

**CHARTER TOWNSHIP OF MERIDIAN
PLANNING COMMISSION
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES
November 25, 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, Norkin (7:20 P.M.), Salehi, Scott-Craig
ABSENT: None
STAFF: Director of Community Planning and Development Mark Kieselbach, Fire Chief Fred Cowper, Director of Public Works and Engineering Ray Severy, Principal Planner Gail Oranchak

1. Call meeting to order

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

2. Approval of agenda

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

VOICE VOTE: Motion carried 8-0.

3. Approval of Minutes (None)

4. Closed Session

Commissioner Scott-Craig moved to go into closed session. Seconded by Commissioner Honicky.

VOICE VOTE: Motion carried 8-0.

Chair Jackson recessed the meeting at 7:01 P.M.

The Planning Commission adjourned to the Administrative Conference Room.

Commissioner Scott-Craig moved to return to open session. Seconded by Commissioner Cordill.

VOICE VOTE: Motion carried 8-0.

Chair Jackson reconvened the meeting at 7:38 P.M.

5. Public Remarks

Chair Jackson opened the floor for public remarks.

Bill Anderson, 2910 Crestwood Drive, East Lansing, expressed appreciation for the opportunity to present his opposition to the proposed plasma center. He indicated representatives of the various adjacent and nearby neighborhoods to Carriage Hills Shopping Center have had conversations with the Economic Development Corporation (EDC) and employees of Michigan State University's School of Planning, Design and Construction to create a vital shopping center at Carriage Hills.

Tom Dietz, 4651 Sequoia Trail, Okemos, offered his continued opposition to SUP #13141. He believed this situation to be one that is a “tradeoff”; an aesthetic improvement to a piece of property and its construction which is likely to put nearby properties at an “unquantified” risk of water damage.

Bill Lee, President, Indian Lakes Homeowners Association, 4795 Arapaho Trail, spoke to the unprofessional manner in which SUP #13141 has been handled by the property owner. He requested Planning Commissioners obtain all the facts before acting on this request.

Michael Hudson, 6009 Skyline Drive, East Lansing, spoke to his continued opposition to SUP #13-77021. He expressed appreciation for the Planning Commission’s thorough consideration of the information presented and not acting in a hasty manner on this request. He suggested the Planning Commission set up a Twitter account or an RSS feed on the Township’s website for special use permits and zoning requests so that residents can subscribe and have up-to-date information at their disposal.

Deb Mosher, 2880 Roseland Avenue, East Lansing, stated there is already a traffic problem on Roseland Avenue and believed it will accelerate with construction of C-PUD #13044. She requested the Planning Commission reject the Whole Foods proposal as it will drive East Lansing Co-op and Foods for Living out of business.

Jeff Woledge, 2700 Mount Hope Road, spoke in support of SUP #13141. As the applicant of this special use permit request, he offered background information on the project since inception, noting he and his wife care about the neighborhood and would not build anything on the property which would be detrimental to their neighbors. Mr. Woledge believed he and his wife have been forthright about the project to the best of their ability.

L. Charles Bokemeier, 4601 Sequoia Trail, Okemos, spoke in opposition to SUP #13141, stating the information neglects an analysis of the area of land where the berm has been placed, area of the project east of the berm and changes in the water flow created by the berm. He believed the project cannot meet SUP criteria #4 and #5 and the applicant must prove the project will not alter the flow of water from the subject property to nearby parcels.

Vance Kincaid, 4530 Nakoma Drive, Okemos, expressed concern the Planning Commission is not following the Master Plan relative to the new central fire station. He indicated a Section 61 Review should have already been conducted, stating the process is flawed and one reason why citizens lose faith in government.

Neil Bowlby, 6020 Beechwood Drive, Okemos, clarified typographical errors contained in the Planning Commission packet.

Lawrence Nolan, 4765 Nakoma Drive, Okemos, attorney representing the Autumn Park Condominium Association, spoke in opposition to SUP #13121.

Donell Snyder, 4611 Sequoia Trail, expressed concern with potential runoff which will be produced if SUP #13141 is approved and where that water will flow. She requested a watershed analysis be performed for this area.

Chair Jackson closed public remarks.

