

**CHARTER TOWNSHIP OF MERIDIAN
PLANNING COMMISSION
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES
June 9, 2014**

APPROVED

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

PRESENT: Commissioners Cordill, Deits, Hildebrandt, Ianni, Jackson, Salehi, Scott-Craig, Van Coevering
ABSENT: Commissioner Honicky
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 Cordill moved to approve the agenda. Seconded by Commissioner Scott-Craig.

VOICE VOTE: Motion carried 8-0.

3. Approval of Minutes

Commissioner Ianni moved to approve the Regular Meeting Minutes of May 19, 2014. Seconded by Commissioner Hildebrandt.

VOICE VOTE: Motion carried 8-0.

4. Public Remarks

Chair Jackson opened the floor for public remarks.

Matt Hagan, Okemos Road LLC, addressed Board action to refer Rezoning #14020 back to the Planning Commission for consideration of a different zoning designation than PO. He expressed concern with a multi-family designation for the parcel of land located at 3698 Okemos Road, requesting if the Planning Commission decides to recommend multi-family to the Board that RC zoning be the designation of choice to make the project financially viable.

Leonard Provencher, 5824 Buena Parkway, Haslett, spoke in support of Special Use Permit #14071 (G.S. Fedewa Builders).

Chair Jackson closed public remarks.

5. Communications (None)

6. Public hearings

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

Chair Jackson opened the public hearing at 7:04 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 rezoning request as outlined in staff memorandum dated June 5, 2014.
- Applicant
David Pierson, Attorney for Boomer Group, LLC, 1305 S. Washington Avenue, Lansing, noted Farrins Parkway and Water Lily Way are to be paved as part of this project. He stated there is a specific use (all suites hotel) being offered as a condition of the rezoning request approval. Mr. Pierson requested the Planning Commission make a parallel comparison as a business use with the area along Hannah Boulevard (which includes Towne Suites/Residence Inn). He indicated the applicant placed a cap of 135 rooms, while the initial plan is for 100-110 rooms. Mr. Pierson noted the Township's ordinance requires a minimum 2-½ acre site for a hotel, while the lot for sale by the owner is 3-½ acres. He added the current owners of the subject property owned, developed and have managed the Holiday Inn Express and Comfort Inn and Suites east of Okemos and south of Jolly Roads and are very familiar with the need/demand for the proposed type of hotel. Mr. Pierson indicated the traffic study undertaken for this seven day per week operation shows considerably lower usage during peak traffic hours than other commercial uses and would not add significant congestion to the Jolly/Okemos Road intersection. He noted C-2 uses (e.g., supermarket) could produce an additional 5,000 vehicle trips per day; hence the need to propose a conditional rezoning in order to obtain approval.

Mr. Pierson stated there are no wetlands on the site, and the drainage is an already built-out shared detention area. He believed the proposed project (home2 suites, a Hilton product) to be a good office-related use and the occupants of the proposed hotel will help support long term retail uses within Meridian Crossings.

- Public
Leonard Provencher, 5824 Buena Parkway, Haslett, spoke in support of the proposed rezoning request as the proposal is in character with the surrounding area.
- Planning Commission discussion:
Commissioner Cordill inquired if there would be a restaurant or bar within the hotel.

Mr. Pierson stated he did not believe there are plans for a bar and limited breakfast options will be available.

Commissioner Deits inquired as to the applicant's plans for the other acre of the 3-½ acre site.

Mr. Pierson indicated there are no plans, unless the hotel takes off and needs to expand. He spoke to the need to include all the acreage within the request to allow for such an expansion if needed.

Commissioner Deits expressed appreciation for the quality of existing home2 suites at which he has stayed.

Commissioner Scott Craig inquired if Farrins Parkway will be made a public road at some point in the future.

Mr. Pierson responded it will not, and was designed as a private road as part of the office condominium development which has not happened.

Chair Jackson asked what roads will be completed as part of the proposed project.

Mr. Pierson responded Jolly Oak and Water Lily Way, as Farrins Parkway is already paved.

Commissioner Scott-Craig believed the letter written by the Township's traffic engineer does not reach any conclusion.

Principal Planner Oranchak indicated the letter concludes the proposed use generates much less traffic than another type of commercial use. She reminded Commissioners that at the rezoning stage, the Township's traffic engineer was looking at less complicated issues than during the development stage; especially since there is only one use being considered.

Commissioner Scott-Craig expressed concern that approval of the rezoning request would conflict with the current Future Land Use Map (FLUM).

Chair Jackson added the Planning Commission is considering changing conditions, economic reality for the area, and excessive vacant professional and office (PO) in the Township.

