

**CHARTER TOWNSHIP OF MERIDIAN
PLANNING COMMISSION
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES
June 24, 2013**

APPROVED

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

PRESENT: Commissioners Deits, Hildebrandt, Ianni, Jackson, Norkin (7:01 P.M.), Salehi, Scott-Craig
ABSENT: Commissioners Cordill, Honicky
STAFF: 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 Hildebrandt moved to approve the agenda. Seconded by Commissioner Scott-Craig.

VOICE VOTE: Motion carried 6-0.

3. Approval of Minutes

Commissioner Scott-Craig moved to approve the Regular Meeting Minutes of June 10, 2013. Seconded by Commissioner Ianni.

VOICE VOTE: Motion carried 7-0.

4. Public Remarks

Chair Jackson opened the floor for public remarks.

Danelle Lofton, 5130 Wexford Road, Lansing, spoke to the July 8, 2013 Planning Commission public hearing and the possibility of rule suspension to move SUP #13061 (Caring Hand) forward.

Neil Bowlby, 6020 Beechwood Drive, Haslett, believed Capstone Phase 3 should be a major amendment to Phase 2 mixed use planned unit development which, in part, requires a phasing plan.

Chair Jackson closed public remarks.

5. Communications

A. Wanda Bloomquist, Planning Assistant, Williamstown Township, 4990 Zimmer Road, Williamston; RE: Williamstown Township Master Plan

6. Public hearings

A. Mixed Use Planned Unit Development #13014 (Capstone), request to develop Hannah Lofts, a mixed use planned unit development consisting of 22,545 square feet of retail space and 282 multiple family residential units in four buildings and

B. Special Use Permit #13081 (Capstone), request to construct a group of buildings greater than 25,000 square feet in gross floor area.

Chair Jackson opened the public hearings at 7:04 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 mixed use planned unit development (MUPUD) and special use permit (SUP) request as outlined in staff memoranda dated June 20, 2013.

- Applicant
Mark Clouse, Chief Financial Officer and General Counsel, 4660 S. Hagadorn Road, Suite 660, East Lansing, offered an overview of this proposal to date. He indicated the various housing types were designed for a diverse population, not geared toward students like the previous phases. Mr. Clouse addressed flex space which can be used for retail/amenities and indicated the one acre park along Hannah Boulevard is a large parcel of open space.

John Acken, Capstone Collegiate Communities, 431 Office Park Drive, Suite 199, Birmingham, Alabama, synopsized details of the current plan after listening to both the Planning Commission and Township Board during the concept plan phase of the process. He spoke to the mix of housing types which will be offered and how the two-story townhouses, flats and apartments will be divided within the building. Mr. Acken noted the location change for the proposed hotel in context of an overall plan for the entire 81 acres. He delineated sidewalk placement for this phase, along the north side of the Hannah office complex with connectivity across to the retail center.

Mr. Acken discussed shared road signage (sharrows) for the interior streets and transit to campus and downtown, similar to Phases 1 and 2. He addressed the approval of the light at the intersection of Hannah Boulevard and Eyde Parkway and believed the light, along with the three (3) exits from the development, will relieve much of the traffic concerns for the Hannah Plaza development. Mr. Acken indicated the location of one acre park/public greenspace on Hannah Boulevard will encourage connectivity with the existing hotel, the proposed hotel and the current and proposed retail. He believed Hannah Boulevard and Esoteric Way will become the crossroads of Hannah Plaza and the correct placement for hardscape with a fountain. Mr. Acken spoke to placement of the three (3) story atrium and location of the townhouses within the building itself. He added the efficiency, one (1) and two (2) bedroom units are located on the 4th floor and are elevator served from the interior, and addressed garbage removal for those units.

- Public
Neil Bowlby, 6020 Beechwood Drive, Haslett, spoke to the density of the proposed phase, addressed the rise in the water table considering the run off and the impact on Indian Lake Estates, and noted the proposal is at 85% impervious surface. He expressed concern the holding ponds east of Phase 2 will be adequate to address water issues. Mr. Bowlby believed the one bathroom per bedroom suggests student housing and would not attract families looking to move into Meridian Township. He addressed lack of sidewalk connectivity between Phases 1 and 2 to allow pedestrian traffic to move outward from the site. Mr. Bowlby noted it was the clear the last time this issue was before the Township Board that they wanted to see significant changes from the plan proposed during the concept phase.

