

**CHARTER TOWNSHIP OF MERIDIAN  
PLANNING COMMISSION  
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES  
April 14, 2014**

**APPROVED**

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

PRESENT: Commissioners Cordill, Deits, DeLind, Honicky, Ianni, Jackson, Salehi, Scott-Craig  
ABSENT: Commissioner Hildebrandt  
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 Cordill moved to approve the agenda. Seconded by Commissioner Scott-Craig.**

VOICE VOTE: Motion carried 8-0.

**3. Approval of Minutes**

**Commissioner Scott-Craig moved to approve the Regular Meeting Minutes of March 28, 2014 as amended. Seconded by Commissioner Salehi.**

VOICE VOTE: Motion carried 8-0.

**4. Public Remarks**

Chair Jackson opened the floor for public remarks.

Chris Thelen, 9915 W. Colony Road, Fowler, spoke in support of Special Use Permit #14031 to provide group housing for up to six international students at 2500 Haslett Road. He believed it would enhance the economy of the greater Lansing region through attraction of international students from Michigan State University (MSU) and “weave” them into the community.

Kim Friesen, 10888 Beach Court, Perrinton, read a prepared statement in support of Special Use Permit #14031.

Rod Friesen, 10888 Beach Court, Perrinton, answered questions raised at the February 24, 2014 public hearing on SUP #14031.

Phillip Adkinson, 40950 Woodward, Suite 300, Bloomfield Hills, attorney for David and Joan Johnson, availed himself for questions later in the meeting regarding the zoning amendment request to allow more than one residence on a parcel 50 acres or more in size.

David Pierson, attorney for Rod and Kim Friesen, 1305 S. Washington Avenue, Lansing, addressed concerns regarding the Federal Fair Housing Act relative to SUP #14031 expressed at its February 24, 2014 public hearing.

Chair Jackson closed public remarks.

**5. Communications**

- A. Wanda Bloomquist, Planning Assistant, Williamston Township, 4990 Zimmer Road, Williamston; RE: Williamstown Township Master Plan
- B. Christopher Johnston, 2190 Seminole Drive, Okemos; RE: SUP #13121 (Meridian Township)
- C. Penny France, 4928 Grandview Avenue, Okemos; RE: SUP #13121 (Meridian Township)
- D. William Fossum, 4996 Hillcrest Avenue, Okemos; RE: SUP #13121 (Meridian Township)
- E. Bethany Hamilton, 4482 Wausau, Okemos; RE: SUP #13121 (Meridian Township)\
- F. Azeethkumar (address unknown); RE: SUP #13121 (Meridian Township)
- G. Ed Jones, 1955 Penobscot Drive, Okemos; RE: SUP #13121 (Meridian Township)
- H. Sue Simkin, 2032 Central Park Drive, Okemos; RE: SUP #13121 (Meridian Township)
- I. Joy Wiseman, 4954 Hillcrest Avenue, Okemos; RE: SUP #13121 (Meridian Township)
- J. Fred and Dorothy France, 4932 Grandview Avenue, Okemos; RE: SUP #13121 (Meridian Township)
- K. Joy Wiseman, 4954 Hillcrest Avenue, Okemos, RE: SUP #13121 (Meridian Township)
- L. Kathleen McQueen, Clerk, Bath Charter Township, 14480 Webster Road, Bath; RE: Bath Township Master Plan

**6. Public hearings (None)**

**7. Unfinished Business**

- A. Special Use Permit #14031 (Friesen), request to establish group housing for up to six international students at 2500 Haslett Road

**Commissioner Cordill 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 #14031 (Friesen) with the following conditions:**

- 1. Approval is granted based on the application dated January 15, 2014 and supporting materials submitted by the applicant.**
- 2. The use shall be owner-occupied with no more than six (6) unrelated, international students residing in the house at any one time.**
- 3. The applicant shall obtain a rental housing license from Meridian Township prior to leasing rooms to students.**
- 4. The applicant shall maintain the affiliation with the International Friends Church and International Friendship Incorporated, and remain in good standing with both organizations for the duration of the use approved by Special Use Permit #14031. If the applicant wishes to change the affiliation, prior approval by the Director of Community Planning and Development shall be required.**
- 5. The former tennis court shall not be reestablished except through the formal site plan review process subject to the approval of the Director of Community Planning and Development. If a tennis court is reestablished, it shall be no closer than 25 feet to any side or rear property line and landscaping shall be installed to obscure it from view of adjacent single-family residences. Lights shall not be installed to illuminate the tennis court for night use.**

