

**CHARTER TOWNSHIP OF MERIDIAN
PLANNING COMMISSION
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES
October 24, 2011**

APPROVED

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

PRESENT: Commissioners Cordill, Deits, Goodale, Honicky, Jackson, Norkin, Scott-Craig
ABSENT: Commissioner Scales
STAFF: Principal Planner Gail Oranchak, Director of Public Works and Engineering Ray Severy

1. Call meeting to order

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

2. Approval of agenda

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

VOICE VOTE: Motion carried 7-0.

3. Approval of Minutes

Commissioner Cordill moved to approve the Work Session Meeting Minutes of October 4, 2011, the Work Session Meeting Minutes of October 10, 2011 and the Regular Meeting Minutes of October 10, 2011. Seconded by Commissioner Scott-Craig.

VOICE VOTE: Motion carried 7-0.

4. Public Remarks

Chair Deits opened and closed the floor for public remarks.

5. Communications (None)

6. Public hearings

- A. *Special Use Permit #11-70141 (Meijer), request to install a drive-through pharmacy window on the west side of the Meijer store and install a free-standing changing message sign at the Meijer gas station; the site is addressed as 2055 Grand River Avenue.

Chair Deits opened the public hearing at 7:02 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 October 20, 2011.
- Applicant
Roger DeHoek, 2929 Walker Avenue, Grand Rapids, indicated Meijer is proposing a major remodel to the store, adding 6,000 square feet to the east side of the building in order to bring produce and the bottle return to the front of the store. He noted that Meijer is requesting approval to install a drive-through window on the west side of the building and approval for the concept of the LED sign on the gas station. Mr. DeHoek added that Meijer is still in the internal decision making process as to the size of the sign. He availed himself for Planning Commissioner questions.

- Planning Commission discussion:
Commissioner Honicky expressed concern that the monument sign would block a driver's line of sight to the traffic light at Grand River and Marsh Road.

Mr. DeHoek stated the setback of the sign requires the sign to be away from the road and the monument sign should not block a driver's vision to the corner when a car exits onto Grand River Avenue.

Commissioner Honicky inquired if the proposed layout would be similar to the layout for the Lake Lansing Road Meijer.

Mr. DeHoek responded in the affirmative.

Commissioner Cordill expressed a desire to see more landscaping in the large area in the center of the drive-through layout.

Mr. DeHoek responded there are plans for more landscaping, as there will be no product sales in that area.

Commissioner Cordill inquired if the area needed to be that large to adequately address stacking of cars.

Mr. DeHoek indicated three cars is adequate stacking, but the applicant is providing for stacking of five cars.

Commissioner Cordill inquired how someone would access the garden center if they parked in the Grand River parking lot, in light of the fence shown on the drawing.

Mr. DeHoek indicated a pedestrian would walk through the concrete area, through the walkway provided in the center of the landscaped area, and turn left on the other side of the cars into the garden center.

Commissioner Scott-Craig inquired if the driver's side of the car was away from the drive-through window as the car approached the window.

Mr. DeHoek responded the drive-up pharmacy window will incorporate a tube system.

Commissioner Scott-Craig asked where patrons will pick up the large bags of mulch, seeds, plants, etc. from the garden center.

Mr. DeHoek stated he was not sure that decision had yet been made, but believed most of it will stay in the down-sized garden center.

Commissioner Scott-Craig expressed concern that patrons might pull into the pharmacy drive-through to load large plants, bags of mulch, etc. He believed there is a conflict in this area which needs to be addressed.

Mr. DeHoek indicated he would make a note of this situation and apprise Meijer's operations department of this concern.

Commissioner Jackson noted the proposed plan is a vast improvement over the previous plan submitted five (5) years ago.

Commissioner Norkin inquired how someone could get out of the drive-through lane if they chose not to wait for their turn at the window.

Mr. DeHoek stated a customer must wait, as there is no pass-through lane.

Commissioner Norkin inquired if consideration had been given to the anti-sustainability a drive-through of this type brings with idling cars. He asked if there was an alternative to providing designated parking space near this area where patrons would be allowed to park and walk up to the window or into the pharmacy. He added there currently are spots designated for "pharmacy only" which are close to the pharmacy. While acknowledging that this plan better protects pedestrians than the previous plan five (5) years ago, Commissioner Norkin indicated this is the most vulnerable and dangerous spot for patrons entering the store and an added risk to them with the addition of the proposed drive-through window. He believed the traffic (pedestrian, bicycle, vehicles, electronic carts) making use of the front entrance on the west end of the building is at the most risk. Commissioner Norkin inquired if there was a better solution to segregating pedestrians from cars than the proposal submitted.

Mr. DeHoek responded that most of the patrons who will park to acquire prescriptions, will enter the store, not walk up to the drive-through pick-up window, parking close to the west door. He added most people who are sick, or have sick children, will remain in their vehicles to fill their prescriptions.

Commissioner Cordill asked how prescriptions would be handled, inquiring if patrons would wait in their cars at the window while prescriptions are filled.

Mr. DeHoek responded many of the prescriptions are called in or are dropped off and picked up later.

