

**CHARTER TOWNSHIP OF MERIDIAN
PLANNING COMMISSION
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES
April 25, 2011**

APPROVED

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

PRESENT: Commissioners Deits, Goldsberry, Goodale, Jackson, Norkin, Scales
ABSENT: Commissioners Beyea, Cordill, Honicky
STAFF: Principal Planner Gail Oranchak

1. Call meeting to order

Chair Deits called the regular meeting to order at 7:06 P.M.

2. Approval of agenda

Commissioner Scales moved to approve the agenda amended as follows:

- **Insert new Agenda Item #8A: Special Use Permit #10-09081 (Grand Petro Mart), resolution to void approval of a drive-through window at 743 Grand River Avenue**
- **Reletter the remaining unfinished business items accordingly**

Seconded by Commissioner Goldsberry.

VOICE VOTE: Motion carried 6-0.

3. Presentation: Wellhead/Groundwater Protection Management

Christine Spitzley, Environmental Programs Planner, Tri-County Regional Planning Commission

Ms. Spitzley offered the following points of interest:

- Tri-County Regional Planning Commission has been involved with water protection since the 1970s
- Section 208 of the federal Water Quality Act of 1972 was the first major national attempt at water quality planning on a multi-jurisdictional level, focusing on evaluating surface water issues
- Groundwater Management Board was established in 1982, to which 14 member communities belong
- Dues paid to belong to the Groundwater Management Board are based on population
- Each community receives one vote
- Goals of the Groundwater Management Board are to protect 100% of the local drinking water supply, create coordinated, comprehensive and economical strategies by working together while ignoring political boundaries
- Major projects over the last 30 years include education and outreach, water regionalization, the Aquifer Study and wellhead protection
- Education efforts were first directed at elected officials
- A Water Regionalization Study was conducted during the late 1980s-early 1990s where 22 communities determined their infrastructure needs
- As a result of the Water Regionalization Study, the Mid-Michigan Water Authority was created, which allowed for interconnections with over a dozen municipalities and Michigan State University
- During the aforementioned time period, a Regional Aquifer model was developed, which is a computer model which defines and illustrates how the water works underground
- The model helps ascertain contributing areas, recharge, glacial layers, assists with management and optimization scenarios and geochemistry analysis

- The aquifer model shows communities how ground water resources are replenished by precipitation and percolation through geologic materials
- The aquifer model also shows areas where recharge is not happening due to impervious surfaces
- Wellhead protection began in the early 1990s to protect aquifers and public water supplies
- Wellhead protection is a voluntary and proactive long term program in Michigan
- All states are required to have a Wellhead Protection Program
- Basic steps to wellhead protection:
 - Commitment
 - Meridian Township Board passed a resolution of support
 - Meridian Township staff was committed to the wellhead protection plan
 - Several grants were obtained from the State of Michigan to support staff time
 - Money spent on the water regionalization study and the aquifer study qualified as match money
 - Roles and Responsibilities
 - Teams were established with specific guidelines mandated by the state
 - Wellhead Protection Area Delineations
 - Model created by was used
 - Approximately 225 public water supply wells in Lansing, East Lansing, Michigan State University and the townships of Meridian, Delhi, Delta and Lansing
 - These areas were used as priority
 - Delineations were done as a group using the existing aquifer model created by the US Geological Survey (USGS)
 - Groundwater Management Board paid \$30,000 and received a grant from the Kellogg Foundation to delineate the 14 communities at the same time
 - 1,4,10 and 40 year time of travel was delineated
 - Time of travel defined as the distance groundwater moves to a public well in a specific time frame
 - State requires a ten (10) year time of travel
 - Groundwater Management Board preferred to do a 40 year time of travel for planning purposes
 - Potential Sources of Contamination
 - Communities need to be aware of risks
 - Communities need to know how to manage these risks
 - Allows for prioritization of funding and resources
 - Contaminant Source Inventory
 - Worked with an environmental engineering firm in 2000 to perform a 75 point evaluation of each site within the six communities mentioned above
 - The contaminant source inventory has been updated two times since 2000
 - A GIS company was hired through a grant from the Board of Water and Light to place the inventory in ARC Viewer format so planners can use and manipulate the data
 - Wellhead Protection Management
 - Goal is to keep contamination from reaching the groundwater
 - Looked at facility inspections, land use regulations, operational policies, best management practices, public information and education, and incorporation of wellhead protection into a community's Master Plan
 - Six communities hired a staff person from the Planning and Zoning Center who went through each community's ordinances, site plan review standards, Master Plans, building codes, etc. and wrote recommendations for each community
 - The goal was to have each community have the same water protection standards
 - Currently working with a Practicum class at Michigan State University (MSU) who went

through the Planning and Zoning Center staff person's work to compare his recommendations with what each community had implemented

