

**CHARTER TOWNSHIP OF MERIDIAN
PLANNING COMMISSION
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES
March 8, 2010**

APPROVED

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

PRESENT: Chair Reicosky, Vice-Chair Deits, Commissioners Beyea, Goodale, Honicky, Jackson,
Jorkasky, Wilcox
ABSENT: Secretary Domas
STAFF: Principal Planner Gail Oranchak

1. Call meeting to order

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

2. Approval of agenda

Commissioner Honicky moved to approve the agenda. Seconded by Commissioner Wilcox.

VOICE VOTE: Motion carried 8-0.

3. Approval of Minutes

Commissioner Wilcox moved to approve the Regular Meeting Minutes of February 8, 2010 as amended. Seconded by Commissioner Jackson.

VOICE VOTE: Motion carried 8-0.

4. Public Remarks

Chair Reicosky opened and closed the floor for public remarks.

5. Communications

- Township Board Update for the Regular Board meeting of March 2, 2010 was given by Principal Planner Oranchak

6. Public hearings

- A. Special Use Permit #10031 (AT&T), a request to bring the site into compliance with C-2 (Commercial) zoning and install two air handling units behind the existing telephone exchange building at 4640 Dobie Road.

Chair Reicosky opened the public hearing at 7:04 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 request as outlined in staff memorandum dated March 4, 2010.
- Applicant

Melany Hagle, AT&T, 221 N. Washington Square, Lansing, stated a sound engineer has taken sound readings, is analyzing the proposed design and will prepare a report. She assured the Planning Commission it is AT&T's intent to meet the Township requirement of 50 db at the property line. She added the screened wall will be constructed on the interior made of acoustical block and the exterior will be a brick façade which matches the existing building. Ms. Hagle stated this special use permit request is necessary as AT&T has exceeded cooling capacity inside the building which houses two 18 ton air handling units with fans. She added the condensing unit which currently sits outside the building to the east will be removed and two new units will sit in that area.

- Planning Commission discussion:
Commissioner Honicky stated he believed the number one problem will be sound. He indicated the material used must be validated at 50 db at the property line as residential buildings with sleeping windows face north to the area where the fans will be located.

Ms. Hagle noted the only way AT&T can ultimately prove 50 db at the property line is after the units are installed, the screen wall is built and sound calculations taken.

Commissioner Goodale indicated his concern over the close proximity to the apartments. He suggested a stipulation to ensure 50 db at the property line through enclosure of the units. He inquired as to why the initial application did not include enclosed units.

Phyllis Stade, Teng & Associates, 27777 Franklin Road, Suite 1680, Southfield, representative from the design firm, noted the "package" unit (condenser and air handling unit in one) are designed to go either on the ground or on top of the building. The apparatus cannot be enclosed because it uses outside air to cool the heat coming out of the building.

Commissioner Deits expressed concern that the drawings included in the packet contain a proprietary information notification which states they cannot be used by other than authorized personnel of a local government agency. He believed the Township should not accept plans which have that stipulation on them as they must be made available to the public as part of the Planning Commission's deliberation.

Principal Planner Oranchak responded she would look into it.

Commissioner Goodale believed that since AT&T brought the plans to the Planning Commission with the knowledge that it is held in a public forum, it is essentially releasing it to the public.

Commissioner Beyea asked staff to indicate other nonconforming issues on this site, specifically the reference in the staff report to landscaping.

Principal Planner Oranchak indicated if this was a new project, staff would request the driveway and parking lot be moved to the north side of the building and install a double row of evergreen trees on the south side. She added the building itself can be compliant with additional landscaping; however, AT&T will need to request a variance from the Zoning Board of Appeals.

Commissioner Beyea inquired if the applicant has proposed landscaping at this point.

Ms. Oranchak stated the Township has not requested that information and the landscaping issue, among others, will be discussed during site plan review.

Commissioner Beyea expressed concern that because this building is only 180 feet from the front doors of the apartments, care must be taken about the noise and visual appeal. He noted the dumpster is not screened and there is a stop sign on the drive which is extremely rusted. Commissioner Beyea stated the decibel requirement would become a code enforcement issue.

Commissioner Beyea asked if the applicant would submit engineering specifications for the eight (8) foot wall.

Ms. Hagle indicated Planning staff has requested AT&T submit findings from the sound engineer when available. She noted Planning staff requested the report contain a number of scenarios; e.g., with screening, without screening, various distances from the air handling unit, etc.

