

**CHARTER TOWNSHIP OF MERIDIAN
PLANNING COMMISSION
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES
May 24, 2010**

APPROVED

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

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

1. Call meeting to order

Chair Reicosky called the regular meeting to order at 7:02 P.M.

2. Approval of agenda

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

VOICE VOTE: Motion carried 7-0.

3. Approval of Minutes

Commissioner Jorkasky moved to approve the Regular Meeting Minutes of May 10, 2010. Seconded by Commissioner Wilcox.

VOICE VOTE: Motion carried 7-0.

4. Public Remarks

Chair Reicosky opened the floor for public remarks.

Marilyn Aronoff, 2248 Kent Street, Okemos, read from a prepared statement expressing concerns with the proposed commercial planned unit development.

Chair Reicosky closed public remarks.

5. Communications

- Susan M. and Roger D. Simkin, 2032 Central Park Drive, Okemos; RE: Support for the pedestrian-bicycle pathway on the east side of Okemos Road north of Central Park Drive

6. Public hearings

A. Special Use Permit #10071 (Meridian Township), request to work in the 100-year floodplain to construct approximately 800 feet of pedestrian-bicycle pathway on the east side of Okemos Road north of Central Park Drive and

B. Wetland Use Permit #10-05 (Meridian Township), request to work in regulated wetlands to construct approximately 800 feet of pedestrian-bicycle pathway on the east side of Okemos Road north of Central Park Drive.

Chair Reicosky opened the public hearings at 7:10 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 and wetland use permit requests as outlined in staff memoranda dated May 20, 2010.
- Applicant
Director of Public Works and Engineering Ray Severy indicated the rationale for the gravel extension on the north end is due to the fact a boardwalk will have to be installed across the wetland and the Township has applied for a grant to fund the project.
- Public
Doug Federeau, 5370 Okemos Road, East Lansing, spoke in support of this pathway but expressed concern it dead ends into the marsh.
- Planning Commission discussion:
Commissioner Honicky inquired if it wasn't standard for homeowners to build the sidewalks and be charged when the Township makes repairs.

Director Severy stated the cost of sidewalks on fully developed property that are on the bicycle pedestrian pathway Master Plan are covered by the millage.

Commissioner Honicky inquired if there would be a "hole" dug for the compensating cut.

Director Severy indicated the Township does not want a hole dug for a compensating cut for floodplain as it can't drain and once it fills with water, there is no compensating volume. The area where this compensating cut will be placed is already a wetland and will remain wet most of the time. It is not the Township's intent to build a basin for the portion designated as the compensating cut.

Commissioner Jorkasky inquired about future plans for the railroad crossing.

Director Severy responded the Township has been in contact with the railroad and now has a draft agreement from the railroad. He indicated the plan is to provide a crossing straight across the railroad tracks without crossing Okemos Road.

Commissioner Wilcox stated this area is a dangerous "stretch" of Okemos Road and is glad to see this project move forward.

Commissioner Beyea inquired if the area where the pathway is going to be located is prone to flooding.

Director Severy indicated the area closest to the drain will flood when the road floods. He indicated this area would flood in a 100 year flood, but this section does not flood during the normal spring and fall rains.

Commissioner Beyea inquired if the proposed elevation is sufficient to address anything outside of the 100 year flood.

Director Severy responded in the affirmative.

Commissioner Beyea asked how deep the compensating cut area is going to be.

Director Severy answered the total excavation depth will be approximately 1 to 1-1/2 feet lower than it is currently.

Commissioner Beyea asked if there would be any fencing or natural landscaping other than the plantings mentioned in the staff report.

Director Severy stated there would not be.

Commissioner Beyea asked the Director to comment on the recommendation from the Township's environmental consultant relative to seeding and monitoring of invasive species.

Director Severy noted the seeding plan will be produced by the environmental consultant and approved by the Director of Community Planning and Development. He added staff will need to monitor the mitigation over the next five years to ensure invasive species do not establish themselves.

Commissioner Beyea inquired if there would be sign placement where the pathway ends and gravel begins.

Director Severy indicated it would be a good idea to let pedestrians and bicyclists know and possibly place a sign closer to Central Park to apprise travelers the pathway stops "short" of the drain and does not continue through.

Commissioner Beyea asked if there are any specific issues as the pathway traverses across concrete driveways.

Director Severy responded the driveways are mostly asphalt. He indicated it will be necessary to take out a small portion on either side of two driveways to bring them up to grade and make the transition between the existing driveway, the pathway and back to the road. Residents will be notified before any work is done on their property through hand delivery of a letter when they will be unable to access their driveway.

Chair Reicosky inquired if the Township needed connectivity between the two sides of the road in order to avoid an unintended saltwater marsh from road salt.

Director Severy indicated there will be connectivity.

Chair Reicosky received a letter from the Drain Commissioner relative to its desire to have a compensating cut of 2:1. The Chair would like to see a compensating cut ratio of at least 1.5:1 for this project.

Director Severy noted there is limited space in this area for a larger compensating cut.

Commissioner Goodale suggested any signage have sufficient sight access to be seen by pedestrians and bicyclists.

Director Severy stated the Township has received its letter of support from the Ingham County Road Commission for the grant application for the boardwalk and the application is ready to be submitted.

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

- C. Zoning Amendment #10040 (Township Board), request to amend Section 86-223 of the Code of Ordinances to extend the approval period for a variance from 18 months to 24 months.

Chair Reicosky opened the public hearing at 7:46 P.M.

