

**CHARTER TOWNSHIP OF MERIDIAN  
PLANNING COMMISSION  
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES  
June 23, 2014**

**APPROVED**

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

PRESENT: Commissioners Deits, Hildebrandt, Honicky (7:01 P.M.), Ianni, Jackson, Salehi, Scott-Craig, Van Coevering  
ABSENT: Commissioner Cordill  
STAFF: Principal Planner Oranchak

**1. Call meeting to order**

Chair Jackson called the regular meeting to order at 7:00 P.M.

**2. Approval of agenda**

**Commissioner Hildebrandt moved to approve the agenda. Seconded by Commissioner Scott-Craig.**

VOICE VOTE: Motion carried 7-0.

**3. Approval of Minutes**

**Commissioner Ianni moved to approve the Regular Meeting Minutes of June 9, 2014. Seconded by Commissioner Scott-Craig.**

VOICE VOTE: Motion carried 8-0.

**4. Public Remarks**

Chair Jackson opened the floor for public remarks.

Leonard Provencher, 5924 Buena Parkway, Haslett, spoke in support of Rezoning #14060, as it is harmonious with the surrounding property.

Neil Bowlby, 6020 Beechwood Drive, Haslett, spoke to consensus reached on changes in the Planning Commission bylaws which have not yet been adopted by the Commission. He continued his assertion that Areas 4 and 5 of the Urban Services Management Area (USMA) have not had problems with failed septic systems and therefore do not have related public health and safety issues. Mr. Bowlby voiced the need for concessions on the part of both the Township Board and the Planning Commission in order for the USMA to move forward. He addressed the issue of who are proper recipients of official notices for site plan reviews, focusing on the interpretation of "adjacent" and suggesting the need for its definition to be included in Section 86.

Vance Kincaid, 4530 Nakoma Drive, Okemos, alleged the site plan review process for the new central fire station was flawed. He spoke to lack of trust in government by township residents.

David Pierson, 1035 S. Washington Avenue, Lansing, attorney for Boomer Group, LLC, offered history for the office use designation for the subject parcel of Rezoning #14060, located on the northeast corner of Jolly Oak Road and Water Lily Way.

Susan Simkin, 2032 Central Park Drive, Okemos, spoke to the evolvement of the Township's Master Plan, indicating it is in "chaos." She believed there is a need for good paying jobs in the community for young people with children in order to have solid Township growth. In order to be effective, Ms. Simkin stated there is a need for township officials to look at the bus rapid transit (BRT) concept in terms of the way zoning is considered. She offered her opinion on the length of the BRT corridor, making a correlation with sewer extension.

Chair Jackson closed public remarks.

**5. Communications (None)**

**6. Public hearings**

A. Special Use Permit #14071 (G. S. Fedewa Builders), request to construct a 10-unit multiple family townhouse complex at 1730 Chamberlain

Chair Jackson opened the public hearing at 7:22 P.M.

- Introduction by the Chair (announcement of procedures, time limits and protocols for public participation and applicants)
- Summary of subject matter  
Principal Planner Oranchak summarized the special use permit (SUP) request as outlined in staff memorandum dated June 5, 2014.
- Applicant  
Gerry Fedewa. G.S. Fedewa Builders, 5570 Okemos Road, East Lansing, indicated the proposed project will be his fourth multi-family development in Meridian Township, pointing to the rental success of a similar project, Brattin Woods, on Okemos Road. He believed this an advantageous location near a bus line. Mr. Fedewa displayed overhead views of the proposed plan and units.
- Planning Commission discussion:  
Commissioner Deits inquired as to the appropriateness of conditioning approval of the SUP on the Chamberlain Drive easement.

Principal Planner Oranchak responded the applicant has the option to ask for access from Marsh Road.

Commissioner Deits noted if the project was required to have access from Marsh Road, there would need to be a substantial site plan revisions, with possible changes to the setbacks.

Principal Planner Oranchak replied the special use permit does not have to be approved until there is assurance as to which access will be used, either Chamberlain Drive or Marsh Road.

Commissioner Deits spoke to the elevation of the property at the back of the building to the north property line sloping down approximately two (2) feet. He inquired where that water would travel to.

Ms. Oranchak responded the development will be designed so that water from that area will flow to the detention pond.