Commissioner Beyea inquired if there could be any changes to the footprint or provided vertical illustrations.

Ms. Hagle responded AT&T plans to keep the wall at eight (8) feet as that height is the top of the air handling units and a higher wall would create air recirculation problems. She noted reconfiguration would depend on the sound engineer's findings, but it is AT&T's intent to have the addition blend with the current building.

Commissioner Deits expressed concern over the request to bring the site into compliance with C-2 as the Planning Commission does not normally attest to the compliance of a site. He inquired as to the component in the special use permit which would speak to the compliance issue.

Principal Planner Oranchak responded it is the fact that AT&T is not currently in compliance and does not have a special use permit.

Commissioner Deits expressed concern about the noise projection for the residents who live on the second floor of the nearby apartments.

Principal Planner Oranchak responded staff will look into that situation as sound studies are usually conducted at the level the equipment is located on the ground. She will investigate the sound study once received to see if the applicant has considered the sound projection for residents who live on the second floor of the adjacent apartment building.

Commissioner Jackson inquired as to why the units are placed in the middle of the building instead of further north away from the apartment buildings.

Ms. Stade responded the units must connect to the existing duct work inside the building.

Commissioner Wilcox requested information from the sound engineer and staff analysis of that information be provided prior to bringing this request back to the Planning Commission.

Commissioner Honicky indicated the noisiest part of the motor is the start up. He requested the sound engineer assessment include information as to the db at start up as well as continuous running.

Commissioner Honicky inquired if AT&T's had plans to update its generator.

Ms. Hagle responded there is a diesel generator in the basement which was upgraded about ten years ago and there are no plans to update it.

Chair Reicosky expressed concern over the sound, given the fact the unit will turn off and on every ten minutes year round. He inquired if AT&T could place a deflector shield on top of the building which would permit air flow while allowing sound to be deflected in a different direction.

Theresa Cisco, Teng & Associates, 27777 Franklin Road, Suite 1680, Southfield, clarified the air handling unit fan will run year round while the compressor and the condensing section of the unit will run mid-April to mid-November, dependent on outside air temperatures.

Chair Reicosky closed the public hearing at 7:40 P.M.

- B. *Commission Review #10043 (Township Board), a request for Section 61 review of character, location and extent for 60-acre Land Preservation Program purchase located north of Bennett Road and east of Hagadorn Road.

Chair Reicosky opened the public hearing at 7:40 P.M.

- Summary of subject matter
Principal Planner Oranchak summarized the commission review as outlined in staff memorandum dated March 4, 2010.
- Planning Commission discussion:
Commissioner Honicky inquired as to where the access points will be located.

Principal Planner Oranchak responded there is a temporary emergency access which connects Creekstone to Sophiea She added the Township has an existing sewer easement which extends from Creekstone into the site which will allow the public access. She added that at some point, Sophiea will have access to the south.

Commissioner Deits noted the map contained in the Planning Commission packet shows parcel boundaries which are “chopped up.”

Principal Planner Oranchak responded it is her understanding there are three intact parcels and two portions of a fourth parcel.

Commissioner Deits inquired if there are any plans to extend a road into the “notched” portion of the fourth parcel and add development in the easterly direction.

Principal Planner Oranchak believed there is intent to develop the aforementioned land in the future.

Commissioner Beyea noted the staff packet contained information relating to a “significant disturbance” created by sand mining the property. He inquired if there were abandoned structures, equipment, etc. outside of the natural realm of the topography.

Principal Planner Oranchak responded that a Level 1 environmental report was conducted as part of the purchase and no environmental issues were identified. She indicated she was unaware of any structures on the property.

Commissioner Beyea asked if there were any steep drop-offs where the ground has been cut into the topography.

Principal Planner Oranchak responded she was not aware of any.

Commissioner Beyea asked staff to explain the intent purpose of the land purchased under the Land Preservation Millage. He stated it was his understanding that it is not intended to be park land but serves as land preserved in its natural state at the time of purchase.

Principal Planner stated the purpose is to preserve natural areas and open space. She added it is not intended to be used as a park and is to be used for passive recreational activities.

Commissioner Jorkasky asked where the closest Township park to the property is located.

Principal Planner Oranchak responded it is Hartrick Park, located south of Bennett off Hulett Road (just north of Okemos High School).

