

**CHARTER TOWNSHIP OF MERIDIAN
PLANNING COMMISSION
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES
March 9, 2009**

APPROVED

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

PRESENT: Chair Wilcox, Secretary Jorkasky, Commissioners Beyea, Deits, Honicky, Jackson,
Klemans, Reicosky
ABSENT: Commissioner Domas
STAFF: Principal Planner Gail Oranchak

1. Call meeting to order

Chair Wilcox called the regular meeting to order at 7:02 P.M. She welcomed new Planning Commissioner Beyea.

2. Approval of agenda

Commissioner Jackson moved to approve the agenda. Seconded by Commissioner Reicosky.

VOICE VOTE: Motion carried 8-0.

3. Approval of Minutes

Commissioner Jackson moved to approve the Regular Meeting Minutes of February 9, 2009. Seconded by Commissioner Honicky.

VOICE VOTE: Motion carried 8-0.

4. Public Remarks

Chair Wilcox opened and closed the floor for public remarks.

5. Communications

- Township Board Update for the Regular Board meeting of March 3, 2009 was given by Principal Planner Oranchak

6. Public hearings (None)

7. Unfinished Business

A. Public Remarks

John Acken, Capstone Development Corporation, 432 Office Park Drive, Birmingham, Alabama, discussed site plan revisions to Mixed Use Planned Unit Development #09014 based on Commissioner comments and recommendations made at the last Planning Commission meeting. He indicated the biggest concern expressed by Planning Commissioners was the distance from the railroad setback.

Mr. Acken noted there is an easement which runs across the northern portion of the property, and in order to move the buildings further south, they would have to be placed approximately one-third of the distance from the property line. Capstone's resolution was to use the easement and create a road over the top of it, placing buildings on both sides of the streets on either side of the new road. Mr. Acken stated this allowed the buildings north of the easement to be removed and utilized that space for a parking lot, shielded from view by the buildings which border the northern edge. He indicated that by "shifting" the buildings, vistas were created at the end of each street, allowing the buildings to be framed by the street itself.

Mr. Acken stated Capstone looked at how to improve landscape on the western edge of the property by shifting the entire development approximately 12 feet to the east to create a buffer zone. He noted that the mix was adjusted to accommodate the change, reducing the number of beds but increasing the number of units.

A.J. Patrick, KEBS, Inc., 2116 Haslett Road, Haslett, indicated he has added the three (3) chiller units for Suburban Ice to the plans. He believed with the addition of the width of landscaping, a sufficient buffer would be provided to take care of noise and unsightly views of the chiller units from the apartments which face Suburban Ice. He added the units in front were pushed back so there is 23-24 feet of space between the balconies and the curb.

Mr. Patrick stated Building #1 in the upper left hand corner of the site is now approximately 115 feet from the railroad right of way, and 130 feet on the other end from the railroad right-of-way. He also indicated trees were added to the preliminary landscape plan in the “boxed” area at the junction where two units butt against one another.

- B. Mixed Use Planned Unit Development #09014 (Capstone), a request to develop a mixed use planned unit development consisting of 229 multiple family residential units in seven buildings.

Planning Commission, staff and applicant discussion:

- Northwestern corner has two buildings which are both approximately 115-130 feet from the railroad right of way
- Northeast corner of Building #3 is approximately 175 feet from the railroad right of way
- Differential between rain garden and pervious concrete solution
- Constructed rain gardens approximately three (3) times more expensive than constructed permeable concrete
- Project too dense for the site
- Intent of this development to allow one unrelated person in each bedroom of a unit
- Four bedroom units would be illegal anywhere else in the Township other than mixed use
- Waiver for parking space square footage to be decided by the Board
- Parking setback waiver needed for parking along the east property line
- Safety concern on the north side of the property could be addressed by placing a safety fence designed to stay out of the floodplain
- Project contains 674 bedrooms with 708 parking spaces
- Multiple family residential units in several buildings is only a small portion of the entire 81 acre development
- Development of this portion of the 81 acre project would leave students with no walkable activities as part of this project
- Possible recommendation that large package MUPUD’s not be considered in the future unless a full plan is presented
- Concern with small amount of green space being used as an amenity
- Concern with pedestrian safety in the internal circulation of this portion of the site
- Redesign of this portion of the site would maximize the natural park area and the Red Cedar River
- Excessive impervious pavement for the internal parking lot
- Amenities for this site are lacking proportionately to the density
- Removal of sidewalks in the “boxed” areas increased the landscape area
- Concern with pipes serving as surface water reservoirs if not matched in diameter to existing pipes
- Two to three times the cost to match pipe diameters

