

**CHARTER TOWNSHIP OF MERIDIAN  
PLANNING COMMISSION  
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES  
November 28, 2011**

**APPROVED**

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

PRESENT: Commissioners Cordill, Goodale, Hildebrandt, Honicky, Jackson, Norkin (7:06 PM),  
Scales, Scott-Craig  
ABSENT: Chair Deits  
STAFF: Principal Planner Gail Oranchak

**1. Call meeting to order**

Vice-Chair Jackson called the regular meeting to order at 7:00 P.M. She welcomed Lynn Hildebrandt, the newly appointed Planning Commissioner.

**2. Approval of agenda**

**Commissioner Honicky offered the following amendment:**

- **Add Agenda Item #8A: Amendment to the 2011 Planning Commission Meeting Schedule**

**Seconded by Commissioner Goodale.**

VOICE VOTE ON THE AMENDMENT: Motion carried 7-0.

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

VOICE VOTE: Motion carried 7-0.

**3. Approval of Minutes**

**Commissioner Scott-Craig moved to approve the Regular Meeting Minutes of November 14, 2011. Seconded by Commissioner Scales.**

VOICE VOTE: Motion carried 7-0.

**4. Public Remarks**

Vice-Chair Jackson opened and closed the floor for public remarks.

**5. Communications**

- Craig W. Muhn, Muhn Investments, LLC, 4388 Braeburn Court, Brighton; RE: Opposition to Special Use Permit #11-86141 (Mercy Ambulance)

**6. Public hearings**

- A. Special Use Permit #11-86141 (Mercy Ambulance), a request to operate a satellite facility at 2700 Grand River Avenue.

Vice-Chair Jackson opened the public hearing at 7:06 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 special use permit (SUP) as outlined in staff memorandum dated November 22, 2011.
- Applicant  
Janet Palmer, Lansing Mercy Ambulance, 1422 E. Michigan, Lansing, availed herself for questions by Planning Commissioners.
- Planning Commission discussion:  
Commissioner Honicky inquired as to the current situation in handling emergencies in Meridian Township which would be duplicated by Mercy Ambulance.

Principal Planner Oranchak responded that Mercy Ambulance has contracted with one or more facilities within the Township to be the first responder.

Commissioner Honicky asked if that arrangement would include 911 activities, such as an emergency to Burcham Hills.

Principal Planner Oranchak responded she did not believe that was the case, but noted the question should be answered by the applicant.

Commissioner Honicky inquired if a resident experienced a heart attack and called 911, to whom the call would be routed.

Principal Planner Oranchak responded it was her understanding it would be routed to Meridian Township EMS. She added she believed the applicant could better respond to this question, as there is a scenario wherein if all Township ambulances are on previous calls, Mercy Ambulance could provide “backup” ambulance services.

Commissioner Honicky requested the applicant explain its business arrangement for providing services in Meridian Township.

Ms. Palmer responded that Mercy Ambulance has had contracts with several facilities for a number of years in the Meridian Township and East Lansing area. She added the proposed location would allow Mercy Ambulance to be closer to these facilities. Ms. Palmer clarified that 911 calls would be dispatched to Meridian Township; however, if all Meridian Township ambulances were occupied and Mercy Ambulance was available, The Township’s dispatch could call upon Mercy as the nearest ambulance to provide service.

Commissioner Honicky inquired as to when Mercy Ambulance would use its sirens.

Ms. Palmer noted that the majority of Mercy Ambulance’s calls are not life threatening calls; however there may be an occasional emergency call.

Commissioner Honicky inquired if a Mercy ambulance located at the proposed satellite facility would be “dispensed” with sirens in the event of an emergency call.

Ms. Palmer responded in the affirmative, while noting that the ambulance would not have to come out of the bay with the sirens engaged, but would do so once on the road. She added

that if the ambulance was not housed at the proposed facility, it would be traveling down Grand River Avenue from its Michigan Avenue headquarters with sirens engaged. She added the proposed facility would allow the ambulance to be in closer proximity

Commissioner Honicky inquired if the proposed facility would service Mercy Ambulance's existing contracts. He asked if there would be further contracts serviced by this proposed location.

