

**CHARTER TOWNSHIP OF MERIDIAN
PLANNING COMMISSION
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES**

APPROVED

**March 12, 2018
5151 Marsh Road, Okemos, MI 48864-1198
517-853-4560, Town Hall Room, 7:13 P.M.**

PRESENT: Commissioners Lane, Richards, Ianni, Premoe, Scott-Craig, Stivers, Trezise, Cordill
ABSENT: None
STAFF: Director of Community Planning and Development Mark Kieselbach, Assistant Planner Justin Quagliata, Director of Economic Development Chris Buck, Principal Planner Peter Menser

1. Call meeting to order

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

2. Public Remarks – None

3. Approval of Agenda

Commissioner Lane moved to approve the agenda as written.
Seconded by Commissioner Richards.
VOICE VOTE: Motion approved unanimously.

4. Approval of Minutes

A. February 26, 2018 Regular Minutes

Commissioner Lane moved to approve the minutes as written.
Seconded by Commissioner Richards.
VOICE VOTE: Motion approved unanimously.

5. Communications

- A. Eric Benbow RE: Zoning Amendment #18020
- B. Petition RE: Zoning Amendment #18020
- C. Leslie Kuhn RE: Zoning Amendment #18020
- D. Julie Larson RE: Zoning Amendment #18020
- E. Kathryn Buysee RE: Zoning Amendment #18020

Principal Planner Menser remarked there was a letter that came in after the meeting packet was sent from Dennis and Karen Rich. A copy will be in the next meeting packet and copies were distributed to each commissioner.

6. Public hearings

- A. Rezoning #18030 (Haslett Holding, LLC), rezone approximately five acres from RR (Rural Residential) to RA (Single Family-Medium Density) at 580 Haslett Road.

Chair Ianni opened the Public Hearing at 7:04 p.m.

Principal Planner Menser outlined the rezoning for discussion.

Robert Schroeder, the applicant, stated this rezoning originally started prior to 2008 and was delayed due to the economic downturn but the development is ready to resume.

Dane Pasquel, from KEBS, commented he was available for questions regarding the rezoning.

Commissioner Premoe asked if the traffic study showed any concerns with the increase in trips from the potential development.

Mr. Pasquel replied no concerns were cited by the traffic engineer.

Vice-Chair Scott-Craig asked exactly what the entire project entails.

Mr. Pasquel replied the parcel is approximately 5 acres surrounded by another 50+ which is zoned RA and the goal would be to develop it into a neighborhood.

Vice-Chair Scott-Craig commented the rezoning would not be in agreement with the Master Plan's vision for future land use.

Principal Planner Menser stated the zoning currently agrees with the master plan but will not if the rezoning is approved.

A straw poll indicated the Planning Commission would like to have a resolution to approve Rezoning #18030 at its next meeting.

Chair Ianni closed the public hearing at 7:24 p.m.

7. Unfinished Business

- A. Zoning Amendment #18020 (Township Board), amend Section 86-440 to remove residential density and building height limitations in downtown Okemos and downtown Haslett.

Principal Planner Menser outlined the zoning amendment for discussion. He stated the language for the zoning amendment was revised by a Planning Commission sub-committee. Mr. Menser said the requirement for 15% renewable energy was eliminated and the language regarding building height and number of stories was clarified.

Commissioner Lane moved to approve recommending Zoning Amendment #18020 to the Township Board.

Seconded by Commissioner Stivers

Vice-Chair Scott-Craig asked for a friendly amendment to the language at the beginning of item 10, he thought it should say “considers” rather than “demonstrates.”

Commissioner Lane accepted the friendly amendment.

Commissioner Stivers seconded the friendly amendment.

Commissioner Cordill remarked for some developers a 14 foot ceiling on the ground floor would be too tall and for some it would not be tall enough. She commented perhaps the concern should be how deep the project goes rather than the height of the development.

Commissioner Lane stated the language purposely left room for developers to engineer their own project.

Commissioner Premoe stated perhaps the language could allow 4 stories and a 5th story with the proper setback, or the language could be changed to a minimum requirement instead of a maximum requirement.

Economic Development Director Chris Buck, said the language was meant to accommodate commercial projects that could vary anywhere from 14 feet to 20 feet in ceiling height on the ground floor. He stated the zoning amendment effort is being made to attract redevelopment but there are no specific projects known to the Township at this time.