- Practicum class created a wellhead protection audit tool
- Findings from the class are to be released on April 29th
- Contingency Plans
 - Utilities in Michigan are required by the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality (MDEQ) to have a contingency plan
 - These plans provide planning for municipal water supplies in the event of drought, contamination, acts of terrorism or system failure
- New Well Sites
 - Forward planning by utilities
 - Future supply requirements are based on population and manufacturing
 - Available property
 - Aquifer yield
 - Logical placement based on natural resources and existing contamination which allows for residents with private wells to have the same protection as those serviced through public water supplies
- Public Education and Outreach
 - 60 civic group presentations in the last two (2) years
 - Use of brochures, placemats, newspapers, websites
 - Children's Water Festival at MSU
- Ongoing plan is to continue updating the plans
- Delineations are updated as there are changes in pumpages and aquifer yield

Planning Commission discussion:

- Revision of the MUPUD ordinance relative to allowing amenities for increasing water recharge capacity
- Part of the stormwater project has included site specific recommendations for water recharge
- Tri-County Regional Planning Commission's position on well and septic is that it is necessary and the cost for extending infrastructure for low population areas is not always feasible
- Ingham County Health Department does a good job of monitoring well and septic in the county

4. Approval of Minutes

Commissioner Scales moved to approve the Regular Meeting Minutes of March 28, 2011. Seconded by Commissioner Norkin.

VOICE VOTE: Motion carried 6-0.

Commissioner Goldsberry moved to approve the Regular Meeting Minutes of April 11, 2011. Seconded by Commissioner Jackson.

VOICE VOTE: Motion carried 6-0.

Commissioner Jackson moved to approve the Work Session Meeting Minutes of April 11, 2011. Seconded by Commissioner Scales.

VOICE VOTE: Motion carried 6-0.

5. Public Remarks

Chair Deits opened the floor for public remarks.

Michael Leon, 4890 Chipping Camden Lane, Okemos, spoke in support of the cancellation of the special use permit for the drive-through window at Grand Petro Mart, located at 743 Grand River Avenue. He also supported the applicant's modification of the original special use permit to add gas pumps to the convenience store at 743 Grand River Avenue and believed the original SUP will come back to the Planning Commission. Mr. Leon requested a traffic study be conducted as he has calculated there will be 800 new trips per day. He also requested the Planning Commission be aware of the cost in making the decision on the original SUP and asked the Planning Commission to do "due diligence." Mr. Leon believed the proper approvals were not obtained from the Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT) for a second driveway.

Ali Damsaz, Grand Petro Mart, 850 Merlin Way, Dexter, disagreed with the trip calculation presented by the previous speaker. He spoke to the fact he has been there almost twenty (20) years and the additional pumps will increase the trips by a maximum of 25-30%. Mr. Damsaz explained there are currently less than 200 trips per day to this site. He refuted earlier public comment regarding the driveways by explaining the exchange between MDOT and himself when it improved Grand River Avenue approximately two (2) years ago.

Chair Deits closed public remarks.

6. Communications

A. Jason Thompson, 4841/4843 Ardmere Avenue, Okemos; RE: SUP #11-07031 (Okemos/Grand River Group)

7. Public hearings (None)

8. Unfinished Business

A. SUP #10-09081 (Grand Petro Mart), a resolution to void approval of a drive through window
Principal Planner Oranchak summarized the change to the special use permit to void approval of a drive-through window

Commissioner Goodale moved [and read into the record] NOW THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED THE PLANNING COMMISSION OF THE CHARTER TOWNSHIP OF MERIDIAN hereby voids Special Use Permit #10-09081 (Grand Petro Mart) to add a drive-through window to the proposed convenience store at 743 Grand River Avenue. Seconded by Commissioner Scales.

ROLL CALL VOTE: YEAS: Commissioners Goldsberry, Goodale, Jackson, Norkin, Scales,
Chair Deits

NAYS: None

Motion carried 6-0.

B. Special Use Permit #11-07031 (Okemos/Grand River Group LLC), request to install a changing message sign at 2131 Grand River Avenue.

Principal Planner Oranchak summarized the proposed special use permit as outlined in staff memorandum dated April 20, 2011.

Commissioner Scales moved [and read into the record] NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THE PLANNING COMMISSION OF THE CHARTER TOWNSHIP OF MERIDIAN hereby approves the special use permit for the installation of a changing message sign at 2131 Grand River Avenue, subject to the following conditions:

1. Approval is granted in accordance with the sign diagrams prepared by Kieffer & Co.,

Inc. dated April 14, 2011.

- 2. Only one freestanding changing message sign shall be allowed on the site.**
- 3. The changing message sign shall not flash, scroll, animate, flip or otherwise move except to change messages in the manner and speed authorized by conditions of approval.**
- 4. The changing message sign shall be limited to a rate of four changes in message per one hour.**
- 5. The changing message sign shall display only letters and numerals; animation and transitional graphics such as a fade, dissolve, wipe, or other effects are prohibited.**
- 6. Use of the changing message sign shall be limited to the hours of operation of the Walgreen's store; it shall be turned off when the Walgreen's store is closed.**
- 7. The overall height of the sign, including the portion of the sign that does not display a changing message, shall be limited to eight feet, as measured from the top of the sign to the ground.**

Seconded by Commissioner Goldsberry.

