

**CHARTER TOWNSHIP OF MERIDIAN
PLANNING COMMISSION
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES
September 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, Norkin (7:03 P.M.), Salehi, Scott-Craig
ABSENT: None
STAFF: Director of Community Planning and Development Mark Kieselbach, Director of Public Works and Engineering Ray Severy, Fire Chief Fred Cowper, 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

Commissioner Ianni moved to approve the Regular Meeting Minutes of August 26, 2013. Seconded by Commissioner Scott-Craig.

VOICE VOTE: Motion carried 8-0.

4. Public Remarks

Chair Jackson opened the floor for public remarks

Marie Persons, 2028 Central Park Drive, Okemos, spoke in opposition to Special Use Permit (SUP) #13121.

William Persons, 2028 Central Park Drive, Okemos, spoke in opposition to SUP #13121.

Robert Szczygiel, 2038 Central Park Drive, Okemos, spoke in opposition to SUP #13121.

Ken Phinney, 4655 Krental, Holt, spoke in support of SUP #13121.

Susan Simkin, 2032 Central Park Drive, Okemos, spoke in opposition to SUP #13121.

Steven E. Lamb, 2026 Central Park Drive, Okemos, spoke in opposition to the location of the new fire station proposed in SUP #13121.

Chris Johnson, 2190 Seminole Drive, Okemos, spoke in support of SUP #13121.

Vance Kincaid, 4530 Nakoma Drive, Okemos, spoke in opposition to the location of the new fire station proposed in SUP #13121. He believed the Planning Commission should discuss various options for a different site for the new station.

David Strobl, 1320 Cove Court, Okemos, addressed physical ramifications of short term exposure to noise levels which would be emitted from emergency vehicles relative to SUP #13121. He requested the Planning Commission deny this SUP at the proposed location.

Chair Jackson closed public remarks.

5. Communications

- A. Ken O’Hara, Secretary, Delhi Charter Township Planning Commission, 2074 Aurelius Road, Holt, RE: Delhi Township Master Plan
- B. Steven E. Lamb, 2026 Central Park Drive, Okemos; RE: SUP #13121 (Meridian Township)
- C. Farideh Behforooz, 2022 Central Park Drive, Okemos; RE: SUP #13121 (Meridian Township)
- D. Christine G. Beavers, 5125 E. Brookfield, East Lansing; RE: ZA #13040 (Planning Commission)
- E. Mark Kieselbach/Martha Wyatt, Community Planning and Development; RE: Staff Memorandum on Signs in Multiple Family Districts
- F. Matthew J. Walters, 5685 Potter Street, Haslett; RE: SUP #13121 (Meridian Township)
- G. Bill Richardson, 5300 Chantilly Lane, Haslett; RE: SUP #13121 (Meridian Township)
- H. Kimberly Kortgoede , 5685 Potter Street, Haslett; RE: SUP #13121 (Meridian Township)
- I. David DeLind, 2188 Hamilton Road, Okemos; RE: SUP #13121 (Meridian Township)

6. Public hearings (None)

7. Unfinished Business

- A. Special Use Permit #13101 (St. Paul’s Lutheran), request to use the building at 3407 Lake Lansing Road for philanthropic, educational and social programs

Principal Planner Oranchak summarized the proposed SUP as outlined in staff memorandum dated September 6, 2013.

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 #13101 subject to the following conditions:

- 1. Approval is based on the submitted application materials dated received by the Township on July 30, 2013, subject to revisions as required.**
- 2. The applicant shall obtain all applicable permits, licenses, and approvals from the Township prior to any work taking place on the site. Copies of all permits, licenses, and approvals shall be submitted to the Department of Community Planning and Development.**
- 3. The applicant shall install landscaping and/or fencing to preserve the privacy of the single-family residential use to the west, subject to the approval of the Director of Community Planning and Development.**
- 4. No more than two vehicles may be parked at any one time at 5407 Lake Lansing Road. All other vehicles shall use the church parking lot at 3383 Lake Lansing Road.**
- 5. Approval is subject to the Zoning Board of Appeals granting variances for lot area less than two acres in size and the minimum 50-foot setback from a property line.**

- 6. Any modification to the site to enlarge the use will require a modification of the special use permit.**

Seconded by Commissioner Cordill.