6. Communications

- A. Michael and Jan Jenkins, 6030 Skyline Drive, East Lansing; RE: SUP #13-77021 (DTN Management)
- B. Thomas A. Jones, President, Whitehills Neighborhood Association of East Lansing, PO Box 1213, East Lansing; RE: SUP #13-77021 (DTN Management)
- C. Howard Majors, 6310 Island Lake Drive, East Lansing; RE: SUP #13-77021 (DTN Management)
- D. Clifford Seybert, Superintendent, East Lansing Public Schools, 501 Burcham Drive, East Lansing; RE: SUP #13-77021 (DTN Management)
- E. Victoria Bellon, 2767 Southwood Drive, East Lansing; RE: SUP #13-77021 (DTN Management)
- F. Laura Waltz, 6196 Rutherford Avenue, East Lansing; RE: SUP #13-77021 (DTN Management)
- G. Roy Saper, 812 Applegate Lane, East Lansing; RE: SUP #13-77021 (DTN Management)
- H. Mark & Mary McDaniel, 1057 Cambria, East Lansing; RE: SUP #13-77021 (DTN Management)
- I. Skyline Hills Association, 6181 Skyline Drive, East Lansing; RE: SUP #13-77021 (DTN Management)
- J. L. Charles & Janet Bokemeier, 4601 Sequoia Trail, Okemos; RE: SUP #13141 (Woledge)
- K. Ipetitions.com; RE: SUP #13-77021 (DTN Management)
- L. Patrick and Dana Brazil, 4593 Sequoia Trail, Okemos; RE: SUP #13141 (Woledge)
- M. Donell Snyder, 4611 Sequoia Trail, Okemos; RE: SUP #13-77021 (DTN Management)
- N. L. Charles and Janet Bokemeier, 4601 Sequoia Trail, Okemos; RE: SUP #13141 (Woledge)
- O. Tom Dietz, 4651 Sequoia Trail, Okemos; RE: SUP #13141 (Woledge)

7. Public hearings

- A. *Special Use Permit #13121 (Meridian Township), request to construct an approximate 15,000 square foot fire station on the south side of Central Park Drive, east of Okemos Road and west of the Okemos Post Office

Chair Jackson opened the public hearing at 8:22 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 request as outlined in staff memorandum dated November 21, 2013.
- Public
Lawrence Nolan, attorney representing the Autumn Park Condominium Association, 4765 Nakoma Drive, Okemos, spoke in opposition to the fire station at the proposed location, despite being on the November, 2012 ballot and approved by a majority of voters. He felt the ballot language was misleading, as the property was not properly zoned for a fire station at the time of the November, 2012 election. Mr. Nolan believed the “correct” recommendation from the Planning Commission is to build this fire station at a location that is appropriate and proper given everyone’s concern. He stated government has to have the trust of its citizens to do the right thing, and the right thing is to void the election.

Marilyn Britten, 1874 Birchwood Drive, Okemos, spoke to the ballot language for the proposed central fire station which stated the location of the site on which the fire station was to be constructed. She expressed concern that the attorney for the appellants cast aspersions on the intelligence of Meridian Township's electorate, and voiced support for SUP #13121.

David Strobl, 1320 Cove Court, Okemos, spoke in opposition to the location of the proposed central fire station. He believed the public was voting on the proposed fire station and did not know where it would be located. Mr. Strobl stated the standard should be higher when the Township is both the owner of the land and the developer of the property in order to avoid any potential conflict of interest. He indicated the condominium owners will be adversely affected by the project, contrary to SUP criteria.

Steven Lamb, 2026 Central Park Drive, Okemos, believed the voters of Meridian Township were misled and government has an obligation to protect the right of all people. He believed the special use permit should have been approved prior to taking the issue to the voters on November, 2012.

Susan Simkin, 2032 Central Park Drive, Okemos, spoke in support of a new fire station, but believed the proposed site is an inappropriate location. She suggested moving the fire station to a location which is designed for it, stating originally it was proposed to be part of the municipal complex. Ms. Simkin offered an alternative proposal, which proposed relocation of the Farmers Market and soccer fields to the subject site.

Matthew Walters, 5685 Potter Street, Haslett, requested the Planning Commission uphold its original decision on SUP #13121, as the ballot language was clear and approved by a majority of the voters.