Ms. Palmer responded she did not know; it is the company's intent at this point to get closer to the existing facilities currently under contract.

Commissioner Honicky inquired as to how many runs were made by the company with its sirens engaged to the facilities in Meridian Township.

Ms. Palmer responded she did not have a number she could provide, but could look that information up and provide it at a future date.

Dennis Palmer, President, Mercy Ambulance, 1422 E. Michigan, Lansing, responded that with the current service agreements, each facility calls Mercy direct; they do not go through 911. He added that if the situation is deemed an emergency, Mercy may or may not call a closer unit to respond to the call. Mr. Palmer stated this arrangement is the same as it has been over the last several years.

Commissioner Honicky again asked for the number of runs made to facilities in Meridian Township where the ambulance needs to engage its sirens.

Mr. Palmer responded that Mercy Ambulance makes runs in Meridian Township two to three times per day, but could not provide a specific number of runs which need to utilize the sirens.

Commissioner Honicky stated there was a communication from a Meridian Township landowner who was concerned with the sirens "destroying the quiet enjoyment of the residents of the entire Wardcliff residential neighborhood."

Mr. Palmer reiterated an earlier comment from Ms. Palmer who had indicated the ambulance could exit without the use of lights and sirens until it traveled onto the street. He noted this proposed location would cut response time by seven (7) minutes.

Commissioner Goodale inquired as to the year the building which would house the satellite ambulance office was constructed.

Principal Planner Oranchak answered it was built in 1986, and was the new use in the area at that time.

Commissioner Goodale inquired if the nearby apartments have been apartments since construction.

Principal Planner Oranchak responded the communication contained in the Planning Commission packet referenced some single family homes to the north of the site on Mansfield Drive which are rental properties. She indicated the proposed location is approximately 300 feet from the nearest house to the north. She indicated ambulances would be exiting on the south side of the building onto Grand River Avenue away from the properties mentioned in the communication.

Commissioner Goodale indicated if there was a condition placed on the special use permit that sirens not be activated until the ambulance was on Grand River Avenue, that should address the concern expressed in the communication submitted by Mr. Muhn.

Commissioner Scales inquired if this was an opportunity to decentralize an organization in an effort to allow for a more efficient response for residents within Meridian Township and East Lansing.

Ms. Palmer responded it would bring one Mercy Ambulance closer to Meridian Township, while noting most of the other ambulances would still operate out of the main base on Michigan Avenue.

Commissioner Scales inquired as to the times of the 12-16 business hours each day.

Ms. Palmer responded the hours would be during the day, as the only facilities available to employees are a restroom and small seating area. She noted the sleeping quarters and kitchen remain at the headquarters on Michigan Avenue. Ms. Palmer indicated business hours would conclude at approximately 8:00 P.M.

Commissioner Scott-Craig inquired if the two (2) to three (3) runs per day were ambulance runs, van runs, or both.

Ms. Palmer indicated most of them would be ambulance runs. She stated that the non-emergency vehicle would not be at this location very often, as it is used to transport individuals to doctor appointments, etc.

Commissioner Scott-Craig inquired if the vans were equipped with sirens.

Ms. Palmer responded the non-emergency vans are not.

Commissioner Scott-Craig inquired if the proposed facility would be limited to two vehicles.

Ms. Palmer answered in the affirmative.

Commissioner Scott-Craig inquired if there was any thought given to future expansion.

Ms. Palmer responded not for this location using the proposed space.

Commissioner Scott-Craig asked the applicant to delineate the hours of operation; possibly 6:00 a.m. until 8:00 p.m.?

Ms. Palmer responded that would be good hours and added that the non-emergency vehicles would have less hours.

Commissioner Scott-Craig inquired if the ambulance is equipped with signal control equipment.

Mr. Palmer responded Mercy Ambulance does not currently have that capability.

Commissioner Scott-Craig believed it to be a valuable and important option and asked why Mercy Ambulance does not have that capability.

Mr. Palmer stated he believed the Opticon system is available, but was unsure of the process to acquire it. He believed driving conditions, along with closer proximity to reduce response times, were bigger safety factors than having the ability to change lights. Mr. Palmer indicated that if the Opticon system would benefit the company in the future, it will be looked into.

