

**CHARTER TOWNSHIP OF MERIDIAN  
PLANNING COMMISSION  
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES  
October 25, 2010**

**APPROVED**

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

PRESENT: Vice-Chair Deits, Secretary Goldsberry, Commissioners Beyea, Goodale, Honicky, xs  
ABSENT: Chair Reicosky, Commissioner Jorkasky  
STAFF: Director of Community Planning & Development Mark Kieselbach, Principal Planner  
Gail Oranchak

**1. Call meeting to order**

Vice-Chair Deits called the regular meeting to order at 7:00 P.M.

**2. Approval of agenda**

**Commissioner Honicky moved to approve the agenda amended as follows:**

- **Add Agenda Item #9B – Resolution of Appreciation**

**Seconded by Commissioner Jackson.**

VOICE VOTE: Motion carried 7-0.

**3. Approval of Minutes**

**Commissioner Jackson moved to approve the Regular Meeting Minutes of October 11, 2010.**

**Seconded by Commissioner Honicky.**

VOICE VOTE: Motion carried 7-0.

**4. Special Presentation: Michigan/Grand River Avenue Corridor Study Update**

**Mark Kieselbach, Director of Community Planning and Development**

Director Kieselbach offered highlights of the Michigan/Grand River Avenue Corridor Study as follows:

- Series of public open houses will be held during the month of November
- Meridian Township will host an open house on Thursday, November 11 from 5:00 P.M. until 7:00 P.M. in the Town Hall Room
- Capital Area Transportation Authority (CATA) received a grant from the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) to perform a corridor study for the Michigan/Grand River Avenue from the Capitol to Meridian Mall
- Study partners included CATA, City of East Lansing, City of Lansing, Lansing Economic Area Partnership, Inc. (LEAP), Lansing Regional Chamber of Commerce, Lansing Township, Meridian Township, Michigan Department of Transportation, Michigan State University and Tri-County Regional Planning Commission
- Two committees were formed: technical committee and steering committee
- Multi-modal study evaluated travel needs and looked at the efficiency of the system
- Economic issues (economic development and revitalization of older commercial areas) as well as land use and master plan were taken into consideration
- Corridor is approximately 8.45 miles in length
- CATA Route #1 along Michigan/Grand River Avenue is the most heavily used route in the system, carrying 6,000 riders per day
- Route #1 averaged 1.75 million riders in 2009

- Partners used the FTA process: project initiation (vision/ideas), possible corridor transportation options, evaluation of the alternatives, and selection of locally preferred alternative
- Three alternatives selected based on cost analysis, ridership potential and impact to surrounding areas
- Three alternatives under consideration:
  - Baseline (existing bus system) with 43 stops along the route, averaging a 45 minute bus ride from Meridian Mall to the Capitol
  - Bus rapid transit (BRT)
    - Designated travelway with fewer stops than current bus system
    - Collection point to purchase ticket prior to accessing the ride
    - Articulated bus sixty (60) feet in length
  - Light rail transit (LRT)
    - Designated travelway with fewer stops than current bus system
    - Collection point to purchase ticket prior to accessing the ride
    - Averages 100 feet in length
    - Runs on a track system with overhead electrical lines
  - Modern streetcar
    - Designated travelway with fewer stops than current bus system
    - Sixty (60) feet in length
    - Runs on a track system with overhead electrical lines
- Features of corridor improvements
  - Center lane as the preferred location for the transitway
  - Four general traffic lanes
  - Improved sidewalks
  - Streetscape and landscape
  - Bike lanes where possible
  - Station locations
    - Assessed corridor fit, station function and development potential
    - Impact on transit ridership, business climate and the environment
    - Locations have not yet been solidified – may move one block east or west dependent upon final design
    - Modern streetcar: 29 stations with spacing at one-eighth to one-quarter mile intervals
      - Average trip time from Meridian Mall to the Capitol of 34 minutes
      - 10 minute duration in the A.M. peak between stations to pick-up: six minutes in P.M. peak and 7.5 minutes during mid-day
    - Bus rapid transit: 23-28 stops with spacing at one-quarter to one-half mile intervals
      - Average trip time from Meridian Mall to the Capitol of 37 minutes
      - 10 minute duration in the A.M. peak, 7.5 minutes in the P.M. peak and 10 minutes during mid-day
    - Light rail transit: 16 stations with spacing at one-half to one mile intervals
      - Average trip time from Meridian Mall to the Capitol of 28 minutes
      - 10 minute duration throughout the day
- End-of-line analysis
  - Identify additional facilities needed
  - Possible Park and Ride
  - West end
    - Downtown Lansing: Turn right on Grand Avenue off of Michigan Avenue, left on Ionia, left on Capitol Avenue, left on Lenawee and left onto Grand Avenue back to Michigan Avenue
  - East end

