

**CHARTER TOWNSHIP OF MERIDIAN  
PLANNING COMMISSION  
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES  
December 13, 2010**

**APPROVED**

**5151 Marsh Road, Okemos, MI 48864-1198  
853-4000, Town Hall Room, 7:00 P.M.**

PRESENT: Chair Reicosky, Vice-Chair Deits, Secretary Goldsberry, Commissioners Beyea, Jackson, Jorkasky  
ABSENT: Commissioners Goodale, Honicky  
STAFF: Principal Planner Gail Oranchak, Parks and Land Management Coordinator Jane Greenway

**1. Call meeting to order**

Chair Reicosky called the regular meeting to order at 7:00 P.M.

**2. Approval of agenda**

**Commissioner Beyea moved to approve the agenda. Seconded by Commissioner Jackson.**

VOICE VOTE: Motion carried 5-0.

**3. Approval of Minutes**

**Commissioner Jackson moved to approve the Regular Meeting Minutes of November 22, 2010. Seconded by Commissioner Goldsberry.**

VOICE VOTE: Motion carried 5-0.

**4. Public Remarks**

Chair Reicosky opened the floor for public remarks.

Michael Leon, 4890 Chipping Camden Lane, Okemos, spoke in opposition to Commission Review #10133.

Chair Reicosky closed public remarks.

**5. Communications**

A. Susan Williams, President, Okemos High School Parent Group, 2800 Jolly Road, Okemos; RE: Request for a temporary moratorium on medical marihuana dispensaries and setting standards within an ordinance for medical marihuana facilities within Meridian Township

**6. Public hearings**

A. \*Special Use Permit #10-09081 (Grand Petro Mart), request to add a drive through window to the proposed gasoline/convenience store at 743 Grand River Avenue.

Chair Reicosky opened the public hearing at 7:05 P.M.

- Introduction by the Chair (announcement of procedures, time limits and protocols for public participation and applicants)
- Summary of subject matter  
Principal Planner Oranchak summarized the special use permit (SUP) request as outlined in staff memorandum dated December 10, 2010.
- Public

Michael Leon, 4890 Chipping Camden Lane, Okemos, spoke in opposition to the future possibility of a more intensive use such as a Starbucks or a Tim Horton's. He also spoke in opposition to impacts on neighbors to the north and south by having a driveway onto Van Atta Road. Mr. Leon questioned the "forthrightness" of some of the applicant's previous responses to questions posed by Planning Commission members during the November 22, 2010 meeting. He believed this type of use is inappropriate in this section of the Township, stating there are no fast food restaurants at the entrance into a residential neighborhood.

Mr. Leon addressed lot sizes on Van Atta Road, indicating some of the lots north of Grand River and on the east side of Van Atta south of Grand River Avenue are "shot gun" lots (narrow frontage, but deep). He spoke to traffic generation from the nearby neighborhoods, stating that no Planning Commission has allowed fast food restaurants at the entrance into residential neighborhoods. Mr. Leon stated he believed a drive-through window is not appropriate at this location.

Mr. Leon believed the Ingham County Road Commission (ICRC) has not reviewed this request for a driveway opening onto Van Atta Road. He also suggested the Planning Commission ask the applicant to move the eastern driveway on Grand River to the far eastern portion of the property in the event another use is developed on the site.

- Planning Commission discussion:  
Chair Reicosky inquired if an applicant would be required to come back to the Planning Commission for approval in the event there was a future request for a second window, order window or use of microphones.

Principal Planner Oranchak responded in the affirmative as those issues were addressed as conditions contained in this resolution to approve.

Commissioner Jorkasky inquired if the Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT) or the ICRC provided preliminary comments or investigated the driveways.

Principal Planner Oranchak responded that when this request originally came before the Planning Commission, MDOT had just completed the modification to Grand River Avenue. MDOT installed the driveways and added curb and gutter to the site. She added the ICRC was contacted, gave consideration to the driveway on Van Atta Road and was interested in seeing one of the two original driveways closed. Principal Planner Oranchak added the applicant complied with the ICRC's request.

Commissioner Deits stated that while this area is not compact development, does not serve a large population in the area and is an anomaly, this is a significant C-2 zoned site at the corner of Grand River and Van Atta Road which has historically been used for various commercial activities for many years. He added the gas station is an eyesore which will not be improved unless the Township assists the owner in making this business a success.

Commissioner Deits reminded fellow Planning Commissioners that some of the details regarding the site itself are not currently before the Commission as they have already been previously approved. He noted his only concern with the drive-through window is due to the "unsafe" left hand turns for westbound Grand River traffic attempting to obtain coffee in the morning on the way to work. He added this location will not become a big restaurant unless the applicant comes back to the Township for another special use permit. Commissioner Deits expressed his support for this special use permit request for the aforementioned reasons.