Commissioner Cordill recommended looking at redevelopment projects in other communities prior to approval of the zoning amendment.

Director Buck replied he has visited several communities with active redevelopment and spoken with both architects and developers about what they are looking for in a redevelopment project. He said the proposed zoning amendment was the synthesis of his site visits and conversations.

Commissioner Lane remarked sub-section 9 would ensure the resulting developments match the surrounding buildings in size and character.

Commissioner Premoe suggested a clear statement be included to express development is not to exceed 60 feet and let the developer decide how tall each story will be.

Director Buck said 60 feet would help attract a diversity of projects for redevelopment. He said the ultimate goal is to remove barriers to redevelopment.

Commissioner Trezise commented that minimums also present limits of their own and there should be clearly stated maximums and minimums.

Commissioner Premoe moved to add language for buildings not to exceed 60 feet in height. Seconded by Commissioner Trezise.

ROLL CALL VOTE ON AMENDMENT:

YEAS: Commissioner Premoe and Trezise

NAYS: Commissioners Cordill, Scott-Craig, Richards, Stivers, Lane and Ianni

Motion failed 2-6.

ROLL CALL VOTE ON ORIGINAL MOTION:

YEAS: Commissioner Lane, Scott-Craig, Richards, Premoe, Trezise, Stivers, and Ianni

NAYS: Cordill

Motion carried 7-1.

8. Other Business

- A. Sign revision recommendations from Meridian Economic Development Corporation (EDC).

Principal Planner Menser outlined the requested sign ordinance amendments proposed by the EDC for discussion.

The Commissioners were concerned these amendments would needlessly complicate enforcement of the Township Sign Ordinance and allow a proliferation of signs to the detriment of the Township residents.

The Planning Commission declined to make a motion to amend the sign ordinance.

- B. Form-based code update.

Director Kieselbach recapped Form Based Code for the new Commissioners. He mentioned that the Shaping the Avenue consultants were able to extend their contract and may be available to orient new commissioners if needed. Director Kieselbach asked the Planning Commissioners to consolidate their questions about Form Based Code so that the Commission can be well educated prior to holding public hearings on the topic.

Commissioner Cordill suggested that each Commissioner who was present for prior discussions on Form Based Code review their notes and consolidate questions for a future work session.

Commissioner Stivers commented she would like to review Form Based Code during a work session and have input from the consultants during the session.

Chair Ianni stated he thought a work session with the consultants would be beneficial to bring all of the new Commissioners up to date with the information on Form Based Code.

**9. TOWNSHIP BOARD, PLANNING COMMISSION OFFICER, COMMITTEE CHAIR, AND STAFF
COMMENTS OR REPORTS**

Vice-Chair Scott-Craig attended the last EDC meeting and gave a brief summary of topics discussed.

Director Buck commented he thought an official from the City of Kalamazoo could help answer questions about Form Based Code and he would reach out to her to see. Director Buck also stated he may encourage the EDC to address some of the Planning Commission's objections to changing the sign ordinance and come back with refined language.

10. PROJECT UPDATES

- A. New Applications - None
- B. Site Plan Received - None
- C. Site Plans Approved
 - 1. Site Plan Review #18-01 (Meridian Township Parks Dept.), construct picnic shelter at 5191 Meridian Road (North Meridian Road Park).
 - 2. Site Plan Review #18-3 (Saroki), redevelop Haslett Marathon gas station at 1619 Haslett Road.

11. PUBLIC REMARKS

Commissioner Premoe stated some of the recent correspondence to the Planning Commission seems to imply that the Planning Commission has been trying to bypass public input and suggested there may be a need to do a better job of making the public aware of the processes that go on behind the scenes and of all of the opportunities for public input. He commented it was very concerning.

Director Buck commented part of his objective is to make the public more aware of opportunities to make their opinions known. He is currently working on public outreach strategies.

Commissioner Premoe said the Planning Commission is here to act as ambassadors and advocates for the public interest.

Commissioner Stivers said the current use of social media allows bad news and misinformation to travel very quickly and is glad the Township is trying to address these issues.

12. ADJOURNMENT

Commissioner Premoe moved to adjourn the meeting.

Seconded by Vice-Chair Scott-Craig.

VOICE VOTE: Motion carried unanimously.

Chair Ianni adjourned the regular meeting at 8:50 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Angela M. Ryan
Recording Secretary