- 6. If parking becomes a problem, a parking lot shall be required. Prior to establishing a parking lot, the applicant shall submit an application for site plan review to the Department of Community Planning and Development. The site plan review application is subject to the approval of the Director of Community Planning and Development.**

**Seconded by Commissioner Ianni.**

Planning Commission discussion:

- Owner occupied building will not conflict with the Federal Fair Housing Act
- Lot is large and there is considerable distance from neighboring properties
- Commissioner belief this proposal would not have an adverse impact on neighboring residences
- Facility will foster international relationships for students seeking the true American experience
- Proposal will not cause excessive traffic or noise as Haslett is already a busy street

**Commissioner Deits offered the following friendly amendment:**

- **Amend condition #2 to delete the word “unrelated”**

**The friendly amendment was accepted by the maker and seconder of the main motion.**

Continued Planning Commission and staff discussion:

- Concern condition #4 places the Director of Community Planning and Development in a position where he would need to decide the appropriateness of an affiliation in the event that relationship changed
- Concern with conditioning the SUP on affiliation with a religious non-profit organization
- Parcel is not a non-profit property, but a rental property
- Concern a new category is being created
- Concern this is a de facto zoning process
- Uses that are not approved are not allowed
- Preference to modify the Township’s code of ordinances to speak to boarding houses
- Planning Commissioner belief that condition #4 does not speak to the merits of the case and is not relevant to the process

**Commissioner Deits offered the following amendment:**

- **Delete condition #4**

**Seconded by Commissioner Salehi.**

VOICE VOTE: Motion carried 8-0.

Continued Planning Commission and staff discussion:

- Owner occupied status stays with the SUP
- Applicant can sell the building
- Suggestion of the SUP for this use to come back to the Planning Commission if the property is sold is not a typical condition
- SUP stays with the land
- Importance of promoting the transferability of property within Meridian Township
- Suggestion to strike the word “international” in condition #2
- Applicant has requested the inclusion of international students

- Inquiry if the SUP can be conditioned on ownership
- Sale of land is not a requirement for review of a SUP
- Conditions should be placed on the use based on potential future problems
- Concern the word “student” is problematic as it is open to interpretation
- Condition #3 requires a rental housing license which would fall under the rental housing ordinance
- Parking and noise issues are addressed under other ordinances
- Owner occupancy is not typical in rental housing situations
- Suggestion for a review of this use to either add it as a use approved by SUP or create a zoning use category for boarding houses
- Concern approval of this SUP creates a use specific to the applicant
- Boarding house definition from the City of East Lansing’s Code of Ordinances
- Approval of this SUP “trumps” the number of unrelated individuals contained in the rental housing ordinance
- A maximum number of occupants is listed in the rental housing ordinance
- A previous owner was licensed by the state for an adult foster care facility at this location

ROLL CALL VOTE: YEAS: Commissioners Cordill, DeLind, Honicky, Ianni, Salehi, Scott-Craig, Chair Jackson  
 NAYS: Commissioner Deits  
 Motion carried 7-1.

- B. Special Use Permit #14041 (First Housing Corporation), request to modify studio apartments in Phase 1 of Grange Acres and bring all phases into compliance with Section 86-658 Buildings Greater than 25,000 square feet

**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 #14041 (First Housing Corporation) with the following conditions:**

- 1. Approval is granted based on the site plan dated March 21, 2014 and floor plans dated November 1, 2013 prepared by Economides Architects, subject to revisions as required.**
- 2. Approval is subject to the applicant receiving Township Board approval for a group of buildings greater than 25,000 square feet in gross floor area.**
- 3. The final site plan and landscape plan shall be subject to the approval of the Director of Community Planning and Development.**
- 4. A landscape buffer shall be installed between the building housing the new offices, identified as 3A on the March 21, 2014 site plan, and the south property line to screen the adjacent single-family residence. The landscape buffer shall be subject to approval by the Director of Community Planning and Development.**
- 5. Approval is subject to the granting of variances by the Zoning Board of Appeals for proposed building additions located closer than 25 feet to existing parking areas per Section 86-376(g)(4)f.7.a.**
- 6. At least one of the four new parking spaces shall be ADA compliant.**

7. **The applicant shall obtain all necessary permits, licenses, and approvals from the Township. Copies of all permits, licenses, and approval letters shall be submitted to the Department of Community Planning and Development.**
8. **A copy of the information that exists on computer for the project and construction plans shall be provided to the Township Engineering staff in an Auto Cad compatible format.**

**Seconded by Commissioner Honicky.**

Planning Commission discussion:

- ADA compliant parking space will be located at the new office
- Variance from the 25 foot separation between a residential entrance and parking would be for approximately two (2) feet

ROLL CALL VOTE: YEAS: Commissioners Cordill, Deits, DeLind, Honicky, Ianni, Salehi, Scott-Craig, Chair Jackson

NAYS: None

Motion carried 8-0.