Commissioner Beyea noted that while the Planning Commission had previously supported site improvements, the nature of the change in this building as a drive-through establishment is a cause for concern. He voiced his agreement with earlier public comment that this is an unprecedented request to have a drive-through window in proximity to a residential area and that a development of this size and intensity would not be approved in this location if it “were to be looked at again.”

Commissioner Beyea agreed with Commissioner Deits’ comment regarding the traffic flow and believed it to be dangerous to the children who live in the manufactured home park and frequent the convenience store. He noted there are sight distance issues further down Grand River Avenue and believed the drive-through window to be a “game changer” as it would change the entire traffic pattern at this intersection. Commissioner Beyea believed this location does not warrant a drive-through establishment because of the character of the area, the traffic pattern and its location in the far eastern end of the Township.

Chair Reicosky noted the information provided to the Planning Commission through traffic studies and traffic consultant reports state traffic patterns will not change significantly and the fact that the owner has reduced one of the drive-up window operations signals smaller than originally anticipated patrons using the drive-through. He expressed concern that in order to stay in business, this establishment may need to depend upon the revenue received from the drive-through window. Chair Reicosky reminded fellow Commissioners there are other commercial establishments in the area and the Planning Commission should provide an opportunity for all businesses in Meridian Township to survive and grow in these difficult economic times.

Chair Reicosky closed the public hearing at 7:29 P.M.

- B. \*Commission Review #10153 (Township Board), Section 61 review of character, location and extent regarding a 20.04 acres land preservation purchase located on the east side of Saginaw between Lake Lansing and Newton Roads in Section 4.

Chair Reicosky opened the public hearing at 7:29 P.M.

- Summary of subject matter  
Principal Planner Oranchak summarized the commission review as outlined in staff memorandum dated December 9, 2010.
- Applicant  
Jane Greenway, Parks and Land Management Coordinator and staff person to the Land Preservation Advisory Board (LPAB), availed herself for Planning Commission questions. She added the LPAB’s long term plan entails acquisition of properties in the northern part of Meridian Township. Ms. Greenway noted this purchase moves toward that long-term goal. She pointed to an article in the December 12<sup>th</sup> edition of the Towne Courier regarding this and another commission review property.
- Planning Commission discussion:  
Commissioner Deits expressed some disappointment over the fact time and effort had been spent on “upzoning” this property for potential significant commercial development which will now never be an economic contribution to the Township due to the significant downturn in the economy. He believed that, under the circumstances, this is the next best use for the property.

Commissioner Beyea asked how this property fits into the overall Land Preservation portfolio.

Ms. Greenway responded this purchase is consistent with previous Land Preservation purchases. She added a scoring sheet with strict ecological criteria is used to measure each potential purchase prior to making an offer. Ms. Greenway noted a stand of tulip poplars are a unique feature present on the property. She added when the first millage passed ten (10) years ago, it was a desire of the LPAB to acquire ten (10) percent of the available and desirable natural areas in the Township, and that goal has been met. At its inception, GIS mapping with multiple layers of natural features were created to be used as part of the overall acquisition plan, and properties located in the northern portion of the Township were envisioned to be part of the plan.

Commissioner Beyea requested staff comment on the impact of the location of this property along a major commercial frontage and significant traffic pattern.

Ms. Greenway responded there is a two-track off Saginaw, although she believed land preserves to typically be used more by neighbors. She added the Township does not provide parking as there is a strong distinction between the land preservation areas and parks. Ms. Greenway did not foresee any traffic conflicts at this location.

Commissioner Beyea asked staff where a resident could access the property.

Ms. Greenway responded they would park their car on the side of the road and enter through the two-track. She added the five (5) acres on the corner of Newton and Lake Lansing Roads was recently designated as a park and this land acquisition would lend itself to the creation of green space connectivity. There will be an approximate 20 car gravel parking lot to accommodate residents who use the athletic fields in this five (5) acre park and a citizen could choose to park their vehicle in the lot and walk to the subject property.

Chair Reicosky spoke in support of obtaining the connectivity between the Township's greenspace areas and believed this parcel a valuable piece connecting the Lake Lansing area.

Commissioner Jorkasky noted that while the Planning Commission previously spent a great deal of time rezoning this property, only a small portion is developable. She agreed it is a nice feature to have the connectivity to the park.

Commissioner Beyea asked staff if there were other examples of predominantly C-2 zoned land which has been purchased by the LPAB.

Ms. Oranchak responded it is mostly residentially zoned land.

Ms. Greenway responded an example would be the acquisition of the Potter parcel, located between the railroad tracks and frontage properties on Haslett Road.