Commissioner Scott-Craig inquired if the Planning Commission would amend the FLUM at the same time or subsequently.

Chair Jackson indicated that would happen at some point in the future, but the Planning Commission could discuss this issue further.

Commissioner Scott-Craig asked if the Planning Commission was considering placing an expiration date on this condition.

Principal Planner Oranchak responded the Planning Commission could make that recommendation to the Township Board.

Commissioner Scott-Craig inquired as to what is a "normal" timespan.

Principal Planner Oranchak replied when conditions have been placed relative to an expiration date, the Board has been liberal in its decision, e.g., three (3) to five (5) years.

Commissioner Hildebrandt inquired as to the occupancy rate of the two hotels currently owned by the applicant.

William Brehm, owner of Holiday Inn Express and Comfort Inn, stated his hotels consistently have an occupancy rate in the 70th percentile, which is needed to be successful. He noted hotels do not run at 100% as there are peaks and valleys at different times during the year.

Commissioner Hildebrandt asked if there are times when the Holiday Inn Express and Comfort Inn are full, and there would be a need for additional rooms.

Mr. Brehm responded in the affirmative.

Commissioner Hildebrandt inquired as to how long it would take the applicant to break ground once the rezoning was approved.

Mr. Brehm estimated approximately one (1) year.

Commissioner Cordill inquired as to the square footage of the building if it reached its capacity of 135 rooms.

Mr. Brehm was unsure of exact footage of the building, but 135 rooms would be maximum in order to accommodate the required commensurate parking on the proposed site.

Mr. Pierson added it would be over 25,000 square feet, which is why a special use permit would be required. He added numbers can be supplied to the Planning Commission.

Commissioner Cordill noted the traffic consultant stated this proposal would generate less traffic than a 62,000 square foot office space, and asked if 62,000 was the maximum size of building which could be constructed on this parcel.

Principal Planner Oranchak responded in the affirmative.

Mr. Pierson added for a rezoning, the ordinance requires comparison of the maximum which could be built in the existing or the proposed zoning designation.

Chair Jackson inquired as to the number of lodging establishments within the Jolly Road/Okemos area.

Mr. Pierson responded there are currently five (5); three (3) in Alaiedon Township and two (2) in Meridian Township.

Chair Jackson asked for a definition of a suite.

Mr. Brehm replied a suite is intended for a longer stay customer, with more amenities in the room; refrigerator, microwave, larger working area. He noted it is intended for customers who require a multiple night stay.

Commissioner Deits stated the proposal is highly consistent with the current character of the region and that specific type of "audience" to provide customers for Meridian Crossings. He voiced support for the proposed project.

Commissioner Hildebrandt indicated the project is complimentary with existing uses in the surrounding area and a good conditional use of the property.

Chair Jackson noted she was always told the FLUM is dynamic and intended to change if the proposed change is justified.

Commissioner Ianni noted the property was rezoned to PO in 1989 and the area has significantly changed since then. He believed the expansion of Jackson National Life will provide a market for this type of use, and the hotel use will be complimentary to the surrounding offices, business and restaurants.

Commissioner Van Coevering expressed her support for this rezoning request.

Commissioner Scott-Craig expressed his support for this rezoning request,

Chair Jackson closed the public hearing at 7:51 P.M.

7. Unfinished Business (None)

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 offered an update on the rezoning request as outlined in staff memorandum dated June 5, 2014.

Planning Commission and staff discussion:

- Transitional land use as a design strategy
- Vacant or for sale homes in Briarwood which front Okemos Road
- A nearby eleven unit apartment complex (with a FLUM designation of 5-8 dwelling units per acre) fronts Okemos Road
- Subject parcel is currently zoned RR
- Eight of the 19 neighboring parcels were built to RC standards (up to 14 dwelling units per acre) for density but do not match the underlying FLUM designation (5-8 dwelling units per acre)
- Properties in the area to the north and east are zoned RC
- Inappropriateness of the Planning Commission to take economics into consideration when making a determination on a rezoning request
- Planning Commissioner belief the body is not considering a rezoning request, but performing a study for the Township Board
- Township Board requested the Planning Commission reconsider its recommendation for this request and recommend appropriate residential zoning designations
- Ability of the Planning Commission to support its original recommendation on this rezoning request
- Inability of the Planning Commission to negotiate or place conditions on the proposed rezoning request
- Possibility of changing the area to a higher residential density category on the FLUM would be consistent, for the most part, with the surrounding current zoning and land use
- Changing those parcels to RC would be going back to a style of multiple family design dating back to the 70's where high density multi-family use (RC or RD) is directly accessed from Okemos Road
- Planning Commissioner preference to update the FLUM
- Request for clarification if South Okemos Road is a high PO vacancy area
- Distinction was made during the presentation between an office complex/office park and a single use office building
- Properties to the south of this parcel are zoned RR (child care facility, church), uses permitted by SUP as a non-residential use in a residential district