Leonard Provencher, 5824 Buena Parkway, Haslett, spoke in opposition to the proposed MUPUD for Hannah Lofts, believing the area is much too dense and not friendly to the existing residential area. He suggested the bus rapid transit system currently under consideration for the Grand River Corridor be modified to turn south on Hagadorn Road and make a “loop” through this community.

Susan Davis, 4772 Arapaho, Okemos, spoke to the density of the previous phases as well as the one proposed and in opposition to additional student housing for this phase. She expressed concern with the quality of life in Indian Lake Estates.

Carol Chapman, 4825 Mohican Lane, Okemos, addressed the issue of drainage in the area with continued additional development, noting many logjams in the Red Cedar River remain. She spoke to the continued loss of trees on properties within Indian Lakes due to poor drainage. Ms. Chapman was opposed to the amount of density proposed for this site. She believed there is not a need for more retail space as there are currently several vacancies in Hannah Plaza. Ms. Chapman inquired as to the owner of the property. She questioned the quality of the units already constructed in Phases 1 and 2.

- Planning Commission discussion:
Commissioner Hildebrandt expressed concern there is no appeal for the configuration other than students. She expressed concern with sustainability stating Michigan State University is addressing decreasing student population while the developer is increasing construction of student housing. Commissioner Hildebrandt indicated there is not sufficient greenspace for the property. She believed the traffic study did not take into account the various methods of transportation for students on bicycles and questioned the dates and times of the study. Commissioner Hildebrandt requested an overall plan for the entire 81 acre site.

Commissioner Ianni inquired if the rationale for lack of sidewalk over the entire property was one of ownership.

Mr. Acken responded the only parcel currently under contract is the Hannah Lofts parcel.

Chair Jackson inquired if Capstone Collegiate Communities still retained control over Lodges of East Lansing, Phases 1 and 2.

Mr. Acken responded Lodges Phase 1 and 2 have been purchased by American Campus Communities.

Chair Jackson inquired if the questions about sidewalks and access from those were not relevant to Capstone Collegiate Communities.

Mr. Acken indicated Capstone is still developing Lodges Phase 2 for American Campus Communities.

Commissioner Norkin asked the applicant to address the issue of drainage in order to understand the relationship of the Red Cedar.

Mark Clouse indicated Eyde Co. and Capstone Collegiate Communities earmarked \$40,000 towards removal of trees in the Red Cedar River, although it was not the responsibility of either company. He noted the Ingham County Drain Commissioner's Office (ICDC) has continually monitored Indian Lake Estates at several locations since removal, and the water has been handled much better since removal of three dams and repair of the drain area. Mr. Clouse indicated the ICDC has obtained approval from the Michigan Department of Natural Resources to make more changes, which will also be paid for by Eyde Co. and Capstone Collegiate Communities. He assured Planning Commissioners work on this phase will not impact drainage in the area.

Chair Jackson asked who owns the property.

Mr. Clouse indicated the Eyde Co. owns the property.

Commissioner Scott-Craig asked where the rainwater from this property and Lodges 1 and 2 drains is directed.

Mr. Clouse responded the rainwater is processed through a cleansing area, back to the large retention area (Hannah Farms Drain) and makes its way to the Red Cedar River.

Commissioner Scott-Craig inquired if the water flows off the property to the east and then moves into the mitigation pond at the bottom of Lodges Phase 2.

Greg Petru, Kebs, Inc., 2116 Haslett Road, Haslett, responded there is regional detention in the Hannah Farms Drain which has an overall drainage plan for the entire site.

Commissioner Scott-Craig asked if reopening the north entry is the location under discussion with the DNR and the ICDC.

Mr. Petru responded the original plan drained to the north with the use of a restrictor pipe. ICDC rerouted the flow to the south.