Chair Reicosky closed the public hearing at 7:45 P.M.

- C. \*Commission Review #10163 (Township Board), Section 61 review of character, location and extent regarding a 19.95 acre land preservation purchase located north of Fenwick Court and east of Mereford Court in Section 3.

Chair Reicosky opened the public hearing at 7:45 P.M.

- Summary of subject matter  
Principal Planner Oranchak summarized the commission review as outlined in staff memorandum dated December 9, 2010.

- Applicant  
Jane Greenway, Parks and Land Management Coordinator and staff person to the Land Preservation Advisory Board (LPAB), pointed to the elevation change on this property. She noted each land acquisition has a boundary survey performed and all corners are marked with 4' by 6' posts which have the Land Preservation logo burned into them. Ms. Greenway believed this to be especially useful in managing properties which back up to residential areas. She indicated the next step in the process is to have a stewardship plan developed by the Township's environmental consultant which is an inventory and analysis of the subject property's natural features, including soils, wildlife, plants, etc. Ms. Greenway stated it is her job to use the stewardship plan to create a land management plan. She added all of the stewardship and land management plans are available online.
- Planning Commission discussion:  
Commissioner Goldsberry inquired if this site is just south of Pine Hollow Drive.

Principal Planner Oranchak responded in the affirmative.

Commissioner Goldsberry asked if the neighborhood would be part of the management plan.

Ms. Greenway responded the LPAB holds neighborhood meetings for land acquisitions to educate neighbors on the Land Preservation program in an effort to recruit citizen stewards into the program. She added many of the preserves are used for cross country ski trails.

Commissioner Deits noted that Fenwick Court will permanently become two little "stubs" and inquired if thought had been given to changing the name of one of those stubs to clarify their location.

Principal Planner Oranchak responded that issue has not yet been discussed but raises a good point.

Chair Reicosky expressed concern that this parcel could bring heavy traffic into the area for fall with the leaves changing color and in the winter for sledding. He inquired if there has been any consideration for improving both the parking and access to this land.

Ms. Greenway responded there are currently no plans to make either access or parking improvements at this time. She noted that while neighbors sometimes do not appreciate cars parking on their street, it is a public road.

Commissioner Jackson noted that earlier staff summary indicated the park to the north was a private park and inquired how that would relate to general public access to the subject site through the park.

Principal Planner Oranchak answered that primary access for the general public would be from Fenwick Court and the residents of Whitehills Woods Subdivision have access through Ridgemont Park.

Commissioner Jorkasky stated she believed this purchase would be a nice buffer for the property where the old movie theater was located.

Commissioner Beyea asked what the fragile link entailed as noted in the staff report.

Principal Planner Oranchak responded it means the land may be narrow, contain a fragmented portion of the natural features or stressed as an urbanized area in this portion of the priority conservation corridor.

Chair Reicosky closed the public hearing at 8:03 P.M.

## 7. Unfinished Business

**Commissioner Jackson moved to suspend Planning Commission By-Law #6.4a to make a decision the same night as the public hearing held on December 13, 2010. Seconded by Commissioner Goldsberry.**

Planning Commission discussion:

- No compelling reason to act on SUP #10-09081 tonight
- Tonight's public remarks require further consideration
- Preference for a full complement of the Planning Commission to vote on this SUP

VOICE VOTE: Motion failed 0-6.

- B. Commission Review #10133 (Township Board), Section 61 review of character, location and extent of an approximate 1,000 lineal foot water main extension within the Grand River Avenue right-of-way east of Wellington Drive.

Principal Planner Oranchak summarized the commission review as outlined in staff memorandum dated December 10, 2010.

Planning Commission discussion:

- Ingham County Health Department (ICHD) and the Meridian Township Fire Department support the water main extension which would provide for three (3) new fire hydrants
- Rationale for the change from the original request of 960 lineal feet to the current 1,170 lineal feet
- Original request for the water main extension of 960 lineal feet still serves the original purposes of the applicant (i.e., elimination of well water, protection of the aquifer, and provides added fire protection through installation of two (2) fire hydrants)
- Water main extension is not necessary for the safety of this site as the site was originally proposed and approved without the extension
- A chemical suppression system is currently acceptable
- Building was approved by the ICHD with the well in place
- Concern one of the reasons for installation of the water main extension may be to have more water supply for additional development in this area
- Concern that approval would place development in the wrong part of the Township at this point in time
- Project has changed significantly since the Planning Commission's initial approval
- Reduction in the size of the building was due to the ICHD's requirement to drill a new well to meet distance standards between the underground storage tanks and the well
- Smart growth principles within the Township's Master Plan indicate the water main extension is not consistent with the goals of the Master Plan
- Proposed water main extension will be paid for by the applicant with no cost to the Township
- Water main extension will serve the safety of the Township by providing adequate water for firefighting
- Water main extension will serve the health of the Township by eliminating possible underground storage tank contamination into the well