Robert Szczygiel, President, Autumn Park Condominium Association, 2038 Central Park Drive, Okemos, spoke in opposition to the new central fire station at the proposed location.

Chris Szczygiel, 2038 Central Park Drive, Okemos, spoke to the noise generated by fire truck and ambulance sirens. He addressed the potential for anxiety attacks which may be experienced when an emergency response siren is activated.

Mike Anderson, 2020 Central Park Drive, Okemos, questioned whether the proposed fire station "mega complex" is what the voters approved when it was placed on the ballot in November, 2012. He inquired as to how and why the location changed from the corner of Okemos Road and Central Park Drive to a location 300 feet to the east on a 28 acre parcel. Mr. Anderson spoke to the \$200,000 spent on architecture planning on a site which is not currently zoned for this type of use.

Bryan Brandenburg, 2058 Central Park Drive, Okemos, previously a real estate agent, requested the Planning Commission explore all possibilities before approving this location as it is not appropriate for a fire station.

Neil Bowlby, 6020 Beechwood Drive, Haslett, stated the Planning Commission has the authority to deny SUP #13121. He indicated Central Park Drive is not a barrier for the condominium owners. He addressed the amendment to install traffic control signals when the Planning Commission first approved the SUP. He critiqued language in several of the WHEREAS clauses within the resolution.

Vance Kincaid, 4530 Nakoma Drive, Okemos, concurred with earlier public comment about “swapping” the land for the Farmers Market. He stated the four (4) acre parcel of land proposed for the new central fire station is less than the accumulated land of the existing three (3) fire stations. He offered various multi-faceted alternatives to the proposed plan.

- Planning Commission discussion:
Commissioner Ianni noted an assessment study performed by the Township’s assessor showed no correlation between lower property values for homes surrounding existing fire stations.

Commissioner Norkin offered history on the south fire station which resulted in the Ingham County Road Department (ICRD) denial of timed signals for that station. He believed that to be a clear indication the ICRD would not approve timed signals for Central Park Drive. Commissioner Norkin addressed the discretion given to the commander of the ambulance or fire engine crew to use best judgment relative to the nature of the call. He spoke to the Township Board action of “stripping” the Planning Commission of its task to review the Capital Improvements Plan.

Commissioner Hildebrandt believed if the fire department is on an emergency run, sirens must be used. She concurred that a road is not a barrier and expressed concern with the three story tower which is proposed.

Commissioner Ianni believed the statistical evidence presented by the Fire Chief regarding use of sirens indicates otherwise, and the fire station will not be hazardous to the surrounding users, and is consistent with the surrounding area.

Commissioner Deits clarified that while the ICRD denied the timed signals on Okemos Road, it did so looking at the ability of the fire equipment to exit onto Okemos Road. He asked for his previously approved amendment to be reinstated.

Commissioner Cordill addressed the importance of fire personnel having the ability to stop traffic on Central Park Drive in an effort to avoid the use of sirens, while voicing concern if those suggestions are denied.

Commissioner Norkin suggested that language which allows emergency fire personnel the ability to control lights be made a condition of SUP approval.

Commissioner Salehi believed the proposed fire station is extremely hazardous to the residential properties across Central Park Drive. He believed the station could be moved elsewhere on the 28 acre parcel. Commissioner Salehi requested either a written statement from the assessor regarding property values or have him in attendance when this issue is discussed again. He also did not understand how this parcel can be characterized as “on the edge of a residential district.”

Commissioner Honicky believed the proposed fire station is a great facility in the wrong location. He recalled an episode where his then three (3) year old daughter was frightened by a siren, and stated she remembers that incident some 37 years later.

Commissioner Ianni agreed that language should be reinserted which requests the ICRD to look at installation of a light, but expressed concern with making it a condition of the SUP. He believed the concerns and fears are unfounded, as there have not been complaints by neighbors who live near the three (3) current fire stations.

Commissioner Scott-Craig pointed out the 3.6 acre parcel on the corner was not purchased until 2009, two (2) years after the Autumn Park Condominiums were built. He indicated the rationale for not placing the fire station on the corner of Central Park Drive and Okemos Road was that it was moved to the proposed location in order to save trees. Commissioner Scott-Craig inquired if there is ultimately a vote of approval, does it affirm the proposed fire station according to the submitted plan at the subject location. He believed if the Planning Commission wishes to have a different location, it must deny the SUP request.

