

**CHARTER TOWNSHIP OF MERIDIAN
PLANNING COMMISSION
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES
July 13, 2015**

APPROVED

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

PRESENT: Commissioners DeGroff, Deits, Honicky, Ianni, Jackson, Scott-Craig, Tenaglia, Van Coevering
ABSENT: Commissioner Cordill
STAFF: Principal Planner Oranchak

1. Call meeting to order

Chair Scott-Craig called the regular meeting to order at 7:00 P.M.

2. Approval of agenda

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

VOICE VOTE: Motion carried 8-0.

3. Approval of Minutes

Commissioner Jackson moved to approve the Regular Meeting and Work Session Meeting Minutes of June 22, 2015. Seconded by Commissioner DeGroff.

VOICE VOTE: Motion carried 8-0.

4. Public Remarks

Chair Scott-Craig opened the floor for public remarks.

Neil Bowlby, 6020 Beechwood Drive, Okemos, questioned why a communication sent via email to the Planning Commission and the Township Board from Liaison for Inter-Neighborhood Cooperation (LINC) dated July 3, 2015 was not listed in the communications section of tonight's agenda. He spoke to the graph he created and presented at the last meeting regarding cell tower coverage, offering additional calculations he computed which allege a 75 foot tower would provide approximately 91% of the coverage offered by a 90 foot tower. Mr. Bowlby questioned whether the ordinance allows for increased tower height without going through the amendment process once the special use permit is granted. He questioned whether the size of the equipment room would allow for co-location opportunities and what all that would entail.

Brent Forsberg, 2422 Jolly Road, Okemos, availed himself for Planning Commission questions when the Mixed Use Planned Unit Development Concept Plan (MUPUD) for Okemos Pointe is discussed later in the meeting.

Kathleen Donahue, 2221 Burcham Drive, East Lansing, requested the Planning Commission "look at the big picture" relative to the placement of the cell tower being requested in SUP #150\61 and urged its denial. She alleged building the cell tower at this location will make the Grand River Corridor within Meridian Township look like any other commercial corridor without a sense of place. Ms. Donahue believed this location runs counter to the purposes of the three (3) year Grand River Corridor study. She offered four (4) reasons why she believed this project should be denied.

Ginger Yang, owner of Lotus Voice Integrative Therapies LLC, 4944 Park Lake Road, East

Lansing, urged Planning Commissioners to look at the overall vision for the future development of the area designated to house the proposed cell tower in SUP #15071. She inquired as to how this 90 foot cell tower fit into the vision of the Planning Commission's Master Plan. Ms. Yang questioned whether the cell tower was more appealing to Commissioners than "The Avenue" project across Grand River Avenue which they rejected last month.

Chair Scott-Craig closed public remarks.

5. Communications (None)

6. Public hearings (None)

7. Unfinished Business

A. Special Use Permit #15061 (Jacobs Engineering), request to install a 90 foot cell tower on 4980 Park Lake Road

Commissioner Ianni 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 #15061 subject to the following conditions:

- 1. Approval is granted in accordance with the revised plans dated June 9, 2015, prepared by Midwestern Consulting, and associated materials submitted by the applicant, subject to revisions as required.**
- 2. The final site plan and landscaping plan shall be subject to the review and approval of the Director of Community Planning and Development. Existing landscaping located outside the easement area shall not be trimmed or removed to accommodate the new wireless communication tower without prior approval of the Director of Community Planning and Development.**
- 3. If additional equipment shelters are located on the site, they shall be connected by at least one common wall, where possible, subject to the review and approval by the Director of Community Planning and Development.**
- 4. The accessory equipment shelter shall be designed in a manner that is architecturally compatible with the surrounding neighborhood.**
- 5. The applicant shall post with the Township a continuously enforceable bond or other instrument of financial guarantee acceptable to the Township to assure removal of the wireless communication facility if the use as a cell tower ceases.**
- 6. Prior to grading or construction taking place on the subject site all necessary approvals and permits shall be secured from the Federal Communications Commission, the Ingham County Drain Commissioner, and the Township. A copy of all permits shall be submitted to the Department of Community Planning and Development.**
- 7. The applicant shall apply for and receive all necessary variances from the Zoning Board of Appeals or redesign the project to comply with the zoning ordinance.**

Seconded by Commissioner Van Coevering.

Planning Commission discussion:

- Cell tower is proposed to be located in a commercial area near the railroad
- Cell towers are critical infrastructure expected by residents and business owners as necessary for the community
- Proposed cell tower is being requested to address capacity and load issues for existing towers in the area
- Planning Commission has extremely restricted criteria to consider (i.e., no aesthetic or health issues)
- Planning Commissioner belief the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) allows any individual adversely affected by a federal, state or local action or failure to act to commence an action in federal court
- FCC requires any denial to be substantiated with written evidence supported by expert testimony
- Shorter towers have fewer colocation opportunities and will result in more towers in the future
- Planning Commissioner belief a 90 foot monopole is obtrusive and a distraction, both of which are not aesthetic values
- Ninety (90) foot tower is not consistent with the Township's height restriction of 45 feet for structures
- Planning Commissioner belief this tower is not the only way to maximize capacity and supply coverage to the area
- Planning Commissioner belief there is no such thing as a renewable easement
- Ninety foot cell tower is 90 feet from two property lines and is, therefore, the maximum height which can be built without a variance
- Consideration should be given where additional towers may be located as this is a growth industry and the issue of more locations will likely come before the Planning Commission in the future
- Suggestion to recraft the Township's ordinance relative to cell tower setback requirements to allow for more flexibility in the event there is a better location
- Suggestion for future cell tower applicants to come to the Planning Commission with a concept plan and ask the Planning Commission for input on the best location
- No flexibility offered by the applicant as to the proposed location of the tower
- Barb wire above the fence is considered part of the applicant's design
- Planning Commissioner desire to limit the height of the tower to 50 feet given its location, acknowledging it will limit the number of colocators
- One Commissioner lives near the cell tower off Park Lake Road, north of Haslett Road and it is not within her daily sight line
- Planning Commissioner belief lowering the height may make a tower more visible to nearby residents and the public

Commissioner Jackson offered the following friendly amendment:

- **The height of the tower shall be limited to 50 feet based on published range minimums for cell phone tower heights**

The friendly amendment was not accepted by the maker or seconder.