- No incompatibility with parcels directly to the south by having this parcel rezoned to PO
- Previous public comment expressing concern with zoning creep into the residential areas to the north and east
- Planning Commissioner concern with rezoning this parcel to RC and then having the Ingham County Road Department (ICRD) not allow an ingress/egress onto Okemos Road
- ICRD would have difficulty prohibiting the use of the land by excluding direct access onto Okemos Road as the subject parcel is land locked from using either Fox Hollow or Woodleaf as an ingress/egress
- Planning Commission consideration of what “works” on Okemos Road
- Lack of viability for high density residential or single family residential on Okemos Road
- Subject parcel currently is a vacant site and will likely remain as such until a viable project is presented
- No intention by the Planning Commission to rezone the seven (7) residential parcels north of Bickford Cottage on Okemos Road to anything but a residential designation
- Possibility of access to a side street through the adjacent apartment building land
- Spot zoning v. spot uses
- Recommended compromise of PO zoning as the correct designation
- RC designation would be consistent with surrounding uses to the north and east
- Two properties immediately south of the subject parcel are zoned RR and are non-residential uses in a residential district (i.e., day care and church) by SUP and do not conform to the FLUM
- Need to consider what would be successful appropriate uses for the seven residential properties to the north along Okemos Road, a major artery in Meridian Township
- Necessity of updating the FLUM for this entire area
- Inquiry if the Township has excess unoccupied multiple family in the Township
- Township staff to investigate the vacancy rates for multiple family housing
- Consideration of another category on the FLUM for properties designated residential on major arteries, but not being used as such (e.g., neighborhood service)
- Concern that different types of services fit into different types of zoning
- Planning Commissioner interpretation that the Board was requesting information about regional choices in future land use planning v. how the Township’s current master plan is laid out
- Possible Planning Commission specificity through verbiage in its planning guidance to the Board
- Seven (7) residential parcels north of Bickford Cottage on Okemos Road will be difficult to develop as residential due to the amount of traffic on Okemos Road
- Minimal choices for development of this residentially zoned property as a non-residential use given the small size of the parcel
- Many residential homes are located on busy streets
- Zoning designation does not make the property undesirable given all the nearby adjacent RC uses
- Property on the corner north of Fox Hollow and Okemos Road is a single family residence which is zoned RX (single family or duplex)
- Township Board has the option to choose a different zoning category
- Impractical to select RR or RC as the zoning designation for the subject parcel as it fairly unique due to a lack of ingress/egress except onto Okemos Road
- Option to recommend Board acceptance of PO or do nothing until an applicant brings forth a proposal to use the site

- There is no rationale for preemptively rezoning the subject parcel to RC, RD or RX as no one is making such a request
- PO zoning designation would allow for the possibility of a mixed use planned unit development (MUPUD) in the future
- Size of the parcel will limit the size of the office building on the subject parcel and aids in the transition
- Concern that changing residential communities into office space/parks is not what the FLUM was intended for
- Depth of the lots under discussion would not allow for their development as an office park
- Necessity of having the Board approve the rezoning before the FLUM is changed
- Option to recommend the three (3) southern properties fronting Okemos Road (subject parcel and the day care) be designated on the FLUM as office and use the rationale for the new designations on the FLUM to renew the Planning Commission's recommendation to the Township Board to rezone the subject parcel to PO
- Pattern is high intensity going "up" (north) Okemos Road, a typical transitional land use scheme where there is commercial, office, multiple family, single family then multiple family higher density, higher density single family and schools (institutional) out further before reaching the Delta Dental offices
- Some pockets of parcels along Okemos Road were viable uses many years ago, but need to be revisited
- Future discussion for the 'strip' of parcels in front of Briarwood along Okemos Road
- Reminder that the Planning Commission should also consider transitional zoning from east to west
- Inquiry if the Board's intent is to have the Planning Commission hold off on a change in use until the FLUM is changed to be consistent with the proposals
- There will always be a proposal which comes before the Planning Commission which differs from the FLUM and the rezoning criteria are available to use at that time
- There will be times when the Planning Commission will need to be proactive and look at making changes to the FLUM as part of the update process even though there is no rezoning request before it
- Possible development of a process for the Planning Commission to recommend a rezoning and commensurate change on the FLUM in tandem
- Change on the FLUM is a different process from the rezoning, even though the rationale for the change is the same
- FLUM would not be amended until the Board approves the rezoning
- Concern with the timing of the change being shown on the FLUM when the rezoning's conditional use "fell through" due to expiration of the timeframe
- Consideration that the FLUM should not be changed until there is actual development

It was the consensus of the Planning Commission to make changes to the FLUM as discussed and reaffirm its recommendation of PO for Rezoning #14020.

