

**CHARTER TOWNSHIP OF MERIDIAN
PLANNING COMMISSION
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES
December 9, 2013**

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
ABSENT: Commissioner Norkin
STAFF: Principal Planner Gail Oranchak

1. Call meeting to order

Chair Jackson called the regular meeting to order at 7:01 P.M.

2. Approval of agenda

Commissioner Ianni moved to approve the agenda. Seconded by Commissioner Hildebrandt.

VOICE VOTE: Motion carried 8-0.

3. Approval of Minutes

Commissioner Cordill moved to approve the Work Session Minutes of November 4, 2013, the Regular Meeting Minutes of November 18, 2013 and the Regular Meeting Minutes of November 25, 2013. Seconded by Commissioner Scott-Craig.

VOICE VOTE: Motion carried 8-0.

4. Public Remarks

Chair Jackson opened the floor for public remarks.

David Strobl, 1320 Cove Court, Okemos, spoke to SUP #13121 (Central Fire Station) and offered a possible alternative to the threat of noise pollution. He indicated there has been no outreach to the Autumn Park Condominium owners by the Township.

Lawrence P. Nolan, 4765 Nakoma Drive, Okemos, attorney for the Autumn Park Condominium owners, inquired as to why SUP #13121 was not on tonight's agenda. He requested the Planning Commission not abandon the idea of future residential development in the area.

Chair Jackson closed public remarks.

5. Communications

- A. Bill and Marie Persons, 2028 Central Park Drive, Okemos; RE: SUP #13121
- B. Susan Simkin, 2032 Central Park Drive, Okemos; RE: SUP #13121

6. Public hearings

- A. Special Use Permit #13151 (Boggio), request to construct a Flagstar Bank with three drive-through lanes on the southeast corner of Grand River Avenue and Washington Heights Avenue

Chair Jackson opened the public hearing at 7:15 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 December 5, 2013.
- Applicant
Mike Boggio, Michael Boggio Associates, 30100 Telegraph Road, #216, Bingham Farms, offered sample of building materials. He indicated the building will serve two purposes, as a branch bank and loan center. Mr. Boggio stated a traffic analysis will be completed and submitted within a few weeks. He believed all issues discussed for this site have been resolved.
- Planning Commission discussion

Commissioner Ianni expressed interest in the information to be obtained from the traffic analysis, while acknowledging that such an analysis may not be needed as a large portion of the building will be office space. He indicated banks are uses permitted by right and the focus will be on the traffic generated by the drive-through lanes. Commissioner Ianni believed community banking is a good service to Township residents and the proposed project is a good development.

Commissioner Deits requested clarification regarding the three (3) drive-through teller lanes on the southeast corner of the bank which will be accessed through the south side of the bank. He asked for traffic management information for a second car which will be in “parallel” and inquired if there will be one lane of vehicles waiting their turn for three (3) drive-through lanes.

Mr. Boggio responded the site will allow two lanes for vehicles entering to stack up. He noted the first lane is an ATM only lane, with a remaining two lanes for use as automatic tellers. He indicated there will be signage clearly designating the ATM only lane, and it is anticipated the ATM lane will not experience any pronounced stacking, especially given its 24 hour access.

Commissioner Deits stated the land just north of the service drive on the drainage plan is designated as grass and expressed concern that it slopes off onto the next property.

Principal Planner Oranchak responded it is the natural grade and did not believe it presented an issue, adding the Engineering Department did not express any concern. She noted the Ingham County Drain Commissioner (ICDC) has also been contacted and did not raise concern with the grade.

Commissioner Deits requested the question surrounding the slope be asked to allay any fears regarding run-off on the adjacent property.

Principal Planner Oranchak indicated she will follow-up on that request.

Commissioner Honicky asked about the system used for numbering of the elevations.

Principal Planner Oranchak responded that, although not often done, the applicant has used a specific location on the site and then developed elevations based on that. She added that the Township's elevations are based on benchmarks located throughout the community and the applicant will be translating their elevations using the Township's benchmark system for any future plans. Principal Planner Oranchak noted the elevations and slopes are accurate, but do not use the number of feet above mean sea level.

Commissioner Cordill inquired if the driveway out to Washington Heights was necessary.

Principal Planner Oranchak responded it allows for better circulation and an alternative for vehicles traveling from south Hamilton Road which would otherwise have to turn onto Grand River. She added it is a more direct route to access the drive-through lanes.

Commissioner Cordill acknowledged it would aid in traffic circulation, but expressed concern with cut through traffic.

Mr. Boggio added the limited access drive is several blocks long and connects a number of properties. He noted the traffic engineer suggested the proposed change, and the applicant agreed to place the building as far as they could off Grand River to make the Grand River/Washington Heights intersection a safe one. He suggested a right turn only sign near the egress onto Washington Heights would alleviate traffic turning into the subdivision.

Principal Planner Oranchak reminded Planning Commissioners that the service drive to the north is required by Township ordinance. She stated the drive was moved to the location near the south property line as it was too close to the intersection as originally proposed and was the preferred location by the Ingham County Road Department (ICRD). She also noted this is part of the Grand River Overlay District requirements to keep as much traffic off of Grand River Avenue so that businesses can be accessed from the service drive. Ms. Oranchak stated the ingress/egress is 60 feet north of the south property line.

Commissioner Hildebrandt believed the exit from Dusty's which empties onto Washington Heights generates more trips than the proposed bank and does not believe there has been an issue with that as a cut-through.

Commissioner Cordill inquired if parking only on the west side of Washington Heights should be reversed once the bank is built.

Principal Planner Oranchak stated staff brought up that issue with the ICRD and there may be a requirement to sign the road near the access drive from that location north to Grand River Avenue.

