

**CHARTER TOWNSHIP OF MERIDIAN  
PLANNING COMMISSION  
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES  
September 23, 2013**

**APPROVED**

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

PRESENT: Commissioners Cordill, Hildebrandt, Ianni, Jackson, Norkin, Salehi, Scott-Craig  
ABSENT: Commissioners Deits, Honicky  
STAFF: Principal Planner Gail Oranchak, Director of Community Planning and Development  
Mark Kieselbach

**1. Call meeting to order**

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

**2. Approval of agenda**

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

VOICE VOTE: Motion carried 7-0.

**3. Approval of Minutes**

**Commissioner Ianni moved to approve the Regular Meeting Minutes of September 9, 2013. Seconded by Commissioner Scott-Craig.**

VOICE VOTE: Motion carried 7-0.

**4. Public Remarks**

Chair Jackson opened the floor for public remarks.

David Otis, 1404 Haslett Road, Haslett, spoke in support of the Haslett Road rezoning request, stating the rezoning would allow long-time home owners to make modifications to their dwellings.

William Seck, 5717 Carlton Street, Haslett, spoke in support of the Haslett Road rezoning request, offering language contained in the goals of the Master Plan as rationale for this request.

Chair Jackson closed public remarks.

**5. Communications**

- A. Susan Simkin, 2032 Central Park Drive, Okemos; RE: SUP #13121
- B. Vance Kincaid, 4530 Nakoma Drive, Okemos; RE: SUP #13121
- C. Sonny & Dorothy France, 4932 Grandview Avenue, Okemos; RE: SUP #13121
- D. Penny France, 4828 Grandview Avenue, Okemos; RE: SUP #13121

**6. Public hearings**

- A. Mixed Use Planned Unit Development #13024 (Hannah Hospitality, LLC), request to locate a Residence Inn on Hannah Boulevard, east of Esoteric Way and west of Eyde Parkway and
- B. Special Use Permit #13131 (Hannah Hospitality, LLC), request to construct a building greater than 25,000 square feet in gross floor area on Hannah Boulevard, east of Esoteric Way and west of Eyde Parkway

Chair Jackson opened the public hearings at 7:08 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 proposed mixed use planned unit development and special use permit as outlined in staff memoranda dated September 19, 2013.
- Applicant  
Mark Clouse, Chief Financial Officer and General Counsel, Eyde Co., 4660 S. Hagadorn, Suite 660, East Lansing, addressed the Ingham County Road Department's resolution of traffic issues for the area, including a through right lane/right-hand turn movement from the site onto Hagadorn Road and similar movements off Hagadorn Road onto Hannah Boulevard. He spoke to the Board's request of seven (7) foot sidewalks for continuity.

Mitch Irwin, representative for Hannah Hospitality, LLC, 3811 Meridian Road, Okemos, introduced Frederic Heller, owner, NorthMich Hospitality, LLC, 2758 West Woodlands Drive, Traverse City, and Tracie Kent, General Manager and Vice-President, 9720 Jason Road, Laingsburg. He noted the proposed extended stay hotel is about walkability.

Ms. Kent noted the Residence Inn brand is geared toward the upscale extended stay business traveler and markets to individuals staying five (5) or more nights. She indicated the hotel offers studio, one and two bedroom suites with fully equipped kitchens. Ms. Kent stated a breakfast buffet is served seven (7) days a week and an evening social hour three (3) days a week. She noted the market driver for this property is Michigan State University.

Ms. Kent added staffing peaks at 28 employees with normal staffing hours from 9:00 AM until 3:00 PM. She added staff parking exceeds the need, as most "back of the house" employees in this market use public transit and/or carpool and approximately 20% of guests do not have vehicles on site during their stay.

Mr. Heller indicated the Marriott hotel brand highlights green amenities, outlined various conservation practices which will be implemented in the day-to-day operations, noted the recycling program within each room and added housekeeping staff uses environmentally friendly cleaning products.

- Planning Commission discussion:  
Commissioner Ianni inquired as to the rationale for the 30 foot light poles, given the height of light poles in the surrounding neighborhood are 15 feet.

Mr. Heller responded that 30 foot light poles are the Marriott standard for guest safety. He indicated he was amenable to speak with Marriott and request a variance from them to reduce the height to 15 feet.

Commissioner Cordill asked for the applicant to elaborate on part time and full time staffing.

