

**CHARTER TOWNSHIP OF MERIDIAN  
PLANNING COMMISSION  
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES  
February 23, 2015**

**APPROVED**

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

PRESENT: Commissioners Cordill, DeGroff, Deits, Ianni, Jackson, Scott-Craig, Tenaglia, Van Coevering

ABSENT: Commissioner Honicky

STAFF: Director of Community Planning and Development Mark Kieselbach, Principal Planner Oranchak

**1. Call meeting to order**

Chair Scott-Craig called the regular meeting to order at 7:02 P.M.

**2. Approval of agenda**

**Commissioner DeGroff moved to approve the agenda. Seconded by Commissioner Cordill.**

VOICE VOTE: Motion carried 8-0.

**3. Approval of Minutes**

**Commissioner Ianni moved to approve the Regular Meeting Minutes of January 26, 2015 and the Work Session Meeting Minutes of January 26, 2015 and February 9, 2015. Seconded by Commissioner Tenaglia.**

VOICE VOTE: Motion carried 8-0.

**4. Public Remarks**

Chair Scott-Craig opened the floor for public remarks.

Chris Buck, 2642 Loon Lane, Okemos, spoke in support of the Okemos Pointe Mixed Use Planned Unit Development (MUPUD) Concept Plan.

Chair Scott-Craig closed public remarks.

**5. Communications (None)**

**6. Public hearings (None)**

**7. Unfinished Business (None)**

**8. Other Business**

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

Director Kieselbach offered a brief synopsis of the MUPUD concept plan.

Brent Forsberg, 2422 Jolly Road, Okemos, highlighted updates as a result of visits to the site by Planning Commissioners and Township Board members. He reported there will be an open forum meeting tomorrow night for the neighbors on Kansas Street followed by a meeting at 2398 Jolly Road on March 5<sup>th</sup> at 6:00 P.M. for a broader spectrum of nearby residents and

businesses. Mr. Forsberg indicated he has entered into discussions with the Greater Lansing Housing Coalition relative to affordable housing, scheduled a meeting with Michigan Energy Options to use best practices in the project and scheduled a meeting with the Okemos School District concerning the project's impact on the school system. He noted talks with the neighbors have shown an interest in adding a small grocer component in existing vacant space.

Planning Commission and applicant discussion:

- Appreciation for affordable housing within the project
- Affordable housing and energy options are two elements which make this project “special”
- Developer is a sponsor of ICE which is a five-year affordable housing plan being developed by the Greater Lansing Housing Coalition and Mid-Michigan Program for Greater Sustainability for the Tri-County area
- Meeting scheduled with the Greater Lansing Housing Coalition to fill out the 40-page application
- Appreciation for the property owner's proactive approach to this plan
- Affordable housing would be interspersed throughout the housing component
- Potential grocer would be part of the property on which the project is located
- Potential grocer would be another use in an existing building on the property
- Rezoning application has capped the density at 18 dwelling units per acre
- Product mix is projected to be near 14 dwelling units per acre
- Planning Commission will have the rezoning request come before it in the near future, with the request conditioned upon a MUPUD
- Applicant could have brought this project before the Planning Commission prior to building the hotel which would have included more commercial and more closely resembled true mixed use development
- Planning Commission needs to have a more global picture relative to processes for development
- List of amenities within the MUPUD is not meant to be exhaustive (e.g., affordable housing)

- B. Commercial Planned Unit Development (CPUD) Concept Plan – Meridian Mall (new building)  
Director Kieselbach summarized the concept plan for the proposed CPUD as outlined in staff memorandum dated February 20, 2015.

Jeff Kyes, KEBS, Inc. 2116 Haslett Road, Okemos and representative for CBL Properties, stated it is the applicant's intent to retain both the current pervious/impervious calculation and the parking ratio from the original CPUD. He indicated he has applied for a permit to work in the floodplain from the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality (MDEQ) through the joint permit application process, but has not yet applied for the special use permit (SUP) for a drive-through window. Mr. Kyes noted the goal is to redevelop the area which previously housed a bank, but some trees are proposed to be cut to provide a view of the commercial site from both Marsh Road and from Grand River Avenue, adding the parcel is “very limited” due to the gas pipeline running through the site accompanied by a large easement. He stated a board certified master arborist has been retained to provide a report on the condition of the property's cottonwood, ash and pine trees. Mr. Kyes indicated the proposed project would fill 54 cubic yards of floodplain with a commensurate amount of compensating cut.