Commissioner Scott-Craig spoke to the natural "berm" from the parking lot up to the level where the bank will be constructed. He believed some bank traffic will exit onto Washington Heights to avoid a left turn onto Grand River Avenue.

Commissioner Scott-Craig inquired if the Planning Commission will see the traffic study prior to a vote.

Principal Planner Oranchak was unsure as this special use permit request will be on the next Planning Commission's agenda. She offered the possibility of conditioning the approval upon inclusion of any recommendations as part of the traffic study and review by the Township's consultant.

Commissioner Scott-Craig wondered if there would be any information which comes out of the traffic study which would prejudice this project from moving forward.

Principal Planner Oranchak answered she did not believe that would be the case, while acknowledging there may be one or two minor issues to be dealt with during site plan review.

Commissioner Salehi inquired as to why a bank with drive-through lanes requires a SUP.

Chair Jackson responded it is required for drive-through lanes in order for the Planning Commission to examine the design and how the project fits into general circulation within the area, etc.

Principal Planner Oranchak added it is required so that traffic circulation, noise and possible conflicts between uses can be discussed.

Commissioner Salehi asked if the drive-through window should be placed along the west side of the property.

Mr. Boggio responded when traffic circulation was examined and stack-up was considered, access needed to be provided from the driver's side of the car. Having the drive-through window on the west indicated the stack-up around the front of the building and appear awkward. Placing it on the east side also allowed for segregation between customer parking and the drive-through lanes and it also would serve as a noise buffer for residential to the west.

Commissioner Salehi believed most drive-through customers would utilize the Grand River Avenue exit.

Mr. Boggio noted the customers who use the bank will use it frequently and develop their own traffic pattern to best meet their needs. Layout of the site as proposed will provide two alternatives.

Commissioner Salehi asked if the applicant considered a west-bound lane on the south side of the bank so customers could directly egress from Washington Heights.

Mr. Boggio replied that the aforementioned scenario was considered, but presented traffic pattern problems.

Commissioner Salehi pointed to the rendering of Flagstar Bank shown by the applicant and inquired as to what appeared to be a dumpster on the western side.

Mr. Boggio responded that the image in question is a transformer.

Commissioner Salehi asked if it is first come first served in C-2 commercial development when a developer approaches the Township with a proposed project. He also wondered if the mix of businesses is considered for each application.

Chair Jackson responded that any business who submits a complete application and meets all township criteria “gets the site.” She indicated it is the developer’s choice of projects.

Commissioner Deits pointed to the plethora of tire stores along Grand River Avenue. He also acknowledged the Planning Commission has provided good input on drive-through lanes in general, reminding fellow Commissioners of their work to dramatically redesign the Meijer pharmacy drive-through and the lengthy discussion on a proposed espresso drive-through on the corner of Grand River Avenue and Van Atta Road.

Commissioner Deits expressed opposition to the applicant’s offer to place a right turn only sign on Washington Heights as it would impede drivers who want to access Hamilton Road and present a safety issue.

Chair Jackson inquired as to the Township’s requirements for street trees.

Principal Planner Oranchak answered that the Township requires street trees to be installed by the applicant and those requirements will be evaluated during site plan review.

Chair Jackson asked if the Township’s requirements relative to street trees would save any of the trees along Washington Heights.

Principal Planner Oranchak responded that staff will investigate the type and quality of the trees, how they fit into the site design.

Chair Jackson closed the public hearing at 7:52 P.M.

7. Unfinished Business (None)

8. Other Business (None)

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

Commissioner Hildebrandt inquired as to why the fire station was delayed.

Principal Planner Oranchak responded that the 15-day noticing requirement could not be met for either the December 3rd or tonight’s meeting.

Commissioner Hildebrandt inquired about the status of closing one of the accesses on Van Atta Road and removing the canopy on the north side of the building for the gas station located at the corner of Van Atta Road and Grand River Avenue.

Principal Planner Oranchak stated staff is currently working with the owner on this issue.

10. New applications

A. Mixed Use Planned Unit Development #13054 (Aldi/Eyde), a request for a mixed use planned unit development with one commercial building and 24 apartments at 5155 Marsh Road

- B. Special Use Permit #13171 (Aldi/Eyde), request to construct a group of buildings greater than 25,000 square feet in gross floor area at 5155 Marsh Road
- C. Special Use Permit #13161 (MSU Federal Credit Union), request to construct a credit union branch with two drive-through ATM lanes and four drive-through teller lanes on the northeast corner of Jolly Road and Jolly Oak Road

11. Site plans received

- A. Site Plan Review #13-03 (Michael Boggio), construct a new Flagstar Bank with drive-through lanes on the southeast corner of Grand River Avenue and Washington Heights Avenue
- B. Site Plan Review #13-05 (Douglas Hinterman), convert an existing barn into a dentist office at 4132 Hagadorn Road

12. Site plans approved (None)

13. Public remarks

Chair Jackson opened public remarks.

Lawrence P. Nolan, 4765 Nakoma Drive, Okemos, attorney for the Autumn Park Condominium owners, noted three of the Planning Commission members hold terms of office which will expire on December 31st. He expressed concern that any newly appointed member will not have sufficient experience on the central fire station issue. Mr. Nolan stated his clients believe there is political maneuvering relative to the timing of voting on the central fire station issue.

David Strobl, 1320 Cove Court, Okemos, addressed Planning Commissioners as protectors of the citizens. He believed the central fire station has been handled in reverse. He believed the Autumn Park Condominium owners are placed in the position of having to prove there has been an injustice surrounding the issue, especially since the Township is the applicant.

Chair Jackson closed public remarks.

14. Adjournment

Chair Jackson adjourned the regular meeting at 8:03 P.M.

Respectfully Submitted,

Sandra K. Otto
Recording Secretary