Mr. Heller answered it is the management company's philosophy to encourage use of full time associates whenever possible as it reduces turnover and increases morale. He noted peak staffing typically has a general and assistant general manager, director of sales, chief engineer, house person, breakfast attendant and a staff of five (5) to eight (8) full time-housekeepers and five (5) to seven (7) front desk full-time employees. Mr. Heller stated his policy is to fill in with part-time employees on their flex schedule basis. He indicated the peak time of 9:00AM until 3:00 PM is when guests are gone and the clean-up work is performed.

Commissioner Cordill inquired as to a specific number of employees at a given time.

Mr. Heller responded that after ramp-up of occupancy, it is anticipated to have 9-11 employees on site during peak time.

Chair Jackson asked for a definition of ramp-up of occupancy.

Mr. Heller replied that it is unrealistic to anticipate full occupancy the first year, but as the hotel becomes busier, it will be necessary to hire more staff to accommodate the guests. He noted the hotel is budgeted to have 72% occupancy for the first full year.

Commissioner Salehi asked for a measure of the luminosity of the 30 foot pole.

Greg Petru, KEBS, Inc., 2116 Haslett Road, Okemos, responded with a higher light there typically will be more luminosity, but the fixture could be shielded. He noted a photometric could be performed to ascertain lighting levels and could be provided to the Commissioners.

Commissioner Salehi inquired if other properties in Meridian Township had 30 foot poles.

Ms. Oranchak stated 30 foot poles are quite popular for commercial sites.

Commissioner Salehi noted there is undeveloped property directly to the east of the TownePlace Suites and believed the proposed lighting could potentially have an effect on individuals if that property was developed as a residential site.

Mr. Irwin indicated there are currently 15 and 30 foot light poles on the TownePlace Suites to accommodate safety and security for guests and address the desire of the community to adhere to its dark sky policy wherever possible.

Commissioner Ianni inquired about additional buffering to shield the property from surrounding uses.

Mr. Petru responded the landscape ordinance will be adhered to. He noted he will look at trees along the north and west sides of the property to see if some of them can be preserved.

Commissioner Scott-Craig asked if there were two (2) entrances required for this proposed development.

Principal Planner Oranchak indicated the traffic volume was not sufficient to require two (2) entrances as well as the narrowness of the site was taken into consideration.

Commissioner Scott-Craig inquired about the possibility of an access point with the adjacent hotel in the rear.

Principal Planner Oranchak believed a second access point was unnecessary.

Commissioner Scott-Craig believed the second access point would be a safety factor and contingency plan.

Commissioner Scott-Craig inquired as to why the Township's traffic consultant's report was not included in the Planning Commission packet.

Principal Planner Oranchak responded the traffic consultant submitted a letter which included comments/concern.

Commissioner Scott-Craig stated it is difficult to make a decision when there are traffic concerns if Commissioners are not provided with comments from the various groups (e.g., Ingham County Road Department (ICRD)) as to their opinion on what effect the development would have on traffic.

Ms. Oranchak added she believed the comments are not necessarily related to the impact of this particular development but overall impact from the area in general.

Mr. Clouse added the traffic analysis was provided to the ICRD and a written response has not yet been provided. He noted his conversation with the ICRD (which included attendance by the Director of Public Works and Engineering) included the approved traffic signal at Hagadorn and Eyde Parkway and one to be funded by Capstone for Esoteric Way and Hannah Boulevard. He added traffic warrants are currently being reviewed for proper authorization and the traffic engineering study is being looked at to provide the needed information.

Commissioner Scott-Craig inquired if there is new data being generated by the on-going study of the traffic patterns since some of the approved developments are now in place.

Mr. Clouse noted the counts are currently being performed to look at the issue of warrants, adding the traffic study before the Planning Commission is based on previous counts with the addition of counts determined to be from Phase 2. He stated he was unclear whether there will be another complete study or a report showing how the warrants are being met. Mr. Clouse explained how the counts are determined by TEA and then extrapolated out over a longer period of time.

Mr. Irwin, in response to Commissioner inquiry as to what the review meant by way of the site plan, added KEBS, Inc. and staff ensured the proposed curb cuts were directly across from the existing ones across the street. He noted the Fire Inspector performed a thorough analysis approximately two weeks ago and the site plan was adjusted to accommodate his observations. Mr. Irwin indicated a drive in the back was discussed with the Fire Inspector, but he felt it unnecessary.

