

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

APPROVED

February 11, 2019

5151 Marsh Road, Okemos, MI 48864-1198

517-853-4560, Town Hall Room, 7:00 P.M.

PRESENT: Commissioners Premoe, Trezise, Cordill, Lane, Scott-Craig, Shrewsbury, Hendrickson and Richards.

ABSENT: None

STAFF: Director of Community Planning & Development Mark Kieselbach, Principal Planner Peter Menser, Economic Development Director Chris Buck and Park Naturalist Kelsey Dillion.

1. Call meeting to order

Chair Scott-Craig called the regular meeting to order at 7:00 P.M. and welcomed the new Planning Commissioner, Scott Hendrickson, to the group.

2. Public Remarks

- A. Ron Calhoun, 2875 Northwind Drive, applicant with Meridian Investment Group, LLC introduced himself and said he would be available for questions regarding Mixed Use Planned Unit Development #18034 and Special Use Permit # 18031.
- B. Lynne Page, 3912 Raleigh Drive, spoke in opposition to Zoning Amendment #19030.

3. Approval of Agenda

Chair Scott-Craig moved to approve the agenda as written.

Seconded by Commissioner Premoe.

VOICE VOTE: Motion approved unanimously.

4. Approval of Minutes

- A. December 17, 2018 Regular Meeting
- B. January 14, 2019 Regular Meeting

Commissioner Cordill moved to approve the minutes as written.

Seconded by Commissioner Premoe.

VOICE VOTE: Motion approved unanimously.

5. Communications

Principal Planner Menser noted additional communications were received after the Planning Commission meeting packets were assembled. He further noted that hard copies of communications were distributed to the Planning Commission at their places on the dais prior to tonight's meeting and would be included in the packet for the February 25, 2019 Planning Commission meeting.

6. Public Hearings

- A. Zoning Amendment #19030 (Meridian Township), amend Section 86-2 of the Code of Ordinances and add Section 86-445 to establish the Commercial Medical Marihuana Facilities Overlay District.

Chair Scott-Craig opened the public hearing at 7:08 P.M.

Principal Planner Menser provided a brief summary of the staff report. The Township Board initiated the zoning amendment and referred it to the Planning Commission to hold a public hearing and make recommendations.

Public Comments: None

Planning Commission Discussion:

Chair Scott-Craig noted this is a complicated issue and the topics of discussion will include the overlay district area, reviewing the process and permitted locations.

Commissioner Trezise mentioned the overlay map is in conflict with the proposed ordinance as about half of Section 1 is zoned RR, but nothing is permitted in RR. He further noted that portions of sections 3 and 4 are zoned RC and no medical marihuana facilities would be allowed unless the area was rezoned. Commissioner Trezise asked why they were included in the district if they are not properly zoned.

Chair Scott-Craig noted the overlay map is in conflict also in section 5 as it is listed as a potential location for a grow facility and is zoned Research Park, not Industrial. Chair Scott-Craig further noted the Township Board is still considering changes and he suggested accepting the current boundaries at this time.

Commissioner Premoe expressed concerns with having six overlay districts as this seems excessive. He shared his concern that the Planning Commission will spend too much time dealing with complaints from residents.

Commissioner Cordill expressed concern that some overlay districts included or were adjacent to residential districts.

Commissioner Richards suggested the Commission wait to make final comments until the Township Board makes final decisions on the locations of overlay districts.

Vice-Chair Lane suggested focusing on Commercial and Industrial Districts (4 and 5) and avoiding anything close to residential areas.

Commissioner Hendrickson expressed concerns with overlay district 4.

Chair Scott-Craig stated the overall number of permits for some facilities exceed the number of permitted locations.

Chair Scott-Craig closed the public hearing at 8:02 P.M.

- B. Zoning Amendment #19040 (Meridian Township), amend Section 86-2 and Section 86-654 of the Code of Ordinances to add continuing care communities to the list of uses permitted as non-residential uses in residential zoning districts.

Chair Scott-Craig opened the public hearing at 8:03 P.M.

Principal Planner Menser provided a summary of the request. In December 2018 a concept plan was presented to the Township Board for a mix of senior independent living and skilled nursing care housing. The developer requested the Board amend the zoning ordinance to accommodate the proposed development and the Township Board voted to initiate a zoning amendment allowing senior living communities.

Senior living communities with cooking facilities (stove and oven) are considered under the multi-family residential zoning and if there are no cooking facilities the senior living communities are considered as a single-family non-residential use in a residential district.

Public Comments:

- A. Lynne Page, 3912 Raleigh Drive, spoke in opposition to Zoning Amendment #19040.
- B. David Pierson, 1305 South Washington Avenue, attorney representing The Eyde Company spoke in support of Zoning Amendment #19040.
- C. Shawn O'Brien, 16948 Pine Hollow Drive, spoke in support of Zoning Amendment #19040.

Planning Commission Discussion:

Commissioner Richards stated the concept makes sense but he has concerns with the impact to the single family residents to the east of the above mentioned site on Hannah Boulevard. Commissioner Richards also suggested imposing greater setbacks and restricting balconies on three and four story buildings, if the buildings are located adjacent to single family zoning. He also noted the minimum age of 55 seems too young for the senior living communities and should be perhaps more in the range of 70-80 years old.