- Meridian Mall: preference for public/private partnership for a Park and Ride
- Creation of a structure which would allow riders to sit down and wait
- CATA Route #1 bus would continue to run along with bus rapid transit and light rail transit
- Principles for Improving the Corridor – will change dependent on local needs
  - Catalyst for economic development
  - Two-way transitway
  - Transit station platform
  - Maintain existing right-of-way
    - Downtown East Lansing adjacent to Michigan State University will offer curb-side service on the north side of Grand River
  - Four lanes for auto traffic
  - Ten foot sidewalks or wider for landscaping and streetscaping
  - One-street bicycle lanes
  - Exclusive left-turn lanes
  - On-street parking
- Open houses held during the month of November to ascertain locally preferred alternatives (LPAs) to narrow down to one choice – all analyses will be available for viewing
  - Michigan State University open house – November 9, 2010 at the International Center from 11:30 a.m. until 1:30 p.m.
  - City of Lansing open house - November 9, 2010 at the Lansing Centre from 5:00 p.m. until 7:00 p.m.
  - City of East Lansing open houses – November 10, 2010 at the Hannah Community Center from 11:30 a.m. until 1:30 p.m. and from 5:00 p.m. until 7:00 p.m.
  - Meridian Township open house – November 11, 2010 in the Township Hall Room from 5:00 p.m. until 7:00 p.m.
- Technical and steering committees to reconvene in December and make one recommendation
- CATA will subsequently make the determination whether to proceed with the funding system
- FTA has a New Starts Program where detailed design work, financial planning, scheduling, and public/private partnerships will then be examined
- Additional information can be obtained at [www.migrtrans.org](http://www.migrtrans.org)

Planning Commission and staff discussion:

- Economic impact of the options
  - Base-line improvements (shelters, energy efficient buses) – Approximately \$5 million/mile
  - Bus rapid transit – Approximately \$23 million-\$26.7 million/mile depending upon alternative
  - Light rail transit – Approximately \$53.6 million/mile
  - Modern streetcar – Approximately \$59.8 million/mile
- Modern streetcar demands a higher ridership for profitability
  - Communities willing to have mixed use development with high densities will be looked at
  - Most individuals will take the five-minute walk (1/4 mile) to access a transit system
  - Many of the systems allow for loading a bicycle onto the system
- Possible types of development the Township would need to consider as the east anchor
  - Master Plan, zoning issues would need to be addressed
  - Would require approximately five (5) acres for the structure and park and ride
  - Decision whether to elevate a system under or over railroad tracks taken into consideration when determining a per mile cost
- Project speaks to in-fill development, reducing sprawl, improving energy efficiency and transportation efficiency

- Eastern arm on the western end of the corridor should be moved one block north to Saginaw as it is currently configured to “dump off” in an abandoned part of the city where there is no student presence
- Saginaw Street is the entrance to Lansing Community College and where bus shelters are currently located
- Challenge in reconfiguring the route is that whenever you increase its length, you increase its cost
- If the New Starts Program commences, it will be an additional three (3) to five (5) year to completion
- Consideration of a dedicated left turn lane
- Township website has a link to this study

**5. Public Remarks**

Vice-Chair Deits opened and closed the floor for public remarks.

**6. Communications** (None)

**7. Public hearings**

- A. \*Special Use Permit #10111 (Consumers Energy), request to upgrade the existing electric substation located at 5521 Okemos Road.

