

TALLMADGE CHARTER TOWNSHIP
PLANNING COMMISSION SPECIAL MEETING
SEPTEMBER 10, 2018

7:00 Marvin Bennink called the meeting to order.

Members Present: Marvin Bennink, Jim Szejda, Matthew Fenske, Joel Terpstra, Richard Temple, Curtis Rypma.

Members Absent: Dave Hanko

Also Present: Greg Ransford, Crystal Buljte, Nora Balgoyen and ITC Representatives, Doug Kloostra and Attorney, and several members of the public.

Agenda:

Richard Temple provided a motion to approve the agenda. Joel Terpstra seconded the motion and was carried unanimously.

Approval of Minutes:

Matthew Fenske provided a motion to approve the Minutes from the August 28, 2018 meeting. Jim Szjda seconded the motion and was carried unanimously.

Non-Agenda Items:

Marvin Bennink opened the floor for public comment.

John Baker – 11871 Nickels Dr., concerned that the retention pond in Manen Meadows was supposed to be a circle shape and is now an L-Shape. Also, only 4 feet of fill was supposed to be allowed, however now the plans show 14 feet. Concerned that the inspection was done aerial and not in person.

Marvin Bennink stated that this would have to be looked in to, can someone get back with Mr. Baker?

Greg Ransford stated yes.

New Business:

- **ITC Special Use Application to construct an Essential Service electrical substation at approximately 1006 Lincoln Street N.W., Grand Rapids, MI 49534**

Nora Balgoyen, Area Manager with ITC states she would be the direct contact between ITC and the Township. ITC is the middle man in the “power” process. Electric transmission is the bulk delivery of

electrical energy from power generating plants along high voltage lines to the local distribution system of utilities serving communities.

- The property which would be accessed through an easement of Lincoln St. will be 37.5 acres, 12.5 acres being utilized for the substation.
- Greenbelt Details: North has existing vegetation, West has existing vegetation that will remain, South – proposed trees for screening will be planted, East- requesting variance next to power corridor.
- This would be an unmanned substation, accessed only for monitoring, maintenance and emergency. The surface would be crushed limestone.
- Lighting would mainly be used in case of emergency, lights on 11' pole are designed to point downwards.
- There would be an 8' chain link fence with 1' V-barbed wire.
- Would like to begin construction early 2019 and complete the end of 2019

ITC supports the local community and wildlife. How should questions be fielded?

Marvin Bennink stated Nora will field the questions. Opened the floor to public comments.

Paul Lothschutz – 1072 Lincoln, asked how the trees will provide blockage when they lose their leaves in the winter?

Nora Balgoyen stated they will be planting an Arborvitae on the north side in a stagger fashion that grow 6'-8' tall will not lose their leaves in the winter.

Paul Lothschutz stated a year ago the power company came and cut 25 trees off his property. What is to stop that from happening again.

Nora Balgoyen stated the North side will not be affected, the existing buffer zone won't change.

Cynthia with ITC stated that the transmission corridor has to be trimmed when trees get to close. The blackout of 2003 changed the standards of how close trees can be to lines. When trees are planted as part of a site plan, they are committed to keeping the trees. They need to keep 100' on either side of the towers clear of trees.

Marv Bennink asked if the trees were trimmed wider than what consumers said they were going to trim and maybe the trees were on an easement?

Paul Lothschutz stated yes, and he didn't think Consumers had an easement on his property. The substation should be put where it is needed like a commercial zone.

Nora Balgoyen stated it is a multi-year process to decide where the best location for the substation should be sited, and they try to find the location with the least impact.

Paul Lothschutz stated that it impacts us. Asked, will we see lights like the city?

Nora Balgoyen stated lights will only be on in an emergency situation. Still working with the Township on the best screening.

Paul Lothschutz asked about noise?

Nora Balgoyen stated noise will not be any different than an existing tower.

Paul Lothschutz stated that the are lower to the ground.

Nora Balgoyen stated substations are designed to be quiet.

Joel Terpstra asked what the decibel reading of the substation is compared to the existing power line?

Nora Balgoyen stated it would be lower than 60.

Richard Temple asked what does 60 decibels sound like?

Cynthia ITC stated the existing station on Lake Michigan Dr. has 3 stations and this proposed station will only have 1. There will be a wall. There will be noise at first but eventually it will become a normal noise.