Commissioner Cordill believed that if a patron has a sick child in the car, they may stay in the car and wait for the prescription to be filled. She asked if there could be a policy for individuals to come inside the store if they are dropping off new prescriptions.

Mr. DeHoek responded he assumed the pharmacist analyzes the activity in the lane and assists the individual at the window.

Commissioner Norkin asked why the applicant felt the need for a sign larger than allowed by ordinance, especially since it will be lit and visibly clearer from more directions.

Mr. DeHoek responded that while the applicant is proposing a 44 foot sign, corporate is reviewing the Township's ordinance and will most likely downsize the sign size to meet the ordinance. He pointed out that, tonight, the applicant is only requesting approval of the concept of a LED sign.

Commissioner Jackson asked if the site was losing any parking spaces near the west entrance to the store.

Mr. DeHoek responded that no parking spaces will be lost.

Commissioner Norkin added the second drive presents an additional risk for patrons who park on the west side and then access the garden center from outside the building. He expressed concern with drivers being aware of pedestrians before accelerating away from the drive-through window. Commissioner Norkin expressed a desire for the applicant to find a safer location in this building for a drive-through pharmacy window.

Commissioner Goodale asked if consideration had been given to placing the pharmacy on the east side of the store, as he believed it a safer location.

Mr. DeHoek indicated it has not been a consideration since the entire grocery portion is on the east side of the store and the pharmacy was moved from the back of the store to the west side a few years ago.

Commissioner Jackson inquired if it was possible to direct drive-through pharmacy window traffic back to the west to prevent less conflict with pedestrians, creating a u-shaped driveway.

Mr. DeHoek stated the vehicles would still interrupt pedestrian traffic walking to the garden center.

Commissioner Jackson felt it would be less pedestrian traffic as there would be across the front to the parking lot.

Commissioner Norkin added drivers in vehicles utilizing the drive-through window would have a better visual to see who was crossing in front of the vehicles.

Chair Deits indicated that if the drive-through was reconfigured into a U shape, all drivers would be turning right instead of the current configuration where cars would be turning both left and right.

Commissioner Scott-Craig stated the proposed scenario would make access to the garden center perilous, as a pedestrian would need to cross three (3) lanes of traffic from the main parking lot.

Commissioner Scott-Craig felt answers were needed on how the garden center entrance could be configured to address concerns expressed at this meeting.

Commissioner Norkin felt it made sense for the entrance to the garden center to be as close to the western parking spaces as possible. He believed most people purchasing large bags of mulch, seeds, etc. would prefer to utilize the parking spaces on the west side of the building. Commissioner Norkin suggested eliminating the walkway and moving the current gate and fence along the west side of the building. He indicated a preference for making the independent entrance to the garden center face the parking area to the west.

Chair Deits noted that the Planning Commission has made suggestion to the applicant's representative which cannot be responded to this evening. He suggested the option of placing the following condition in the SUP: "Applicant will work with the Department of Community Planning and Development to investigate the feasibility of exiting from the drive-through on the west side and moving the garden center entrance to the west side." He indicated the SUP could still be approved this evening as requested by the applicant.

Commissioner Jackson clarified that the only portion of the gas station sign that is lit are the numbers depicting the price of gasoline.

Chair Deits reminded Commissioners the only issue before the Planning Commission relative to the sign is the fact the numbers denoting the price of gasoline is lit by LED bulbs.

Commissioner Goodale indicated there are safety issues which need to be addressed before he could approve the plan.

Commissioner Honicky noted the Meijer on Lake Lansing Road utilizes the parking lot to house plants and mulch in the Spring and could envision doing the same on the west side of the parking lot for the Grand River location.

Chair Deits closed the public hearing at 7:41 P.M.

Commissioner Jackson moved to suspend Rule 6.4a of the Planning Commission bylaws which states, "A decision on a special use permit, zoning request or ordinance will not be made on the date of the public hearing considering such an item."

The motion died for lack of a second.

- B. *Commission Review #11043 (Meridian Township), request to extend a force main from the existing sanitary sewer serving Okemos High School to serve eight properties west of the high school and east of Hagadorn Road.

Chair Deits opened the public hearing at 7:43 P.M.

- Summary of subject matter
Principal Planner Oranchak summarized the commission review as outlined in staff memorandum dated October 20, 2011.
- Applicant
Director of Public Works and Engineering Ray Severy explained the request is to address the failed drain field of the Big Ten Party Store located on Jolly Road. He noted the party store received a letter from the Ingham County Health Department four (4) years ago addressing the need for something to be done with the sewer septic field. Director Severy noted his department has spoken with the City of Lansing regarding the Big Ten party Store connecting to the city's system across the street in Alaiedon Township and those efforts have not been successful.

Director Severy indicated his department's preference is for a common force main so that the properties along Jolly Road to Hagadorn Road could connect as their septic failed. He stated that once a sewer services more than one (1) property, it is required to become a public sewer. He noted on the map an existing gravity sewer which goes to the nearby pump station which belongs to Okemos Schools and the Township would need to obtain easements and a bill of sale transferring the pump station and the gravity line from Okemos Public Schools to Meridian Township.
- Planning Commission discussion:
Commissioner Honicky noted that a 2" pipe diameter is small and believed the real cost was the excavation.