Commissioner Norkin inquired if the procedure for this SUP request would follow the same process for denial of any other SUP request, or is the direction to vote on the resolution before the Planning Commission and then request staff to draft a different resolution.

Principal Planner Oranchak responded that if there is not a majority vote for approval, a motion to deny could be prepared for the next meeting. She noted Planning Commissioners may take up a resolution to approve and make a change in the location as one of the conditions of approval, being specific as to where on the parcel it should be located.

Commissioner Salehi preferred to see a site plan for a different location on the parcel in lieu of a condition which recommends a different location as part of the approval.

Commissioner Deits believed the size of the proposed fire station is not of concern, as the existence of an administrative center does not negatively impact the neighbors more than the fire station itself. He noted a library or community center could be placed on that site. As part of his deliberation, Commission Deits will consider that the Board has made a decision this is an appropriate location for the fire station and specified that location in the ballot language which was approved by voters in the November, 2012 election. He noted regardless of where the fire station is placed on the site, the emergency vehicles will still exit onto Central Park Drive. Commissioner Deits would not support a motion to redesign the site as there is no way in which to make it "work better."

Chair Jackson noted she asked the question whether moving the fire station to the corner would mitigate the noise issue and was told that it would not, as the station would not be far enough away from the condominiums to change the amount of noise which would be experienced by the residents along Central Park Drive.

Commissioner Norkin reminded fellow Commissioners that although the Township Board decided to place this issue on the ballot, the Township is still an applicant in this process and should have approached the neighbors prior to moving forward with plans and applying for a SUP.

Commissioner Salehi indicated he is deliberating on the suitability of this site for a fire station, not on the results of the ballot proposal or the desires of the Township Board.

Commissioner Ianni believed the Township did look to the community as individuals were knocking on doors throughout the Township regarding this site. He believed the entire community was reached out to through that process. He concurred with Commissioner Deits regarding the location being based on the need for proper ingress and egress. He believed the public safety of township residents must weigh heavily into this decision and selection of another site which does not meet public safety needs is not appropriate.

Commissioner Cordill believed the proposed administrative offices across from residential would not be too disruptive. She requested the Fire Chief provide the protocol for emergency vehicle use of sirens.

Fire Chief Cowper replied state law is specific in that it provides emergency response personnel the ability to use discretion when sirens are used. He added that if the siren needs to be turned on for safety reasons or an emergency response vehicle would be impeded by traffic, the sirens must be engaged. He added residents near the north and south fire stations were asked if they had problems with how the stations were run and responses indicated there were none.

Commissioner Cordill inquired as to the number of calls the proposed fire station could expect between 11:00 P.M. and 6:00 A.M.

Fire Chief Cowper replied the Planning Commission was provided call volume for all three (3) stations in an hourly breakdown for 365 days per year. He noted those statistics show calls drop off dramatically after 11:00 P.M. and pick back up around 8:00 A.M. Chief Cowper clarified that more calls are generated by the more heavily populated northern and central sections of the Township, and when those two fire stations cannot handle the volume, the south station responds, resulting in an even “across-the-board” call volume per apparatus. He indicated statistics show a call can be anticipated between 11:00 P.M. and 8:00 A.M. out of the central fire station.

Commissioner Norkin inquired if anyone reached out to the Autumn Park Condominium Association or condo owners when various sites were considered.

Chief Cowper indicated he could not answer that question, as this project was planned with the previous Township Manager and other department directors over many years. He indicated the Township Manager and Director Kieselbach were the individuals which looked at the various sites and spoke with business owners. Chief Cowper was not aware of any “pushback” in the entire process until the Environmental Commission expressed concern with saving the trees and wanted the proposed station closer to the post office.

Chair Jackson closed the public hearing at 9:48 P.M.

- B. *Commission Review #13053 (Meridian Township), request for Section 61 review to construct a fire station on Central Park Drive, east of Okemos Road

Chair Jackson opened the public hearing at 9:48 P.M.

- Summary of subject matter

Principal Planner Oranchak summarized the commission review request as outlined in staff memorandum dated November 21, 2013.

