-the-way space for the boxes and the school buses. Applicant Bitely thinks the school bus route will make the loop in the development. There was discussion to change Lots 40 and 41 to allow for mailboxes and school bus drop off. Regarding well and septic failures, there have been high water tables during this process. Regarding Ottawa County, they have a deep and shallow aquifer; Applicant Bitely explained their situation. This development has a very different situation. The mining project will be noted in residents' signed documents. Concerns of safety and such are really addressed. It is projected that 2500 truck trips at the most over four years is needed to remove 49,695 yards of sand. Lot numbers in each phase are: Phase 1 Lots 1–38, Phase 2 Lots 39–60, Phase 3 Lots 61–75. There will be language included that not every house was meant to have a pole bard/accessory building.

Planner Posillico reviewed her memo of February 4, 2020, and items needing to be addressed. Applicant Bitely listed his understanding of the items: engineering completed, road commission permit, parking out front for mailboxes, and final draft of legal documents (after Board approval, i.e., open space and private road maintenance agreements).

Motion by VanderWerff, second by Driscoll, to tentatively recommend to the Township Board that it approve the planned unit development ("PUD") rezoning request and site plan by Applicant South Sparta, LLC for a residential housing development (including approval for a site condominium, mineral extraction, and pond) contingent upon Township staff and the Township Attorney drafting a resolution and PUD ordinance to that effect, and the resolution and PUD ordinance being adopted by the Planning Commission hereafter. Roll call vote: Humphreys, No; Anderson, No; VanderWerff, Yes; Driscoll, Yes; Hartman, Yes. Due to the understanding that a majority of the complete panel of seven commissioners is needed to pass a motion, the motion failed to pass. Motion by Humphreys, second by Driscoll, to include this item of business on the April 14, 2020, agenda of the Township Planning Commission. Motion carried 4 to 1, with Anderson opposing.

VII. Old Business: Proposed Revisions to Section 8.13 (Migrant Farm Labor Housing): The Township Board had concerns of the defined months housing could be open each year. They desire a longer period of time. Attorney Bloom will review the law on the matter as well as Supervisor Bergman's input.

VIII. Public Comment: None.

IX. Adjournment: Motion by Driscoll, second by Humphreys, to adjourn at 9:35 PM. Motion carried unanimously. Due to a lack of quorum in March, the next regular meeting of the Sparta Township Planning Commission will be Tuesday, April 14, 2020, at 7 PM in the Sparta Township Hall meeting room.

Respectfully submitted,
—Toni Potes, Recording Secretary