Paul Lothschutz asked if property value will decrease?

Nora Balgoyen stated there is no direct correlation, but they'll work closely with the Township on screening requirements.

Marvin Bennink stated questions need to be kept to a 3-minute limit so everyone has a chance to speak.

Stan Sloboda asked ITC representatives if anyone of them lived in Tallmadge? If they would want this in their backyards? This project does not need to go in a rural community.

Kim Lothschutz 1072 Lincoln – Stated our house is right down the purple line. Do you want this in your backyard? What will this do to our health? Found studies where this can cause childhood leukemia.

Nora Balgoyen stated the World Health Organization found no adverse health effects. But that there have been conflicting reports by other organizations.

Kim Lothschutz asked Nora if she has children?

Nora Balgoyen answered yes.

Kim Lothschutz asked would you subject your kids to this?

Nora Balgoyen answered yes.

Julie Doll – 12414 8th Ave. stated she just recently bought on 8th Ave. and had she known there was a substation going in, she would have never gotten into a bidding war over her house. Asked if this substation is a done deal?

Marvin Bennink stated this is the beginning process.

Greg Ransford stated that everyone has a right to apply for special use. This is the first public hearing where we are reviewing the site plan for the application. The Planning Commission will then submit their recommendation to the Board of Trustees.

Julie Doll asked why as residents are we willing to sell? What is the advantage of having this in Tallmadge?

Greg Ransford stated that the Planning Commission will deliberate after the public hearing portion of the meeting.

Julie Doll stated that the residents are not looking forward to this.

Lyda Wilcox – 11722 8th Ave. asked what the height of the equipment will be?

Steve ITC – stated the lightning poles will be 70', the h-frame will be 70'. Nothing will be shorter than the fence.

Lyda Wilcox asked how the arborvitaes are going to screen the view then? Are you planning on expanding of more than one tower?

Steve ITC stated plans for more transformers are in the works.

Lyda Wilcox stated to the commission to consider what is ideal for the residents and to deny their request.

Cynthia ITC stated that what is on the site plan is what will be designed.

Janice ITC stated that there are no plans right now for another transformer, maybe 20-30 years down the road they may need one.

Lyda Wilcox asked why they can't expand the Lake Michigan Drive substation.

Janice ITC stated it's not good for all the transformers to be close together if something exploded.

Nora Balgoyen stated that putting all the transformers close together would be like putting all your eggs in one basket, it wouldn't be good. They learned from the 2003 blackout, and they are held to new standards from that experience.

Craig Van Driel – 12131 8th Ave. asked if a landlocked piece of property can be sold with only easement access to the road?

Marvin Bennink stated yes.

Craig Van Driel asked if the easement has been granted?

Nora Balgoyen stated yes, by Consumers.

Cynthia ITC stated they do have an easement.

Craig Van Driel asked if this substation will service our township or others?

Nora Balgoyen stated it will service the West Michigan area.

Craig Van Driel asked how big a geographical area do we need for this substation?

Cynthia ITC stated that the transmission process is the back bone of the power process.

Craig Van Driel asked what will this project do? How big will this get? Will any additional lines come off of it?

Nora Balgoyen stated no, not on that corridor.

Craig Van Driel asked what this will look like in 10 years?

Janice ITC stated this is the 10-year plan.

Craig Van Driel asked if this will be a storage facility?

Nora Balgoyen stated No. There will be no trash receptacles.

Craig Van Driel stated that he is 4th generation living there. That he does not want to live next to that. He is concerned about voltage off the lines. Stated this doesn't fit with the master plan. Asked about water run-off- having 12 ½ acres of limestones, you would need a retention pond. Stated trees on the site plan will not screen the tall equipment. We are reviewing a site plan that already needs updating. Has pictures of the current county drains that don't handle the water well. Please don't allow this and if we have to, to minimize the impact on the residents.

Marvin Bennink asked why he feels like there will be more water run-off?

Craig Van Driel stated because they would be changing the nature of the land.

ITC stated that the stones are filtered, like marbles where water can run through. There is a detention pond proposed, and they will have soil erosion plans.

Craig Van Driel asked if there was engineering on the water?

Greg Ransford stated yes and the site can handle the water.