Planning Commission discussion:

- Request is not controversial
- Proposal would have no greater impact than if used as a private residence
- “Legalization” of the association of these two properties is not necessary, given that they are in two different municipal jurisdictions

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

NAYS: None

Motion carried unanimously.

- B. 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

Principal Planner Oranchak summarized the SUP request as outlined in staff memorandum dated September 6, 2013.

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 #13121 subject to the following conditions:

- 1. Approval of the special use permit is granted in accordance with the site plans prepared by DLZ, dated August 2, 2013, subject to revisions as required.**
- 2. The character and quality of the building materials and general architectural design of the buildings shall be consistent on all four sides. Building materials shall be substantially consistent with elevations plans prepared by DLZ and dated August 2, 2013, subject to approval by the Director of Community Planning and Development.**
- 3. The applicant shall obtain all necessary permits, licenses, and approvals from the Ingham County Road Department and the Township. Copies of all permits and approval letters shall be submitted to the Department of Community Planning and Development.**
- 4. The parking lot shall be designed in accordance with the requirements of Section 86-756 Design and Construction Requirements.**
- 5. Bicycle parking shall be provided in accordance with the requirements of Section 86-760.**
- 6. The building shall be moved approximately five feet south to comply with the setback requirements of Section 86-654 or be granted a variance by the Zoning Board of Appeals.**

7. **Prior to issuance of any permit for construction activity including grading permits, any wellhead(s) located on the site shall be properly closed and abandoned pursuant to the requirements of the Ingham County Health Department and the Township.**
8. **The location, species and size of street trees to be installed on street frontages shall be subject to the approval of the Director of Community Planning and Development.**
9. **Landscaping shall generally comply with all applicable provisions of the Code of Ordinances.**
10. **Site and building lighting shall comply with Article VII of Section 38 of the Code of Ordinances and shall be subject to the approval of the Director of Community Planning and Development. Parking lot lighting shall not exceed 15 feet in height. LED lighting shall be used where feasible.**
11. **All mechanical, heating, ventilation, air conditioning, and similar systems shall be screened from view by an opaque structure or landscape material (if at street level) selected to complement the building. Such screening is subject to approval by the Director of Community Planning and Development.**
12. **The utility, grading and storm drainage plans shall be subject to the approval of the Director of Public Works and Engineering and shall be completed in accordance with the Township Engineering Design and Construction Standards.**
13. **A copy of the site plan information that exists in a computer format for the development project and construction plans shall be provided to the Township Engineering staff in an Auto Cad compatible format.**
14. **Any future modifications to the building or site shall require an amendment modification to the special use permit.**

Seconded by Commissioner Ianni.

Planning Commission and staff discussion:

- Project did not previously come before the Planning Commission
- Several discussions on this issue took place at the Township Board level
- Township is assuming the position of the “developer” for this proposed special use
- Difficulty for Planning Commissioners, absent obvious issues regarding the land itself, to not move forward given all the discussions at the Board level and the vote by residents within the Township
- No market evidence to support the allegation that property values will decline
- Majority of residents who voted supported this property as the location for the new central fire station
- Township has not received complaints from residents near other fire stations in the Township relative to noise
- Proposed site is located at the edge of a commercial district adjacent to Meridian Mall
- Necessity of relocating the central fire station between the railroad tracks to cover the central area of the Township
- Site will be able to service the areas south of the flooding area on Okemos Road during heavy rain