Vice-Chair Deits opened the public hearing at 7:40 P.M.

- Introduction by the Vice-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 October 21, 2010.
- Applicant  
Mike Brewster, Consumers Energy, 649 Earliglow Lane, Haslett, clarified the sidewalk to the north falls short of Consumers property line. He indicated Consumers Energy would be willing to consider adding a sidewalk to tie into the existing trail system. Mr. Brewster added the two trails running east and west, one of which is currently under construction, is within Consumers right-of-way or overline easement and Consumers granted the Township a license agreement to construct the path. He noted Consumers has subsequently received a permit from the Ingham County Road Commission for the driveway.

Mr. Brewster expressed concern with the landscaping requirement to the north, as the current buffer is solid, even without leaves on the trees. He added they reserve the north side in the event of an emergency which requires a mobile subtrailer to service the substation. Mr. Brewster noted the biggest improvement will be moving the fencing from 13 feet to 39 feet.

- Planning Commission discussion:  
Commissioner Honicky inquired if there were sufficient setbacks in the event Okemos Road is widened to four (4) lanes.

Jeff Watson, Consumers Energy Engineer, 1955 West Parnell Road, Jackson, said it would be dependent upon how wide Okemos Road becomes. He added it could be an option to shorten the driveway.

Commissioner Honicky asked if there was danger of the station “blowing up.”

Mr. Watson responded that equipment can fail and transformer fuses may blow, but it is not explosive in nature. He added there are pressure relief devices on the transformers and would render them out of service.

Commissioner Honicky asked if Consumers equipment contains bio hazards.

Mr. Watson responded it does not; only mineral oil.

Commissioner Jackson asked the applicant to describe the type of fencing Consumers' is proposing to use.

Mr. Watson responded it would be the same type of fencing currently on site; i.e., chain link fence with barbed wire on top. He added there are safety and security concerns with the opaque fencing mentioned earlier. Mr. Watson stated problems do exist where thieves steal the copper ground conductors. He indicated before employees enter the substation, it is necessary to ensure the ground is still intact and it would be more difficult with opaque fencing.

Commissioner Beyea inquired about the procedure to prevent erosion on the site during construction. He also asked if surface runoff would be affected as a result of the cut and fill.

Mr. Watson referred Commissioners to the portion of the packet explaining soil erosion measures which will be used. He noted the size of fenced area, covered with crushed stone, will be reduced and the remainder will become a grass lawn with some screening. He indicated there would not be an increase in impervious surface so no change in stormwater runoff is anticipated.

Commissioner Beyea requested applicant comments on staff's request for opaque fencing, the recommendation for additional trees to be added to the north side of the substation and a change in the tree species to "deer resistant."

Mr. Watson indicated there is an approximate 100 foot buffer on the north side with overhead lines, poles and guy wires. He believed there is no place to plant additional trees, unless it is in the existing buffer zone between the substation and the development to the north.

Mr. Brewster added Consumers would have to clear some of the existing brush in order to create a landscape area on the north side. He noted Consumers has restrictions on planting underneath overhead lines, while stating the purpose of screening is to screen adjacent views from substations. Mr. Brewster indicated Consumers Energy would look at potential other species which are labeled as "deer-resistant."

Commissioner Beyea requested staff comment on its specific recommendation relative to tree species.

Principal Planner Oranchak responded staff would like to have the opportunity to review tree species during site plan review to ascertain whether additional landscaping is needed along the frontage.

Commissioner Honicky inquired as to the owner of the property between Consumers Energy's substation and the condominiums.

Mr. Brewster responded it is owned by Consumers Energy.

Commissioner Deits asked staff regarding the logistics of the twenty foot “gap” in the sidewalk.

Principal Planner Oranchak responded the Township will construct that portion of the pathway if no other arrangement has been made such as holding a performance guarantee with the property owner of Songbird Point.

Commissioner Deits requested the applicant ascertain which parts of the site are currently crushed gravel and if there are going to be additional changes in the crushed gravel content other than in the front area.

Mr. Watson answered the existing fenced area will be squared off and anything inside the fenced area will be covered with crushed stone. When finished, there will be a gravel drive and three (3) feet around the perimeter of the fence which will also contain crushed stone.

