

**CHARTER TOWNSHIP OF MERIDIAN  
DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNITY PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT  
PUBLIC HEARING FOR MIXED USE PLANNED UNIT DEVELOPMENT #21-19024 (VILLAGE OF OKEMOS, LLC) AND SPECIAL USE PERMIT #21-19051 (VILLAGE OF OKEMOS, LLC) MINUTES**

**January 7, 2021**

**Meeting held virtually using the Zoom web conferencing application  
6:00 P.M.**

**STAFF: Director of Community Planning & Development Mark Kieselbach, Principal Planner Peter Menser, Neighborhoods & Economic Development Director Amber Clark, and Director of Information Technology Stephen Gebes.**

**APPLICANT AND TEAM:**

**Village of Okemos, LLC Authorized Agent Will Randle, Lead Architect Greg Presley, KEBS, Inc Project Engineer AJ Patrick, Advanced Redevelopment Solutions Eric Helzer, and Land Owner Scott Weaver.**

**1. CALL MEETING TO ORDER**

Director Kieselbach called the public hearing to order at 6:01 P.M.

**2. PUBLIC HEARINGS**

- A. **Mixed Use Planned Unit Development #21-19024 (Village of Okemos, LLC)** – minor amendment to the approved Village of Okemos project on the west side of Okemos Road and north and south sides of Hamilton Road.
- B. **Special Use Permit #21-19051 (Village of Okemos, LLC)** – minor amendment to the overall size of the Village of Okemos project on the west side of Okemos Road and north and south sides of Hamilton Road.

Director Kieselbach explained the process of the public hearing and noted 21 communications were received as of January 7, 2021 and are part of the public record. The Director is required to make a decision on the proposed amendment within 60 days of the date of the public hearing.

Principal Planner Menser provided an overview of the changes to the project and explained if approved the applicant will proceed with Site Plan Review, followed by the submission of building permits and then building construction will commence.

Principal Planner Menser introduced the applicant, Will Randle and Will Randle introduced his team in attendance and noted they would be available to answer questions.

Will Randle stated the demolition process is anticipated to be completed by the end of January. He further noted their goal is to preserve the north and south Hamilton Road corridor for shops and restaurants. The future Douglas Salon and Barber Shop would reside on the South side of Hamilton Road. The office space along Okemos Road would be converted to residential use.

### 3. PUBLIC COMMENT

- A. Neil Bowlby, 6020 Beechwood Drive, spoke in opposition of the revised changes. Question: What criteria will be used by the Director of Community Planning & Development to approve or deny the application and will the Planning Commission and Township Board consulted. Question: Will the utilities be buried as the plans he reviewed showed utility poles on Okemos Road. Question: Asked about TIF Funds and the effects with less commercial space.
- B. Jade Sims, Chair of Economic Development Corporation (EDC), spoke in support of the revised changes and noted the Economic Development Corporation had submitted a letter of support for the revised changes.
- C. Vance Poquette, 2226 Kent Street, spoke in concern of the revised changes. Mr. Poquette stated the Planning Commission should review the request because of the decreased commercial use being proposed and noted the community should have more discussion.
- D. Renee Korrey, Chair of Downtown Development Authority (DDA), spoke in support of the revised changes. Ms. Korrey stated she had been a Township resident for 60 years and lives very close to the proposed project.
- E. Amber Clark, Neighborhoods & Economic Development Director and Township resident since 2015, spoke in support of the revised changes. Director Clark noted this was a \$5 million investment including public road work and noted that although the commercial office space would be decreased there still would be availability for 8-10 small businesses/boutiques.
- F. LG (unable to understand name), spoke in support of the revised change. Question: Was there an updated traffic analysis and if ownership would be an option versus rental dwelling units for this project.
- G. Bill McConnell, 4376 Manitou Drive, spoke in support of the revised changes. Question: Regarding the aspects of reconfiguration to adapt with the times regarding retaining 20 foot ceiling height on the main floor and the design front entrances for residential on Okemos Road.
- H. Cindee Picklo, 1940 Pawnee Trail, Township resident for 34 years, spoke in support of the revised changes.
- I. Don Romain, 5420 Jo Pass, spoke in support of the revised changes. He appreciated Director Clark's comments regarding the clarification of the reduction in office space and not retail space. Mr. Romain expressed support for the developers who have demonstrated great integrity through the process and the pandemic.
- J. Elaine Putvin, 2003 Pawnee Trail, has been a Township resident since the 1950's, spoke in support of the revised changes. Question: Regarding the soil residue in the space where the underground parking was to be built. Ms. Putvin mentioned she was a member of the Okemos Community Church and they are excited for the new walkable community.

