

**CHARTER TOWNSHIP OF MERIDIAN
PLANNING COMMISSION
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES
September 8, 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 (7:04 P.M.), Scott-Craig, Van Coevering
ABSENT: Commissioner Honicky
STAFF: Director of Community Planning and Development Mark Kieselbach, Principal Planner Gail Oranchak, Associate Planner Martha Wyatt

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 Ianni.

VOICE VOTE: Motion carried 7-0.

3. Approval of Minutes

Commissioner Scott-Craig moved to approve the Regular Meeting Minutes of August 25, 2014. Seconded by Commissioner Ianni.

VOICE VOTE: Motion carried 7-0.

4. Public Remarks

Chair Jackson opened the floor for public remarks.

Neil Bowlby, 6020 Beechwood Drive, Haslett, addressed a statement contained in the letter from KEBS, Inc. relative to Special Use Permit (SUP) #14091 and the use of the groundwater vulnerability map contained in the "old" Master Plan to determine the location for the all-suites hotel to be free of concern. He noted the groundwater vulnerability map was referenced during the hearing before the Board on the new central fire station and the Township's environmental consultant pointed out that map is a "Source of Groundwater Vulnerability Information and makes no claim to whether the map actually shows areas of groundwater vulnerability." Mr. Bowlby believed this map should not be used in the future as a basis to claim there is no groundwater vulnerability. He spoke to approaching the Master Plan from a land use perspective. Mr. Bowlby addressed the need to find a way to obtain public involvement in Township meetings.

Chair Jackson closed public remarks.

5. Communications

A. Mike and Jackie Christie, 6399 E. Reynolds Road and Marcy Plant, 6401 E. Reynolds Road, Haslett; RE: SUP #14-13111 (Hunnicut)

6. Public hearings

A. Special Use Permit #14091 (Boomer Group), request to construct an approximate 55,561 square foot hotel with 107 rooms on the northeast corner of Jolly Oak Road and Water Lily Way

Chair Jackson opened the public hearing at 7:06 P.M.

- Introduction by the Chair (announcement of procedures, time limits and protocols for public participation and applicants)
- Summary of subject matter
Associate Planner Wyatt summarized the special use permit (SUP) request as outlined in staff memorandum dated September 5, 2014.
- Applicant
Susan Bowers, Bowers and Associates, 2400 South Huron Parkway, Ann Arbor (architect for the building) noted many of the issues brought up by staff will be decided during site plan review once the SUP is approved. She stated there are no plans to have any meeting rooms on the first floor.
- Public
Emily Conway, JPMS, Inc. (owner of Staybridge Hotel in Okemos), 605 S. Capitol Avenue, Lansing, stated this applicant has not been required to provide a letter from a third party hotel consultant proving this project is feasible as was required of Staybridge. She questioned the quality of the hotel given 107 rooms in 55,561 square feet compared to Staybridge's 95 rooms in 69,770 square feet.
- Planning Commission discussion:
Commissioner Ianni inquired as to the applicant's intent about changes to the dumpster's location and the two driveways on Jolly Oak Road.

Ms. Bowers responded the dumpster location can be changed, brought closer to the building or be made part of the building. She noted adjustments can be made to the drive to accommodate concerns raised by staff in its report.

Commissioner Ianni asked if there would be adjustments to the current 55 mile per hour speed limit.

Ms. Bowers stated the applicant could not have two (2) drives if the speed limit remained at 55 m.p.h. but would be allowed with a 35 m.p.h. speed limit. She did not believe anyone could accelerate to 55 m.p.h. before making the turn on Jolly Oak Road.

Associate Planner Wyatt added the applicant would still need a variance for two driveways on a local road even if the spacing was changed and the speed limit reduced.

Commissioner Deits inquired if the speed limit on all unsigned local roads in Meridian Township is 55 m.p.h.

Associate Planner Wyatt responded in the affirmative.

Commissioner Deits inquired as to the Commission's legal status if it approved the SUP without conditioning it upon driveways being in compliance with the 55 m.p.h. speed limit. He stated the eastern driveway is illegal as it is not 350 feet from the adjacent driveway as required for a road with a 55 m.p.h. speed limit. Commissioner Deits added there is observed evidence contained in the traffic study that, according to the 85% rule, the speed on Jolly Oak Road is 35 m.p.h.