Commissioner Deits inquired if it was the applicant’s intent to complete the proposed project this year.

Mr. Watson responded in the affirmative, dependent upon receiving all the necessary permits.

Vice-Chair Deits closed the public hearing at 8:06 P.M.

#### 8. Unfinished Business

**Commissioner Wilcox moved to suspend Planning Commission Bylaw 6.4 to consider Special Use Permit #10111 the same night as the public hearing. Seconded by Commissioner Jackson.**

VOICE VOTE: Motion carried 7-0.

- A. \*Special Use Permit #10111 (Consumers Energy), request to upgrade the existing electric substation located at 5521 Okemos Road.

**Commissioner Honicky moved [and read into the record] NOW THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED THE PLANNING COMMISSION OF THE CHARTER TOWNSHIP OF MERIDIAN hereby approves Special Use Permit #10111 subject to the following conditions:**

- 1. Approval is subject to the property plan and foundation prepared by Consumers Energy, dated September 22, 2010 and the grading plan and soil erosion plan prepared by Consumers Energy, dated September 23, 2010, and the associated materials submitted as part of Special Use Permit #10111, subject to revisions as required.**
- 2. The applicant shall obtain all applicable permits and approvals from the Michigan Department of Natural Resources and Environment (MDNRE), Ingham County Drain Commissioner’s office, and the Township. Copies of all permits and approvals shall be provided to the Department of Community Planning and Development.**
- 3. A seven-foot wide concrete pedestrian-bicycle pathway shall be provided across the frontage of the subject site.**
- 4. No work shall take place in the regulated wetlands without first obtaining approval from the Township and the MDNRE.**

5. **Prior to any work starting on the site, the applicant shall obtain necessary variances from the Zoning Board of Appeals or revise the plans so variances are no longer necessary.**
6. **Fill placed in the floodplain as part of the project shall be protected against erosion.**
7. **The applicant shall dispose of all materials from the compensating cut to an upland location approved by the Director of Community Planning and Development.**
8. **A Letter of Map Revision (LOMR) shall be obtained from the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) and a copy provided to the Department of Community Planning and Development.**
9. **The compensating cut to fill ratio shall be no less than 1:1.**
10. **Proposed site landscaping, including street trees shall be subject to the review and approval of the Director of Community Planning and Development during site plan review.**

**Seconded by Commissioner Jackson.**

ROLL CALL VOTE: YEAS: Commissioners Beyea, Deits, Goldsberry, Goodale, Honicky, Jackson, Wilcox

NAYS: None

Motion carried 7-0.

- B. Special Use Permit #10131 (Meridian Township), request to relocate the Haslett branch library into a Haslett Public Schools' building addressed as 1590 Franklin Street  
Principal Planner Oranchak outlined the special use permit request as outlined in staff memorandum dated October 21, 2010.

**Commissioner Goodale moved [and read into the record] NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THE PLANNING COMMISSION OF THE CHARTER TOWNSHIP OF MERIDIAN hereby approves Special Use Permit #10131 to relocate and expand the Haslett branch of the Capital Area District Library into 11,150 square feet in the Haslett Public Schools' Center for Community Education building with the following conditions:**

1. **Approval of the special use permit is recommended in accordance with the floor plans prepared by TMP Associates, Inc. dated September 13, 2010. All plans are subject to revisions as required.**
2. **The Township should coordinate with the Haslett Public Schools to see that bicycle parking is added to the site in accordance with Section 86-760 of the Code of Ordinances.**
3. **The Township should coordinate with the Haslett Public Schools to see that the parking lot is re-stripped and other site improvements deemed necessary for the operation of the branch library are accomplished.**
4. **The Township shall request the Ingham County Road Commission determine if a pedestrian-activated crossing signal is warranted at the intersection of Franklin Street and the crosswalk connecting the Haslett Middle School site to the north side of Franklin Street.**

**Seconded by Commissioner Beyea.**

Planning Commission discussion:

- Appreciation for the individuals and groups who promoted reuse of this facility to bring the expansion of the Haslett branch closer to reality
- Project is an example of the type of smart growth being promoted within the Township

ROLL CALL VOTE: YEAS: Commissioners Beyea, Deits, Goldsberry, Goodale, Honicky, Jackson, Wilcox

NAYS: None

Motion carried 7-0.