Commissioner Jackson recalled that there is a ditch on the property. She stated Land Preservation purchases are not intended to cost the Township money for development in order to provide recreational activities. Commissioner Jackson believed extensive development would be necessary for the Township to take on the responsibility in allowing residents to use the property for active recreational activities.

Principal Planner Oranchak affirmed that Land Preservation parcels are never intended to be used for active recreational activities.

Commissioner Beyea believed that while active recreational uses are not prohibited on Land Preservation, the intended purpose of preserved land is for passive use.

Principal Planner Oranchak added that she believed if the activity was to cause damage, i.e., mountain biking, such activity would be discouraged. She added that these properties will not have manicured trails.

Commissioner Deits reminded Planning Commission members the focus of the public hearing is a Section 61 Review.

Commissioner Jackson read from the Land Preservation Ordinance that the primary purpose is to provide open space in perpetuity.

Chair Reicosky expressed appreciation for the mature sugar maple forest which could be used as a teaching tool for both Okemos Schools and Michigan State University. He stated the land is an excellent wildlife area habitat. Chair Reicosky stated having these parcels in the Land Preservation Program will prevent residential building from encroaching on the wetlands on the west edge of the property.

Commissioner Wilcox noted sixty (60) acres is a considerable amount of open space to be preserved and speaks to the intent of the Section 61 Review.

Commissioner Jackson added the comment in support of this purchase contained in the report stated not as much land has been preserved on this side of the Township.

Chair Reicosky closed the public hearing at 8:07 P.M.

7. Unfinished Business

- A. *Commission Review #10043 (Township Board), a request for Section 61 review of character, location and extent for 60-acre Land Preservation Program purchase located north of Bennett Road and east of Hagadorn Road.

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 land located north of Bennett Road, east of Hagadorn Road, and south of the CSX Railroad right-of-way in Section 29 of the Township totaling approximately 60 acres. Seconded by Commissioner Honicky.

ROLL CALL VOTE: YEAS: Commissioners Beyea, Deits, Honicky, Goodale, Jackson, Jorkasky, Wilcox, Chair Reicosky
NAYS: None
Motion carried 8-0.

8. Other Business

- A. Downtown Development Authority Signage Request
Principal Planner Oranchak summarized the signage request(s) as outlined in staff memorandum dated March 4, 2010.

Planning Commission discussion:

- Okemos High School sandwich board advertising its Spring Musical is on Ingham County Road Commission property
- Township working with the Ingham County Road Commission on ordinance amendment requirements
- Assurance that the owner keeps the sandwich boards in good repair
- Provision within the ordinance to remove the sign each evening
- Request for staff to investigate businesses using sandwich boards that endorse a political position
- History of not originally including sandwich boards in the ordinance
- Staff research to see if there is a limitation on the time of year a sandwich board can be displayed
- Possible limitation on the number of signs
- Sandwich board signage may not be appropriate in all commercial zoning districts of the township

Commissioner Jackson moved to initiate an amendment to the zoning ordinance to allow A-frame signs in commercial zoning districts and to add vertical streetlight banners to the list of permitted Township-sponsored signage. Seconded by Commissioner Beyea.

VOICE VOTE: Motion carried 8-0.

9. Announcements

Commissioner Deits reported the Downtown Development Authority Board met March 1, 2010 and discussed the new streetlights as well as listened to a presentation by Beckett and Raeder (consultants) on the different market analyses which can be used in the revitalization of a downtown area. He noted part of the discussion centered around the issue that such a market analysis may reveal a downtown development area has no room for expansion or market to develop necessitating consideration of development by “contraction.”

10. New applications

- A. *Commission Review #10043 (Township Board), a request for Section 61 review of character, location and extent for 60-acre Land Preservation Program purchase located north of Bennett Road and east of Hagadorn Road.

- B. Special Use Permit #10041 (AT&T), a request to allow the installation of new utility cabinets in the easement at 2258 Bennett Road causing the total footprint of all utility cabinets to exceed 50 square feet.

11. Site plans received

- A. Site Plan Review #10-01 (Christopher Enright Architects), a request to raze a former car wash and construct a Belle Tire store at 2045 Grand River Avenue.

12. Site plans approved (None)

13. Public remarks

Chair Reicosky opened and closed public remarks.

14. Adjournment

Chair Reicosky adjourned the regular meeting at 8:27 P.M.

Respectfully Submitted,

Sandra K. Otto
Recording Secretary