David Schut – 11813 Nickels Dr. stated that in 20 years, these will be obsolete. Then what will happen? This will make properties worthless. They should place this in Grand Rapids where the power is needed.

Gus Permoda asked where the next substation is going? Stated that he moved away from the last substation and that they should expand the current one.

Joel Terpstra stated that the Township doesn't go looking for these types of projects. Someone in your neighborhood wants to sell their property and that is why we are here.

Mike Skinner – 1110 Lincoln stated that he is representing all the Skinners. Asked if the township has time to review this? Stated that he does not want it in his backyard.

Martin Daling – 8th Ave. stated that his farm has been in his family for 100 years. First the power company came through and split his farm, then the gas company came through. This will hurt the neighbor's property value and concerned that the water will run off onto his farm and ruin his crop.

Kim Lothschutz asked what type of emergencies will they have. Is it correct that the fire department does not have access to the substation?

Nora Balgoyen stated that it is a rare occurrence that there will be an emergency.

Cynthia ITC stated that they have partnered with the local authorities and police do have authority. Only qualified operators will have access to the substation. The reason the fire department doesn't have access is because water can't be sprayed on electrical equipment.

ITC stated that after hours emergencies will most likely be caused by something like storm damage.

Public Comment asked when the last time the Tallmadge Fire Department was trained?

ITC stated recently, a truck recently caught on fire.

Public Comment asked if the training was before or after the truck caught on fire.

ITC stated after.

Marvin Bennink closed the public comment portion.

Julie Doll asked what is the next step?

Greg Ransford stated it depends on what the Planning Commission decides tonight.

Matthew Fenske asked if the existing substation on Lake Michigan Drive can be expanded? And are there any more substations that have 3 towers?

ITC stated one station to the south has 3 towers.

Matthew Fenske stated he looked on GIS and saw that ITC owns property surrounding the current Lake Michigan Drive substation, asked can they use the current property?

ITC stated they did look at adding on the current property but it would not be a good fit.

Matthew Fenske asked if it is impossible to put another transformer on the Lake Michigan Drive substation?

Steve ITC stated it would not add more power and they need to mitigate the overload.

Matthew Fenske stated that he understands residents not wanting to hurt their property value because he has powerlines running through his own property. Question for the attorney – Does the township have to allow this?

Crystal Bultje stated no, the township does not have to allow. The township would need a solid reason why yes or no. Ultimately this goes to the board for a decision.

Matthew Fenske stated there are 3 transformers at an existing station. Are there any stations with more than 3 transformers? Have you looked into adding at that station?

ITC stated yes, there is one municipality with a larger station. But if we did that here, it wouldn't mitigate the issue. We need to increase power from other locations.

Matthew Fenske asked if the light fixtures are open fixtures, can they be visible from an adjacent property?

Steve ITC – state they would resemble street lights that shine down. The poles are 11' high and they make about a 20' diameter light spot on the ground.

Matthew Fenske stated the lights need to be a shoebox type.

Joel Terpstra asked if the light will be visible from the other properties?

Steve ITC stated that if you shine a flashlight, it will be seen, so the lights will be seen. They are on a timer though so they will go off after a certain amount of time.

Richard Temple stated that we will always have the legacy of a substation. Asked if we want this in a residential area? Stated concern about this becoming a nuisance. Concern about visibility. Asked ITC if they are non-profit or will they be paying taxes?

Nora Balgoyen stated they will be paying taxes.

Curtis Rypma asked Greg Ransford if these substations are in the master plan?

Greg Ransford stated they are not in the Master Plan.

Curtis Rypma asked Greg Ransford where he typically sees these?

Greg Ransford stated he was part of the same approval process for a facility in Olive Township, but it was not so close to houses.

Curtis Rypma stated that ITC has the right to apply for this special use. Looking at section 19 in the Ordinances, he feels there is a more suitable place, would rather see this in an industrial or commercial zone.

Crystal Bultje stated the decision has to be made based off of the standards included in the Township's ordinances.

Marvin Bennink asked if the 345 lines stay parallel in other townships or do they break off?

Nora Balgoyen stated they wanted to avoid creating more corridors and she will get back with the township on where they break off.

Jim Szejda asked how many other sites ITC have looked at?