Commissioner Scott-Craig expressed appreciation that the impervious surface percentage was close to the maximum allowed for the underlying zoning (C-2). He inquired if there was a response from the Drain Commissioner regarding the effect of an additional 1.75 acres of impervious surface in that neighborhood.

Principal Planner Oranchak was not aware of a response to date.

Mr. Clouse explained the reopening of the connection to the Red Cedar River is currently underway and was the last piece deemed necessary by the Ingham County Drain Commissioner (ICDC) for the overall 81 acre site. He believed KEBS will obtain a letter from the ICDC which delineates that information.

Commissioner Scott-Craig inquired as to whom the amenities are geared toward.

Principal Planner Oranchak responded the improvements are designed for residents of the hotel.

Mr. Heller added a Marriott extended stay hotel designs for both guests and their visitors.

Commissioner Norkin expressed concern about pedestrian and bicyclists sharing the roadway with the availability of two (2) right-hand turn lanes. He believed the Planning Commission had envisioned a road diet with a bicycle lane on Hannah Boulevard when the Capstone projects came before that body.

Mr. Clouse reiterated roads are owned by the ICRD. He suggested the Planning Commission have conversations with township staff members who attended the meetings where road sharing dynamics were decided upon. He stated it is the position of Township staff, the ICRD and the traffic engineers that Hannah Boulevard should be left as two (2) lanes where the two (2) lanes currently exist. Mr. Clouse indicated it was the belief of the professionals that sharing of the travel lanes with automobiles and bicycles is proper given the 25 mile per hour speed limit and that continued development would assist in slowing down the vehicles as they travel through the area.

Commissioner Norkin inquired why there cannot be a bicycle lane along the "short strip" up to the Michigan Athletic Club. He noted there is no public transportation on Hannah Boulevard and indicated a bicycle could be an option for students in the first three (3) phases of the 81 acre site along with the extended stay hotel guests.

Director Kieselbach responded that leaving the median on Hannah Boulevard would necessitate a redesign of the road and there was insufficient right-of way to accomplish that goal. He stated the median would need to be removed to accommodate the bicycles and that was not a preferred option during discussion. The ICRD believed there should not be bicycle lanes on one portion of the road and shared lanes in another portion, but uniformity throughout the Hannah Farms development.

Commissioner Hildebrandt believed the traffic counts are questionable as the counts were done well before any construction commenced on Hannah Farms.

Principal Planner Oranchak replied the traffic report is done based upon information collected by the traffic consultant hired by the applicant. She noted staff looks at what is available from the ICRD as far as traffic counts are concerned.

Commissioner Hildebrandt believed these numbers were a result of the “piecemeal approach” being taken with the Hannah Farms development as the issues were not resolved before the next phase commenced.

Mr. Clouse stated individuals who are licensed traffic engineers use standardized industry methods to perform traffic studies. He asked that any requested additional information be provided to staff which will then forward the request to Mr. Clouse to obtain a response from KEBS and Traffic Engineering Associates (TEA).

Ms. Oranchak added traffic counts are conducted based on how many cars travel the road at a given time. She indicated a traffic analysis focuses on the intersection where traffic problems are created, stating the analysis determines what improvements need to be made to allow the road to function properly.

Commissioner Hildebrandt added that traffic counts, not just turns, will impact bicycles being used by students.

Mr. Clouse stated a large multiple acre site is not developed all at once, and applicants use what they know at any given time, following Township ordinances and standards in place.

Commissioner Cordill suggested a right hand turn on red only would maximize auto and bicycle conflict at the intersection of Hagadorn and Hannah Boulevard.

Commissioner Scott-Craig stated Michigan State University is in the process of placing bicycle lanes in sections along Service Road which will lead to Hannah Boulevard in the future. He added there will be a significant shift when that occurs and the safety of thousands of students should be taken into consideration.

Chair Jackson clarified that all of the arguments mentioned during this public hearing have been taken to the ICDR, and the result is that the ICDR indicated the preferences of the Planning Commission are not going to happen at this time.

Commissioner Norkin believed that Planning Commissioners only option as citizen planners is to vote no on the project, as there is no other mechanism available to persuade the ICDR of the road dangers in that area.

Mr. Clouse clarified the concept for shared roads is for an automobile to share a lane with a bicycle, and care must be taken not to overpower the bicycle; similarly, the bicycle must not overpower the automobile. He noted each must treat the other with respect while obeying the rules of the road. Mr. Clouse did not believe ICDR’s decision about traffic flow is the basis upon which to deny this mixed use planned unit development or special use permit.