Director Kieselbach noted the Planning Commission could condition SUP approval on obtaining a variance from the Zoning Board of Appeals (ZBA) on the number of driveways. He believed the Planning Commission could also condition approval upon meeting the requirements based on the traffic study to be performed by the State Police. Director Kieselbach reminded Commissioners the Ingham County Road Department (ICRD) has already stated it does not want two (2) driveways as it will not meet the ICRD's spacing requirements. He believed the Planning Commission could approve this SUP conditioned upon meeting ICRD approval and meeting the standards of the ordinance regarding separation of driveways, if more than one, if the speed limit is reduced to 35 m.p.h.

Commissioner Deits voiced concern with the length of time it will take for the State Police to conduct its processes for a speed limit reduction, while acknowledging there is no indication the State Police will make that change.

Director Kieselbach stated the ICRD has already requested the State Police perform the speed limit study.

Commissioner Deits commented it does not make sense for the applicant to comply with the 55 m.p.h. speed limit given the information received in the traffic study.

Chair Jackson stated she did not believe anyone is advocating for the 35 m.p.h. v. 55 m.p.h. speed limit.

Commissioner Van Coevering stated the SUP approval could be conditioned upon receiving approval from the State Police for a 35 m.p.h speed limit.

Director Kieselbach suggested if the Planning Commission wants to proceed on this request, it could provide conditions in the SUP approval if it stays at 55 m.p.h. and conditions if it is changed to 35 m.p.h.

Commissioner Hildebrandt inquired if any thought had been given to placing one of the driveways on Water Lily Way.

Director Kieselbach acknowledged that while the ICRD made the suggestion during review of the design for a driveway on Water Lily Way, he was unsure whether the applicant had considered it.

Ms. Bowers added the reason the two driveways are shown on Jolly Oak Road is that is where the existing curb cuts are located. She stated the applicant would have no problem placing one access point off Jolly Oak Road and one off Water Lily Way.

Commissioner Hildebrandt believed having one access point on each road would allow for the eastern most driveway to be moved, making that variance request unnecessary. She stated her preference to have that change made on the plan which comes before the Planning Commission for approval.

Chair Jackson added that the Planning Commission could make the driveway change a condition of approval.

Commissioner Scott-Craig noted the placement of the eastern most driveway by the ICRD is directly across from a driveway for the neighboring hotel. He indicated there have been other instances where the ICRD has objected to offset driveways.

Commissioner Cordill believed it appropriate for Jolly Oak Road to have one driveway, one farther east for cars entering the premises to commence the registration process. She inquired as to the rationale for a four (4) story building, as it is in a primarily one (1) story commercial building area.

Ms. Bowers responded four (4) stories allow for the smallest footprint while constructing the requisite number of rooms required in order for the project to be feasible.

Commissioner Cordill believed that as parcels in the area develop, speed limits will continue to be lowered.

Commissioner Van Coevering inquired if there are plans for Farrins Parkway, currently a private road, to be made a public road.

Ms. Wyatt indicated there is not.

Commissioner Salehi noted the staff report states completion of Farrins Parkway and Water Lily Way will be a condition of the SUP approval. He asked if the cost would be borne by the applicant.

Associate Planner Wyatt believed that in the purchase agreement, the current owner (Mr. Forsberg) will finish both roads up to the point they meet one another.

Commissioner Scott-Craig asked if the sidewalk widths and bicycle parking “would be taken care of” as the Township has not heard back from its traffic consultant regarding the traffic study.

Ms. Wyatt is looking for information back from the Township’s traffic consultant prior to the next Planning Commission meeting on this SUP request.

Commissioner Scott-Craig noted the traffic study certified a level of service (LOS) A coming out of both driveways onto Jolly Oak. He believed the real issue which needs to be addressed by the traffic consultant is one of traffic exiting from Jolly Oak onto either Okemos Road or Jolly Road.

Commissioner Scott-Craig indicated the staff report stated the land drops approximately nine (9) feet from one corner to another, while the report from KEBS, Inc. noted a drop between 20 and 24 feet.

Associate Planner Wyatt stated she would look at the grading plan and report back to the Planning Commission.

Commissioner Scott-Craig noted the Hilton website showed a variety of exterior building materials. He asked if it would be possible to change out some of the surfaces to be more harmonious with the surrounding area (which is predominantly brick).

Ms. Bowers added the rendering is a new brand of Hilton franchise, called Home2 Suites, indicating it is the prototypical look for this franchise.

Commissioner Scott-Craig stated he went on-line to preview the facades of other Home2 Suites, and there are many different looks. He noted one of the Township's conditions is that the building be harmonious with the surrounding neighborhood, and suggested changing out some of the surfaces to brick.

Ms. Bower indicated the applicant is not opposed to adding more brick to the project, while noting the amount of brick must be harmonious with the concept embraced by the franchise for its hotels.