- Public

Lawrence Nolan, 4765 Nakoma Drive, Okemos, attorney for members of the Autumn Park Condominium Association, spoke to government's mandate to protect the rights of the people. He believed the proposed central fire station is a great idea which is in the wrong place at the wrong time, and requested the Commission Review be denied.

Susan Simkin, 2032 Central Park Drive, Okemos, spoke to the proposal to place the details of the new central fire station out to the public which was not supported by the Board.

Mike Anderson, 2020 Central Park Drive, addressed all the noise which will be produced by the proposed central fire station, including that generated by starting a 600 horsepower diesel engine in an emergency situation. He believed if the fire station is built anywhere on the 28 acre parcel, the value of the property on the north side of the corner of Central Park Drive and Okemos Road will be "destroyed".

David Strobl, 1320 Cove Court, Okemos, spoke to quality of life issues, property values, and health issues.

T. J. Booms, 9162 Warner Road, Haslett, stated a fire station is not a bad neighbor and there are no known complaints from residents surrounding the existing stations. He addressed the need for a larger facility to house existing equipment which is currently left outside in inclement weather, resulting in greater replacement costs. Mr. Booms spoke to future growth, noting that the fire department is not likely to remain the same size over the next 50 years. He explained the need for keeping equipment and firefighters in the same location to best serve residents.

Vance Kincaid, 4530 Nakoma Drive, Okemos, expressed concern with safety for night-time joggers along Central Park Drive when sirens are not engaged. He questioned the noise which would emanate from training tower exercises. Mr. Kincaid did not believe the Township held itself to the same standard as other applicants.

- Planning Commission discussion:

Commissioner Ianni stated the review came back to the Planning Commission from the Board to ensure due process was followed. He believed this location satisfies the character, location and extent.

Commissioner Salehi objected to the specific location of the site, but was satisfied with the character and extent.

Commissioner Scott-Craig believed noise qualified as a character of the project when considering the Section 61 Review.

Commissioner Hildebrandt inquired as to the benefit of all three (3) fire stations on Okemos Road for a Township of this size and wondered if that was the best way to serve the community.

Chair Jackson closed the public hearing at 10:12 P.M.

8. Unfinished Business

- A. Special Use Permit #13-77021 (DTN Management), request to operate a plasma center in the Carriage Hills Shopping Center located on the northwest corner of Lake Lansing Road and Hagadorn Road

Commissioner Hildebrandt moved [and read into the record] NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THE PLANNING COMMISSION OF THE CHARTER TOWNSHIP OF MERIDIAN hereby denies Special Use Permit #13-77021 as the proposed plasma center is not consistent with all of the review criteria identified in Section 86-126 and Section 86-659 of the Code of Ordinances. Seconded by Commissioner Honicky.

Planning Commission discussion:

- Benefits to the neighborhood are minimal
- Possibility of negative impacts to the neighborhood are significant
- Appreciation for the neighbors activism on this issue
- Suggestion for the neighbors to find a desirable tenant, possibly through use of social media
- Appreciation to DTN for listening to the community and publicly announcing it will not appeal this SUP decision

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

NAYS: None

Motion carried unanimously.

Chair Jackson recessed the meeting at 10:20 P.M.

Chair Jackson reconvened the meeting at 10:27 P.M.

- B. Commercial Planned Unit Development #13044 (Wolverine Building Group) Construct a Whole Foods store at 2758 Grand River Avenue

Commissioner Ianni moved [and read into the record] NOW THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED THE PLANNING COMMISSION OF THE CHARTER TOWNSHIP OF MERIDIAN hereby recommends approval of Commercial Planned Unit Development #13044, subject to the following conditions:

1. **The recommendation for approval is based on the Overall Site Plan, Site Plan, Utility Plan, Grading Plan, and Landscape Amenities Plan, prepared by Paradigm Design, dated November 13, 2013, and building elevations prepared by Paradigm Design, dated received November 18, 2013, subject to revisions as required.**
2. **Approval is subject to one or more amenities. The applicant proposes the following amenities: rehabilitation of a degraded site; fenced outdoor patio; and two (2) sidewalk planters in the outdoor patio.**
3. **The requested waiver for building perimeter landscaping should be granted as site constraints and location of the building entrances limit the areas for landscaping around the building, and sidewalk planter boxes are proposed in the outdoor patio as an amenity.**

