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# ALEXANDRIA TOWNSHIP

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## PLANNING COMMISSION

MEETING PACKET FOR  
**January 25, 2016**





**PRELIMINARY AGENDA**  
**Alexandria Township Planning Commission**  
**January 25, 2016**  
**6:00 p.m. – Township Conference Room**

**Call to Order**

**Adopt Agenda**

**Approve Minutes**

November 23, 2015

**Public Hearing**

1. None

**Zoning Administrator's Report**

**Old Business:**

1. Discussion – Ordinances related to credits for use of pervious pavers and other stormwater management practices on lots that would otherwise be over the 25% impervious surface limit (Shoreland vs. Non-shoreland).

**New Business:**

2. Discussion – Online permit applications.

**Adjournment**

\*\*NOTE: This is a preliminary agenda, subject to change at any time.



## STAFF REPORT

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**Application:** Discussion - Ordinances related to credits for use of pervious pavers and other stormwater management practices on lots that would otherwise be over the 25% impervious surface limit (Shoreland vs. Non-shoreland).

**Agenda Item:** Old Business - 1

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**Summary:** Should the Township allow for a credit on the use of “pervious pavers” or similar systems designed to allow for infiltration of water in non-shoreland areas?

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**Background Information:** The Township has, at various points over the years, discussed whether it should grant a credit against impervious coverage for the use of “pervious paver” systems. A significant reason for this is because both the City of Alexandria and Douglas County allow for credits in certain circumstances. For example, Douglas County allows for up to 100% credit provided that the applicant goes through a conditional use permit process.

In 2007, when the Township began zoning ordinance administration, the Town Board had discussed whether to give credit and decided against it. This was due primarily to the relatively short timeframe in which pervious pavers had been used and a concern over their long-term viability without sufficient maintenance. There were also concerns about whether such systems would be installed correctly, as they require professional design and often professional installation in order to function properly.

“Pervious Paver” systems are usually concrete or stone paver blocks with open, permeable spaces between each block that allows water to infiltrate into the ground rather than running off the paved surface. They are intended to protect surface water quality by preventing pollutants and nutrients from entering a lake or stream.

The Town Board directed the Planning Commission to look at this issue back in June 2015. The Commission did so, after Staff talked with Douglas County Land & Resource staff to determine their experience with allowing credit for pervious pavers. Staff also contacted the City of Alexandria regarding their experience with pervious pavers.

The DNR was also contacted about their current policy/thoughts on the use of pervious pavers, since they have the authority to determine what kinds of credits could be allowed by local governments in shoreland areas. Staff received information from DNR staff in the St. Paul office (after the question was forwarded from the regional DNR contact), which cited a December 2014 DNR “Water Talk” newsletter as indicating that “Using a ‘credit’ system to allow the use of pervious pavement to exceed the 25% impervious surface limit is prohibited in the shoreland district. And in no case should any hard surface be placed in the shore impact zone (SIZ) or bluff impact zone (BIZ) unless needed for water access. Any project which proposes to exceed the impervious surface limit through the use of pervious pavement should be reviewed as a variance. The following conditions are suggested if a community finds such a variance acceptable. These conditions include guidance from the MN Stormwater Manual and DNR field experience:

1. The slope of the pervious pavement system should be 2% or less
2. There should be a 3 foot distance between the bottom of the pervious system (including its sub base) and bedrock or seasonally saturated soils.
3. The system should be designed to infiltrate the first inch of any storm from the pavement surface.
4. The system should be designed and installed by qualified individuals and not by the property owner.
5. The system should be set back from basements, septic system leach fields, steep slopes and wells.
6. The site should be inspected during construction for compliance
7. Instructions for maintenance, including a maintenance schedule, should be provided to the property owner and zoning administrator or building inspector. Salt and sand should not be applied to pervious pavement systems.

Given that the DNR does not allow for “credits” on the use of pervious pavers without a variance, the only option the Township would have to do so is outside of shoreland areas. There are a number of lots outside of shoreland where lot sizes are relatively small and homeowners may desire to make use of these paver systems.