Mr. Severy indicated a larger diameter pipe is not really needed and the vast majority of the work would be accomplished with directional drilling

Commissioner Honicky noted that some of the land is zoned commercial and was concerned that the entire sewer system would have to be revisited in the event a restaurant or extended care facility was constructed on one of those lots.

Director Severy indicated commercial usage typically has lower water usage than a single-family home.

Commissioner Honicky believed that demographics and future plans should require a pipe greater than 2 inches in diameter.

Director Severy noted the force main has not yet been designed and diameter of the pipe can be taken into consideration at that time.

Commissioner Norkin requested a cost figure for the project and how much of that cost is being fronted by the Township. He also requested a cost figure for the project if Alaiedon Township had allowed for connection across the street

Director Severy stated his department had not calculated the cost for a connection to Alaiedon Township's system. He estimated the cost for 1,200 feet of pipe at \$40 per foot.

Commissioner Norkin inquired as to who suggested a possible connection to Alaiedon Township's system.

Director Severy responded it was Township staff, due to the fact that there was a system directly across the street. He explained there is an arrangement with Bath Township in the north end of Meridian Township to service those properties.

Commissioner Norkin inquired as to the distribution of fees between Alaiedon and Meridian Township.

Director Severy stated he is unsure as to how Alaiedon Township bills for its sewer. He noted the Big Ten Party Store has water service through the Board of Water and Light.

Commissioner Norkin inquired if there is sewer on the west side of Hagadorn Road.

Director Severy responded there is not.

Commissioner Norkin inquired if there is sewer to the "golf area" of the new development heading towards the east.

Director Severy responded that the College Fields "golf area" has a pump station which takes the water and pumps it into a force main down Hagadorn Road west to the City of Lansing.

Commissioner Norkin inquired if heading northbound on Hagadorn Road to connect to the College Fields system would be an option.

Director Severy responded it is not, as the distance is too great.

Commissioner Norkin inquired as to how damaging this construction would be on the wetland in front of Okemos High School.

Director Severy responded it will have no impact, as directional drilling will take place underneath the wetland. He added the only excavation will take place at the manhole, just north of the drive and not in the wetland.

Chair Deits reminded Planning Commissioners that the matter before them is a Section 61 review of the request to extend a force main.

Commissioner Jackson asked if the floodway fringe is accurately depicted on the floodplain map contained in the packet to ensure that the pipe would not be placed in the floodway fringe.

Director Severy responded that the pipe will be laid underneath the floodway fringe. He indicated he was unsure how close the floodway fringe comes to the pavement on Jolly Road, and added the force main would be in the Jolly Road right-of-way between the pavement and the edge of the road. Director Severy stated that in some cases, the fringe areas do extend into the road at that is a probability in this area.

Principal Planner Oranchak added that as noted in the staff report, public utilities are exempt from the conservancy district requirements for the floodplain.

Commissioner Norkin asked if the expenditure for this force main is approved in the CIP by the Township Board.

Chair Deits reminded Planning Commissioners that the cost of the force main is not before the Planning Commission.

Commissioner Norkin inquired if this project would come back to the Planning Commission at some point.

Chair Deits responded the Planning Commission generally does not receive budgetary questions.

Chair Deits closed the public hearing at 8:00 P.M.

7. Unfinished Business

Commissioner Cordill moved to amend the agenda to add Agenda Item #7A: Commission Review #11043 (Meridian Township), request to extend a force main from the existing sanitary sewer serving Okemos High School to serve eight properties west of the high school and east of Hagadorn Road. Seconded by Commissioner Norkin.

VOICE VOTE: Motion carried 7-0.

- A. *Commission Review #11043 (Meridian Township), request to extend a force main from the existing sanitary sewer serving Okemos High School to serve eight properties west of the high school and east of Hagadorn Road.

Commissioner Scott-Craig moved [and read into the record] NOW THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED THE PLANNING COMMISSION OF THE CHARTER TOWNSHIP OF MERIDIAN approves the location, character and extent of the proposed sewer force main extension along Jolly Road from Okemos High School west to Hagadorn Road. Seconded by Commissioner Norkin.

Planning Commission discussion:

- Concern that specifically stating the pipe diameter at 2" or 3" limits the Township in the event they choose to install a larger pipe

Chair Deits offered the following friendly amendment:

- **Amend the first WHEREAS clause by deleting "2" or 3" in" and inserting "of appropriate"**

The friendly amendment was accepted by the maker.

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

NAYS: None

Motion carried 7-0.

8. Other Business (None)

9. Township Board, Planning Commission officer, committee chair, and staff comment or reports
Commissioner Norkin reported that he and Commissioner Scales attended the three day training session for the Citizens Planner course. He added that former Commissioner, Professor Beyea, was an outstanding teacher and lecturer throughout the course. Commissioner Norkin expressed appreciation to the Township for allowing him the opportunity to receive this training.

10. New applications (None)

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 8:07 P.M.

Respectfully Submitted,

Sandra K. Otto
Recording Secretary