4. The requested waiver for the side setback from the parking area and access drive on the east and west sides of the subject site should be granted as landscaping is proposed to provide screening, including a five (5) foot high berm with a double row of coniferous trees along the majority of the east property line.
5. The requested waiver to exceed the maximum number of parking spaces should be granted as the additional parking spaces will benefit customers both at the Whole Foods store and existing retail stores west of the subject site. Granting the waiver is subject to cross-parking agreements being secured between the Township and the appropriate property owners, in a format acceptable to the Township.
6. The requested waiver for the proposed ten (10) foot wide landscape buffer along Grand River Avenue (southwest corner of site) should be granted as additional right-of-way is required by the Michigan Department of Transportation in this area.
7. The requested waiver for the proposed five (5) foot wide landscape buffer on the west side of the subject site, adjacent to Tom's Party Store, should be granted as the existing buffer is approximately five (5) feet wide and new landscape screening is being provided to improve the area.
8. The requested waiver for the size of the proposed freestanding sign (56 square feet of surface display area) should be granted as similarly-sized freestanding signs are located on commercial sites along Grand River Avenue. Granting of the waiver is subject to a monument-style sign being provided in place of the proposed pole-style sign. Brick or masonry materials that match the building should be incorporated into the sign base.
9. The existing mobile homes and other structures associated with the entire Mobile Home Manor site, or other materials and debris found on the subject site, and debris resulting from clearing, grading, or construction activities related to the proposed project should be removed from the site and be properly disposed. Existing utilities including water, sanitary sewer, cable, natural gas, and electric utility lines should be properly abandoned.
10. All utility service distribution lines should be installed underground.
11. Truck deliveries to the site should be limited to the hours between 7:00 a.m. and 9:00 p.m.
12. A future ingress-egress connection should be considered, if feasible, to the adjacent commercial property east of the subject site (Super 8 Motel).
13. Appropriate pavement improvements should be made to the existing service drive located west of the subject site (next to Advanced Auto Parts) as part of the proposed project.
14. Shopping carts should be stored inside the building or in an enclosed area.

15. **If the existing fence remains along the east property line of the subject site, the fence should be repaired or upgraded as deemed appropriate by the Director of Community Planning and Development.**
16. **Site accessories such as benches, trash and recycling receptacles, exterior lighting fixtures, and bicycle racks should be considered for commercial quality, and being complementary with the building design and style.**
17. **Site and building lighting should comply with Article VII in Chapter 38 of the Code of Ordinances and are subject to the approval of the Director of Community Planning and Development. LED lighting should be used where feasible.**
18. **All mechanical, heating, ventilation, air conditioning, and similar systems should be screened from view by an opaque structure or landscape material selected to complement the building. Such screening is subject to approval by the Director of Community Planning and Development.**
19. **The applicant should obtain all necessary permits, licenses, and approvals from the Michigan Department of Transportation and the Township. Copies of all permits and approval letters should be submitted to the Department of Community Planning and Development.**
20. **The utility, grading, and storm drainage plans for the site are subject to the approval of the Director of Public Works and Engineering and should be completed in accordance with the Township Engineering Design and Construction Standards.**
21. **The applicant should apply to the Township for a land division; once approved, documents should be recorded with the Ingham County Register of Deeds and proof of recording submitted to the Township prior to the issuance of an occupancy permit.**
22. **Copies of the site plan information and construction plans for the project that exist in an AutoCAD compatible format should be provided to the Township Engineering staff.**
23. **Any future building addition or expansion will require a modification to the Commercial Planned Unit Development #13044.**

Seconded by Commissioner Hildebrandt.

Planning Commission discussion:

- Project is consistent with the Master Plan for promoting infill redevelopment and rehabilitation of a somewhat blighted area
- Project will be a good addition to the surrounding area
- Appreciation for the outdoor eating area
- Improvements to the traffic light at Grand River Avenue and Northwind Drive to facilitate ingress and egress to the Whole Foods site
- Waivers requested by the applicant will allow use of the property in a way which is most beneficial to the applicant and the community

Commissioner Hildebrandt offered the following amendment:

- **Amend conditions #3 through #22 by replacing all references of “should” to “shall”**

Continued Planning Commission discussion:

- Planning Commission as a recommending body for Board approval of a CPUD
- Planning Commission does not have the authority to assign waivers for a CPUD

Commissioner Hildebrandt withdrew her amendment.