Cynthia ITC stated they looked at others but this location was selected based on needs and the amount of property. Stated that she couldn't share more specific information because of privacy concerns.

Joel Terpstra stated that ITC is adding vegetation to the south and keeping them on the west, have they considered existing types of trees?

Nora Balgoyen stated that they won't put in the type of trees that can fall on the lines.

Joel Terpstra asked about the health risks with bringing the power down to the ground? Stated, how do you reconcile the different studies about health?

Cynthia ITC stated the World Health Organization, where they base their studies from, does not show risks.

Joel Terpstra stated that if power was being lost in the Township, it would be a better sell.

Joel Terpstra asked what the expansion looks like?

Steve ITC stated if needed future parts that would be installed would look like the site plan now, they would expand out and not up.

Joel Terpstra asked what happens if they are not granted this location?

Nora Balgoyen stated they would look for alternative solutions, possibly more lines, which would be a greater impact to the residents.

Marvin Bennink stated he is concerned that this site plan is not correct and would want a revised up to date site plan.

Greg Ransford stated he could ask for a revised site plan, a more complete site plan to make a recommendation.

Julie Doll stated she would like the commission to vote tonight.

Matthew Fenske stated he was looking at section 19 in the Ordinances and it states the special use needs to be harmonious with the neighborhood and not sure if this would be.

Joel Terpstra asked would power lines there be harmonious?

Crystal Bultje stated that the commission has to figure out what would be most harmonious for their community.

Joel Terpstra stated a commercial property would be better.

Richard Temple provided a motion to request legal counsel to draft a resolution to recommend against the special use permit from the applicant. Curtis Rypma seconded and was carried unanimously.

- **Tallmadge Pointe**

Curtis Rypma excused himself due to conflict with the agenda on Tallmadge Pointe.

Joel Terpstra provided a motion to allow Curtis to be excused. Jim Szejda seconded and was carried unanimously.

Doug Kloostra stated he would like to develop 28 duplexes with one existing single family on a private drive. He will have green space and all required setbacks.

Marvin Bennink asked if there are existing houses to the east?

Doug Kloostra stated yes, three. Described the look of the units from the plans, would have additional parking, green space play area. Would like to preserve the existing barn. Density would be 57, 61 is actually allowed. Respectfully asked to approve the PUD.

Joel Terpsta asked time frame?

Doug Kloostra stated one phase in 24 months.

Joel Terpstra asked why the density was too high the first time Doug came with a proposal.

Doug Kloostra stated he was originally going to put in apartments but duplexes worked out better and he was able to add green space.

Jim Szejda stated the fire department would recommend no parking on the street.

Doug Kloostra stated every unit would have two parking spaces and he will add an additional 18 parking spaces.

Jim Szejda stated there is a retention pond proposed on the south end. Asked if there are any homes around that could be affected?

Doug Kloostra stated the closest home is 100' feet away.

Richard Temple asked if the parallel plan is accurate?

Greg Ransford stated the parallel plan goes off the master plan so it is accurate.

Richard Temple stated this is the part of the township that should have more density.

Crystal Bultje stated that water and sewer are not on plan and would need to be reviewed.

Marvin Bennink stated there are no sidewalks or street lights.

Doug Kloostra stated no sidewalks because it's a private drive. Can add street lights.

Marvin Bennink recommended not having sidewalks but adding street lights.

Joel Terpstra agreed sidewalks aren't necessary if street lights are added.

Jim Szejda suggested adding no street parking signs.

Doug Kloostra asked if they can be at night only?

Richard Temple suggested a wider road?

Doug Kloostra asked if he could add more parking spaces instead?

Joel Terpstra asked Greg if they can approve the motion with stipulations?

Greg Ransford stated they can provide a motion to approve the preliminary plan with the stipulation that street lights are added and more parking spaces added. Approve the density as given tonight.

Joel Terpstra provided a motion to approve the preliminary plan on the basis that the density is satisfactory, to increase off-street parking as an option to the applicant, no internal sidewalks are necessary, the installation of street lights shall occur, and payment in-lieu of construction of the pathway on Leonard is appropriate.

Richard Temple seconded the motion and was carried unanimously.

Joel Terpstra motioned to adjourn the meeting. Richard Temple seconded and was carried unanimously.

Meeting was adjourned at 10:11 P.M.

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