

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

APPROVED

**December 19, 2016
5151 Marsh Road, Okemos, MI 48864-1198
853-4000, Town Hall Room, 7:00 P.M.**

PRESENT: Commissioners DeGroff, Honicky, Ianni, Lane, Premoe, Richards, Scott-Craig, Tenaglia
ABSENT: Commissioner Van Coevering
STAFF: Director Kieselbach, Senior Planner Menser, Associate Planner/Economic Development
Coordinator Motil

1. Call meeting to order

Chair Scott-Craig called the regular meeting to order at 7:05 P.M.

2. Approval of agenda

Commissioner Ianni moved to approve the agenda with the suggestion from Chair Scott-Craig that Special Use Permit #16101 (Gillett) be acted upon prior to the public hearings. Seconded by Commissioner Honicky.

VOICE VOTE: Motion carried 8-0.

3. Approval of Minutes

Commissioner Ianni moved to approve the Regular Meeting Minutes of November 14, 2016 and November 21, 2016. Seconded by Commissioner Tenaglia.

VOICE VOTE: Motion carried 8-0.

4. Public Remarks

Chair Scott-Craig opened and closed the floor for public remarks.

5. Communications

A. Chris Edwards, 4612 Herron Road, Okemos; RE: Special Use Permit #16111

6. Public hearings

A. Mixed Use Planned Unit Development #16024 (Capstone), construct Hannah Farms East project consisting of 296 multiple family residential units at Hannah Boulevard/Eyde Parkway **and**

B. Special Use Permit #16111 (Capstone), construct group of buildings greater than 25,000 square feet at Hannah Boulevard/Eyde Parkway.

Chair Scott-Craig opened the public hearing at 7:14 P.M.

- Introduction by the Chair (announcement of procedures, time limits and protocols for public participation and applicants)
- Summary of subject matter

Senior Planner Menser summarized the proposed mixed use planned unit development (MUPUD) and Special Use Permit #16111 as outlined in staff memorandums dated December 19, 2016.

- Applicant

Mark Clouse, Chief Financial Officer/General Counsel, Eyde Company, 300 S. Washington Square, Suite 400, Lansing recapped projects for the entire 81 acre parcel since 2008. He noted the goal was to provide a diversity of unit types and indicated the proposal before Commissioners this evening have unit types which are not currently available within the 81 acre parcel.

John Acken, Capstone Collegiate Communities, 431 Office Park Drive, Birmingham, Alabama offered a depiction on the overhead projector how the current site plan fits in with the existing area. He indicated it is their intent to extend the existing greenspace on the north side of The Lodges development across the front of the proposed development. Mr. Acken stated the intent of the plan is to create three (3) different housing types: one (1) and two (2) bedroom apartments in a stand-alone building; a second building which contains one (1) to four (4) smaller bedroom units for a lower price point (both with internal corridors and served with elevators), and townhomes on the south side with some units having an underground two-car garage. Mr. Acken offered the layout of the various unit types. He noted parallel parking along Eyde Parkway is currently prohibited by the Ingham County Road Department (ICRD), but the applicant would like to use some of their land to create parallel parking as a traffic calming device which would buffer pedestrian traffic along the sidewalk.

Mr. Acken stated the applicant wants to make a change to the setback on the southside based on the communication from Mr. Edwards and demonstrated the desired change to buffer the neighbors to the south. He added that based on comments from the ICRD, the applicant would like to change the location of the entrance so it does not conflict with the entrance to The Lodges and provides for only one entrance onto Eyde Parkway with an emergency access off of Eyde Parkway. Mr. Acken also demonstrated interior finishes on the overhead projector for all three (3) development areas.

- Public

Neil Bowlby, 6020 Beechwood Drive, Haslett, believed the proposed project is more high density student housing, with only .94 percent dedicated to mixed use over the 81 acre parcel. He indicated he did not see any affordable housing component presented. Mr. Bowlby projected future Hagadorn Road traffic through a linear extension of 22,000-25,000 vehicle trips in 2022. Mr. Bowlby noted there does not appear to be any comments from the Township's traffic consultant and requested the Planning Commission give careful consideration when reviewing this latest phase.