**Commissioner Scott-Craig moved [and read into the record] NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THE PLANNING COMMISSION OF THE CHARTER TOWNSHIP OF MERIDIAN hereby recommends approval of Special Use Permit #14041 (First Housing Corporation) for a group of buildings greater than 25,000 square feet in gross floor area. Seconded by Commissioner Honicky.**

ROLL CALL VOTE: YEAS: Commissioners Cordill, Deits, DeLind, Honicky, Ianni, Salehi, Scott-Craig, Chair Jackson

NAYS: None

Motion carried 8-0.

Commissioner Scott-Craig moved to amend the agenda by taking up Agenda Item #8A prior to Agenda Item #7C. Seconded by Commissioner Cordill.

VOICE VOTE: Motion carried 8-0.

- C. Commission Review #12053 (Planning Commission), 2005 Master Plan amendment  
Principal Planner Oranchak summarized Planning Commission agreement reached on Areas 1 and 6 of the urban serves management area (USMA) boundary and requested direction on Areas 2, 3, 4 and 5.

Planning Commission and staff discussion:

- Planning Commissioner belief there is no demand for Area 3 to be included to accommodate previously approved single family development which would be served by the Haslett Public School system
- Rationale for inclusion of Area 3 was to entice more “Ozzie and Harriet” type families (family of four) to relocate and enroll their children in the Haslett Public School system

- “Ozzie and Harriet” family of four is no longer the prevailing demographic of Meridian Township as noted in the 2010 census
- Prevailing demographic in Meridian Township is the aging population which would not relocate to Area 3
- Planning Commissioner belief the Georgetown Payback District includes Section 5 and is a foregone inclusion if the Township does not repay the developer
- Planning Commissioner belief many homes in Area 4 are older homes with the potential to have septic failure and could be included
- Established amendment process to extend the boundary “on demand” and preference not to include Areas 3, 4, 5 and 6 until needed
- Faulty premise for Area 3 to go all the way to Meridian Road in an attempt to get additional students for the Haslett School System
- Inclusion of Areas 2 and 3 was for future planned development
- Inclusion of Areas 4 and 5 was based on the potential for septic failure
- Planning Commission was given legal advice to exclude the Georgetown Payback District from the urban services boundary
- Vast majority of the eastern portion of the Township is in the Georgetown Payback District
- Preference for the Georgetown Payback District to be delineated on the Urban Services District Map (Map 8-12) with notation
- In the absence of an analysis of all other undeveloped parcels, partially developed parcels or parcels with septic systems in the Township, Areas 2, 3 4 and 6 are being arbitrarily identified
- Neither the Planning Commission nor the Township Board comprehensively surveyed all possible development in the Township prior to selecting these areas
- Areas included were done so on ad hoc comments from Board members
- Suggestion to take a vote on the USMA and move to other areas of the Master Plan
- Part of the Board rationale for inclusion of Areas 4, 5 and part of 6 were that these areas are already developed
- Request for more information on the legal opinion relative to Area 5 and whether it is included in the Georgetown Payback District
- Planning Commissioner consideration of the ten (10) criteria from Tri-County Regional Planning Commission (TCRPC) when reviewing these areas resulted in no rationale to include Areas 2 and 3
- Criterion #2 from TCRPC deals with the relationship of the road system to these areas and Areas 4 and 5 are in the midst of the major passage through the Township and are in closest proximity to the Grand River Corridor
- Planning Commissioner support for Area 6 as it has a direct connection with Jolly Road
- Planning Commissioner support for Areas 4, 5 and 6 as they are built out and have a likelihood of failing septic systems due to age
- Inclusion of Areas 4, 5 and 6 by the Township is an indication that it recognizes its responsibility to provide appropriate sewer service, but does not necessarily translate into extending sewer lines into the area
- One purpose for separating parcels in and out of the USMA is to note areas for which the municipality will not assume responsibility for providing appropriate sewer service
- Area 3 is designated as Agriculture (Ag) on the Future Land Use Map (FLUM) with a housing density of 0.0 to 0.5, recognizing the more densely populated areas will become more urbanized over time
- Majority of applicable TCRPC criteria positively relate to Areas 4, 5 and 6
- Some residents in the Ponderosa subdivision have successfully replaced their septic system