**9. Other Business**

A. 2005 Master Plan Update

Principal Planner Oranchak summarized the staff memorandum on the update to the Master Plan dated October 22, 2010.

Planning Commission and staff discussion:

- Preference to wait for the result of the Michigan/Grand River Avenue Corridor Study
- Begin focus on the commercial reuse segment
- Data to be obtained through the results of the US census
- Goals as a good place to begin
- Consideration of changes in Township Board goals over the past few years
- Consideration of the Township being more affirmative about economic development
- Potential for a regional urban services boundary
- Work on goals will lead the Planning Commission to reconciliation in the Master Plan where the goals do not currently align with actual events
- Possible framework of form based codes
- Confirm invitation from the Williamstown Township Planning Commission for a joint meeting
- Goals and topics of the joint meetings
- Exchange of goals between the two Planning Commissions
- Joint planning commission meetings with adjacent neighbors would provide insight relative to the Master Plan Update process
- Explicit statement in goals and objectives about creating walkable communities, fostering sustainability, and taking advantage of compact building design
- Focus on creating a range of housing diversification
- Garner resources from a potential MSU program to create a school of sustainability
- Opportunity for MSU student teams to participate in a visioning exercise with the Planning Commission
- Use of the most recent community survey results
- Expenditure of funds to initiate community input must be approved by the Township Board
- Possible use of a social network survey to obtain public input on the Master Plan update
- Need to ascertain the extent of the update
- Some components of the Master Plan do not currently have available up-to-date information (e.g., economic analysis, demographic analysis)
- Master Plan as a document which is continually being adjusted based on newer information
- Master Plan update is not the creation of a new document
- Look at current Master Plan to see if any goals are complete



**It was the consensus of the Planning Commission to begin the Master Plan update process by holding a work session to prioritize goals and objectives and participate in a Joint Meeting with the Williamstown Township Planning Commission.**

B. Resolution of Appreciation – Carole Wilcox

**Commissioner Jackson moved [and read into the record] NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE PLANNING COMMISSION OF THE CHARTER TOWNSHIP OF MERIDIAN, INGHAM COUNTY, MICHIGAN as follows:**

**The Planning Commission of the Charter Township of Meridian, by means of resolution, extends to Carole Wilcox grateful thanks for her voluntary effort on behalf of all residents of the community during this period of dedicated service on the Planning Commission. Seconded by Commissioner Honicky.**

ROLL CALL VOTE: YEAS: Commissioners Beyea, Deits, Goldsberry, Goodale, Honicky, Jackson, Wilcox

NAYS: None

Motion carried 7-0.

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

Commissioner Wilcox thanked fellow Commissioners for their kind words expressed in the resolution of appreciation. She commended fellow Commissioners for the manner in which the exchange of ideas have been handled.

**11. New applications**

A. Rezoning #10070 (Wiggins), request to rezone 4133 Okemos Road from RA (Single Family-Residential) to PO (Professional and Office)

B. Zoning Amendment #10080 (Planning Commission), request to add Section 86-444 Commercial Planned Unit Development (C-PUD) to the Code of Ordinances

**12. Site plans received**

A. Site Plan Review #10-5 (Consumers Energy), request to upgrade the existing electric substation located at 5521 Okemos Road

**13. Site plans approved**

A. Site Plan Review #10-95-02 (Haslett Community Church), request to add a Volunteers of America drop box on the site addressed as 1427 Haslett Road

B. Site Plan Review #10-97-17 (Rhodes), request to add an enclosed outdoor seating area to Dusty's Cellar addressed as 1839 Grand River

**14. Public remarks**

Vice-Chair Deits opened and closed public remarks.

**15. Adjournment**

Vice-Chair Deits adjourned the regular meeting at 9:02 P.M.

Respectfully Submitted,

Sandra K. Otto  
Recording Secretary