Susan Davis, 4772 Arapaho Trail, Okemos, urged the Township to consider the effect the proposed project would have on nearby residents. She voiced concern with the lack of overall greenspace throughout the various phases. Ms. Davis believed the additional units would place stress on police and fire services. She believed this to be nothing more than high-density student housing and requested the Planning Commission consider the residents' desire when reviewing this project.

Joe Pavona, 4726 Arapaho Trail, Okemos, representative for Indian Lakes Estates Homeowner Association, voiced appreciation for the applicant's willingness to reach out to the neighborhood. He stated this latest phase is a continuation of dense student housing, not residential as being depicted. Mr. Pavona expressed opposition to the dense nature of the proposed MUPUD and its impact to the overall community. He questioned why the Township would agree to exceed its ordinance requirements for the special use permit (SUP) and urged the Planning Commission to take a step back. He cited an article in the October 3rd edition of the *Lansing State Journal* which stated Michigan State University President LouAnna Simon has told local officials there is no need for more student housing.

John Acken, Capstone Collegiate Communities, replied the applicant followed the vision they understood from the Township Board and Planning Commission regarding density to create a village type atmosphere. He concurred with earlier public comment requesting Commissioners take a drive through the area. Mr. Acken stated students want to be in the area due to its close proximity to MSU and the proposed development would reduce vehicle trips for students who would live farther away and need to use a vehicle.

Mark Clouse, Eyde Company, reminded Commissioners and the public the overall 81 acre site already includes substantial office and a hotel, the definition of what mixed use is intended to be. He added the density was intentional when the rezoning was approved in 2008.

Douglas Hinterman, 4616 Pioneer Trail, Okemos, lives in a residence immediately to the south of the proposed high density student housing project, and believed the ordinances currently in place should be used as a guide. He suggested there be more greenspace on the southern border currently zoned Professional and Office (PO). Mr. Hinterman stated PO as a neighbor provides less activity during the evening and on weekends.

Leonard Provencher, 5824 Buena Parkway, Haslett, inquired as to how many individuals will live in each bedroom. He believed parallel parking on Eyde Parkway would present problems relative to snow removal. Mr. Provencher questioned the need for this project as noted in the communication from MSU's community liaison regarding no need for additional student housing with the construction of 1855 Place off Harrison Road.

- Planning Commission discussion:
Commissioner Ianni voiced appreciation for the presentation from Capstone and the affordability segment of the project.

Commissioner Honicky asked why the applicant wanted the setbacks waived.

Mr. Acken responded the request to waive the setbacks was to achieve the vision of the original MUPUD in this area. He indicated they understood this vision was to create a traditional village concept where buildings are "pulled" closer to the street and provides an outdoor space. He acknowledged that density happens as a result of those actions. Mr. Acken added most of the commercial is towards Hagadorn Road, where he believes it needs to be for visibility of traffic.

Commissioner Honicky stated his experience with underneath garages leaves the first floor very cold in the winter and warm in the summer.

Mr. Acken replied consultants were hired to deal with the issue of balancing heating and cooling within the units.

Commissioner Honicky summarized this phase would not have commercial on the first floor with residences above, but the applicant is requesting setbacks be waived in order to have the buildings located as close to the sidewalks as possible to achieve the village atmosphere.

Mr. Acken responded Lodges Phase One has the village type feel and they would like to continue that same type of development pattern in this phase with different types of units.

Commissioner Tenaglia inquired as to whom this phase is being marketed and how these units would be marketed.

Mr. Acken replied that because of the proximity to MSU, students have a desire to live there. He alleged that regardless of how these units are marketed, students will typically outbid to live in the area.

Commissioner Tenaglia inquired if the townhouses are rentals or available to purchase. She believed there is a need for 2-3 bedroom housing by young professionals with families who do not desire upkeep of the traditional single family homes.

Mr. Acken responded the intent today is to market the townhouses as rentals. He believed one idea to improve the housing stock of single family homes for young professionals is to “pull” out the students who live in them. Mr. Acken alleged the overall ratio associated with the number of students looking for housing v. the number of purposeful student housing in the market is approximately 30%, a percentage he indicated is on the low side for most college towns. He indicated that this means students are living farther from the school in 1-2 bedroom apartments, single family homes in neighborhoods and in the surrounding area. Mr. Acken believed that by building more purposeful student housing in close proximity to campus, it will pull students out and open up the supply of single family homes for young professionals to rent. He asserted the lack of student housing in the area inflates the rate of student housing.