- Smaller lots equate to higher density
- Lot size alone is not a determinant of the need for sewer lines
- Replacement of septic systems in the Ponderosa subdivision show there is no evident risk
- Township responsibility to ensure adequate services in all cases regardless of where the line is drawn
- Preference to deal with each parcel on an as-needed basis
- Difficulty in establishing the lines as there is no present need for areas beyond the proposed Planning Commission recommendation
- Continued preference to utilize the existing amendment process when needed
- Expense involved in running a sewer line down Grand River Avenue
- Planning Commission recommendation for the USB was not straight, but followed the developed areas
- USB designates it is the Township's responsibility to provide (organize a means for) sewer for the included area
- Planning Commissioner interpretation of the USB is that on the west side of the line (and areas included), the Township is going to "foster" development
- Planning Commissioner interpretation of the USB is that on the east side of the line the Township will make it more challenging to justify development and further development
- Planning Commissioner belief that placing the USB as far west as possible facilitates special scrutiny when discussing properties east of the USB at the appropriate time
- Suggestion to proceed with other areas of the Mater Plan and then return to the USB at the end of the process
- Suggestion to include all undeveloped land in Meridian Township on the map and then apply the ten TCRPC criteria to the specific parcel(s)
- Reminder that there needs to be preservation of the rural character in the eastern third of the Township
- Planning Commissioner belief the boundary line deals with controlling development in the Township
- Planning Commissioner preference for a compromise position v. no boundary
- Staff to provide a map revision based on comments and consensus reached at tonight's meeting
- Inquiry of the Board if the Georgetown Payback District should be delineated on the FLUM when it comes back to the Planning Commission
- A resolution provided by staff at the next meeting which allows voting on each area would need to be refined and presented to the Planning Commission for approval at a subsequent meeting
- Planning Commissioner concern that if an area is on the map, it must affirmatively be removed from the map; if an area is not on the map, it must affirmatively be added to the map
- Planning Commissioner concern that tie votes will allow the map to stand
- Map has not been amended by the Board to add the Georgetown Payback District
- Georgetown Payback District was specifically left off the map as it is not definitive
- Georgetown Payback District is totally independent of the USB and not part of the consideration
- Georgetown Payback District is under legal contractual considerations to determine if the area will have services
- Exemption of the Georgetown Payback District from the USMA
- Adoption of TCRPC standards indicates agreement the USB will be used to direct development

- Staff to provide a map and resolution at the next Planning Commission meeting based on consensus voiced during this discussion
- Planning Commissioner preference to vote area by area and send results to the Board

## 8. Other Business

### A. Zoning amendment request to allow more than one residence on a parcel 50 acres or more in size

Principal Planner Oranchak summarized the request to initiate a zoning amendment allowing two residences on a parcel 50 acres or more in size.

Planning Commission, staff and applicant's representative discussion:

- Concern with the road needing to be addressed prior to constructing a second dwelling
- Land division ordinance requires every lot of subdivided land to have the proper amount of frontage on a public street
- Another option would be to create a planned unit development (PUD)
- Concern the proposed zoning amendment mechanism would allow for spot zoning
- Planning Commissioner belief there is a different way to deal with this issue
- Specific issue is multiple residences on one parcel which is not currently allowed by Township ordinance unless it is a PUD
- Township's zoning "objective" is to have one (1) house on one (1) parcel
- Current minimum width requirement for a public road is 60 feet
- Current parcel has 15 feet of road frontage in Meridian Township and is an existing non-conforming parcel
- Planning Commissioner inquiry if the land could be subdivided, request a variance for decreased frontage and then share the existing driveway
- Land division ordinance is not part of zoning and would not provide for a variance from that particular section of the ordinance
- Possibility of proposing a PUD to address this situation and then request a variance for the lot width
- Access to Park Lake Road is problematic in all scenarios
- Condominium PUD would require common ground shared by the parties involved
- Applicant is proposing a special land use process which would separate the structures, size of the separation would be the same as if the new structure had been located within a condominium project, subdivision or land division and is identical to the process used for land division, subdivision or condominium
- Planning Commission can place a "family" occupancy restriction
- Planning Commission can place a requirement that if the property is sold to non-family, one building must be torn down or the road must be constructed
- Impact of the proposed use is minimal compared to other uses currently allowed as a special land use in this district
- Parcels 50 acres or more exist in the Township which currently are undeveloped
- Most undeveloped parcels in the Township which are 50 acres or more are publicly owned
- Rationale for not addressing this issue by SUP is because the zoning ordinance does not allow it
- Parcel being landlocked is a self-limiting situation and makes it more appropriate for a SUP
- Rationale for tailoring this amendment specifically to 50 acres or more
- Limiting the proposed zoning change to 50 acres or more, in part, due to the low impact on the community of larger rural residential parcels