Commissioner Deits inquired if there is an additional ten feet near the north setback which could be utilized in some fashion.

Principal Planner Oranchak responded 50 feet is the required setback when the adjacent property is zoned in a single family residential zoning category,

Commissioner Salehi expressed concern if there would be sufficient available parking for ten units. He inquired if visitors would have the ability to park on Chamberlain Drive.

Principal Planner Oranchak replied that since Chamberlain Drive is not a public street, any parking arrangements would need to be worked out through the easement. She noted each unit has a concrete pad in front of it which can be used for guest parking.

Commissioner Salehi noted the staff report commented on township policy in multiple family projects for future parking to equal 25% of the total required spaces (i.e., five (5) spaces). He inquired if there would be room for an additional ten parking spaces, which would provide one additional space for each unit.

Principal Planner Oranchak indicated the applicant currently needs a variance from the required five (5) additional future spaces, as the current site plan shows their location in the required landscape buffer between Chamberlain Drive and the access drive. She stated two (2) parking spaces per unit is a typical multiple-family parking standard, noting that multiple-family developments generate fewer cars than single family.

Commissioner Salehi asked the applicant if he considered providing one parking space per unit and then provide ten (10) spots for "group" parking.

Mr. Fedewa replied they followed the standard of two (2) spaces inside the garage with two (2) additional spaces outside the garage. He noted if a resident is planning a party, there is sufficient parking available at nearby Marshall Park and Lake Lansing Park.

Commissioner Ianni believed this project would attract young professionals with school aged children, a demographic which was mentioned during public comment as necessary for Township growth.

Commissioner Honicky inquired if the applicant had created any rules for renters regarding the storing of boats, specifically for the concrete slab in front of the garage or the visitor/guest parking lot.

Mr. Fedewa responded his rental agreement clearly specifies a prohibition on parking boats and RVs.

Commissioner Scott-Craig expressed appreciation for the sidewalks indicated on the drawings.

Mr. Fedewa added he plans to leave the total brush and leaf barrier currently in the back which would give both renters and residents in back that privacy.

Commissioner Scott-Craig spoke to the limited flexibility the Zoning Board of Appeals (ZBA) has when an applicant makes a variance request that is “self-created.” He asked if Mr. Fedewa has considered other possibilities.

Mr. Fedewa responded he is flexible and will work with the Planning Commission to tweak the footprint to accommodate the requirements for the vegetation strip which would affect the westerly two units.

Commissioner Scott-Craig noted the detention pond is a large area and inquired if it could be reconfigured to accommodate the needed additional five (5) parking spaces.

Mr. Fedewa responded he believed it could be reconfigured to avoid the requested variance for additional parking spaces.

Commissioner Scott-Craig observed during his visit that there are water issues in the back corner of the property (north of the end of the retention pond area on the other side of the driveway), where a wooden power pole was standing in significant water.

Mr. Fedewa responded he will work to resolve that issue during development of the site.

Commissioner Scott-Craig encouraged the applicant to eliminate any applications for variance in an effort to smoothly move the process forward.

Commissioner Van Coevering inquired regarding the five (5) criteria listed in Section 86-756(7)(b) which must be met in order for the Director of Community Planning and Development to waive curb and gutter requirements.

Principal Planner Oranchak replied three (3) of the criteria are listed in the staff memorandum and the other two deal with the number of parking spaces and approval of the detention pond by the Township Engineering Department.

Commissioner Deits requested clarification on the issues with respect to the buffer on the south side in the front of the building

Principal Planner Oranchak pointed out the property line on an overhead map and indicated there should be a 20 foot buffer just north along the property line.

Commissioner Deits believed all the requested variances would not be needed if the applicant would remove two (2) of the units or, in the alternative, eliminate one unit and turn the other unit 45 degrees which would open up a large area on the east side of the property for parking.

Principal Planner Oranchak added the curve in Chamberlain Drive impacts design options.

Commissioner Deits acknowledged appreciation for the applicant attempting to turn a vacant lot into productive property while being cognizant of the need to balance the Township’s design standards against the desire to utilize the property.

Principal Planner Oranchak indicated she has had discussions with the applicant that if a significant redesign is needed, it could be presented to the Planning Commission at its next meeting with a decision at the meeting following that.