**Commissioner Deits moved [and read into the record] NOW THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED THE PLANNING COMMISSION OF THE CHARTER TOWNSHIP OF MERIDIAN approves the location, character and extent of the proposed extension of the water main along Grand River Avenue. Seconded by Commissioner Jackson.**

ROLL CALL VOTE: YEAS: Chair Reicosky  
NAYS: Commissioners Beyea, Deits, Goldsberry, Jackson, Jorkasky  
Motion failed 1-5.

Continued Planning Commission discussion:

- Necessity of a resolution to deny to comply with the Planning Commission duty of providing a report to the Board
- Potential of a Planning Commission representative providing a verbal report to the Board
- Planning Commission's legal responsibility relative to providing a resolution to deny when a resolution to approve fails should be discussed with the Township Attorney during the Planning Commission's legal training session

**Commissioner Deits moved [and read into the record] NOW THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED THE PLANNING COMMISSION OF THE CHARTER TOWNSHIP OF MERIDIAN does not approve the location, character and extent of the proposed extension of the water main along Grand River Avenue. Seconded by Commissioner Jackson.**

ROLL CALL VOTE: YEAS: Commissioners Beyea, Deits, Goldsberry, Jackson, Jorkasky,  
Chair Reicosky  
NAYS: None  
Motion carried 6-0.

- C. \*Commission Review #10153 (Township Board), Section 61 review of character, location and extent regarding a 20.04 acres land preservation purchase located on the east side of Saginaw between Lake Lansing and Newton Roads in Section 4.

**Commissioner Jorkasky moved [and read into the record] NOW THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED THE PLANNING COMMISSION OF THE CHARTER TOWNSHIP OF MERIDIAN approves the location, character and extent of an approximate 20 acre parcel of land located east of Saginaw Highway, west of Newton Road, and north of Lake Lansing Road in Section 4 of the Township. Seconded by Commissioner Jackson.**

**The seconder offered the following friendly amendment:**

- **In the sixth WHEREAS clause, delete "the only" and insert "a significant"**

**The amendment was accepted by the maker.**

ROLL CALL VOTE: YEAS: Commissioners Beyea, Deits, Goldsberry, Jackson, Jorkasky,  
Chair Reicosky  
NAYS: None  
Motion carried 6-0.

- D. \*Commission Review #10163 (Township Board), Section 61 review of character, location and extent regarding a 19.95 acre land preservation purchase located north of Fenwick Court and east of Mereford Court in Section 3.

**Commissioner Jackson moved [and read into the record] NOW THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED THE PLANNING COMMISSION OF THE CHARTER TOWNSHIP OF MERIDIAN approves the location, character and extent of an approximate 20 acre parcel of land located west of the old M-78 Drive-In, north of Pine Hollow and east of Mereford Court in Section 4 of the Township. Seconded by Commissioner Beyea.**

ROLL CALL VOTE: YEAS: Commissioners Beyea, Deits, Goldsberry, Jackson, Jorkasky,  
Chair Reicosky  
NAYS: None  
Motion carried 6-0.

**8. Other Business**

**A. Revise 2010 Meeting Calendar**

Principal Planner Oranchak summarized the calendar revision as outlined in staff memorandum dated December 9, 2010.

**Commissioner Goldsberry moved [and read into the record] NOW THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED THE PLANNING COMMISSION OF THE CHARTER TOWNSHIP OF MERIDIAN hereby revises the 2010 meeting schedule by canceling the regular meeting scheduled for December 20, 2010. Seconded by Commissioner Deits.**

ROLL CALL VOTE: YEAS: Commissioners Beyea, Deits, Goldsberry, Jackson, Jorkasky,  
Chair Reicosky  
NAYS: None  
Motion carried 6-0.

**9. Township Board, Planning Commission officer, committee chair, and staff comment or reports**

Commissioner Jorkasky expressed appreciation for her time of service on the Planning Commission which comes to a close this evening.

**10. New applications (None)**

**11. Site plans received (None)**

**12. Site plans approved (None)**

**13. Public remarks**

Chair Reicosky opened public remarks.

Michael Leon, 4890 Chipping Camden Lane, Okemos, expressed appreciation for the Planning Commission's vote on Commission Review #10133.

Chair Reicosky closed public remarks.

**14. Adjournment**

Chair Reicosky adjourned the regular meeting at 9:08 P.M.

Respectfully Submitted,

Sandra K. Otto  
Recording Secretary