

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

April 10, 2023

5151 Marsh Road, Okemos, MI 48864-1198

517.853.4000, Town Hall Room, 6:30 P.M.

PRESENT: Chair Blumer, Vice-Chair Trezise, Commissioners Brooks, McConnell, McCurtis, Scales, Shrewsbury, Snyder

ABSENT: Commissioner Richards

STAFF: Director of Community Planning and Development Tim Schmitt, Senior Planner Shorkey, Community Planning and Development Intern Joey Emery

1. CALL MEETING TO ORDER

Chair Blumer called the regular meeting to order at 6:29 pm.

2. ROLL CALL

Chair Blumer called the roll of the Planning Commission. Commissioner Richards is absent, all others present.

3. PUBLIC REMARKS

Chair Blumer opened public remarks at 6:30 pm.

NONE

Chair Blumer closed public remarks at 6:30 pm.

4. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Vice-Chair Trezise moved to approve the agenda. Seconded by Commissioner Shrewsbury.

VOICE VOTE: Motion approved unanimously.

5. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

A. March 27, 2023 Regular Meeting

Commissioner Scales moved to approve the minutes of March 27, 2023 as amended. Seconded by Commissioner Shrewsbury.

Commissioner McConnell noted a correction on page 4 sentence 7, "Commissioner McConnell noted the multi-residential status of the building compared to the single-residence housing in the neighborhood." Should Read "Commissioner McConnell noted the multi-residential nature

of the envisioned development compared to the single residence zoning in the surrounding neighborhood.”

Commissioner Shrewsbury noted that Section 10, Subsection H would have been better suited under project updates.

Director Schmitt noted that Section 7, Subsection A should be changed to SUP #23007.

Commissioner Shrewsbury noted that Section 8, Subsection A should be changed to REZ #23006.

Commissioner Scales Accepted the friendly amendments.

VOICE VOTE: Motion approved unanimously

6. COMMUNICATIONS

A. NONE

7. PUBLIC HEARINGS

A. SUP #23004

Senior Planner Shorkey outlined SUP#23004 – Schultz Veterinary Clinic Expansion for public hearing.

Senior Planner Shorkey noted that staff had two concerns. One being the wetland on the property, which will not be disturbed by the expansion. The other pertaining to the 2006 SUP Approval for the previous expansion of the building. This approval had a condition that the property owner would expand the township pathway across the property, but this condition was never met. The applicant has worked with township DPW to meet this condition, and planning division staff are satisfied that this condition has now been met.

Commissioner Scales asked if this was a state or a township regulated wetland.

Senior Planner Shorkey replied that this was a state regulated wetland, however, there would need to be wetland permits from both the state and township levels as the township regulations are more stringent than the state’s regulations.

Director Schmitt noted that this does meet the definition of a wetland, and that they would follow up next meeting with the size of the wetland in question.

Commissioner Scales asked why this hadn’t been done previously.

Director Schmitt responded this was an item that hadn’t been followed up on by the previous director, and his team has taken the steps to follow up on it now.

Commissioner Scales asked if there had ever been a previous state permit that had been denied.

Senior Planner Shorkey replied there is no evidence that the permit had ever been applied for. He also noted that this wetland is showing under 3 acres, so it is township regulated.

Chair Blumer asked why this wasn't charged as a code violation years ago, as the previous building conditions had not been met.

Director Schmitt stated that there was no record in the files why there was no follow up, but they are in a position now to address it.

Chair Blumer asked if this had been in violation for more than 10 years.

Director Schmitt replied it has.

Commissioner McCurtis asked when construction on the trail would begin.

Senior Planner Shorkey stated that he doesn't have a date at this time.

Commissioner McCurtis asked about the potential of negative disturbances to the wetlands on this property.

Senior Planner Shorkey stated, according to the Township's Wetland Ordinance, if there is disturbance to the wetlands during construction, the township will mitigate that disturbance to a 1.5 time factor.

Commissioner McCurtis asked about the safety and access of the walkway due to the wetlands.

Senior Planner Shorkey noted that this has been discussed with the applicant, and they are aware of the requirements and challenges associated with this project.

Commissioner Scales summarized the topic in total, and questioned if we are fixing the original noncompliance for the applicant in this new SUP.

Senior Planner Shorkey noted the township is not fixing the original noncompliance. The applicant has worked with township engineering and DPW to get a cost. While the township will be constructing the trail, the applicant has paid over \$67k to the township for this construction and to become compliant. Senior Planner Shorkey gave the floor to the applicant for public comment.

Applicant Ingrid Schultz of 1280 Sebewaing Rd, Okemos, stated that she has spoken to the township engineers and had raised concerns about proper railings and walkways, but she directed all concerns relating to that matter back to the engineers, as she wasn't aware of how they'd proceed with construction.

Commissioner McConnell commented on the other successful wetland construction projects the township has undertaken.

Chair Blumer called for a straw vote on the approval of this special use permit #23004. By unanimous consent, the Planning Commission indicated support for SUP #23004.

8. UNFINISHED BUSINESS

A. SUP #23007 – 1502 River Terrace Drive

Senior Planner Shorkey summarized the public hearing for this Special Use Permit. He noted that there were no further board nor public comment.

Commissioner Shrewsbury noted that the word “construct” was missing in the resolution.

Chair Blumer suggested using different terminology, such as “establish” or “operate”.

Senior Planner Shorkey agreed.

Commissioner Shrewsbury moved to adopt Special Use Permit #23007 with the amendments to the resolution as noted. Vice-Chair Trezise seconded.