Continued Planning Commission and staff discussion:

- Project is a great redevelopment use
- Belief there will still be a draw which will bring customers into neighboring businesses including East Lansing Food Co-op and Foods for Living
- Whole Foods on Washtenaw Avenue in Ann Arbor is 50,000 square feet
- Inquiry as to the ability of customers to exit Whole Foods by accessing Sirhal Drive
- Easement for Stratford Place to use the access as a second point of access to Grand River Avenue and was required when Stratford Place was built
- Request for signage to clearly identify the purpose of the easement and discourage drivers from exiting onto Sirhal Drive
- Easement is for emergency vehicles only
- Traffic from Stratford Place travels on Sirhal Drive to access Brookfield
- Planning Commissioner preference for the easement to be gated off
- Applicant suggestion to close off the parking at the back of the property so vehicles cannot easily exit onto Sirhal Drive
- Inclusion of the closed off parking will go to the Board as part of an amended plan
- Seven foot sidewalk in front of the subject site on Grand River is required as part of the Pedestrian/Bicycle Pathway Master Plan
- Grand River Avenue overlay district requires vehicular service drive connection between properties in the front of the sites
- Preference for the gate in the existing fence along the east property line of the subject site to remain
- Planning Commissioner belief the project will expand clientele, not compete with a fixed clientele
- Concern with making exceptions to sign size in general as there are many nonconforming signs in the Township
- Desire to see nonconforming signs grandfathered away when feasible
- Proposed 56 foot monument sign will require a waiver from the Township’s 28 foot maximum sign size
- Site is allowed one building face sign and a free-standing sign
- Planning Commissioner belief the ordinance provides for a building sign calculated at one square foot for each lineal foot of building frontage
- Purpose of the CPUD ordinance is to grant certain waivers in exchange for amenities by the applicant
- Planning Commissioner belief the CPUD allows for flexibility given restrictions of the site
- Desirability of a monument sign v. pole sign
- Concern the outdoor eating area is not a true general public amenity
- Redevelopment of the site should not be considered an amenity
- Planning Commission is not required to accept all waivers requested by the applicant
- Size of the store should be considered when deciding if a waiver for sign size is desirable

- Reminder that the ordinance for sign size is based on the size of the building
- Part of the rationale contained in condition #8 for supporting a larger sign size is that other similar sized non-conforming signs are on commercial sites along Grand River Avenue
- Zoning Board of Appeals granted similar sign variances for the Foods for Living complex and the center at Park Lake and Grand River

Commissioner Deits offered the following amendment:

- **Change condition #8 to read: A monument-style sign should be provided in place of the proposed pole-style sign. Brick or masonry materials that match the building should be incorporated into the sign base.**

Seconded by Commissioner Norkin.

Continued Planning Commission discussion:

- Zoning Board of Appeals has the authority to grant a variance for the sign size
- Waiver should be granted for competitive reasons
- Preference to bring all nonconforming signs into conformance with the ordinance
- Maximum size for a conforming sign is 28 square feet

VOICE VOTE: Motion carried 6-3 (Honicky, Ianni, Salehi).

Continued Planning Commission discussion:

- All parcels will be combined into one parcel with one zoning designation

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

NAYS: None

Motion carried unanimously.

Commissioner Salehi moved to postpone Agenda Items # 8C, 8D and 8E.

The motion died for lack of a second.

C. Special Use Permit #13141 (Wooledge), request to work and place fill in the 100-year floodplain at 2700 Mt. Hope Road

Principal Planner Oranchak offered updated information on the proposed special use permit request.

Commissioner Scott-Craig 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 #13141 subject to the following conditions:

1. Approval is subject to the plan prepared by Mayotte Engineering & Design, dated September 30, 2013, and the related materials submitted as part of Special Use Permit #13141, subject to revisions as required.