Commissioner Cordill expressed concern with the proposed building height and stated a sixty foot/four story building should be located more than fifty feet from a neighboring single family home. Commissioner Cordill also commented on the proposed minimum lot size (10 acres) and wanted to know how many people might live in the proposed senior living community of this size. Principal Planner Menser replied there could be 25 units per acre based on the draft ordinance.

Commissioner Hendrickson asked if a comparison of the three independent senior living communities (Marsh Pointe, The Marquette and Meridian Stratford Place) listed in the staff report has been done regarding parcel size and standards. Principal Planner Menser replied that a comparison has not been done.

Chair Scott-Craig reminded everyone the ordinance is what is being considered and not the project in the concept plan seen by the Township Board. Additional projects will be limited if the proposed ten acre minimum lot size is kept in the ordinance.

Commissioner Premoe shared an experience with a family member who was in Independence Village in East Lansing. When a senior moved into the complex they stayed in the same living quarters even as the skilled care levels changed from independent living thru hospice care. He also noted if the density is 25 units per acre with a ratio of 2:1 (independent living units versus assisted and skilled care units typically being one room) one has to wonder what the area would look like.

Chair Scott-Craig mentioned some independent living does require moving into different size living accommodations based on the level of care needed. He also talked about a senior living community in New Hampshire that has buildings which are connected with walkways so residents do not have to walk outside. This is an example of why provisions of minimum space between buildings could impact future building plans.

Commissioner Trezise suggested taking each proposal on a case by case basis because the details may vary and this would allow more flexibility.

Commissioner Richards suggested a minimum setback from other residential zones should be more than fifty feet and the higher the building, the greater the setbacks should be. He also suggested putting smaller buildings closer to the neighboring residential area.

Commissioner Premoe agreed there is a need in our community for independent senior living and we don't want to make restrictions so difficult that we discourage future development.

Chair Scott-Craig closed the public hearing at 8:48P.M.

The Planning Commission took a five minute recess.

7. Unfinished Business

- A. Rezoning #19010 (Woda Cooper Companies, Inc.), rezone approximately 4.6 acres of a 5.9 acre parcel identified by Parcel I.D. #17-377-031 located north of Grand River Avenue, east of Sirhal Drive, and west of Wardcliff Drive from RX (One and Two Family Residential) to RC (Multiple Family-14 dwelling units per acre).

Principal Planner Menser explained the revised concept plan and reviewed the four conditions of the rezoning.

Frank Fugate, 5000 South Front Street, Columbus, Ohio, applicant for the project re-introduced himself and said he was available for questions.

Commissioner Premoe expressed appreciation to Mr. Fugate for listening to the Planning Commission concerns and also the concerns of local residents. Commissioner Premoe is very comfortable with the updated proposal.

Commissioner Richards asked if the property would pay taxes and he was told by Mr. Fugate yes. The applicant will also request payment in lieu of taxes (P.I.L.O.T.).

Commissioner Cordill asked about the building height and was told by Mr. Fugate this would be a two story building with a pitched roof with a final height of twenty-five feet.

A straw poll indicated the Planning Commission would be in favor of recommending approval of Rezoning #19010 to the Township Board and staff was asked to prepare a resolution recommending approval for the next meeting.

- B. Special Use Permit #19011 (Potterpin Investments LLC), grading and fill in floodplain for drain crossing at 4977 Cornell Road.

Principal Planner Menser provided a brief re-cap of the Special Use Permit.

Motion by Commissioner Premoe to approve Special Use Permit #19011.
Supported by Commissioner Richards.

ROLL CALL VOTE:

YEAS: Commissioners Premoe, Richards, Hendrickson, Shrewsbury, Lane, Cordill, Trezise and Scott-Craig.

NAYS: None

MOTION CARRIED: 8-0

- C. Mixed Use Planned Unit Development #18034 (Meridian Investment Group, LLC), construct 70,213 square foot mixed use building at 2875 Northwind Drive.
- D. Special Use Permit #18031 (Meridian Investment Group, LLC), construct group of buildings greater than 25,000 square feet in size at 2875 Northwind Drive.

Principal Planner Menser provided an update on both agenda items since the last meeting. The Planning Commission was preparing to recommend denial of Mixed Use Planned Unit Development #18034 and Special Use Permit #18031 but the applicant asked to come back with additional information to present to the Commission. They had a flood plain zone study done by HRC Consultants and wanted to share the results. In addition, the Meridian Township Engineering Department reviewed the study and agreed with the study results. In conclusion, there is a one percent chance of future flooding every year based on FEMA and information gathered.

Principal Planner Menser noted the Engineering Department report was not included in the packet but a copy of the letter was provided to each Commissioner.

Ron Calhoun representing Meridian Investment Group, LLC, 2875 Northwind Drive, reviewed the proposed project for redevelopment including 88 units, 107 beds, on 5 acres and discussed the challenges regarding the parking lot flooding. Mr. Calhoun indicated the HRC study showed there have been 81 flood events over the past 115 years. He further commented signs could be installed in the parking area noting the area is a "flood prone area" and the owner of the property is responsible to provide "habitable housing".