Staff sees the following questions as relevant for Township discussion:

1. Why would the Township allow for the use of these systems:
  - a. Increased attractiveness of properties for development – new residents, new tax base, etc...
  - b. Increased potential for neighborhood stormwater problems – if the systems don’t work properly
2. Where/when should a credit system be allowed:
  - a. On lots which are being developed for the first time?
  - b. Only on lots which already exceed the 25% impervious surface limit as a way to mitigate the addition of any new impervious surfaces?
  - c. On already developed lots that are currently meeting the 25% limit, but would go over that 25% if no credit were given?
3. How should a credit system be allowed:
  - a. As a variance?
  - b. As a conditional use?
  - c. As a permitted use, subject to specific standards of design, installation and maintenance?
4. Who should be allowed to design and install such a system?
  - a. Only qualified individuals or companies?

- b. Any landowner provided they meet certain standards?
- 5. What standards should apply to the installation of pervious pavement systems:
  - a. Specific standards as outlined in an ordinance (i.e. similar to what DNR recommends as shown above)?
  - b. As per a design prepared by a qualified individual?
  - c. Still have a maximum lot coverage allowed?
- 6. What role should Township staff play in the regulation of these systems?
  - a. Review and approval of designs?
  - b. Inspection and approval of installations?
  - c. Annual inspection of the system to ensure continued viability?

ADDITIONAL NOTES:

1. The Township needs to take care that whatever it does is not considered less restrictive than Douglas County ordinances, due to requirements of state law. Douglas County's ordinance currently allows for a 25% credit to be given to the installation of pervious paver systems via a conditional use permit provided:
  - a. The pervious pavement system shall be designed and certified by a registered engineer or landscape architect and installed by someone qualified in the particular system used, or the installation shall be overseen by a product representative to ensure its proper long-term function;
  - b. The pervious pavement designer shall include maintenance instructions to the property owner along with a maintenance schedule, with a copy to the Land & Resource Office to be filed along with the permit.

A 100% credit can be given by the County Ordinance if the pavers are used as part of an overall stormwater management plan that infiltrates and/or retains at least the two year 24 hour storm event in conjunction with buffer strips, vegetated swales, rainwater gardens or other similar methods.

The County also has other requirements when pervious paver systems are used, such as not allowing them within a bluff or shore impact zone and being setback from basements, septic systems and wells at least 10 feet.

2. Staff has discussed the issue of pervious pavers with Douglas County Land & Resource recently. The County has expressed an interest in considering the adoption of new ordinances that would allow landowners flexibility to use a variety of methods for stormwater management and possibly some that would allow for "credits" against impervious coverage. Is the Township interested in working jointly with Douglas County in developing these ordinances? Land & Resource suggested that such an effort may be something that could be completed by Spring 2016.
3. Any changes to the Township's ordinances would require a public hearing, which would need to be scheduled at a separate date, and approval by the Town Board.

## STAFF REPORT

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**Application:** Discussion – Online permit applications.

**Agenda Item:** New Business - 1

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**Summary:** Is the Township interested in allowing for online permit applications by residents and contractors?

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**Background Information:** Hometown Planning has recently been developing a system that would allow landowners and contractors to make applications for permits online, without the need for filling out paper copies.

Features of the system include:

1. 24-hour access to the system, including ability to start and come back later to complete the application;
2. Ability to simplify the application process by eliminating non-relevant questions based on the initial answers given by an applicant (e.g. questions about roof pitch or sidewall height would not be asked if the structure being constructed was a patio).
3. Ability for landowners to upload electronic copies of building plans, sites plans and other related application materials.
4. Applications can be made for all types of permit applications – land use/building permits, variances, conditional use permits, preliminary plat applications, shoreline alterations, etc...
5. Ability to have records of the application e-mailed to applicants, Township staff and Hometown Planning staff;
6. Ability to have the applications printed out on paper forms matching or similar to what is used now for permit applications (so that applications can be filed in hard-copy format for safe record-keeping);
7. Possibility of having a running record of permit applications automatically created in a spreadsheet form for additional record-keeping;
8. Online payments of permit fees could theoretically be allowed, although that may not be practical at this time given that permit fees are often not calculated until the time that permits are picked up at the Township office.

Staff will give a short demonstration of the online application system at the Planning Commission meeting. The system is still in development, although it could be made functional in a short period of time.

As an inaugural user of the system, Hometown Planning would make the online permitting system available to the Township at no additional charge for at least the first year of use (2016 calendar year). A pricing system would be developed that would likely involve a monthly or annual charge (the cost of such system could either be added to an application as a “convenience fee” or simply covered by the Township as part of its normal operations.