Commissioner Richards inquired if the proposed townhouses meet the ordinance’s height requirement, which he believed was not taller than what is buildable for single family to the south.

Mr. Acken replied their architect is looking at the situation and it “goes” to the interpretation of the height requirement with regard to measurement of the roof line.

Commissioner Richards noted one of the issues raised by residents is being able to hear the activity taken place in the apartment area, and suggested if there are balconies, they be placed to the north and to the west to minimize noise experienced by the adjacent neighborhood. He inquired as to when the applicant will have a discussion concerning the offered amenities.

Mr. Acken responded the amenities are defined in statute, which include covered bicycle parking, open bicycle parking and pedestrian connection to sidewalks. He noted that in lieu of one centralized clubhouse, there will be two (2) clubhouses. Mr. Acken stated the clubhouse to the north would contain a game room, workout facilities, tanning facilities, multipurpose rooms, saunas, conference rooms, computer rooms with a greenspace out front. He alleged one of the biggest amenities is the walking distance to the commercial area and linkages to MSU. Mr. Acken noted the central location of the clubhouse is to provide buffering from the residential neighborhoods.

Commissioner Richards requested information concerning police and fire responses for the existing phases.

Chair Scott-Craig requested staff provide the requested data to Planning Commissioners for their next meeting.

Commissioner DeGroff requested public policy rationale behind the MUPUD concept.

Mr. Menser replied he believed it was an initiative to allow flexibility on setbacks and traditional zoning requirements to obtain a higher end product with more amenities and higher density of residents within an area.

Commissioner DeGroff believed the rationale behind the MUPUD concept was to create synergy between commercial and residential and used as a placemaking tool.

Mr. Menser deferred to Section 86-440 of the Code of Ordinances and read the purpose and intent.

Chair Scott-Craig reiterated the purpose is to create more walkable pedestrian oriented developments that respect Meridian Township's transitional land use concept to protect, enhance and preserve natural resources. He asked the applicant what part of this development enhances and preserves natural resources.

Mr. Acken demonstrated on the overhead projector where the development creates two (2) internal greenspaces. He noted the idea of a denser village development is to take the pressure off low slow growth throughout the "countryside", not necessarily on the site.

Based on the applicant's answer, Chair Scott-Craig suggested he reverse his intent to exceed the maximum impervious surface on the northern portion and bring back something that is below the amount allowed for the underlying zoning requirement.

Chair Scott-Craig acknowledged from his perspective, the MUPUD ordinance needs some work. He noted Lodges 1 has 14 units per acre, Lodges 2 has 16 units per acre, both of which are within the range of 14-18 units per acre permitted by ordinance. Chair Scott-Craig stated Hannah Loft has 35.7 units per acre, more than double the density permitted by ordinance. He added the proposed phase is 28 units per acre, double what is allowed by ordinance. Chair Scott-Craig recommended the applicant considerably reduce the density of the proposed phase which would also alleviate a significant increase in vehicle traffic. He believed the amenities listed by the applicant were non-existent, as none of them proposed were for the public to enjoy.

Chair Scott-Craig discussed the study commissioned by MSU President Simon in collaboration with the Land Policy Institute which concluded the surrounding towns to MSU are overbuilt for student housing. He stated the number of on-campus students is decreasing and the total number of students within the university will also likely decrease.

Mr. Acken will look at the plans and take the factors presented this evening into consideration. He added that one of the biggest indicators is demand in the area, adding The Lodges is 75% leased and Hannah Lofts is over 50% leased for next year.

Commission Ianni believed raising the supply of housing will drive prices down and provide more affordable housing options throughout the community.

Chair Scott-Craig closed the public hearing at 8:43 P.M.

7. Unfinished Business

- A. Special Use Permit #16101 (Gillett), install outdoor barbeque smoker at 1754 Central Park Drive. **Commissioner Tenaglia moved [and read into the record] NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THE PLANNING COMMISSION OF THE CHARTER TOWNSHIP OF MERIDIAN hereby approves Special Use Permit #16101 (Gillett) to install an outdoor barbeque smoker behind the existing shopping center at 1754 Central Park Drive subject to the following condition:**

- 1. The applicant shall obtain all necessary and applicable permits and approvals from the Ingham County Department of Health, and all other relevant entities.**

Seconded by Commissioner Ianni.