- Summary of subject matter
Principal Planner Oranchak summarized the zoning amendment as outlined in staff memorandum dated May 21, 2010.
- Planning Commission discussion:
Chair Reicosky clarified the extension is to allow the applicant sufficient time to get all necessary approvals.

Principal Planner Oranchak added the complexity of a project may affect the time period necessary to move it forward. She indicated the economy is also a factor as to why some cases are being delayed.

Commissioner Beyea believed 24 months should be the maximum time allowed.

Chair Reicosky closed the public hearing at 7:50 P.M.

7. Unfinished Business

- A. Zoning Amendment #10010 (Township Board), request to amend Section 86-368 (b)(2) Home occupations to update the allowed uses and standards for home occupations.
Principal Planner Oranchak summarized the changes made to the zoning amendment based upon Planning Commission discussion at its May 10, 2010 meeting.

Planning Commission and staff discussion:

- Would allowance of external employees require buildings to be smoke-free
- Current ordinance does not regulate residential structures relative to the smoking ban
- Concern with liability issues regarding clients on the property
- Definition of one outside employee (e.g., two part-time employees)
- Concern that 7:00 a.m. is too early to allow delivery by motor vehicle
- Time frame (7:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m.) was taken from the nuisance ordinance for hours of operation
- Reminder that the home occupation is incidental to the occupancy to the home
- Outside employees is an area which should be avoided
- Agreement with staff recommendation of additional employee(s) for conditional use where impacts are identified
- Concern that existing home-based businesses may be out of compliance if this zoning amendment passes
- Request by the chair for a legal opinion on the work environment ramifications if employees are allowed (i.e., interpretation of liability)
- Staff to speak with the township attorney to obtain feedback
- Staff to provide information in its next staff report along with a resolution
- Owners of home-based businesses need adequate liability coverage in the event an employee or client is injured on the property
- Planning Commissioner request for staff to provide language for the conditional use of an employee prior to a Planning Commission vote on this issue

It was the consensus of the Planning Commission to discuss this zoning amendment at a future meeting.

- B Zoning Amendment #10030 (Township Board), request to amend various sections of Chapter 86 Zoning to bring them into consistency with Chapter 22, Article VI, Soil Erosion and Sedimentation Control
Principal Planner Oranchak summarized the zoning amendment as outlined in staff memorandum dated May 20, 2010.

Commissioner Honicky moved [and read into the record] NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THE PLANNING COMMISSION OF THE CHARTER TOWNSHIP OF MERIDIAN hereby recommends approval of Zoning Amendment #10030 to the Township Board. Seconded by Commissioner Jackson.

Planning Commission discussion:

- Newly adopted Soil Erosion and Sedimentation Control standard has been taken out of the zoning ordinance
- Inquiry if any standards were changed that the Township were administering under zoning
- Township acted as a referral agency to the Ingham County Soil Conservation or Ingham County Drain Commissioner
- Previous standards mirrored standards used by the Ingham County Soil Conservation or Ingham County Drain Commissioner
- Current ordinance includes or incorporates the same standards used by the Ingham County Drain Commissioner
- Current ordinance language also had to be approved by the State of Michigan

ROLL CALL VOTE: YEAS: Commissioners Beyea, Goodale, Honicky, Jackson, Jorkasky, Wilcox, Chair Reicosky

NAYS: None

Motion carried 7-0.

8. Other Business

A. C-PUD Discussion

Chair Reicosky offered background on the proposed commercial planned unit development ordinance.

Planning Commission discussion:

- Discussion with developers and property owners to see if this proposed ordinance had benefit
- Balance between benefit to the Township and the effect on the neighborhood
- One Planning Commissioner perception this is an issue of speed and dialogue
- Subcommittee member's perception that the proposed process provides more input by the public up-front to allow them greater influence on the final project during the pre-application process
- Need for the proper balance between incentives and safeguards for public participation
- Include benefits to the neighborhood in the definition of amenity
- Major policy decisions currently being made at the Zoning Board of Appeals
- Necessity of the Planning Commission as a whole to move forward in a workshop setting
- Need for Planning Commission discussion whether to move forward with public/developer input in conjunction with the five-year Master Plan
- Suggestion to develop a simple survey/questionnaire to hand out to developers, business owners and residents in an effort to pinpoint specific issues
- Planning Commission to provide input to staff on the questions to be placed on the survey/questionnaire
- Request to receive background information prior to holding a Planning Commission

meeting in a workshop setting

- Additional meeting to invite developers, property owners, Township representative, business owners, DDA representative, individuals involved in commercial real estate, and residents whose properties abut Grand River Avenue
- Need to schedule two different types of meetings

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

Chair Reicosky announced the wedding of Commissioner Domas on Saturday, May 29, 2010.

10. New applications

- A. Special Use Permit #10080 (Gist), request to work and place fill in the 100-year floodplain at 2280 Seminole Drive.

11. Site plans received

- A. Site Plan Review #10-04 (AT&T Real Estate), request to install two air handling units and a screen wall at 4640 Dobie Road.

12. Site plans approved (None)

13. Public remarks

Chair Reicosky opened public remarks.

Ann Alchin, 2227 Hamilton Road, Okemos, expressed concern that under the commercial planned unit development language, the public could be unaware of changes from the initial meeting until it reaches the Township Board level.

Chair Reicosky closed public remarks.

14 Adjournment

Chair Reicosky adjourned the regular meeting at 8:54 P.M.

Respectfully Submitted,

Sandra K. Otto
Recording Secretary