Commissioner Scott-Craig indicated that when the water exceeds a certain height, it flows over the top of that barrier, as shown to the Planning Commission a few years ago by Kebs, Inc. He asked where the water flowed from there.

Mr. Petru responded it proceeds southwesterly and eventually ends up in the Red Cedar River.

Commissioner Scott-Craig added that it flows directly through the Indian Lakes neighborhood as stated by two (2) previous members of the public who spoke earlier and live in that subdivision.

Mr. Petru replied it does connect through the waterway which flows to the Red Cedar River, but the detention area holds the water from this development through the 100 year rain event before a certain amount is allowed through.

Commissioner Scott-Craig stated the water which falls on the impervious surface in these developments is flowing down in that direction and goes into the Indian Lakes subdivision before making its way into the Red Cedar River. He believed it imperative the developer and the ICDC find a solution for the water not to flow into the Indian Lakes subdivision, especially in light of continued new development.

Mark Clouse believed the large majority of that problem was addressed and has been corrected. He added the berm was rebuilt and the spillway over the top allows only a small amount of water in that direction. Mr. Clouse suggested facts be obtained from the ICDC on these improvements.

Commissioner Scott-Craig noted the MUPUD ordinance allows “flexibility” for the impervious surface guided by the underlying zoning. He indicated this property has C-2 zoning which has a maximum impervious surface area of 75%. Commissioner Scott-Craig added the proposal exceeds the maximum by nine (9) percent and needs to be downsized to stay under the 75% threshold.

Commissioner Scott Craig requested the applicant “aim” for the pathway standard of seven (7) foot sidewalks noting bicyclists will use sidewalks until Hannah Boulevard is reconfigured to accommodate traffic and bicycle lanes. He suggested proactive steps be taken on Hannah Boulevard so it will accept the bicycle lanes which will be added at some point to the last segment of Hannah Boulevard (between the clinical center and Hagadorn Road). Commissioner Scott-Craig noted progress with the traffic light at Eyde Parkway and Hannah Boulevard which will aid in traffic flow. He expressed concern with spillover of parking, given there are 650 parking spaces for 702 bedrooms.

Commissioner Ianni inquired as to the composition of trees on the property other than the north section.

Mr. Acken indicated most of the trees are scrub.

Mark Clouse added he obtained a land clearing permit for the property approximately three (3) or four (4) years ago.

Commissioner Ianni expressed appreciation for the elevators, as they open up possibilities for people with limited mobility.

Commissioner Deits expressed concern with the lack of permeable surface, while asking for the remaining permeable surface to be treated as an amenity. He requested clarification on the designation of the clubhouse as an amenity, while the applicant stated there is uncertainty if there is going to be a clubhouse. Commissioner Deits spoke to the design of the building, noting the MUPUD ordinance states there shall be an architectural break in the structure every 50 feet which has not been met.

Commissioner Deits asked who was going to provide unified transportation from the east side to the west side of the development for pedestrians, bicycles and vehicles.

Mr. Clouse stated these issues have been addressed during each part of this phase and will be done as each part is developed.

Commissioner Deits did not believe the proposed plan is a complete streets solution, and Hannah Boulevard needs to be placed on a road diet in the future. He expressed surprise it is 400 feet from the elevator to the last apartment on the 4th floor.

Mr. Acken stated all distances were reviewed and are in compliance.

Commissioner Salehi stated the surrounding properties have impervious surfaces at approximately 90% which is an eye sore and a detriment to walking. He expressed appreciation for the one (1) acre park and believed it will be heavily used by residents of the development. Commissioner Salehi requested the impervious surface percentages for Lodges Phase 1 and 2.

Mr. Acken indicated he will provide those numbers.

Commissioner Salehi noted the existing Marriott TownPlace Suites has an open greenspace layout and could provide a design template for more open space as it has a nice balance of pervious/impervious space. He suggested if the applicant wanted to maintain a high percentage of impervious surface on this phase, a possible compromise could be worked out where another portion of the 81 acres would be committed for open space/greenspace.