- One residence per lot is a fundamental basis for residential zoning in the Township's zoning ordinance
- Inquiry if staff should explore the option of a SUP to address this issue on the subject parcel
- Staff comment more than one residence on a lot is a non-conforming use and an SUP would not be approved for a non-conforming use
- Land locked status of the parcel is not part of the proposed ordinance, but the land locked property prevents land division
- Delineation of steps needed in a process to achieve the end result
- Suggestion by the applicant's representative to take a parallel path of investigation into the SUP option while moving forward with the zoning amendment
- Applicant's intent to provide a site plan such that in the event the property is developed, it would not be necessary to tear down one or both of the houses to achieve orderly development
- Need for the applicant to propose a specific zoning amendment
- Encouragement to the applicant to explore the possibility of a SUP on the subject property
- Consideration of the Township's length to depth requirement for parcels of land
- Length of the road (1,500 feet) is the issue with its construction

**Commissioner Salehi moved to initiate an amendment adding a new section to the Section 86-368 (c) Uses permitted by special use permit to allow a second residential structure on RR zoned properties. Seconded by Commissioner Scott-Craig.**

VOICE VOTE: Motion carried 7-0.

[Commissioner DeLind abstained from voting on this issue stating his rationale was that he is a property owner of land locked lots]

[Chair Jackson recessed the meeting at 9:26 P.M.]

[Chair Jackson reconvened the meeting at 9:35 P.M.]

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

Commissioner Salehi addressed the insertion in the Planning Commission packet from the Township Attorney regarding ethical dilemmas.

Chair Jackson explained the ethical dilemmas document was included in the current packet to prepare Planning Commissioners for the training session with the Township Attorney scheduled for early May.

Commissioner DeLind announced his resignation from the Planning Commission effective at the conclusion of this meeting as he will be moving out of the area.

Commissioner Deits announced the Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) stakeholders meetings will be held on Wednesday, April 16<sup>th</sup> beginning at 4:00 PM in the Town Hall Room of the Meridian Municipal Building to offer input on the Meridian Mall/Meijer segment. A meeting on the Park Lake to Okemos Road segment will be held at 2:00 PM and at 9:30 AM at Wardcliff School regarding the Hagadorn/Park Lake segment.

Chair Jackson announced information regarding stakeholder meetings is available on both the Township's website and the [www.cata-brt.org](http://www.cata-brt.org) website.

Commissioner Salehi inquired if staff would follow up on Attorney Sluggett's statement as to whether a failure to approve is a denial or not in an effort to obtain procedural clarification.

**10. New applications**

- A. Special Use Permit #14061 (Kincaid Henry Bldg. Group, Inc.), a request from Kincaid Henry Building Group, Inc. to develop a commercial kennel (dog day care and spa facility) at 1284 Grand River Ave.
- B. \*Special Use Permit #14051 (Meridian Township), a request to work in the 100-year floodplain associated with construction of a paved pathway in Wonch Park, 4555 Okemos Road
- C. \*Commission Review #14042 (Meridian Township), a request Section 61 review for location, character and extent of a paved pathway to be located in Wonch Park, 4555 Okemos Road

**11. Site plans received**

- A. Site Plan Review #14-06 (MSU Federal Credit Union), request to construct a 7,520 square foot bank with six drive-through lanes on the northeast corner of Jolly Road and Jolly Oak Road

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

**13. Public remarks**

Chair Jackson opened and closed public remarks.

**14. Adjournment**

Chair Jackson adjourned the regular meeting at 11:09 P.M.

Respectfully Submitted,

Sandra K. Otto  
Recording Secretary