2. **The applicant shall obtain any applicable permits, licenses, and approvals from the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality and the Township prior to any further site work taking place. Copies of all permits, licenses, and approvals shall be submitted to the Department of Community Planning & Development.**
3. **In no case shall the impoundment capacity of the floodplain be reduced.**
4. **Prior to work restarting on the site, silt fencing shall be installed at the required 40 foot setback from regulated wetlands located to the east of the berm to prevent accidental erosion and/or disturbance in the water features setback.**
5. **All fill placed in the floodplain or on other parts of the subject site shall be protected against erosion with silt fencing.**
6. **Prior to any additional site work taking place, the applicant shall provide to the Department of Community Planning & Development a set of detailed stormwater calculations prepared and sealed by a professional engineer, which confirm that additional stormwater will not accumulate on properties located east of the proposed berm because of the addition of the berm.**
7. **If detailed stormwater calculations as described in condition #6 above cannot be provided, the entire berm proposed in the 100-year floodplain shall be removed and all soils from it deposited in an upland location first approved by the Director of Community Planning & Development. Upon removal of the berm, the pre-existing grade shall be re-established.**

Seconded by Commissioner Honicky.

Planning Commission and staff discussion:

- Conditions #6 and #7 addresses concerns of some of the neighboring property owners
- Appreciation for the requirement of detailed stormwater calculations which indicate the additional stormwater will not accumulate on properties located east of the proposed berm due to the berm
- Need for a provision which outlines landscaping of the berm after construction
- Suggestion to add a condition which addresses reseeding of the berm and Township follow-up to ascertain its integrity
- Necessity of the berm due to the topography as it affects nearby properties
- Existing grade of the berm is higher than the existing grade of the neighbors' back yards
- Part of the berm is out of the floodplain
- Homes on Sequoia Trail are in the 100-year floodplain
- Trees are to be planted on the berm
- Soil erosion permit will require seeding of the berm
- Essential to insure there is a fluid connection between work in the floodplain and the compensating cut
- Uncertainty of the exact elevation at which the homes on Sequoia Trail will "take on" water
- Conditions #6 and #7 provide protection for the nearby homeowners
- Aesthetics of the berm are not worth the risk to the homeowners on Sequoia Trail
- Accountability of the engineering firm which "signs off" on the stormwater calculations
- Request to hear a response from the affected homeowners regarding conditions #6 and #7
- Professional analysis must be performed prior to any additional site work being performed

- Township staff did not recompute the calculations performed by the applicant's engineering firm regarding the compensating cut
- Some of the cut is being placed out of the floodplain

Commissioner Ianni called the question. Seconded by Commissioner Norkin.

VOICE VOTE: Motion carried 8-1 (Hildebrandt).

ROLL CALL VOTE: YEAS: Commissioners Cordill, Deits, Honicky, Ianni, Norkin, Scott-Craig, Chair Jackson

NAYS: Commissioners Hildebrandt, Salehi

Motion carried 7-2.

- D. *Special Use Permit #13121 (Meridian Township), request to construct an approximate 15,000 square foot fire station on the south side of Central Park Drive, east of Okemos Road and west of the Okemos Post Office

Commissioner Ianni moved to suspend Planning Commission Bylaw #6.4a to consider Special Use Permit #13121 the same night as the public hearing. Seconded by Commissioner Salehi.

VOICE VOTE : Motion failed 3-6 (Deits, Hildebrandt, Honicky, Norkin, Salehi, Scott-Craig)

Commissioner Deits moved to amend the agenda to remove Item #8E. Seconded by Commissioner Hildebrandt.

Planning Commission discussion:

- Several members of the public have been waiting for this agenda item and paying an attorney to be present
- Planning Commission action to not address Agenda Item #8D this evening commits it to another meeting on this topic

VOICE VOTE: Motion carried 7-2 (Ianni, Salehi).

9. Other Business (None)

10. Township Board, Planning Commission officer, committee chair, and staff comment or reports (None)

11. New applications (None)

12. Site plans received (None)

13. Site plans approved (None)

14. Public remarks

Chair Jackson opened public remarks.

Susan Simkin, 2032 Central Park Drive, Okemos, addressed searchability of documents on the Township's website in order for the public to have clear access.

Chair Jackson closed public remarks.

15. Adjournment

Chair Jackson adjourned the regular meeting at 11:51 P.M.

Respectfully Submitted,

Sandra K. Otto
Recording Secretary