Commissioner Deits expressed concern with earlier comment regarding making the hotel look like the surrounding buildings relative to the amount of brick used. He did not believe harmonious meant identical. Commissioner Deits noted the Hilton chain is a designed focused chain which "sells" its design features. He believed the Commission must be cognizant of the intent of the franchise to market their brand and differentiate themselves.

Commissioner Cordill added that similar building materials like brick can be used, but the building could be distinguished from others through the use of "architectural style."

Commissioner Salehi inquired about the Township requirement for Staybridge to obtain a feasibility letter from a third party hotel consultant prior to its construction.

Commissioner Deits explained that was a request from a Planning Commissioner, in part, because the Township had allowed hotels in C-2 for the first time with approval of that project.

Commissioner Salehi stated that since his appointment to the Planning Commission, the Commission has not addressed the feasibility of a business looking to construct a building within the Township.

Chair Jackson added at the meeting which dealt with the rezoning, there was extensive discussion on the pending need for this type of use in this location, believing that was an exploration of feasibility at this location.

Commissioner Hildebrandt noted the staff report implied the wetlands were filled in one corner of the property. She stated when she walked the property late Sunday there was a wet "mucky" area midway along the eastern side.

Commissioner Deits stated it could be run off from adjacent property to the east which is infiltrating into the area and suggested staff look into it as there is a great deal of impervious surface along the property line.

Chair Jackson inquired about Hilton's philosophy regarding building in a community.

Ms. Bowers responded each hotel is individually owned with varying interior and exterior options (urban v. suburban, country, etc).

Chair Jackson noted sustainability is an important component of Hilton's corporate philosophy, adding the greatest variation in similarly sized buildings on Hilton's website was the amount of brick. She was supportive of using additional brick on the exterior of the proposed project.

Chair Jackson indicated the plan calls for 107 rooms with 20 staff on the first shift, but only 118 parking spaces.

Ms. Bowers clarified the first shift is the changeover shift which clean all the rooms, but do not all arrive at the same time prior to checkout. She stated 118 parking spaces should adequately serve occupancy plus a staff of 20 for that shift.

Commissioner Salehi spoke in favor of using less brick for the façade, pointing to new buildings in Lansing and East Lansing constructed by Gillespie Group which do not have any brick at all.

Commissioner Van Coevering expressed appreciation for the diversity of design and used downtown Grand Rapids as an example.

Chair Jackson inquired about the sustainability of all exterior surfaces which are not brick.

Ms. Bowers explained fiber cement board, which consists of cement and fiber and is a renewable material with long life similar to brick. She indicated capstone is a cement based product made of renewable material, structural steel is a renewable material and exterior insulation and finishing material offers a sustainability factor, albeit not renewable material.

Chair Jackson closed the public hearing at 8:00 P.M.

- B. *Special Use Permit #14081 (Hunnicuttt), request to place fill in the 100-year floodplain of Lake Lansing associated with installation of a seawall at 6415 E. Reynolds Road

Chair Jackson opened the public hearing at 8:00 P.M.

- Summary of subject matter
Principal Planner Oranchak summarized the special use permit request as outlined in staff memorandum dated September 4, 2014.
- Applicant
Roger Hunnicutt, 7640 E. Cutler Road, Bath, spoke to the ongoing safety hazard of the seawall and the need to address this issue. He read a letter from the property owner, Mr. Zsigo, which outlined the process intended to be used.
- Planning Commission discussion:
Commissioner Cordill inquired as to the thickness of the corrugated vinyl.

Mr. Hunnicutt replied he has not actually seen the product, but appears to be approximately four (4) to five (5) inches. He added the 6" X 6" post shown on the overhead would be notched into the existing concrete slope, but engineered concrete fill must come "down" to the floodline in order to create a seal. Mr. Hunnicutt stated the post would be placed four (4) to five (5) feet into the floodline of the lake.

Commissioner Ianni stated one of the neighbors was concerned with a change in the flow of water and asked what impact, if any, the project would have on the flow of water in Lake Lansing.

Mr. Hunnicutt responded the water level currently meets the wall at that intersection, so the requested change would not affect the water flow.

Commissioner Deits inquired if it would be a correct statement to say adding the work on the lake side plus the rip rap against the base to the lake bottom and then subtracting the size of the footing, concrete and ramp being removed would result in no net effect on the volume of the lake.

Principal Planner Oranchak responded in the affirmative, adding that rip rap does not count towards fill. The cut to fill ratio is 1:1.