Commissioner Salehi addressed walkability by indicating it is essential to have extra wide sidewalks on Esoteric Way and Hannah Boulevard, noting five (5) foot sidewalks anywhere within the development is inadequate. He believed it unacceptable there are not bicycle lanes given the existence of Lodges 1 and 2. Commissioner Salehi stated students currently park at the Eyde building and walk to campus, walking diagonally across the Hannah Plaza parking lot and crossing the road at the railroad tracks. He suggested high end fencing to guide them down Hannah Boulevard to cross at an intersection.

Commissioner Salehi believed dense development in the area is generally a good idea and will boost the dying retail segment in the existing Hannah Plaza, noting foot traffic is amenable to retail usage. He suggested the development be renamed Lofts of East Lansing.

Chair Jackson voiced her objection to the suggested name change, as the development is in Meridian Township.

Commissioner Hildebrandt clarified the issue of pedestrian traffic and bicycle traffic on the sidewalk from Lodges Phase 1 out are not being addressed, despite assurances that they are.

Mr. Acken indicated signs have been placed to discourage bicyclists on sidewalks, as it becomes a safety issue for vehicular traffic "pulls out." He stated parties agree the best place for bicycles is on the street (whether shared or dedicated lanes), while noting the challenge is that ICDTR feels differently.

Mark Clouse acknowledged that sharrows were part of the original plan, but was met with opposition from the ICDTR. He added although his company paid for and built the roads, they were dedicated (and subsequently owned) by the ICDTR, and nothing can be done without ICDTR permission. He suggested the possibility of the Township designating money from its road fund budget to maintain those roads once they are installed and paid for by the developer.

Commissioner Norkin also addressed the issue traffic flow.

Commissioner Deits pointed to this development as what appears to be a seven (7) phase project and the first six (6) phases will be residential. He stressed the importance of the last parcel (a redevelopment of the “front” parcel), hoping the same vision the Eyde Company is bringing to the renovation of the Knapp’s building in downtown Lansing will be brought to the seventh phase.

Chair Jackson addressed the mistake made in setting the number of units as it relates to occupancy of those units (people). She inquired if Capstone has developed anything other than student housing.

Mr. Acken responded his company has developed some housing for wounded veterans and, in many of the existing developments, residents other than students live in those units.

Chair Jackson inquired how many total units to date are planned for all phases.

Mr. Acken responded with 646 including this proposed phase.

Chair Jackson noted each bedroom has a bathroom, which is the way student housing is designed.

Mr. Clouse added the overall housing construction market has changed where a bathroom is now constructed for each bedroom. He believed there will be a mix of students, grad students, employees working in the medical area, faculty and some older individuals as residents.

Chair Jackson asked if the 41 units per acre mentioned earlier was an accurate assessment.

Principal Planner Oranchak responded density is not an issue as the MUPUD approval allowed for up to 1,159 units.

Commissioner Hildebrandt inquired if hotel rooms counted toward the density.

Principal Planner Oranchak responded they do not.

Commissioner Hildebrandt noted the two small remaining parcels are left with the potential for extremely high density.

Commissioner Deits added the potential redevelopment of the existing Eyde office space could also include housing.

Commissioner Salehi asked if the Eyde Building is included in the 81 acre site.

Mr. Clouse responded in the affirmative. He added the 81 acres were rezoned as mixed use in 2008, and the six story and two story building are both part of the area. Mr. Clouse acknowledged that even with the six-story building nearing occupancy capacity, there is still excess parking. He suggested the possibility of shared parking or development in the excess parking area.

Commissioner Salehi acknowledge that setback requirements can be waived for a MUPUD, but suggested that the setbacks for this building not be obliterated, due to its height and the daunting look for pedestrians using the sidewalk.

Mr. Acken noted the rationale for placement of the patios all in front was to address that issue, as well as the additional four (4) feet for tree wells.

Commissioner Salehi inquired about the width of sidewalks.

Mr. Acken pointed to the proposed seven (7) foot and five (5) foot sidewalks on the plan.

Commissioner Salehi voiced his preference for all sidewalks to be seven (7) feet in width.