- K. Vincent Zea owner of the Okemos Barber Shop, spoke in support of the revised changes. Question: Would like to know what will be built across the street from his business. He would like to see more commercial businesses in the area.
- L. Phil Deschaine, 1383 Silverwood Drive, Meridian Township Treasurer, spoke in support of the revised changes. Treasurer Deschaine noted the Township Board is aware of the proposed changes and they understand this is a necessary and reasonable request.
- M. Jessica Lawson, 1452 Forest Hills, spoke in support of the revised changes. Ms. Lawson stated because of social media she felt it was a “bait and switch” tactic at first but because of the public hearing she has learned the facts and understands the necessary changes for the project.
- N. Michael Nevells, 4310 Kenosha Trail and member of Okemos Masonic Lodge, had concern regarding the changes in parking for the project.

#### STAFF AND APPLICANT TEAM DISCUSSION:

- Director Kieselbach will use the criteria and standards in the Zoning Ordinance to review the minor amendment to the MUPUD and SUP. The Planning Commission and Township Board had not been asked to be involved with the review of the minor amendment.
- The power lines will potentially be buried during the Okemos Road construction work and Okemos Road bridge construction in 2022. The applicant is working with Consumers Energy on the burial of the power lines.
- Additional Tax Increment Financing (TIF) will be requested through the Downtown Development Authority (DDA) and the Brownfield Redevelopment Authority (BRA). The request is critical to the developer to recover costs related to the infrastructure and environmental cleanup.
- There was an updated traffic study provided with the revised plans. The total daily vehicle trips will go down by 1,054 trips. The p.m. peak hour trips will decrease by 107 vehicle trips.
- The paving of Okemos Road north and south of the project will be a Federal Road Project.
- New directional turning lights will be added on Clinton Street, Hamilton Road, and Methodist Street. The Okemos Road and Hamilton Road intersection light will be updated.
- During the initial phase of the project ownership of dwellings will not be available due to the financing restrictions for the project but that may change with in the future.
- Will Randle to discuss with Bill McConnell the reconfigurations of adaptable spaces at a separate meeting.
- Even though there will not be an underground parking structure built the approach is the same to deal with the volume of contaminated soil, including the vaper barriers. The Michigan Department of Environment, Great Lakes, and Energy (EGLE) completed \$1 million project with the dry cleaner location cleanup in 2020.
- The elimination of the underground parking structure was an economic decision and replaced with the elevated parking decks. Additional overflow parking of 119 spaces will be located on the block to the west, identified as Block 3 on the submitted site plans (where Douglas J currently is located).
- Vincent Zea from the Okemos Barber Shop can reach out to Will Randle to discuss the future plans across from his business for commercial uses on Okemos Road.

- Detailed drawings of the project, including updated building facades and utilities, will be available during the Site Plan Review process.
- Director Kieselbach reiterated the amount of commercial space available to use after taking out the Douglas J tenant space was approximately 24,400 square feet. He wanted to share a visual perspective and relate the size to recent developments in Meridian Township. Chick-fil-A and Panera's new building are approximately 4,500 square feet in size each and the new retail center at the corner of Okemos Road and Grand River Avenue with 5 tenants is approximately 11,000 square feet and there would still be an additional 4,000 square feet of space available.

An additional opportunity was given to the attendees to comment on the minor amendment. The Public Hearing was closed at 7:30 p.m.

#### **ADDITIONAL PUBLIC COMMENT**

- O. Pat Jackson, Township Board Trustee, spoke in support of the revised changes and expressed her appreciation for the comprehensive review of the project.
- P. Ron Styka, Township Supervisor, thanked everyone for their participation in the meeting. He noted the changes are considered a minor amendment and will be addressed by staff. Supervisor Styka stated he was looking forward to something great happening in the Village of Okemos project.
- Q. Vance Poquette, 2226 Kent Street, questioned the approval of Ingham County Road Department relating to adding the left turn lanes in the area.
- Will Randle stated ongoing conversations are happening with all parties including Deputy Township Manager Derek Perry regarding the plans for the turn lanes on Okemos Road and the other construction work planned for 2022 on Okemos Road from Grand River Avenue to Mt. Hope Road.
- R. Joyce VanCoevering, thanked everyone for the transparency and asked about the funding for road improvements.
- Deputy Township Manager Derek Perry stated the Ingham County Road Department was aware of the improvements for the proposed project and conversations are continuing in order to leverage local dollars with state and federal dollars to maximize results throughout the Okemos Road corridor.

#### **4. ADJOURNMENT**

Director Kieselbach and Principal Planner Menser thanked everyone for taking the time to attend the meeting and share their thoughts. Director Kieselbach said that if anyone has questions please contact Mr. Randle, Principal Planner Menser, or himself. There were 68 attendees on the Zoom meeting. When the decision on the request is made it will be posted on the Meridian Township Website.

Director Kieselbach adjourned the meeting at 7:35 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,  
Debbie Budzynski, Recording Secretary