

**Minutes from the
Almira Township Planning Commission Meeting**

April 2, 2024

6:00 p.m.

Call to Order: Chairperson Ratajczak called the meeting to order at 6:02 p.m. at the Almira Townhall in the Village of Lake Ann.

Members Present: Ryan Ratajczak, Kurt Swartz, Shannon Jordan, Melisa Martin. Lori Florip, Vince Edwards. Duane Newman was excused.

Additions/Deletions to Agenda: None

Approval of Agenda: *Motion by* Edwards, supported by Swartz, to approve the agenda as presented. All ayes, no nays, Newman excused, motion passed.

Approval of Minutes: *Motion by* Swartz, supported by Edwards, to approve the meeting minutes of March 5, 2024, as presented. All ayes, no nays, Newman excused, motion passed.

Brief Public Comment: No brief public comment on items not on agenda.

Zoning Administrator: Z/A Preston presented information regarding number of permits this year versus the last two years, inspection status for zoning permits, and complaint report.

Township Board Representative: Township Board member Florip stated the Township Board supported a grant letter regarding a brush truck; resolutions were read and approved; and that ARPA projects are progressing.

Zoning Board of Appeals Representative: Commissioner Martin stated no meetings have been scheduled.

Intergovernmental Representative: Vince Edwards, Lake Ann Village Council member, stated that the Village Council is discussing the purchase of two speed control signs, ARPA funds, replacing pavement in front of Lake Ann Grocery, Short Term Rental process is starting, and Community Coffee is at 7:30 a.m. on the second Wednesday of the month at the Red Door.

Conflict(s) of Interest: None

Guests: None

Old Business:

- A. Master Plan – Final Review Prior to Public Hearing:** Chairperson Ratajczak stated that per Mathew Cooke, from Networks Northwest, that due to the public hearing notice not being published as Mathew had planned, the public hearing for the Master Plan would not be held at this meeting. Discussion took place, this public hearing should be at the May Planning Commission meeting.

New Business:

- A. Public Hearing – Special Use Application: Advent Lutheran Church Day Camp:** ZA Preston gave an overview of the application. *Motion by* Swartz, supported by Jordan, to

recess the regular meeting. All ayes, no nays, Newman excused, motion passed. Meeting recessed at 6:19 p.m. and public hearing opened at 6:19 p.m. Chairperson Ratajczak gave an over view of the public hearing process. Paul Lemman, President of Advent Lutheran Church Council, stated that the day camp was a great need in this area. Pastor Rosanne Anderson agreed with Paul's comment and that a lot of thought has already gone into this issue. Laura Kingman, Advent Lutheran Church Council member, stated that she had to leave her job because she could not find day care for her own children during the summer. Laura also stated that the camp has planned activities for each day, field trips once a week, and service projects. This would also be an additional use of the facilities already in place. Pastor Anderson stated that the State of Michigan has guidelines for day camps and would be setting the ratio of campers to staff. Luke Allen, stated that he is in support of the day camp as his two kids need child care and sees this camp as a safe environment for socializing his kids and would be helping make this community even better. Amiee Erfourth, Superintendent of Benzie County Central Schools, and Advent Lutheran Church Council member, stated that the Lake Ann Elementary school would not be having a summer program for this same age group this year as the school would be closed for updates. This program would be a wonderful way to help the local families from having to get kids over to Homestead Hills Elementary in Benzonia. ZA Preston read a text message she had received just before the meeting from Barb Keelan, a member of the Lake Ann United Methodist Church, stating that Barb was in support of this project and that Barb was impressed with the curriculum that she had seen for this project. Steven Schroeder stated that he recognized the need but that the church has been a problem since the start, noise from car doors, car lights, lights on the church, trash pickup and plowing being done early in the mornings. Nicole Hicks stated that they wrote a letter but forgot to sign it, and that trees take a long time to grow. Laura Kingman stated that the State of Michigan guidelines for day camps is that 51% of time needs to be outside, weather permitting. Laura also stated that a forty (40) foot landscape buffer on the north side of the property has been planned along with trying not to hold many activities on the north side. Chairperson Ratajczak asked what would the actual impact have on the residents who live on Linwood Ave. Laura also stated that the planned buffer would be a visual space for the kids to stay within. Robert Lautner asked how many kids would be attending this camp and would it be for all summer. Laura answered Robert's question with up to fifty-five (55) people, which includes staff. Nicole Hicks requested that no megaphones be used outside. Robert asked if another building would be added for this day camp, with the answer coming from Paul Lemman that no other buildings are being discussed because the church already has a larger mortgage than is wanted. Pastor Anderson again stated that the State of Michigan regulates the number of campers allowed. Laura stated that the State of Michigan camp licensing inspector has reviewed the physical buildings, has reviewed the written plans, and that the Church is still waiting for the State to tell them how many campers can attend. Chairperson Ratajczak explained that the Planning Commission can put conditions on use of this application. Steven Schroeder stated that he appreciated receiving the letter about the application. Chairperson Ratajczak reviewed points of concern from Kelley Galla's written response. Laura stated that the camp would be for a total of eleven (11) weeks and that there would not be any camp during the week of July 4th. Laura also stated that the State did not mention needing any fencing for activities to keep campers in. Commissioner Melisa Martin

asked if there would be times when the camp would be producing more noise than other times. Laura stated that a camp daily schedule could be found on the Church's website. Planning Commissioners asked additional questions and made additional comments. Commissioner Lori Florip stated that she lives across the lake from the Lake Ann Camp, which has about 700 kids a week, and the noise is not that bad. Chairperson Ratajczak stated that there would be lesser impact if activities could take place on the south side of the property. ZA Preston stated that the Planning Commission could define what the buffer can be, how tall buffer can be, how close together buffer can be, etc. Heather Stetson-Leman stated there are already some trees on the north side of the church. Chairperson Ratajczak stated that a compromise could be made to come to an agreement. Ratajczak also stated that any complaints need to be presented to the Township Zoning Administrator. Nicole Hicks stated that the noise factor would be greatest during drop off and pick up, and for bathroom breaks. *Motion by Swartz*, supported by Edwards, to close the public hearing. All ayes, no nays, Newman excused, motion passed. Public hearing was closed at 7:30 p.m. Meeting was reconvened at 7:30 p.m. Planning Commissioners reviewed Zoning Ordinance Sections 8.02.A.B.C.E. with no additional discussion. Section 8.02.D had discussion. *Motion by Swartz*, supported by Edwards, to approve the Advent Lutheran Church's Application for Special Approval/Site Plan Review with the following conditions: noise mitigation where ever camp activities occur including drop off and pick up times, specifically on the north property line. Mitigation to include an evergreen landscape buffer not less than ten (10) feet in width across the north property line where camp activity occurs. Buffer must be adequate to address noise from camp activities. Adequacy is based on annual review and feedback. Planning Commission will review in the fall of 2024 (estimated at October 2024 meeting) and potentially to recur in the following years. Roll call vote was as follows: Martin, aye; Florip, aye; Swartz, aye; Edwards, aye; Jordan, aye; Ratajczak, aye; all aye, no nays, Newman excused, motion passed.

Extended Public Comment: Several members of the public thanked the Commissioners.

Commissioner Comments: None

Chair Comments: None

Adjourn: Chairperson Ratajczak adjourned the meeting at 7:58 p.m.

Mary Dort, Recording Secretary