Commissioner Hildebrandt inquired as to this project's effect on neighboring properties after a storm or large rain event.

Mr. Hunnicutt showed a picture of a similar seawall on an adjacent parcel to the west, noting the higher the water the greater the distance the new wall will step out, but none as high as the neighbor.

Commissioner Hildebrandt asked if there would be a change in the way the water moved around the lake if this was installed all along the shore.

Mr. Hunnicutt stated he spoke with a number of the neighbors who expressed more concern with the "pockets" catching the long weeds as they float in a circle around the lake.

Commissioner Scott-Craig asked about the color of the vinyl.

Mr. Hunnicutt responded he believed there were three (3) color selections, but the two (2) he has seen are tan and grey.

Chair Jackson noted the MDEQ permit addresses 12.44 cubic yards of backfill but the staff memorandum speaks to 8.5 cubic yards.

Principal Planner Oranchak was unsure as to why there is a discrepancy.

Mr. Hunnicutt clarified there was a design change and the post was set into the wall to make that change, stating that previously it was all going to sit in front of the existing wall, but has now been backed up to keep the one-to-one ratio.

Chair Jackson closed the public hearing at 8:18 P.M

- C. *Zoning Amendment #13040 (Planning Commission), amend multiple sections of the zoning ordinance to add Adult Care facilities

Chair Jackson opened the public hearing at 8:18 P.M.

- Summary of subject matter
Principal Planner Oranchak updated the Planning Commission on information relative to the proposed zoning amendment as outlined in staff memorandum dated September 4, 2014.
- Planning Commission discussion:
Commissioner Hildebrandt inquired as to the rationale for the one district which allows this use by right is rural residential (RR).

Chair Jackson replied the conditions spelled out in the rural residential district also apply to the other single family residential zoning districts.

Principal Planner Oranchak added the family adult care home (six (6) or fewer) would be a use by right and more than six (6) would be considered a group adult care home, which requires a special use permit (SUP) as a non-residential use in a residential district.

Commissioner Hildebrandt noted there are small rural residential lots which front major roads (e.g., Okemos Road) and her preference would be for this use on those types of lots to be by SUP.

Principal Planner Oranchak added the idea was to align this verbiage with language for child care (i.e., family child care, group child care) as child care is permitted in the same manner.

Commissioner Deits noted the definition of adult care center does not specify the allowed number of adults.

Principal Planner Oranchak responded there is no limit set as they typically are not in homes, but use a stand-alone building similar to child care centers. She stated the limitation could come from the Planning Commission's decision during the SUP process, dependent upon the size of the lot, number of parking spaces, etc.

Commissioner Salehi believed the exact number six (6) is precluded in the definition for family adult care home and suggested deleting the language "up to six (6)" and inserting "six (6) or fewer".

Principal Planner Oranchak suggested following the language for child care. She suggested verbiage which states "not more than six (6)" to replace "up to six (6)" in the family adult care home definition.

Chair Jackson requested a correction be made to the reference for Section 86-386(c) Uses permitted by special use permit to have it read Section 86-368(c).

Chair Jackson closed the public hearing at 8:29 P.M.

7. Unfinished Business

Commissioner Deits moved to suspend Planning Commission Bylaw 6.4a to consider Special Use Permit #14081 the same night as the public hearing. Seconded by Commissioner Van

Covering.

VOICE VOTE: Motion carried 7-1 (Hildebrandt).

A. *Special Use Permit #14081 (Hunnicut), request to place fill in the 100-year floodplain of Lake Lansing associated with installation of a seawall at 6415 E. Reynolds Road
Commissioner Ianni 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 #14081 subject to the following conditions:

- 1. Approval is subject to the plans and application materials submitted as part of Special Use Permit #14081, subject to revisions as required.**
- 2. The applicant shall obtain all necessary variances from the Zoning Board of Appeals prior to any work taking place related to the project or revise the plans so no variances are required.**
- 3. Design and construction of the seawall project shall comply with all conditions placed on the project by the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality Permit Number 14-33-0009-P.**
- 4. In no case shall the impoundment capacity of the floodplain be reduced.**
- 5. Fill placed in the floodplain as part of the project shall be protected against erosion pursuant to a soil erosion permit from the Department of Public Works & Engineering.**
- 6. The applicant shall properly dispose of all excess materials from the compensating cut areas to an off-site location subject to the approval of the Director of Community Planning & Development.**
- 7. The disposed materials at an off-site location shall be protected from erosion and re-seeded subject to the approval of the Director of Community Planning & Development.**

Seconded by Commissioner Cordill.