Chair Jackson closed the public hearings at 9:16 P.M.

7. Unfinished Business

- A. Special Use Permit #13071 (AT & T), request to install utility cabinets in the easement at 2258 Bennett Road (Presbyterian Church of Okemos)
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 #13071 (AT&T) a request to add two utility cabinets to an existing equipment installation at 2258 Bennett Road with the following conditions:

1. **Approval is based on the site plan prepared by Mid-State Consultants, dated May 2, 2013, subject to revisions as required.**
2. **The applicant shall obtain site plan approval from the Department of Community Planning and Development and a utility permit from the Department of Public Works and Engineering prior to installing the new cabinets.**
3. **The applicant shall prepare a landscape plan and submit it with their application for site plan review.**
4. **An evaluation of visual impacts to surrounding properties shall be conducted during site plan review and if deemed necessary, all of the utility cabinets shall be repainted a suitable color to limit their visual impact.**

Seconded by Commissioner Norkin.

Planning Commission discussion:

- Desire for as much landscape coverage as possible to hide the cabinets

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

NAYS: None

Motion carried 7-0.

- B. Commission Review #12053 (Planning Commission), 2005 Master Plan amendment
 Chair Jackson addressed her charge from the last Planning Commission meeting to request a joint meeting between the Planning Commission and the Township Board to discuss differences in the versions of the urban services management area.

Planning Commission discussion:

- Board adoption of Chapter 11 (Implementation) of the Master Plan
- A portion of the Board's motion to adopt included the ten (10) criteria established by the Tri County Regional Planning Commission (TCRPC)
- Neither the Board resolution nor the Master Plan lists the ten (10) TCRPC criteria; they are only references
- Possible amendment to list the TCRPC criteria to the Master Plan
- Possibility of including the criteria in any change sent by the Board and the required new public hearing
- Request for Planning Commission members to be provided a copy of the ten (10) TCRPC criteria

8. Other Business (None)

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

Commissioner Hildebrandt inquired as to the possibility of receiving information on involved and detailed projects as it becomes available to the Township for ease in review prior to Planning Commission meetings.

Commissioner Norkin indicated the discrepancy between the ICDTR and other interested parties regarding views on bicycle lanes for Hannah Boulevard needs to be addressed and "fixed."

Commissioner Scott-Craig pointed to the recent experience of all parties coming together for a solution on Cornell Road as an example of cooperation by all parties.

Commissioner Ianni suggested that when the plan comes before the Planning Commission for approval at its July 8th meeting, the resolution include language which ensures the Drain Commissioner has approved the plan and has corrected the runoff "problem."

Commissioner Deits suggested the Planning Commission recommend to the Board that a complete streets analysis of Hannah Boulevard be performed in the near future.

10. New applications

- A. Mixed Use Planned Unit Development #13-12051 (Douglas J), minor amendment to increase total building size from 43,569 gross square feet to 47,618 gross square feet
- B. Zoning Amendment #13030 (Planning Commission), to add adult day care facilities to Section 86-654(c)(6).

11. Site plans received (None)

12. Site plans approved (None)

13. Public remarks

Chair Jackson opened public remarks.

Leonard Provencher, 5824 Buena Parkway, Haslett, spoke to the contractual agreement between Meridian Township and the City of East Lansing for sewage and inquired as to the effect of continued increased development/redevelopment on that capacity.

Chair Jackson noted the Master Plan contains information on the capacity of the sewage system and data on projected population parameters.

Commissioner Deits added work on reducing infiltration of ground water into the sewer has had the effect over the last three (3) to four (4) years of reducing the outflow from our sewer system despite a lack of decline in population.

Neil Bowlby, 6020 Beechwood Drive, Haslett, clarified his earlier computation on density of 41 units per acre for the Hannah Lofts. He did not believe the developer listened to either the Planning Commission or the Township Board relative to the buildings contained in the Hannah Lofts project.

Chair Jackson closed public remarks.

14. Adjournment

Chair Jackson adjourned the regular meeting at 9:40 P.M.

Respectfully Submitted,

Sandra K. Otto
Recording Secretary