Commissioner Hildebrandt believed the overflow parking issue at certain times needs to be addressed on site and encouraged the applicant to have ample bicycle parking given its proximity to Lake Lansing.

Commissioner Salehi inquired if it was possible to move the two sets of units closer together to allow for the proper vegetation strip.

Mr. Fedewa believed some of the units could be downsized at the west end to allow for a proper vegetation strip. He indicated one constraint for the two unit building is that it must have a 100 foot setback from Marsh Road so cannot be moved, adding the units are located as far north as possible. At this point, he stated he needs to rework the various units' footprints and bring back a revised plan which would not include "self-created" variance requests. He added the eight (8) unit-building cannot be moved to the east as it will cause vehicular conflict with the adjacent units.

Commissioner Salehi requested the Planning Commission would like to be apprised if an answer regarding parking on Chamberlain Drive is obtained.

Mr. Fedewa responded the title companies do not have a definitive answer as to the owner(s) of Chamberlain Drive, indicating the Michigan Department of Treasury may be the owner.

Chair Jackson inquired if the space in front of the garages could satisfy the requirement for the additional 25% required for future parking spaces.

Principal Planner Oranchak responded they would not, as the additional future parking spaces need to be away from the main parking for each unit.

Chair Jackson closed the public hearing at 8:04 P.M.

## 7. Unfinished Business

- A. Rezoning #14060 (Boomer Group, LLC), request to rezone approximately 3.55 acres located on the NE corner of Jolly Oak Road and Water Lily Way from PO (Professional and Office) to C-2 (Commercial) with a voluntary offer of a condition to develop the site for a hotel

**Commissioner Hildebrandt moved [and read into the record] NOW THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED THE PLANNING COMMISSION OF THE CHARTER TOWNSHIP OF MERIDIAN hereby recommends approval of Rezoning #14060 to rezone approximately 3.55 acres located on the north of Jolly Oak Road, east of Water Lily Way and south of Farrins Parkway from PO (Professional and Office) to C-2 (Commercial) with the voluntary offer of a condition limiting development on the site to an all-suites hotel with no more than 135 rooms, subject to the standards applying to hotels in the C-2 district and all requirements of Chapter 86 of the Code of Ordinances for special use permit, site plan review, or variance, if any.**

**Seconded by Commissioner Ianni.**

Planning Commission and applicant discussion:

- Hotel as a good use on the subject site
- Preference that a time limit of two (2) years to break ground be placed in the resolution
- Three (3) years is a more appropriate timeframe
- Time limit provides for an opportunity to revisit the site in the event this specific project does not come to fruition
- Time limit protects the Township from potential future changes if something happens with the surrounding area and this is no longer the right project
- Applicant has offered a condition on this rezoning of development of a maximum 135 unit all suites hotel
- If this project is not built and the time limit expires, the rezoning would revert back to its original PO zoning designation
- Concern if conditions in the surrounding area change and there is no time limit, the rezoning designation stands

**Commissioner Deits offered the following friendly amendment:**

- **Add an additional WHEREAS clause to read: WHEREAS, while the Future Land Use Map (FLUM) shows office use of this parcel, the excess of comparable office space in the Township, as documented in the current Township Master Plan, renders it appropriate to designate an alternative compatible use.**

**The friendly amendment was accepted by the maker and seconder of the main motion.**

Continued Planning Commission and applicant discussion:

- All-suites hotel would generate approximately one-half of the peak hour trip generation compared to PO
- Preference to use the language as noted in the staff report dated June 19, 2014
- Objection by the maker of the amendment that an amendment should not be supported based on an analogy

**Commissioner Deits offered the following friendly amendment:**

- **Amend the seventh WHEREAS clause by inserting the word “fewer” before “peak hour”**

**The friendly amendment was accepted by the maker of the main motion.**

**The maker offered the following friendly amendment:**

- **Add an additional RESOLVE clause to read: BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED the Planning Commission recommends a time limit of three (3) years for groundbreaking to begin after final approval.**

**The friendly amendment was accepted by the seconder.**

VOICE VOTE: Motion carried 8-0.

## **8. Other Business**

- A. Rezoning # 14020 (Okemos Road, LLC/Hagan), request to rezone 3698 Okemos Road from RR (Rural Residential) to PO (Professional and Office)  
Principal Planner Oranchak updated the rezoning request as outlined in staff memorandum dated June 19, 2014.