Planning Commission and applicant discussion:

- No existing provision in the Township's ordinance for a changing sign
- Rationale for choosing four changes in message per hour
- Previous requests by gasoline stations were approved to allow for a price change on the sign whenever the price of gasoline changes
- Individuals stopped at the intersection of Grand River Avenue and Okemos Road would only sit through one message change, at most
- Changing message signs are the way of the world
- No state standards on changing message signs
- If an ordinance amendment is initiated, the number of times a message may change could be more or less than the condition proposed in this special use permit
- Basis of the need to change a sign
- Staff looked at other ordinances as a basis for the proposed draft

Commissioner Norkin moved that this sign special use permit approval be tabled to give members of the Commission a chance to study the Township Master Plan and the impact of moving signs in our community.

The motion died for lack of a second.

Continued Planning Commission discussion:

- Limitation on the number of times a message can be changed on a sign in some way defeats the purpose of having a changing sign
- Applicant not locked into a changing message sign even if the Planning Commission approves the special use permit
- Applicant allowed a fixed sign by right
- Appreciation that the sign height is lowered to eight (8) feet
- Request that Planning Commission members consider the precedent set by approving changing message signs
- A changing message sign four times per hour distracts drivers and is a safety concern

- Aesthetics of the sign relative to the adjacent neighborhood
- Appreciation that the changing message sign display is limited to the hours of operation and turned off when the store is closed
- Applicant has modified the original special use permit request to address the concerns expressed by Planning Commissioners at the previous meeting

Commissioner Jackson offered the following friendly amendment:

- **Change the message rate to one message per day**

The maker did not accept the amendment.

Commissioner Jackson offered the following amendment:

- **Change the message rate to one time per day**

Seconded by Commissioner Norkin.

Continued Planning Commission discussion:

- If the ordinance is changed, the applicant would be required to come back and modify this SUP
- Possible inclusion of a condition which would address a less restrictive ordinance change in the future

VOICE VOTE: Motion failed 2-4 (Goldsberry, Goodale, Scales, Chair Deits).

Commissioner Goldsberry offered the following amendment:

- **Amend condition #4 by deleting “four changes in message per one hour” and inserting two changes in message per day, except if the ordinance is amended to allow for more frequent message changes”**

Seconded by Commissioner Jackson.

VOICE VOTE: Motion carried 5-1 (Norkin).

ROLL CALL VOTE: YEAS: Commissioners Goldsberry, Goodale, Jackson, Scales, Chair Deits

NAYS: Commissioner Norkin

Motion carried 5-1.

C. Zoning Amendment #11020 (Township Board), amendment to Section 86-440 Mixed Use Planned Unit Development

Principal Planner Oranchak summarized the proposed zoning amendment as outlined in staff memorandum dated April 21, 2011.

Planning Commission discussion:

- Request for staff to look into language on how to improve groundwater recharge on the site as an amenity
- Opportunity for the Planning Commission to review the findings of the MSU Student Practicum Project at some point in the future after it is presented to Tri-County Regional Planning Commission staff
- Draft MUPUD: Page 4, line 148: Suggestion to use a whole number (18) rather than a percentage (25 percent)
- Draft C-PUD: Page 3, line 86: Should read every commercial PUD, not mixed use PUD

- Draft C-PUD: Page 3, line 89: Staff to provide language to allow the amenities to be open ended
- Draft C-PUD, Page 7, line 274: Should read commercial PUD, not mixed use PUD
- Draft C-PUD, Page 9, line 347: Insert “, as applicable” after “agencies”
- Draft C-PUD, Page 9, line 349: Delete “, as applicable”
- Draft C-PUD, Page 9, line 350: Delete “, as applicable”
- Draft C-PUD, Page 9, line 351: Delete “, as applicable”

If was the consensus of the Planning Commission to direct staff to prepare a final version for approval at the next Planning Commission Meeting.

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

Chair Deits reported he received communication from Supervisor McGillicuddy anticipating Planning Commission receipt of an urban service boundary ordinance sometime in the May-June timeframe. He stated the Supervisor would like “brisk” action on this ordinance and asked Planning Commissioners to consider this request in terms of the work associated with review of the Master Plan.

10. New applications

A. Zoning Amendment #11040 (Township Board), amendment to Section 86-436 Conservancy.

11. Site plans received (None)

12. Site plans approved (None)

13. Public remarks

Chair Deits opened and closed public remarks.

14. Adjournment

Chair Deits adjourned the regular meeting at 8:31 P.M.

Respectfully Submitted,

Sandra K. Otto
Recording Secretary