Planning Commission discussion:

- Applicant has indicated the area will be enclosed and monitored
- Barbeque smoker will be a good addition to an area where several restaurants currently exist
- Township has a nuisance ordinance relative to any complaints regarding smoke from restaurants

ROLL CALL VOTE: YEAS: Commissioners DeGroff, Honicky, Ianni, Lane, Premoe, Richards, Tenaglia, Chair Scott-Craig

NAYS: None

Motion carried 8-0.

8. Other Business

- A. Master Plan update

Commissioner DeGroff moved to transmit the 2017 Master Plan to the Township Board and recommend authorization to distribute the document for the 63-day review period to agencies and communities identified in the Michigan Planning Enabling Act. Seconded by Commissioner Lane.

Planning Commission and staff discussion:

- Maps are being updated by staff and will be included
- Suggested attachments will be included in the distribution
- Preference for items such as Building a More Liberal Community's Corridor Design portfolio to be referenceable by outside commenters

ROLL CALL VOTE: YEAS: Commissioners DeGroff, Honicky, Ianni, Lane, Premoe, Richards, Tenaglia, Chair Scott-Craig

NAYS: None

Motion carried 8-0.

9. Township Board, Planning Commission officer, committee chair, and staff comment or reports

Commissioner Honicky expressed his appreciation to the citizenry for the opportunity to serve on the Planning Commission. He also noted his gratitude to fellow Commissioners and Planning staff.

Chair Scott-Craig reported his attendance at the December 6th Environmental Commission meeting where the greenspace plan was discussed and the December 1st Economic Development Corporation meeting where members worked on the EDC's 2017 goals. He reported his participation at the December 4th session on form based codes and the December 1st Michigan Association of Planning's Transportation Bonanza Meeting where policies from various state transportation departments were vetted.

Chair Scott-Craig expressed appreciation to Commissioner Honicky for his service, adding the Chair has learned a great deal from him.

A. New Applications - NONE

B. Update of Ongoing Projects

1. Site Plans Received – NONE

2. Site Plans Approved - NONE

10. Public remarks

Chair Scott-Craig opened public remarks.

Joe Pavona, 4726 Arapaho Trail, Okemos, thanked the Chair for his summary comments on the Capstone project. He stated his neighborhood is pro-growth but within the confines of the plan for Meridian Township. He requested the density be reduced, since the original plan presented for the entire 81 acres has gotten "off the path." Mr. Pavona suggested 200 feet be dedicated as a buffer between the project and adjacent neighborhoods.

Chair Scott-Craig suggested Mr. Pavona present his ideas in writing and submit them to the Planning Department for inclusion in the Planning Commission packet.

Bill McConnell, 4376 Manitou, Okemos, addressed the Master Plan process. He voiced disappointment the Environmental Commission's recommendation was not addressed at tonight's work session. Mr. McConnell also expressed disappointment tonight's work session was concluded without public remarks and the Planning Commission action to move the Master Plan forward did not allow for public remarks. He believed the Master Plan is not ready to be sent to the Township Board. Mr. McConnell believed the Future Land Use Map (FLUM) is the heart of the plan and the amount of time the Planning Commission has dedicated to review of that map has been "small."

Neil Bowlby, 6020 Beechwood Drive, Haslett, voiced appreciation for Commissioner Honicky's service to the Township. He spoke to sight lines encountered with the four (4) story building proposed for the Capstone project. Mr. Bowlby indicated there is not the type of commercial needed on the Capstone site, i.e., grocery store, clothing store, drug store, etc. He objected to the applicant's submission of what they labeled as greenspace. Mr. Bowlby urged the Planning Commission to review the videos on the Township website relative to the 2008 vision for this 81 acre parcel in its entirety.

Chair Scott-Craig closed public remarks.

11. Adjournment

Chair Scott-Craig adjourned the regular meeting at 9:03 P.M.

Respectfully Submitted,

Sandra K. Otto
Recording Secretary