- Possible Planning Commission recommendation for placement of a condition of no more than one (1) person to a bedroom
 - One of the benefits of density is transit
 - Students will use transit to go to school while wanting a car parked in the lot to use on the weekends
 - Sufficient parking needed to accommodate cars for students and guests
 - Principle that any type of small neighborhood should reflect the overall; i.e. same number of students, elderly, single families on the 81 acre site
 - Increase in green space developed an interior urban park
 - Streetscapes become an amenity where the students will “hang out”
 - Two north/south streets which become the civic elements and three east/west streets
 - Density of population on the site will “drive” the commercial component and create the community
 - Student housing portion of the entire site is the economically feasible component in today’s economy
 - Elimination of the 100 units with four bedrooms would reduce impervious parking spaces by 62 and create a 65’ X 40’ greenspace in the center of each “boxed” area
 - Buildings and structures as the restricted items in the conservation easement
 - Concern that the walkability concept within an urban village is not met in this development
 - Pedestrian network design for the interior movement connected all the sidewalks within the development and increased their width
 - “Urban block” system increases pedestrian movement
 - Design principles incorporate pedestrian interest along the pathway by placing parking behind, defining the walkway and keeping the parking areas small
 - Creation of a neighborhood within the neighborhood to give each area its own sense of identity
 - Transit stop is the center element of this component of the project in the short term until it is completely developed
 - Sidewalk connection to main sidewalk allows walkability to existing Hannah Development commercial area
 - Conceptual drawing of the entire 81 acre site would aid Planning Commission deliberation
 - Partnered couples renting a bedroom would be a management issue
 - Zoning Board of Appeals variance needed to meet the requirement for windows to be at least 50% of the first floor façade
 - Outdoor ice skating as a unique amenity
- C. Special Use Permit #09011 (Capstone), a request to place fill in the floodplain of the Red Cedar River and Hannah Farm Drain and to construct a group of buildings greater than 25,000 square feet in gross floor area.
Principal Planner Oranchak stated there has been a 399 square foot reduction in building size on the site with the proposed revision.

Planning Commission discussion:

- No communication to date from the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality

- D. Commission Review #09013 (Planning Commission), amendment to the Planning Commission Bylaws (formerly Rules of Procedure).

Commissioner Jackson moved [and read into the record] NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT THE PLANNING COMMISSION OF THE CHARTER TOWNSHIP

OF MERIDIAN hereby adopts the document titled Meridian Township Planning Commission Bylaws. Seconded by Commissioner Reicosky.

Commissioner Deits offered the following friendly amendment:

- **Amend 6.3(a) by deleting “public participation, applicants and defendants)” and inserting “participation by the public, applicants and their designated representatives.”**

The amendment was accepted by the maker and seconder.

Planning Commission discussion:

- Township Board decision based on the new Michigan Planning Enabling Act that Capital Improvements Program will be a staff responsibility which will go to the Township Board with the budget

ROLL CALL VOTE: YEAS: Commissioners Beyea, Deits, Honicky, Jackson, Jorkasky, Klemans, Reicosky, Chair Wilcox

NAYS: None

Motion carried 8-0.

8. Other Business

A. Resolutions of Appreciation

Commissioner Deits moved [and read into the record] NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE PLANNING COMMISSION OF THE CHARTER TOWNSHIP OF MERIDIAN, INGHAM COUNTY, MICHIGAN as follows:

The Planning Commission of the Charter Township of Meridian, by means of resolution, extends to Elizabeth LeGoff grateful thanks for her voluntary effort on behalf of all residents of the community during this period of dedicated service on the Planning Commission.

Seconded by Commissioner Honicky.

ROLL CALL VOTE: YEAS: Commissioners Beyea, Deits, Honicky, Jackson, Jorkasky, Klemans, Reicosky, Chair Wilcox

NAYS: None

Motion carried 8-0.

Commissioner Klemans moved [and read into the record] NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE PLANNING COMMISSION OF THE CHARTER TOWNSHIP OF MERIDIAN, INGHAM COUNTY, MICHIGAN as follows:

The Planning Commission of the Charter Township of Meridian, by means of resolution, extends to Lynn Ochberg grateful thanks for her voluntary effort on behalf of all residents of the community during this period of dedicated service on the Planning Commission.

Seconded by Commissioner Jackson.

ROLL CALL VOTE: YEAS: Commissioners Beyea, Deits, Honicky, Jackson, Jorkasky, Klemans, Reicosky, Chair Wilcox

NAYS: None

Motion carried 8-0.

9. Announcements

Commissioner Deits reported the Okemos Downtown Development Authority (DDA) met this

morning. He indicated money has been allocated to enhance Okemos Road with roadside amenities from Jolly Road northward. Commissioner Deits added the DDA is planning to participate with the Township to purchase additional materials which would be used to extend the roadside amenities into the Okemos/Hamilton Road area to give continuity up to at least Hamilton Road.

Commissioner Deits reported that the DDA commissioned Integrated Development Plan is close to finalization. He noted there were recommendations in the report from the consultant relative to zoning for the area, although the DDA has not formally approved zoning changes. Commissioner Deits added the DDA would like to meet with the Planning Commission to discuss the specific recommendations, since the Planning Commission has set aside the Okemos Village Study area pending outcome of the Integrated Development Plan.

Commissioner Honicky expressed concern over the continued and repeated flooding of North Okemos Road.

10. New applications (None)

11. Site plans received (None)

12. Site plans approved (None)

13. Public remarks

Chair Wilcox opened and closed public remarks.

14. Adjournment

Chair Wilcox adjourned the regular meeting at 8:40 P.M.

Respectfully Submitted,

Sandra K. Otto
Recording Secretary