- Uniqueness of this situation as the funding has already been obtained through special ballot initiative prior to coming before the “zoning authorities”
- Board and Planning Commission roles relative to the Capital Improvements Program
- \$200,000 of taxpayer money has been spent on the design of the proposed fire station
- Environmental Commission concerns about placing the fire station at the corner of Okemos Road and Central Park Drive as it would require extensive tree removal
- Suggestion to have a light at the mall entrance off Central Park Drive (near the post office) which can be activated to red by emergency vehicle drivers in order to avoid the use of sirens
- Ability to activate the proposed new light and the light at Central Park Drive and Okemos Road to red would eliminate any potential traffic congestion and allow the emergency vehicles to exit without the need for sirens
- Priority of this location was to ensure there is a fire station to the south of the railroad tracks, one to the north of the railroad tracks, and the one proposed to be in-between the railroad tracks
- Flooding on Okemos Road is a temporary situation
- Station is designed with the housing, kitchen and training tower in the rear of the building
- Station will experience approximately four (4) calls per day, with the majority during daylight hours
- Some of the calls may transpire when the emergency vehicle is returning from a hospital run and will not begin from the station
- Fire Department does not use sirens during the night unless it is necessary
- Possibility of an easement from the post office to exit the emergency vehicles “through the mall” at the Fire Department’s discretion
- Based upon input from the Environmental Commission, planning engineer and the architect, this was the most appropriate location on the subject parcel
- Township consideration of a new location for the Farmers Market behind the proposed fire station on this parcel
- Utilities will be installed for the new fire station which will assist in the market relocation
- Use of the mall access road as the fire station exit would “hamper” response time

Commissioner Deits offered the following friendly amendment:

Add condition #15 to read: “The Township shall work with the Ingham County Road Department (ICRD) to explore and implement, if feasible, measures (including traffic controls) that would obviate the use of sirens on the western end of Central Park Drive.”

The amendment was accepted by the maker of the main motion.

Continued Planning Commission and staff discussion:

- Concern there is no mention of coverage in all the Board notes on this issue
- Planning Commissioner belief the largest concern is not the protection of the residents of the community, but financial in nature
- Belief the Planning Commission does not have adequate information to make a decision if the proposed site is the best location for the new central fire station
- Question before the Planning Commission is not what site is best, but on this specific site
- Under the Township’s ordinances and mode of operation, the action is appropriate
- Planning Commissioner belief the voters are not the “higher authority” in dictating what decisions are made by Planning Commissioners
- Planning Commissioner belief the residents vote on this location is a suggestion or guidance
- Desire of the Township Board for Planning Commission approval of this special use permit does not preclude independent assessment by Planning Commissioners

- Planning Commissioner belief the placement of a new fire station directly across from the Autumn Park Condominium buildings is inappropriate and will “destroy” the market values of those condominiums
- Information obtained by a former realtor from an online real estate source, www.zillow.com, indicated location close to fire stations negatively impacts market value
- Condominiums constructed just south of the south fire station do not speak to the impact of the market value of the Autumn Park Condominiums
- Issue before the Planning Commission is one of land use, and this is not the appropriate location for a new fire station
- Moving the fire station behind the post office would place it into the floodplain
- Location of the fire station behind the post office, although it would change the visibility factor for the Autumn Park Condominium owners, it would not change the noise impact as the access out of the site would still be onto Central Park Place
- As noted during the public hearing, placing the fire station at the intersection of Okemos Road and Central Park Drive creates a traffic concern
- This facility will produce very low volume traffic and will have virtually no impact on Central Park Drive traffic
- Suggested alternate routes for exiting the site are not practical and hamper response times
- Inquiry if the station must go on the subject parcel, given passage of the proposal by voters
- Concern with the millage being tied to this site only
- Denial of this SUP request by the Planning Commission does not preclude the Township from appealing that decision to the Board
- Feasibility of a compensating cut if the location of the fire station was placed south of the post office
- Cost involved with placement of the building in the floodplain and the commensurate compensating cut
- Wetland delineation indicates that it follows the floodplain and work in the wetland would require a permit from the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality (MDEQ)
- Access drive out to Okemos Road near Best Buy is in the floodplain, but the buildings on the north side of Grand River have been raised above the floodplain
- Wetland setback would add 40 feet to the wetland boundary shown on the map and would be protected from development
- Planning Commissioner position that the value of residential property near a fire station is subjective, dependent upon the buyer
- Concern the Planning Commission is being placed in an impossible position as it does not have an answer to the question whether the millage vote, de facto, cites the fire station on the proposed location
- Suggestion to table the issue until the question regarding the location as passed by the millage language has been answered by our Township Attorney
- Planning Commissioner belief the question before them is if the proposal, as presented, is an appropriate use for the subject parcel

Commissioner Deits moved to table. Seconded by Commissioner Hildebrandt.