Mr. Irwin requested the applicant not be held hostage over this issue, but offered to do whatever it can to help find a solution.

Commissioner Ianni expressed appreciation for the diversity of housing offered with the proposed hotel. He inquired if it was possible to reduce the number of parking places to meet the impervious surface requirement.

Mr. Petru believed the applicant could come fairly close to the required number of parking spaces. He noted when the fire turnaround was reconfigured, it reduced some of the impervious surface.

Commissioner Salehi believed the two right turn lanes onto Hannah Boulevard and Hagadorn Road are needed, specifically when future development occurs. He indicated he bicycles on the sidewalk at Grand River and Hagadorn and it is doable, adding that traffic can turn right on red now at that intersection.

Chair Jackson asked where the recommendation of a pedestrian control of the light in the median is to be located.

Principal Planner Oranchak believed it was a recommendation from the Township's consultant for pedestrians crossing Hannah.

Mr. Clouse suggested allowing him to obtain that information as he was unsure if TEA's traffic engineer has seen the Township consultant's responses as of yet.

Commissioner Cordill inquired as to the rationale for locating two hotels adjacent to one another.

Mr. Heller responded there is demand for it and they serve different clientele at different price ranges.

Commissioner Norkin asked the applicant to reconsider a turnable loop between the two hotel properties in order for guests/foreign visitors to have the ability to board a motor coach at the hotel entrance.

Mr. Irwin responded they would relay the request to corporate Marriott, taking into account the Fire Inspector's recommendation. He noted the owners of the two hotels are separate entities with partial common ownership.

Chair Jackson inquired as to why the seven (7) foot sidewalk is considered an amenity of this project.

Principal Planner Oranchak answered the connection from the hotel to the sidewalk is the amenity.

Chair Jackson closed the public hearings at 8:37 P.M.

**7. Unfinished Business (None)**

**8. Other Business**

**A. Haslett Road Rezoning Request**

Principal Planner Oranchak summarized the rezoning request as outlined in staff memorandum dated September 20, 2013.

**Commissioner Ianni moved to initiate rezoning of the following properties from the current zoning to RB (Single Family-High Density): 1404, 1408, 1416, 1422, 1434, 1438, 1443 and 1449 Haslett Road. Seconded by Commissioner Hildebrandt.**

Planning Commission discussion:

- The commercial designation has been in place for 40 years and commercial development has not happened
- Designation of commercial or PO on the Future Land Use Map
- Each property owner is in support of the rezoning

VOICE VOTE: Motion carried 7-0.

B. 2005 Master Plan Goals and Objectives

Director Kieselbach offered a brief overview of the Meridian Economic Development Corporation's recommended changes as outlined in staff memorandum dated September 20, 2013.

Planning Commission and staff discussion:

- Board changes meant to streamline some of the strategies
- Lack of rationale from the Board for its changes
- Concern with Board removal of specific studies
- Concern with Board changes to Goal 6: Objective C
- Concern with Board changes to Goal 7: Objective F
- Board replacement of Planning Commission language with "action" language
- Board has edited out strategy specifics
- Board has removed redundancies
- Goal 1: Objective A, Strategy 4 Board language made the statement more concise and less specific
- Board language did not change the intent of some of the Planning Commission's strategy, but did address the specificity of the language
- Concern with Board changes in Goal 2: Objective D, Strategy 1
- Planning Commissioner preference to restore the Commission's language in Goal 2: Objective D, Strategy 1
- Preference for presentation of the document for public input first
- Planning Commissioner concern with several of the Economic Development Corporation's (EDC) recommended changes
- Planning Commission option to discuss Board changes after public input
- Explanation of the Master Plan process
- Appreciation for input by various stakeholders
- Planning Commissioner preference to have input from all stakeholders prior to the public hearing
- Public hearing is a legal requirement but does not preclude additional input from the public on an ongoing basis throughout the process
- Suggestion to send the "clean" copy back to the Board with either a cover letter explaining what the Planning Commission would like to have happen and/or a representative from the Planning Commission to present to the Board where the Planning Commission is at with the document
- Suggestion to assign a date specific for adoption of the revised Master Plan Goals and Objectives
- Need for a direct line of communication with the Township Board on this issue