ROLE CALL VOTE: YEAS: Commissioners Shrewsbury, McCurtis, Brooks, Scales, McConnell, Snyder; Vice-Chair Trezise; Chair Blumer

NAYS: None

Results: 8-0

9. OTHER BUSINESS

A. Lighting Ordinance – Presentation

Director Schmitt introduced the Community Planning and Development’s intern, Joey Emery for this presentation. Director Schmitt spoke on the outdated ordinances in the township, many of them being written in 1974. The lightning ordinance was written in 2007, but at the time it was drafted, it was already close to functionally obsolete.

Intern Emery spoke on the current ordinance and its outdated components. He stated that the proposed ordinance would update those old features and bring it to a modern standard.

Commissioner McCurtis asked if using LED lighting would be the updated standard going forward.

Director Schmitt confirmed that for the most part, any future lighting ordinances would involve replacing existing lights with LEDs lighting. Director Schmitt also mentioned that any feedback should go to him as this project goes forward.

Commissioner McCurtis raised concern over the time restraints of the lights, specifically concerned about the safety of those who are walking late at night.

Vice-Chair Trezise questioned if this ordinance should be in another ordinance or in front of another committee, or if it should stay where it’s at currently.

Director Schmitt stated that he suspects that this is not in another ordinance due to the technical nature of the regulations.

Commissioner Brooks mentioned low-income neighborhoods being targeted for higher amounts of lighting, which he noted wasn't always a just method of deploying lighting. He also mentioned concern over Home Owners Associations and their curfew on lighting, including holiday ("Christmas") lights. He also questioned if there would be different applications for this ordinance along the rural-urban boundary.

Commissioner Snyder asked if this would connect with the sign ordinance.

Director Schmitt stated that the sign ordinance has a provision that all sign illumination is approved solely by the Director of Community Planning and Development.

Commissioner Shrewsbury asked if there were any other townships or cities in Michigan that have adopted this, or similar, ordinances.

Intern Emery stated that the city of Ann Arbor has a similar ordinance, as well as Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. He also noted that this is an upward trending topic for lighting ordinance reform.

Chair Blumer asked if Michigan State University is currently following similar ordinances, or plan on implementing any.

Intern Emery stated that he doesn't believe they have any regulations, but he wasn't sure.

Commissioner Scales asked if the ordinance would apply to holiday ("Christmas") lights.

Intern Emery stated that temporary lighting would be allowed in noncommercial areas for 90 consecutive days during the year, but the lighting curfew would still be implemented for these temporary lights.

Chair Blumer stated that he believes that this ordinance should remain in the miscellaneous ordinances section, as it would exist in its own terms and be more enforceable.

10. MASTER PLAN UPDATE

Director Schmitt outlined the Master Plan updates.

A. Goals and Objectives – Handout

Director Schmitt stated that they have 5 overarching goals that his team will be discussing at the next meeting, but wanted to present them to the Planning Commission via handout to review prior.

B. Urban Service Boundary – Discussion

Director Schmitt noted the three sections of the Urban Service Boundary: North, Central & Southern. He stated that there were no recommendations for the southern third. In the northern third, he had a minor recommendation to fix a split on Green Road, which separated 6121 & 6117 Green Road.

Commissioner Scales asked if these properties would be required to pay for sewer hookups. Commissioner McConnell asked if the properties are already served with the utilities that the urban service boundary is meant to limit.

Director Schmitt stated that they would not be required to pay for sewer hookup, and that these properties are not served.

Commissioners Scales and Shrewsbury raised questions about informing the residents affected by this change.

Director Schmitt stated that he will reach out to the two properties affected. He continued to speak on the central third of the Urban Service Boundary. His staff would recommend taking the line from Georgetown down to Grand River Avenue, including multiple vacant properties & the MAC Legends Golf Center.

Commissioner Brooks asked if this change was made, would it continue the belief that the Urban Service Boundary is just expanding eastward.

Director Schmitt stated that he doesn't subscribe to that belief, and this is functionally the only change that would be made to the boundary.

Commissioner Scales stated that residents have raised concerns about moving the boundary eastward, as well as concerns over future development in that area.

Commissioner McConnell questioned if this would always be a hard boundary or under what conditions it might be moved.

Director Schmitt replied this conversation is to make the line more defensible. This is a conversation that will come up every time the Master Plan is discussed as long as he was the Director.

Commissioner Snyder questioned why the central portion of the Urban Service Boundary was being looked at as a potential area of change.

Director Schmitt stated that the area in question was the only section with a questionable boundary from Staff's perspective, but discussion can occur on any portion.

Vice Chair Trezise was generally supportive of moving the line to the rear of the properties fronting on Powell Road.

11. REPORTS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

A. Township Board Update

Director Schmitt reported that the Township Board has taken up the Cade Street rezoning project. The Township Board will also be voting to adopt the sign ordinance at their next meeting.

A. Liaison Reports

Chair Blumer

- Attended the April 3rd meeting of the Downtown Development Authority where new officers were elected.

Commissioner Scales

- Attended Economic Development Corporation meeting, where they announced the Juneteenth event will take place from June 17th to the 19th.

12. PROJECT UPDATES

A. NONE

13. PUBLIC REMARKS

Chair Blumer opened public remarks at 7:50 pm.

NONE

Chair Blumer closed public remarks at 7:50 pm.

14. ADJOURNMENT

Chair Blumer moved to adjourn.

VOICE VOTE: Motion approved unanimously.

Chair Blumer adjourned the regular meeting at 7:51 pm.