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

8. Other Business

A. 2005 Master Plan Goals and Objectives

Principal Planner Oranchak summarized the status of the 2005 Master Plan Goals and Objectives as outlined in staff memorandum dated September 5, 2013.

Planning Commission discussion:

- Preference for the Planning Commission to be supplied with Board rationale for its changes
- Concern the Board “generalized” much of the language
- Request for the Planning Commission to be supplied with more information relative to the following changes:
 - Goal 3: Objective B, Strategies 1 and 2
 - Goal 6: Objective C, Strategies 1
 - Goal 7, Objective F
- Next step would be for any Planning Commission suggestions/comments to go back to the Board
- Public hearing will be held after the final draft is sent out to the surrounding communities for comment
- Situation surrounding the Master Plan Goals and Objectives is a perfect example for the need to have a joint meeting of the Planning Commission and the Township Board to work “in sync”
- Request for the Planning Commission to review the language before it is sent back to the Board
- Master Plan process is allowed by the Michigan Planning Enabling Act
- The final decision will be made by the Township Board
- Planning Commission has the ability to receive public input through an additional public hearing if so desired
- Public always has the option to participate in the discussion of issues which come before the Planning Commission
- Status of the Planning Commission’s request for a joint meeting with the Township Board
- Need for the strikeouts to remain so Planning Commission language and points will not be lost

Commissioner Deits moved to direct staff to complete a clean copy with the Board’s recommended changes and any typographical changes for approval at the next meeting. Seconded by Commissioner Norkin.

Continued Planning Commission and staff discussion:

- Discussion can still take place at the next meeting regarding concerns the Planning Commission has with language contained in the draft sent back by the Board
- Concern with the length of time this process may take to adopt the goals and objectives
- Ability of the Planning Commission to vote on the Board’s proposed language this evening
- The next review of the Master Plan Goals and Objectives will begin in 16 months
- Master Plan is a living document which constantly changes

VOICE VOTE: Motion carried unanimously.

Commissioner Deits moved to remove SUP #13121 from the table. Seconded by Commissioner Scott-Craig.

VOICE VOTE: Motion carried unanimously.

Director Kieselbach stated he spoke with the Township Attorney who opined that the money generated by the millage is tied to the specific site of the proposed new central fire station.

Continued Planning Commission discussion:

- Desire for the Fire Department to work with the neighbors to mitigate the noise issue
- Belief the Planning Commission has options and should vote on the merits of the proposal before it
- Concern with cloistered government backing the Planning Commission into a corner

ROLL CALL VOTE: YEAS: Commissioners Cordill, Deits, Hildebrandt, Ianni, Norkin, Scott-Craig,
Chair Jackson
NAYS: Commissioner Honicky, Salehi
Motion carried 7-2.

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

Commissioner Deits stated the Board has relieved the Okemos Downtown Development Authority (DDA) of some financial burden associated with the Meijer Tax Tribunal decision, but there will still be a significant decline in the DDA budget due to continued drop in property values.

10. New applications

- A. Mixed Use Planned Unit Development #13024 (Hannah Hospitality, LLC), request to locate a Residence Inn on Hannah Boulevard, east of the Esoteric Way and west of Eyde Parkway
- 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

11. Site plans received (None)

12. Site plans approved (None)

13. Public remarks

Chair Jackson opened public remarks.

Marie Persons, 2028 Central Park Drive, Okemos, believed justice was not served with the Planning Commission vote on SUP #13121.

Susan Simkin, 2032 Central Park Drive, Okemos, believed there will be increased expense for the Township due to additional services to the proposed Residence Inn. She did not believe there was a real awareness by the general population about the real cost of these new developments near the western boundary of the Township.

Chair Jackson closed public remarks.

14. Adjournment

Chair Jackson adjourned the regular meeting at 9:37 P.M.

Respectfully Submitted,

Sandra K. Otto
Recording Secretary