Mr. Calhoun also mentioned the building code required they build one foot above the flood zone and they actually plan to increase that number fifteen inches. There was also another concern with the Southwest entrance of the building and Mr. Calhoun noted it is the lowest level of the building and there is no interior space at that level as previously thought.

Planning Commission Discussion:

Commissioner Richards expressed concerns at the previous meeting and since he has reviewed the report provided he is now in support of the project.

Commissioner Cordill noted her concern in the third paragraph of the report where it was noted during the past 115 year period there were 14 events with water levels 3 feet high. Commissioner Cordill stated water levels this high would ruin vehicles and may even cause them to float away.

Chair Scott-Craig mentioned several reasons he is opposed this project. The scale of the project is too large for the site. The current building is a 40,000 foot two-story building and the proposed redevelopment is a 75,000 foot four-story building. At least 70 percent of the proposed parking would be in the flood plain area. In the past most parking was for office use during the day and the area would be transitioning to primarily student resident parking with both day and night use on a regular basis. This is an unacceptable risk. Traffic issues were also discussed during the July 2018 meeting and problems noted at that time have not been addressed.

Commissioner Hendrickson shared his concerns relating to the parking area and noting 51 of 81 occurrences relating to past flooding had levels of 12 inches of water or more during the past 115 years and it is not acceptable to take future risks. He further noted if a change were to be made by raising the parking structure above the flood plain then he would reconsider his decision.

Commissioner Richards noted the proposed redevelopment is a walkable, bike-able site for students at Michigan State University and this should be considered when discussing the traffic issues in the area. He suggested that the traffic light could also be adjusted at the intersection near Whole Foods to help with traffic flow at Northwind Drive.

Commissioner Cordill reviewed the January 14, 2019 staff packet and suggested reducing the density of the project in order to scale down the waiver requests so they don't seem as significant.

A straw poll indicated the Planning Commission would not be in favor of recommending approval for Mixed Use Planned Unit Development #18034 and Special Use Permit #18031 to the Township Board and staff was asked to prepare a resolution to recommend denial for the next meeting.

E. Mixed Use Planned Unit Development (MUPUD) concept plan – Village of Okemos.

This item was removed from the meeting agenda by the developer prior to the meeting. It was instead scheduled for the Planning Commission's next meeting on February 25, 2019.

8. Other Business

A. Commission Review #19013 (Parks Commission), review of location, character, and extent for potential land donation at W. Sleepy Hollow Lane.

Principal Planner Menser provided an overview of the potential land donation. The property is undeveloped land being offered to the Meridian Township Parks Department and is located adjacent to Brattin Woods Park. Principal Planner Menser introduced Kelsey Dillon and expressed appreciation to her for waiting so patiently to speak with the Planning Commission.

Park Naturalist Kelsey Dillon provided an overview of the proposed land donation. The one acre piece of property includes many mature trees, harbors wildlife and borders the Brattin Woods Park. The property is being considered by the Park Commission because of the connection to the current park and a possible future pedestrian pathway that may be constructed. If the property were to be considered for Land Preservation the pathway would not be a consideration.

Motion by Commissioner Premoe to approve Commission Review #19013.
Supported by Commissioner Hendrickson.

ROLL CALL VOTE:

YEAS: Commissioners Premoe, Hendrickson, Trezise, Cordill, Lane, Shrewsbury, Richards and Scott-Craig.

NAYS: None

MOTION CARRIED: 8-0

B. 2019 PC Goals.

Chair Scott-Craig moved this item to a future meeting.

C. Subcommittee meetings.

Chair Scott-Craig moved this item to a future meeting.

9. Township Board, Planning Commission Officer, Committee Chair, and staff comments or reports

Commissioner Premoe provided an update from attending the Environmental Commission meeting last week. He also wanted to note a member of the public attended their meeting and they expressed an interest in expanding the chicken and rabbit ordinance so the Planning Commission may see this come to a meeting in the near future.

Commissioner Trezise provided an update from attending the Downtown Development Authority meeting last week.

Commissioner Richards provided an update from attending the Transportation Committee meeting last week.

10. Project Updates

A. New Applications

1. Wetland Use Permit #19-01 (LaFontaine Automotive Group), fill regulated wetland for development of new car dealership at 1448 Grand River Avenue.
2. Special Use Permit #19031 (Okemos Retail Mgmt., LLC), construct shopping center with five tenants and drive-through window at 2085 Grand River Avenue.

B. Site Plans Received – None

C. Site Plans Approved – None

11. Public Remarks

A. Lynne Page, 3912 Raleigh Drive, spoke in opposition to Zoning Amendment #19030.

12. Adjournment

All Commissioners moved to adjourn the meeting.

Supported by All Commissioners.

VOICE VOTE: Motion carried unanimously.

Chair Scott-Craig adjourned the regular meeting at 9:50 P.M.

Respectfully Submitted,

Debbie Budzynski
Recording Secretary