

CHARTER TOWNSHIP OF MERIDIAN  
REGULAR MEETING PLANNING COMMISSION 2023  
5151 Marsh Road, Okemos MI 48864-1198  
517.853.4000, Township Hall Room  
MONDAY, September 25th, 2023, 6:30 pm

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

ABSENT: Commissioner McCurtis

STAFF: Community Development Director Schmitt, Senior Planner Brian Shorkey

1. CALL MEETING TO ORDER  
Chair Blumer called the September 25<sup>th</sup>, 2023 regular meeting for the Meridian Township Planning Commission to order at 6:30pm.
2. ROLL CALL  
Chair Blumer called the roll of the Board. All board members present except for Commissioner McCurtis.
3. PUBLIC REMARKS  
Steve Day spoke in opposition to REZ #23030.  
Eric Furseth spoke in opposition to REZ #23030.  
Barbara Light spoke in opposition to REZ #23030.  
Josh Neal spoke in support of ADUs and higher density in the Township.  
Kelly Dean spoke in opposition to REZ #23030.
4. APPROVAL OF AGENDA  
**Vice-Chair Trezise moved to approve the September 25th, 2023 regular Planning Commission meeting agenda. Seconded by Commissioner Scales.**

**VOICE VOTE YEAS: Chair Blumer, Vice-Chair Trezise, Commissioners McConnell, Richards, Scales, Snyder, Brooks, Shrewsbury**

**NAYS: None**

**Motion carried: 8-0**

5. APPROVAL OF MINUTES  
NONE. Commissioner Scales brought up the concern of a lack of minutes in recent meetings and asked Chair Blumer to look into the issue. Director Schmitt said that the Clerk’s office had some staffing issues and the Community Development Department would be taking over the minutes as a short term measure.
6. COMMUNICATIONS
  - A. Kathy Selden Re: REZ #23030
  - B. Larry Taillefer Re: REZ #23030
  - C. Kathryn Sharp-Simmers Re: REZ #23030
  - D. Josephine Wolk Re: REZ #23030

## 7. PUBLIC HEARINGS

### A. REZ #23030 – Park Lake Road

Director Schmitt introduced and described the application. Commissioner Shrewsbury said that she had received a message and that the Township audio feed had no sound. Director Schmitt directed residents to the HOM TV online feed, which has audio.

Commissioner Richards described the state's notice requirements and said that the Township had followed the state's requirements. Chair Blumer said that the application seemed contrary to the Master Plan and said that the Park Lake Road corridor was single-family residential in nature.

Commissioner Brooks asked if the rezoning would require a change to the Master Plan. Director Schmitt said that it could go either way and said that the proposed conditions from the applicant are trying to meet the Master Plan's intent. Commissioner Brooks asked if there was a history of Special Use Permits in this scenario. Director Schmitt reiterated that this was a conditional rezoning and that a Special Use Permit would come later in the process. Commissioner Brooks asked where the USB is located in relation to the property. Director Schmitt said that it was several miles to the east.

Commissioner Richards asked Director Schmitt to describe the process for the public hearing. Commissioner Shrewsbury pointed out that the application came from the applicant and not from the Planning Commission.

Emily Englehart, representing the applicant, spoke about the application and gave a presentation. Vice-Chair Trezise asked for clarification in the traffic analysis' data. Ian Graham, engineer for the applicant, explained the traffic analysis and said that the conclusion was that a traffic study was not required. Vice-Chair said that the traffic analysis did not include the northern 13 acres of the property. Mr. Graham said that the conditions of the rezoning would apply to the northern 13 acres and that no development was proposed in that area. Director Schmitt confirmed that the rezoning conditions applied to the entire parcel. Vice-Chair suggested committing to not developing the northern 13 acres.

Chair Blumer asked Ms. Englehart why Redwood was interested in this property. Ms. Englehart said that Redwood had been interested in Meridian Township for a long time and felt that this would be a successful development. Chair Blumer said that mid-class is desirable but questioned if the application was consistent with the existing neighborhood specifically. Ms. Englehart said that multiple-family residential had to go somewhere and that what was being proposed was as compatible as possible.

Commissioner Scales said that he liked the proposal but had the same concern about the location; there was a need for this type of housing, but not here. Commissioner Scales said that there was a possibility of this development becoming student housing and that he did not believe that it would attract families with children because the nearby elementary school was closed. Commissioner Scales said that some existing homes had been converted to rental homes and that students and homeowners were not a good mix. Commissioner Scales asked if the proposed development has any entrances other than Park Lake Road. Ms. Englehart said no and that Park Lake Road was the only road the property fronted on. Commissioner Scales said that would result in more traffic onto only one road and that would be a problem for the neighborhood. Commissioner Scales said that the rezoning was not congruent with the Master Plan.

