

**CHARTER TOWNSHIP OF MERIDIAN
PLANNING COMMISSION
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES
October 13, 2014**

APPROVED

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

PRESENT: Commissioners Cordill, Deits, Hildebrandt, Honicky, Ianni, Jackson, Salehi, Scott-Craig, Van Coevering
ABSENT: None
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 Ianni moved to approve the agenda. Seconded by Commissioner Hildebrandt.

VOICE VOTE: Motion carried unanimously.

3. Approval of Minutes

Commissioner Cordill moved to approve the Regular Meeting Minutes of September 22, 2014. Seconded by Commissioner Hildebrandt.

VOICE VOTE: Motion carried unanimously.

4. Public Remarks

Chair Jackson opened the floor for public remarks.

Treasurer Brixie, 2294 Hamilton Road, Okemos, shared information relative to the Board's recent resolution to save a 36" diameter tree on Cornell Road to save the tree from Ingham County Road Department (ICRD) removal. She apprised the Planning Commission the Board also initiated an ordinance amendment to the Township's tree ordinance in an effort to protect significant trees within the Township.

Chair Jackson closed public remarks.

5. Communications (None)

6. Public hearings

A. Rezoning #14050 (Planning Commission), rezone approximately 16 acres from C-2 (Commercial) to RR (Rural Residential) located on the east side of Saginaw Highway between Lake Lansing and Newton Roads

Chair Jackson opened the public hearing at 7:05 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 October 9, 2014.

- Public

Julie Brixie, Board representative to the Land Preservation Advisory Board (LPAB), 2294 Hamilton Road, Okemos, spoke in opposition to the proposed rezoning. She relayed the subject parcel is not the only commercially zoned land preservation property. Treasurer Brixie explained the main focus of the LPAB has been land acquisition, and recent focus has now included land management.

Treasurer Brixie explained the LPAB believes this rezoning will have a negative impact on the LPAB land acquisition process as often a land owner will sell a portion of the property to the LPAB program and retain the remainder. She stated significantly changing the setback requirements through rezoning would be an impediment to the ability of the donating resident/seller to develop the portion retained. Treasurer Brixie stated members of the LPAB had confidence in both the Planning Commission and Township Board in protecting the Township's interest during the entire development process.

Jerry Fedewa, 5570 Okemos Road, East Lansing, spoke in opposition to the rezoning request as he believed it would "downgrade" the land he owns adjacent to the subject property. He requested the possible use of the site plan review process to create the necessary buffers which initially caused Planning Commissioner concern. Mr. Fedewa inquired if a traffic study has been conducted for this rezoning request. He believed this change will affect property he owns adjacent to land preservation property. Mr. Fedewa stated there are ways to protect LPAB property without rezoning it to residential. He reminded the Planning Commission that six (6) months ago it stated this location was right for commercial zoning. Mr. Fedewa indicated there are ways to protect the subject parcel without changing the zoning designation.

- Planning Commission and staff discussion:

Principal Planner Oranchak responded to earlier public inquiry by stating a traffic study is not required as it is based on the use or potential use and whether the change from one zoning category to another would generate more traffic. She stated that since land preservation property has very low traffic impact, the study is not needed.

Ms. Van Coevering questioned whether there was initial Planning Commission consensus to rezone the subject parcel.

Principal Planner Oranchak responded in the affirmative, noting the rezoning process was properly initiated by the Planning Commission earlier this year.

Commissioner Van Coevering voiced her objection to rezoning this parcel to RR (rural residential).

Commissioner Ianni expressed opposition to the rezoning after hearing from the adjacent property owner and the LPAB representative. He noted site plan review will "protect" the LPAB property.

Commissioner Hildebrandt requested history on the Newman Equities property acquisition. She also inquired if the subject parcel was purchased in an effort to protect its significant wetlands.

Treasurer Brixie replied the Newman Equities property was the first development proposal to look at the Township's greenspace plan, adding the LPAB does not typically seek out properties for purchase which are entirely wetlands. She noted LPAB looks for land to purchase which has more developable upland; however, if a parcel is located in an area which is in a priority conservation corridor, the LPAB will accept donations with significant wetlands. Treasurer Brixie reminded Planning Commissioners that wetlands are already preserved through the state and Township ordinances.

Commissioner Hildebrandt asked if the LPAB looks for property with specific value(s) which set them apart to preserve. She further inquired what specific features of the subject property created interest from the LPAB to preserve.

Treasurer Brixie responded she was not the Board representative to the LPAB at the time of the subject parcel's purchase. She stated there is a combination of upland and wetland with substantial stands of hardwood trees.

Commissioner Scott-Craig recalled that during the original Planning Commission discussion on this topic, the possibility of creating a special category to more easily identify land preservation property on either the zoning map or Future Land Use Map was considered.

Chair Jackson believed there was also concern expressed about the relationship of setbacks to passive use by residents.

Commissioner Salehi agreed that changing the zoning on a parcel after it has been acquired through the land preservation process will diminish the ability of the LPAB to acquire properties.

Commissioner Van Coevering inquired if site plan review could address the setback issue.

Principal Planner Oranchak responded setbacks are established by ordinance, but site plan review can consider how to mitigate any impact on adjacent property (e.g., landscaping) and will ensure the proper wetland setback is in place.