- Suggestion for the Planning Commission to write a cover letter requesting explanations for Board changes
- Master Plan is an ongoing and living document
- Planning Commissioner preference to incorporate the EDC's recommended changes prior to sending the document to the Township Board
- Township Clerk serves on the EDC, but chose not to offer input at the EDC level since he will be reviewing the Master Plan when it comes before the Board
- Inquiry as to Planning Commission facilitation of EDC input
- Suggestion by the Chair to deal with the specifics of the EDC recommendation prior to sending it back to the Board
- Staff reminder that the act requires the Township to review the Master Plan every five (5) years, but does not mandate that it be changed
- Suggestion to review the EDC recommendations
- Goal 3: Objective A, Strategy 1: EDC recommendation to "incorporate" is an action
- Capital Area Transportation Authority's (CATA) Transportation Study noted in Goal 3: Objective A, Strategy 1 is a regional study
- Goal 3: Objective A, Strategy 1: Concern with binding the Township to the appropriation of money through the reincorporation of "action" words
- Goal 3: Objective A, Strategy 1: Belief the intent is to incorporate data from the CATA Transportation Study which requires exploration of the document to ascertain what is useful to the Township
- Belief the Board changes make the language so general that it means nothing
- CATA Transportation Study was funded through the Federal Transit Authority (FTA) to look at improvements on the Grand River Corridor from the Capitol to the Meridian Mall
- Transportation Study resulted in bus rapid transit as the preferred option
- Next "round" of funding which was recently approved by the FTA is for design and engineering of the system
- A separate study commenced in May with money received by Tri-County from the US Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) which covered the area down the Michigan/Grand River corridor from the Capitol to Webberville
- Belief the Board's rationale for changing the language in Goal 3: Objective A, Strategy 1 was to allow participation in both redevelopment efforts
- Suggestion to incorporate a third component of transportation in the goals and objectives titled Meridian Township Transportation Plan which includes, among other things, Redi-Ride
- Staff suggestion that these general broader issues should be brought up in the Transportation Goals
- Goal 6: Objective F addresses the coordination of Meridian Township's transportation planning with regional planning efforts
- Suggestion to rephrase Goal 3: Objective A, Strategy 1: Participate in regional efforts to redevelop the Grand River Corridor and incorporate results, where appropriate

**It was the consensus of the Planning Commission to hold a work session on the 2005 Master Plan Goals and Objectives on Monday, October 7<sup>th</sup> at 7:00 P.M.**

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

Commissioner Cordill spoke to inclusion of the proposed Haslett Road rezonings in the Master Plan's Future Land Use Map. She voiced frustration when dealing with a large MUPUD and not having the broader perspective on roads/traffic patterns in the area.

Chair Jackson announced the appeal of Special Use Permit #13121 will be heard by the Township Board on Tuesday, October 15, 2013 and appointed Commissioner Ianni as the Planning Commission representative for that meeting.

Members of the Planning Commission requested a written communication from the Township Attorney on whether the millage approved by the voters for the new central fire station is tied to the proposed site.

**10. New applications**

- A. \*Special Use Permit #13-77021 (DTN Management), request to locate a plasma center in the Carriage Hills Shopping Center located on the northwest corner of Lake Lansing Road and Hagadorn Road
- B. Commercial Planned Unit Development #13034 (Jeff Kyes), request to establish the Meridian Mall C-PUD and add approximately 18,650 square feet onto the Meridian Mall to accommodate a new tenant
- C. Mixed Use Planned Unit Development #13-10014 (DTN Management), request for a minor amendment to add a canopy and modify parking for the Waterbury Place MUPUD office building

**11. Site plans received**

- A. Site Plan Review #13-10-06 (DTN Management), minor site plan amendment to the Waterbury Place Mixed Use Planned Unit Development to add a canopy over the office building entrance at 4530 Hagadorn Road

**12. Site plans approved**

- A. Site Plan Review #13-78-22 (Zahra Institute), locate a religious institution at 4133 Okemos Road
- B. Site Plan Review #13-02 (Capstone), review of Hannah Lofts, third phase of Hannah Farms MUPUD located on Esoteric Way, south of Hannah Blvd and north of Eyde Parkway

**13. Public remarks**

Chair Jackson opened and closed public remarks.

**14. Adjournment**

Chair Jackson adjourned the regular meeting at 10:04 P.M.

Respectfully Submitted,

Sandra K. Otto  
Recording Secretary