Commissioner Brooks asked how the rent compared to the rest of the Township. Ms. Englehart said that the rent was compared to other Redwood properties and that they could try to get that

information. Commissioner Brooks said that he didn't notice any sidewalks in the presentation. Ms. Englehart said that sidewalks were installed adjacent to the roads and that parking isn't allowed on the streets. Commissioner Brooks asked if fiber lines would be installed. Ms. Englehart said that developments offered cable and internet but didn't have information on providers. Commissioner Brooks asked why comparisons were made with Redwood properties and not local communities. Ms. Englehart said that Redwood already had those studies. Commissioner Brooks asked for similar comparisons with local Redwood communities. Ms. Englehart said that she would look into it.

Chair Blumer opened the floor to the public.

Shawn O'Brien, representing the land owner. Mr. O'Brien described his history with the property and said that a development under the current zoning could result in 142 units. Mr. O'Brien said that land owners had a right to sell their property and that the Redwood development worked because of the smaller footprint of the buildings, few units, and less mitigation. Mr. O'Brien suggested that the R2 Master Plan designation allowed the use based on density.

Vince Lione spoke in opposition to REZ #23030.  
Ed Gillespie spoke in opposition to REZ #23030.  
Betty Caldwell spoke in opposition to REZ #23030.  
Rob Fortino spoke in opposition to REZ #23030.  
Peter Glendenning spoke in opposition to REZ #23030.  
Peter Hoffner spoke in opposition to REZ #23030.

Carla Clos introduced herself as the Deputy Drain Commissioner. Ms. Clos said that the ICDC would send more representatives to meetings in the future and that the ICDC would review any future site plan. Ms. Clos described the drainage situation around the subject property and encouraged the developers to come speak to the ICDC. Commissioner Snyder asked Ms. Clos if she was there as herself or on behalf of the ICDC. Ms. Clos said that she was representing the ICDC. Commissioner Shrewsbury said she was glad Ms. Clos was there and asked if she had a concern about the applications. Ms. Clos said that there were significant downstream drainage issues but that they had not seen a site plan. Commissioner Shrewsbury asked if a site plan could be approved without Drain Commission approval. Director Schmitt said that several different approvals were required, including the Drain Commission, before a site plan was approved.

Chair Blumer closed the public hearing.

Commissioner McConnell said that he was delighted to see the public that attended. Commissioner McConnell said that many of the environmental concerns would be valid for any development of any property and encouraged attendees to look at the deer management information on the Township's website. Commissioner McConnell said that the Township has an adopted Greenspace Plan and that the draft Master Plan proposes to update it. Commissioner McConnell said that he had researched the history of the site and that in the past it was in agricultural use and that the woods have not always been there. Commissioner McConnell said that he drove through the Safire duplex development and saw walkers. Commissioner McConnell said that the land owners have a right to build and that traffic problems need to be addressed whether or not the application is approved. Commissioner McConnell pointed out that the Township has just gone through a major upheaval and complimented the Staff.

Commissioner Richards said that shared the comment that it was a great development but questioned whether or not the request was consistent with the Master Plan. Commissioner Richards noted the site's difficulties, including a railroad setback, drains, and wetlands. Commissioner Richards said that he understood the logic of wanting return on investment, but he was having a hard time coming to the conclusion that the rezoning is consistent with the Master Plan. Commissioner

Richards said that was open to hearing more information. Commissioner Richards agreed that the traffic and environmental issues are important but the Planning Commission needs to focus on the Master Plan question.

Commissions Scales said that he is not a fan of straw polls but asked for one so that the members of the public had an idea where the Planning Commission stood.

Chair Blumer said that he understood the public's concerns. Chair Blumer said that he does not have a problem with the development, but not in favor of the location. Chair Blumer said that he does not want to be responsible for the disruption of the neighborhood and if there is a straw poll, he votes no.

Commissioner Brooks asked about the rezoning process. Director Schmitt said that this is a map amendment and described the process. Commissioner Brooks asked if the Planning Commission's job was to make sure that the zoning aligns with the Master Plan. Director Schmitt said that the Zoning Ordinance implements the Master Plan. Commissioner Brooks said that he was aware of the flooding issues, but that there is a housing shortage in Meridian Township. Commissioner Brooks said that the proposal might keep residents in the community when they downsize and that it would be a mistake not to address the housing shortage.