Commissioner Deits believed one of the motivations for this action was a Board suggested effort to align the zoning and land use maps to pinpoint inconsistencies. He stated he has no problem not rezoning this parcel if the LPAB does not want a change. Commissioner Deits believed the special land, purchased with taxpayer dollars, should have their level of review raised by going through the special use permit (SUP) process.

Commissioner Cordill clarified SUPs are handled through Township bodies during evening meetings while site plan reviews are conducted during the work day. She agreed some protection (i.e., SUP) would encourage the integrity of the land preservation parcel.

Chair Jackson spoke to the need to address the conflict when attempting to align the FLUM categorization with zoning.

Principal Planner Oranchak replied the Planning Commission reviewed this matter several months ago when it assessed all the zonings since the Master Plan was adopted, one of which was the subject parcel. She noted the Commission made a decision to not change the underlying Master Plan category which is residential (1.25-3.5 dwelling units per acre).

Commissioner Ianni requested the LPAB representative speak to potentially having a SUP process, instead of site plan review, for land preservation property.

Treasurer Brixie replied the LPAB relies on a good relationship with property owners when going through the land acquisition process. She noted being a neighbor of land preservation property is an asset in Meridian Township. Treasurer Brixie expressed confidence in the Director of Community Planning and Development to continue considering the interests of the land preserves when issuing building permits and administering the site plan review process. She added the LPAB believes the Township itself controls the development approval process and is a protection for Township preserves.

Treasurer Brixie indicated having adjacent property owners go through the site plan review process treats the land preserves differently and the LPAB has faith the protections afforded everyone are sufficient for land preservation property. She reminded Planning Commissioners the reason for purchasing these properties are to prevent development of the preserves. Treasurer Brixie spoke to the poor precedent which would be set to have a different level of development standards for an owner of property adjacent to a land preserve. She believed such action would have a negative impact on negotiation of both sales and donations in the land acquisition process.

Treasurer Brixie asked staff what was the cost of a SUP application.

Principal Planner Oranchak responded the application is \$500, plus a \$40 fee for each additional acre of land.

Treasurer Brixie inquired as to the noticing requirements for the site plan review process.

Principal Planner Oranchak responded a public notice is published in the newspaper and adjacent property owners are notified by letter.

Commissioner Scott-Craig inquired as to the next step in the process.

Chair Jackson explained a resolution on the rezoning request will be provided to the Planning Commission.

Further Planning Commission and staff discussion:

- Waste of staff and Commission time to bring forth a resolution to approve which is then voted down
- Resolution to deny would be the preferable action to come before the Planning Commission
- Option to withdraw the Commission's initiation of the rezoning so the Planning Commission's recommendation would not need to go before the Township Board
- Subject parcel was zoned RR until 2007
- Purchase price was between \$400,000-\$500,000

Commissioner Ianni moved to withdraw the Planning Commission's request to rezone the property in Rezoning #14050 for the reasons discussed at tonight's meeting. Seconded by Commissioner Van Coevering.

VOICE VOTE: Motion carried unanimously.

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

7. Unfinished Business (None)

8. Other Business

A. City of Williamston Master Plan Review

Planning Commission discussion:

- Appreciation for the executive summary
- Appreciation for the brevity and conciseness of their Master Plan
- Number of City of Williamston residents who work in Meridian Township
- Need for Meridian Township to refocus on who is its audience
- Appreciation for the City of Williamston's action plan as each goal and objective was measurable
- Only 5% participation rate in response to the survey
- Importance of a random sampling of the population
- Report stated there was an undersampling of a younger age group so it did not meet the criteria for a random sample
- Lack of building within the community since 2010
- City of Williamston is experiencing an aging population without providing housing for those individuals who will care for persons in nursing homes and extended care facilities
- Submitted Master Plan lacked substance
- Numbers and details should be in the appendices
- Objective of Williamston Township to maintain large agricultural areas and "push" residential uses towards the City of Williamston

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

Commissioner Deits expressed appreciation for the state-wide media coverage on the well-attended Lansing Maker Week Event. He encouraged Meridian Township to consider becoming part of this event to promote entrepreneurship for young people.

Commissioner Scott-Craig announced the Tri-County Regional Planning Commission sponsored Farmland Tour will be held on Friday, October 17th, commencing at noon beginning at the Red Cedar Spirits

Principal Planner Oranchak announced she had a conversation with Wayne Beyea regarding the sustainability assessment tool and he would like to make a presentation to the Planning Commission. She offered times of November 3rd as a special work session, November 10th as part of the regular Planning Commission meeting or November 17th as a special work session.

Commissioner Scott-Craig reminded fellow Commissioners they received a notice on this program's training on October 23rd and two online training sessions the following week. He believed it a good idea to go through the training prior to Mr. Beyea's presentation.

It was the consensus of the Planning Commission to request Mr. Beyea present the sustainability assessment tool on November 10th after the regular meeting.

10. New applications

- A. *Special Use Permit #14101 (Krumm), request to operate a pre-school at 1251 Sweetwood Drive, Okemos

- B. Rezoning #14070 (Township Board), request to rezone 0.5 acres at 2150 Clinton Street from RB (Single Family-High Density) to C-2 (Commercial)

11. Site plans received (None)

12. Site plans approved (None)

13. Public remarks

Chair Jackson opened and closed public remarks.

14. Adjournment

Chair Jackson adjourned the regular meeting at 8:15 P.M.

Respectfully Submitted,

Sandra K. Otto
Recording Secretary