Commissioner Scott-Craig noted he lives in the neighborhood and when an ambulance approaches Grand River and attempts to join the flow of traffic during rush hour (particularly in the form of a left turn), the applicant would need the siren and flashing lights to facilitate optimum response time. He believed the ambulance driver would need to use the siren and flashing lights at the end of the driveway in order to access traffic flow during rush hour.

Mr. Palmer responded that the use/non-use of sirens to exit the premise is a “catch 22”, depending upon who you speak with. He noted the viaduct close to Park Lake has a blind spot and spoke to the need for an exit method for complete safety.

Commissioner Norkin expressed concern with increased traffic in this area over time and the accompanying traffic safety issues. He asked the applicant if they had considered any alternative locations to meet the valuable goal of bringing the ambulances closer to Meridian Township.

Mr. Palmer believed this proposal is a good step in bringing a satellite location to Meridian Township, and added doors may open in the future for a different location. He reminded the possibilities for location are limited. Mr. Palmer indicated some information is proprietary to his business and could not be shared at this time.

Commissioner Norkin reiterated that this location is not conducive for an ambulance service to exit from as Grand River Avenue is the busiest roadway in our community. He continued to express concern, given the topography in the area.

Mr. Palmer responded that all appropriate open locations for lease were considered, but did not believe this location to be more dangerous to exit from than any other location. He noted that any area along the Grand River/Michigan Avenue corridor is congested. Mr. Palmer added that the most congested areas are where an ambulance should be located, as that is where most of the call volume is generated. He reminded Planning Commissions that the vast majority of runs at this satellite business will be for non-emergency use.

Vice-Chair Jackson inquired as to the zoning of this location.

Principal Planner Oranchak responded the entire site is zoned C-2 and that the majority of the site is designated commercial on the Master Plan Future Land Use Map, noting that the mostly undeveloped back portion of the site is in the residential 1.25 to 3.5 dwelling unit/acre range.

Vice-Chair Jackson asked the applicant if the anticipated method of operation would be that the vehicles would enter the building through the back doors, exit from the front doors, turning on the siren and flashing lights (if needed) once they reach Grand River Avenue.

Ms. Palmer responded in the affirmative.

Vice-Chair Jackson reiterated that most of the calls currently made by Mercy Ambulance in Meridian Township are non-life threatening and do not require a siren and flashing lights.

Mr. Palmer noted the building is currently vacant and viewed this proposed special use permit request as a win-win situation for the applicant and the Township.

Commissioner Norkin believed this location was geographically problematic for the type of business proposed, as most of the ambulance runs will require a left hand turn onto Grand River Avenue.

Vice-Chair Jackson closed the public hearing at 7:42 P.M.

**7. Unfinished Business** (None)

**8. Other Business**

A. Revision to the 2011 Planning Commission Meeting Schedule

**Commissioner Honicky moved [and read into the record] NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT THE PLANNING COMMISSION OF THE CHARTER TOWNSHIP OF MERIDIAN hereby revises the 2011 meeting schedule by canceling the regular meeting scheduled for December 12, 2011.**

**Seconded by Commissioner Scott-Craig.**

ROLL CALL VOTE: YEAS: Commissioners Cordill, Goodale, Hildebrandt, Honicky, Norkin, Scales, Scott-Craig, Vice Chair Jackson

NAYS: None

Motion carried 8-0.

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

**10. New applications**

A. Special Use Permit #09081 (Grand Petro Mart), request for a 12-month extension of SUP #09081 to replace the existing building, increase the number of gasoline fueling islands and add a canopy at 743 Grand River Avenue.

B. Special Use Permit #11041 (Van Dusen), request to operate a day care group home for not more than twelve children at 6408 Lake Dr., Haslett, MI.

**11. Site plans received** (None)

**12. Site plans approved** (None)

**13. Public remarks**

Vice-Chair Jackson opened and closed public remarks.

**14. Adjournment**

Vice-Chair Jackson adjourned the regular meeting at 7:46 P.M.

Respectfully Submitted,

Sandra K. Otto  
Recording Secretary