Planning Commission discussion:

- Project is being undertaken by the owner of the property as a safety measure
- 1:1 ratio will not increase the amount of fill in the lake
- Applicant already has MDEQ approval as well as approval by the Director of Public Works and Engineering
- Ordinance requires a minimum 1:1 ratio
- Ratio of cut to fill cannot be reduced
- Ordinance allows more cut than fill, but not more fill than cut

ROLL CALL VOTE: YEAS: Commissioners Cordill, Deits, Hildebrandt, Ianni, Salehi, Scott-Craig, Van Covering, Chair Jackson

NAYS: None

Motion carried 8-0.

- B. *Zoning Amendment #13040 (Planning Commission), amend multiple sections of the zoning ordinance to add Adult Care facilities

Commissioner Scott-Craig moved [and read into the record] NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THE PLANNING COMMISSION OF THE CHARTER TOWNSHIP OF MERIDIAN hereby recommends approval of Zoning Amendment #13040, to define adult care facilities, to create separate commercial conditional use entries, and to provide consistent terminology between adult and child care facilities by amending Section 86-2 Definitions, Section 86-368 RR district, Section 86-403 C-1 commercial district, Section 86-404 C-2 commercial district, Section 86-654 Nonresidential structures and uses in resident districts, and Section 86-755 Schedule of requirements for parking spaces. Seconded by Commissioner Ianni.

Planning Commission discussion:

- Absence of additional public input this evening could be interpreted as no objections

ROLL CALL VOTE: YEAS: Commissioners Cordill, Deits, Hildebrandt, Ianni, Salehi, Scott-Craig, Van Covering, Chair Jackson

NAYS: None

Motion carried 8-0.

Chair Jackson recessed the meeting at 8:44 P.M.

Chair Jackson reconvened the meeting at 8:52 P.M.

8. Other Business

A. 2005 Master Plan Update

Principal Planner Oranchak addressed the 2012 National Citizen Survey (NCS) and the Community Attitude Survey (CAS) conducted for the 2005 Mater Plan provided in the Planning Commission packet.

Planning Commission discussion:

- Improvement in bus travel
- Large standout is the absence of community involvement in all areas compared to the national average
- Township is below average in recycling
- Ranked 75th out of 76 jurisdictions in contact with the fire department
- 4% of survey participants were interested in having taxes reduced
- NCS survey is a public document
- Participants more likely to report crimes while experiencing little crime
- Retail growth seen as too slow
- Need for a recycling program for businesses and apartment complexes
- Poor condition of the road leading to the Township's recycling center
- Some of the desires of the individuals surveyed have come to fruition (e.g., housing and facilities for seniors, land preservation)
- 1998 survey provides useful questions
- CAS used the voting rolls from which to poll respondents
- How NCS obtains respondents
- Inquiry if funds are in the budget to conduct another NCS
- NSC initiated by the Township's administration
- Commissioner preference to conduct another NCS in 2015

- Level of participation in Commissioner preference for Master Plan subcommittee assignments

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

Principal Planner Oranchak noted there is a line item in the Planning Division's budget under the heading of outside services. She stated there is an increase of \$47,500 budgeted in 2015 to hire (a) consultant for the Master Plan.

Commissioner Deits addressed the need for improving community outreach (staff time, flyers and other ancillary items) which need to be budgeted for.

Principal Planner Oranchak replied there is no plan as of yet, so those costs cannot be determined. She stated scheduling community outreach during business hours will assist in keeping down those costs.

In response to Planning Commissioner inquiry, Principal Planner Oranchak provided a timeline for adoption of the 2015 Budget by the Board.

Commissioner Hildebrandt inquired if the Planning Commission's training session with the Township Attorney has been rescheduled and included in the 2015 budget.

Principal Planner Oranchak responded funding for that session would be included in the budget's line item for attorney services.

Commissioner Hildebrandt voiced appreciation for the Board's consideration of providing consulting services towards the 2005 Master Plan Update.

Commissioner Scott-Craig announced the Planning Commission's 2005 Master Plan Goals and Objectives public hearing scheduled for October 27th. He reported his attendance at a public hearing held at the Ingham County Drain Commissioner's office where he learned a great deal of information relative to the Township's drainage system. He suggested adding the drainage system to the Master Plan, since it is an important part of the Township's infrastructure.

Commissioner Hildebrandt reported the June Celebrate Downtown Okemos event was financially successful for the first time since its inception thanks, in part, to the tremendous support by Douglas J and Bodies in Motion.

10. New applications (None)

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 9:18 P.M.

Respectfully Submitted,

Sandra K. Otto
Recording Secretary