[Chair Jackson recessed the meeting at 9:32 P.M.]

[Chair Jackson reconvened the meeting at 9:39 P.M.]

- B. Compare approved rezonings to the 2005 Master Plan Future Land Use Map designations
Principal Planner Oranchak summarized the two remaining inconsistencies (Maps #3 and #7) between the Future Land Use Map and approved rezonings since 2005 as outlined in staff memorandum dated June 5, 2014.

Planning Commission discussion:

- Original designations of other Land Preservation parcels on the FLUM have been retained
- Land Preservation parcels in the northwest corner of the Township have an institutional designation on the FLUM
- Map #3, Case #05020 should be designated mixed use on the FLUM
- Planning Commissioner belief the area near Map #3 utilized transitional zoning (west to east) and is not the same thing as mixed use
- If the property owners desired to develop Map #3 as a mixed use, the Planning Commission would have the ability during the review to ensure transitional methods were used
- Land Preservation funds have specific and restricted conditions attached to their use
- Definition of Land Preservation (LP) land is a unique use restriction
- Suggestion to create a LP category on the FLUM
- Zoning designation for LP parcels could be changed once protective conditions have been created
- Use of taxpayer Land Preservation millage money to purchase these parcels create the need for their preservation
- Setbacks for Map #7, currently zoned C-2, do not protect it from the adjacent C-2 land
- Future zoning district of LP would protect citizen's financial investment in land preservation parcels
- Staff preference to retain the institutional designation for land preservation property as categories have a broad range of uses
- Staff suggestion to add LP to the list of institutional uses on the FLUM as most institutional uses are owned by the government (e.g., parks, schools, fire stations, etc.)
- Previous discussion that all Township properties may be placed in one zoning category
- Land Preservation Ordinance created specific regulations for land preservation property, including restrictions as to their sale
- Inquiry if setback standards could be added to the Land Preservation Ordinance
- Setbacks typically exist in other zoning districts
- LP property is different from other Township owned property as it has passive uses
- Request for input from the Land Preservation Advisory Board during the preliminary discussion of a zoning amendment regarding issues related to development of adjacent parcels
- Use of an institutional piece of Township owned property is dramatically different than LP property
- Preference to distinguish LP property from other institutional categories on the FLUM
- Each type of property in the institutional category has its own icon on the FLUM
- FLUM is intended to not be site specific but grouped together and then individually identified through icons
- Consensus of the Planning Commission to create a separate category on the FLUM for LP property
- Consensus of the Planning Commission to change Fedewa property from 1.25-3.5 to commercial as the Board has approved the rezoning
- Request to add MSU as dark green in the key
- Preference to free up dark green for LP property in the key
- Staff to obtain accurate map colors

It was the consensus of the Planning Commission to designate on the FLUM Map #3 (Case #05020) as mixed use, change Map #7 to a separate category for LP property, and change Rezoning #14030 from residential 1.25-3.5 dwelling units per acre to commercial.

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

Commissioner Hildebrandt reminded residents of the Celebrate Downtown Okemos Event to be held on Saturday, June 14th from noon until 9:00 P.M. She noted Friends of Okemos Library are starting a community conversation monthly series the third Wednesday of each month at 7:00 P.M. at the Okemos Library; adding the speaker on June 18th will be Russ Allen from Farm Fresh Seafood speaking on farming fish and its environmental and economic impacts. Commissioner Hildebrandt additional information is available on Capital Area District Library's website.

Commissioner Deits spoke to the park millage request which will be on the August 5th Primary ballot and encouraged residents to research information on the topic.

Chair Jackson reminded residents they have the option to vote absentee in the event they will be out of town for the August 5th Primary Election.

10. New applications

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

11. Site plans received

- A. Site Plan Review #14-08 (Milligan & Martin Westside), request to construct a commercial kennel at 1284 Grand River

12. Site plans approved (None)

13. Public remarks

Chair Jackson opened and closed public remarks.

14. Adjournment

Chair Jackson adjourned the regular meeting at 10:14 P.M.

Respectfully Submitted,

Sandra K. Otto
Recording Secretary