Vice-Chair Trezise said that he was having difficulty. Vice-Chair Trezise said that the applicant's conditions don't restrict development of the northern 13 acres of the property. Vice-Chair Trezise said that it was a very attractive development, and it was needed in the community, but that he did not know where he stands.

Commissioner Shrewsbury said that she was still up in the air. Commissioner Shrewsbury said that she had no doubt about the development's quality but was concerned with the development of the specific property. Commissioner Shrewsbury said that the owner has a right to develop, and that she was open to additional conditions, but she would vote no as it is.

Chair Blumer called for a straw poll. After discussion, the Planning Commission indicated that they did not support the application.

8. UNFINISHED BUSINESS  
Ordinance #2023-05 - RRC Ordinance

Senior Planner Shorkey reviewed the ordinance and said that the Planning Commission had indicated support for the ordinance at the public hearing.

**Commissioner McConnell moved to recommend approval to the Township Board for Zoning Amendment #20223-05, to amend the zoning ordinance as described in the attached resolution. Seconded by Commissioner Brooks.**

**VOICE VOTE      YEAS: Chair Blumer, Vice-Chair Trezise, Commissioners McConnell, Richards, Scales, Snyder, Brooks, Shrewsbury**

**NAYS: None**

**Motion carried: 8-0**

9. OTHER BUSINESS  
Conservancy District Discussion

Senior Planner Shorkey summarized his memo and described the issues with floodplain developments that led to the draft ordinance update. Commissioner Snyder asked how cubic yards are measured. Senior Planner Shorkey said that is measured in cubic yards of material removed and was confirmed during the state's permitting process. Chair Blumer asked if anyone opposed the draft ordinance as discussed. Hearing no objection, Chair Blumer told Staff to proceed.

10. MASTER PLAN UPDATE

NONE

11. REPORTS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

A. Township Board Update

Director Schmitt said that the Board approved the budget for next year. Discussion about HOMTV purchase and the new police chief. Director Schmitt said that the two marijuana applications were approved and that the Board would take up licensing rules within the next two meeting. Director Schmitt said it was time to consider reappointments and that he would be in touch with Commissioners.

B. Liaison Reports

Vice-Chair Trezise said that the ZBA heard a request for a wetland buffer setback variance and that the application was tabled for more information.

Commissioner Brooks said that the CIA had met and approved the TIF plan, which was not going to the Board for final approval. Commissioner Brooks said that a Drain Commission representative was at the meeting to discuss the Okemos Consolidate Drain.

Commissioner Brooks asked for an update for the MSU trail. Director Schmitt gave a brief update. Vice-Chair Trezise said that noticed the fence around the Haslett Village site.

12. PROJECT UPDATES

A. Project Report

Director Schmitt pointed out the updated project report in the packet.

13. PUBLIC REMARKS

A. NONE

14. COMMISSIONER COMMENTS

Commissioner McConnell said that he was happy to see Ms. Clos at the meeting and that he had toured the Montgomery Drain with the Drain Commissioner. Commissioner McConnell said it would be nice to have a presentation from the Drain Commissioner's office to show off the work they have done in the Township.

Chair Blumer agreed that it was beneficial to have Ms. Clos at the meeting and that he had the impression that the Drain Commission had serious issues with the rezoning.

Commissioner Snyder said that Ms. Clos' comments had her wondering if the current zoning was appropriate. Commissioner Snyder said that she had previously asked for a list of developable parcels. Director Schmitt said that was turned into a Master Plan goal and that we would ask GIS to work on it in the future.

Commissioner Brooks said that he was surprised by the number of people in attendance and that the Planning Commission should maintain a standard; if the Drain Commission or the applicant's attorney want extra time, they can ask to be on the agenda. Commissioner Shrewsbury said that past practice was to allow the applicant's attorney to speak and that the Drain Commission representative is sharing different information than residents making public comments. Commissioner Richards said that the applicant typically talks before the public hearing is opened and that was a good question to ask Ms. Clos who she represented. After more discussion about future public hearing processes, Commissioner Shrewsbury asked Staff to display Public Hearing conduct rules at future public hearings.

15. ADJOURNMENT

**Chair Blumer asked if there was any opposition to adjourn the meeting. Hearing none, Chair Blumer closed the meeting.**

Meeting adjourned at 9:19 pm.