Commissioner Jackson offered the following amendment:

- **The height of the tower shall be limited to 50 feet based on published range minimums for cell phone tower heights**

Seconded by Commissioner DeGroff.

ROLL CALL VOTE: YEAS: Commissioners DeGroff, Jackson

NAYS: Commissioners Deits, Honicky, Ianni, Tenaglia, Van
Coevering, Chair Scott-Craig

Motion failed 2-6.

Continued Planning Commission discussion:

- Planning Commissioner pointed out cell tower companies have no reason to engage with the Planning Commission in selecting future locations if the Planning Commission does not exercise its authority in the SUP process
- Suggestion for a future discussion on creating a template for inviting cell tower companies to engage with the Planning Commission in the selection of cell tower locations

ROLL CALL VOTE YEAS: Commissioners Deits, Honicky, Ianni, Tenaglia, Van
ON THE MAIN Coevering, Chair Scott-Craig

MOTION: NAYS: Commissioners DeGroff, Jackson
Motion carried 6-2.

8. Other Business

A. Mixed Use Planned Unit Development Concept Plan - Okemos Pointe (Kansas Street and Jolly Oak Road)

Principal Planner Oranchak offered a summary of the MUPUD Concept Plan since its inception in January, 2015.

Brent Forsberg, 2422 Jolly Road, Okemos provided a Powerpoint presentation on the concept plan, offering details of the site design, buildings and landscape, including amenities.

Planning Commission and applicant discussion:

- Applicant currently has a proposed unit mix of 378 units which constitutes approximately 50% two bedroom units
- Demographic profile identified through “validation” will determine the actual unit mix
- Applicant will work with industry focus groups (Jackson National Life, Delta Dental, and Dart) to test floor plans, building types, amenity mix and pricing of the product to receive feedback
- Official programs through Michigan State Housing Development Authority (MSHDA) for affordable housing are unavailable on this property as MSHDA does not desire to target this area
- Applicant is currently reviewing adjusted median income programs used in other areas
- Applicant is working with the Greater Lansing Housing Coalition (GLHC) to design their own “test program” to incorporate affordable housing into the mix (e.g., 60% and 80% programs)
- GLHC has not previously worked with a private developer regarding adjusted median income programs
- Removal of the six acre parcel abutting Kansas Road has made the project’s margin very narrow
- Building design is unique in that some of the buildings are split in half and are mirror images
- Towers contain stairs

- Applicant would like to request a vote on the same night as the public hearing which would require a motion to suspend Planning Commission rules to consider the request
- Applicant has worked with the public to thoroughly vet this project
- Okemos Pointe is the largest multi-family project to be proposed in Meridian Township and should go through the normal planning process
- No public present at tonight's meeting expressing concern about the proposed project
- Handicap accessible units will be located on the first floor
- Industry "thumb rule" for elevators is four (4) stories
- Lack of elevators are due to cost (\$150,000 per elevator shaft)
- Weight of elevator installation v. more amenities when looking at the total cost
- Demographic profile will be predominantly a younger tenant
- Planning Commissioner suggestion to survey whether proposed tenants would be willing to pay a rent premium to have use of an elevator
- Height of the buildings are just under 45 feet
- Paved pathway is proposed on the east side of the pond
- Current plan is calculated at 12 units per acre
- RC zoning would not allow for many of the variances due to the shape of the property
- Property was rezoned to C-2 conditioned on a MUPUD
- MUPUD was requested to allow clustering of the buildings

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

Commissioner Deits reported his attendance at this morning's Okemos Downtown Development Authority meeting. He noted the land previously housing the now closed central fire station and the Meridian Area Resource Center (MARC) has been sold, and the developer plans to come before the Township to build a MUPUD, with a restaurant which fronts Okemos Road and apartments in the rear. Commissioner Deits reported on the success of the Celebrate Okemos Event on June 13th, where a profit was realized. He addressed a Downtown Meridian Days

Chair Scott-Craig reported his attendance, along with Commissioner Jackson, at the charrette on Okemos Pointe. He announced the Meridian Water and Sewer Annual Business Meeting is this Wednesday, July 15th, at 11:00 AM and a tour is provided.

A. Future Projects/New Applications

- i. Special Use Permit #15081 (Judge), request to open a light manufacturing business at 1870 Grand River Ave.
- ii. Rezoning #15040 (Mayberry Homes), request for conditional rezoning of approximately 25.5 acres located on Powell Road from RR (Rural Residential) to RAA (Single Family-Low Density)

B. Update of Ongoing Projects

- i. Site Plans Received - NONE
- ii. Site Plans Approved -NONE

10. Public remarks

Chair Scott-Craig opened and closed public remarks.

14. Adjournment

Chair Scott-Craig adjourned the regular meeting at 8:28 P.M.

Respectfully Submitted,

Sandra K. Otto
Recording Secretary