Planning Commission and staff discussion:

- Requests made at the last Planning Commission meeting to ascertain the amount of PO on south Okemos Road as well as the multi-family vacancy rate
- The Township does not maintain information on vacancy rates
- Identified difference between office park developments and single building PO development
- Comparison of the 2000 and 2010 census information compiled by the sustainability grant group shows a nominal increase between those years in multiple-family vacancy rates
- Two parcels make up the child day care site
- Church has an institutional zoning designation
- Lack of need for more professional office in the area
- Township Board requested the Planning Commission consider which residential use was most appropriate for the subject parcel
- Planning Commissioner belief that RC is the most appropriate zoning designation based upon the adjacent uses to the north

**Commissioner Ianni moved to rezone this parcel to RC to make it more productive and in keeping with the surrounding uses to the north. Seconded by Commissioner Van Coevering.**

Planning Commission and staff discussion:

- Board request for the Planning Commission to look at other zoning designations than PO
- Planning Commissioner belief this body looked at other zoning designations and the conclusion is represented in the memorandum dated June 19, 2014

VOICE VOTE: Motion failed 3-5 (Deits, Hildebrandt, Salehi, Scott-Craig, Van Coevering).

**Commissioner Salehi moved to advise the Township Board the Planning Commission continues to recommend PO (Professional and Office) zoning for 3698 Okemos Road for the following reasons:**

- **The Planning Commission considered existing Future Land Use Map (FLUM) designations and zoning from Jolly Road north to the railroad tracks and a similar distance east to west paying specific attention to seven properties north of Tamarack Drive and Bickford assisted living facility.**
- **The Planning Commission concludes residential use of any kind is inappropriate at 3698 Okemos Road due to traffic and associated noise. The mid-block location precludes indirect access to the high trafficked Okemos Road, a designated Principal Arterial with a speed limit of 45 miles per hour. Adjacent multiple family developments to the north and east access Okemos Road via Fox Hollow Drive.**
- **The small size of 3698 Okemos Road, approximately one acre, does not make it suitable for a non-residential use permitted by special use permit in a residential district like the child care center and church to the south and the Bickford assisted living facility to the north since the minimum lot area requirement for such uses is two acres.**
- **Buffering residential zoning from higher intensity commercial uses with office uses is consistent with the Master Plan's transitional land use policy and is exemplified by the separation of Hiawatha Lakes subdivision from the commercial areas of the Jolly and Okemos intersection by PO zoning and an Office designation on the FLUM.**

- Unlike the subject site, the seven properties to the north of Tamarack Drive and Bickford assisted living facility about a single-family residential subdivision. The Planning Commission sees no reason to revise the FLUM designation or zoning at this time. In the future the sites could be consolidated to facilitate one or more non-residential uses permitted by special use permit in a residential district such as the Bickford assisted living facility. The seven properties total approximately four acres in size, exceeding the minimum area requirement of two acres.
- If 3698 Okemos Road is rezoned to PO (Professional and Office), the Planning Commission intends to change the FLUM designation for the subject site and the adjacent child care center from Residential 5.0 to 8.0 dwelling units per acre to Office.

Seconded by Commissioner Scott-Craig.

VOICE VOTE: Motion carried 6-2 (Honicky, Ianni).

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

Commissioner Honicky inquired as to the origin of the Township's mission statement.

Commissioner Scott-Craig spoke to the success of the Celebrate Downtown Okemos event held on June 14<sup>th</sup>.

Commissioner Deits read the project update report produced by Associate Planner Menser.

**10. New applications (None)**

**11. Site plans received**

A. Site Plan Review #14-09 (Meridian Township), request to construct a new fire station on Okemos Road south of Central Park Drive.

**12. Site plans approved (None)**

**13. Public remarks**

Chair Jackson opened public remarks.

Leonard Provencher, 5824 Buena Parkway, Haslett, requested clarification be provided on the retention pond outlet depicted for Special Use Permit #14071 as the plans appear to have water dumping out at grade next to the pathway. He also expressed concern with its size.

Chair Jackson closed public remarks.

**14. Adjournment**

Chair Jackson adjourned the regular meeting at 8:46 P.M.



Respectfully Submitted,

Sandra K. Otto  
Recording Secretary