Planning Commission and applicant's representative discussion:

- Cottonwoods are “dirty” trees
- Planning Commissioner belief the applicant is approaching this project “all wrong”

- Concern with parking close to Grand River Avenue
- Site line is for visibility of the driveway
- Commissioner suggestion for the applicant to clear the trees and then plant trees which can be seen through to provide a “park-like” environment
- Planning Commissioner preference to handle visibility of the site through signage v. clear cut of trees
- Planning Commissioner preference for the applicant to garner the services of a landscape architect
- Possible achievability of a site line by cutting down diseased and damaged trees
- Applicant does not currently have a tenant for the property as they are first seeking approval
- Gas pipeline easement and floodplain prevent placing the building closer to Grand River Avenue
- Township preference to have the greenspace on the eastern side of the main mall entrance on Grand River remain as is
- Capital Area Transportation Authority’s (CATA’s) bus rapid transit (BRT) proposal does not work for the mall’s property owner (CBL) as it adversely affects one of Meridian Mall’s largest anchor stores
- Vision for non-motorized transportation from Grand River Avenue into the applicant’s property
- Easement is written in such a way that it allows for parking on the easement, but not a building
- Concept plan is the maximum which would be requested on the site
- Synopsis of the history on the eastern greenspace section
- Building on the eastern greenspace area would allow for less tree removal
- Movement of the building closer to the drive may provide better sight lines
- Curb cut entrance to this site off Grand River Avenue creates traffic issues
- Drive through window creates significant demands on the property
- Planning Commissioner belief the argument by the applicant for the need of sight lines to the building is not valid because of ready availability of global positioning systems (GPS)
- Internal roads are technically off-street parking approved by the Township at the time of construction
- Connection to Grand River Avenue would be under the jurisdiction of the Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT)
- Concern with maneuverability of traffic into the subject property traveling westbound on Grand River
- Concern with alignment of the curb cut on the dog leg off Grand River Avenue
- Single internal curb cut into the property off the northern internal road frees up frontage and the building can be moved closer to Grand River Avenue

C. Mixed Use Planned Unit Development Concept Plan – The Avenue on Grand River (Meridian Pointe – 2655 Grand River Avenue)

Director Kieselbach summarized the concept plan as outlined in staff memorandum dated February 19, 2015.

John Gaber, Williams, Williams, Rattner & Plunkett, 380 North Old Woodward, Suite 300, Birmingham, offered an overview of the surrounding uses on both sides of Grand River Avenue. He displayed the multi-family residential component of the MUPUD at a density of up to 18 dwelling units per acre (accompanied by corresponding permissible amenities), with the commercial component already home to Foods for Living, State of Fitness and a Salvation

Army store. Mr. Gaber addressed the “synergy” created among the residential and retail components. He noted the average of 1.9 beds per unit focuses on grad students and graduates interested in starting their own businesses as tenants, with an entrepreneurial hub which contains conference rooms, meeting rooms, offices, group work spaces, etc.

Ray Behling, Director of Design and Construction, Campus Village Communities, 919 West University Drive, Suite 700, Rochester, offered an extensive overview of the layout of the proposed housing development and surrounding amenities.

Planning Commission and developer discussion:

- Pervious/impervious ratio
- Concern there is not enough pervious surface
- Some of the area shaded in gray on the plan (e.g., fire pits) may consist of a pervious paver material
- Frequency of train traffic
- Setback requirement from industrial to multi-family residential
- Proposed project does not have a commercial component to it
- Inquiry if the Township’s ordinance allows for a MUPUD with no commercial development
- Variances and setbacks needed if the project was developed as a multi-family housing project
- Project has “community” built into it on Grand River, which provides density on a major corridor
- Appreciation for the applicant’s consideration of walkability and bus stop location
- Concern with compromises Planning Commissioners will need to make (e.g. setbacks from the railroad, ordinance requirements) in order for this project to happen
- MUPUD ordinances are typically adopted by communities to allow for flexibility
- Project adds commercial space for tenant use and office space for tenant’s entrepreneurial pursuits within the clubhouse
- Proposed area will allow for possible redevelopment of some of the commercial space in the future
- Review of the ordinance needed to determine if existing commercial development on the land can be counted towards the MUPUD requirements
- One parking space allotted for each bed within the entire development
- Developer’s belief the existing retail parking space is “over parked”
- Shared parking calculation is normal for mixed use development as not everyone is using every space at the same time all the time
- Proposed parking configuration would require some residents to park in an assigned spot on the other side of Foods for Living with a small reduction in rent
- Entrepreneurial center can be reserved by residents only
- Existing commercial and proposed development will be under the same ownership
- 12.65 acres is three separate tax parcels all under common ownership
- Developer intends to purchase the entire 12.65 acres
- Meridian’s PUD ordinance allows for ownership to be split in a variety of ways
- Planning Commissioner suggestion to open up entrepreneurial space to the “arts”
- Number of gallons in flammable fuel transported by railroad has increased 40 fold over the last several years
- In 2014, there were 121 reported railroad accidents
- Concern with placing housing close to the railroad tracks
- Difficulty in moving away from the required setback from the railroad tracks

- MUPUD ordinance states that residents shall be as far as possible from railroad tracks
- There is a maximum impervious surface of 70% in the underlining C-2 zoning
- One amenity would be more pervious surface
- Developer anticipates a mixture of tenants
- Suggestion to run a shuttle bus to the university as an amenity
- Necessity for screening from the adjacent industrial area on Dawn Avenue
- Current easement into Dawn Avenue from the subject property
- Subject property could connect to the Pathway Master Plan

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

Commissioner Jackson stated the number of trains which run through Meridian Township is cited in the Infrastructure Chapter of the Master Plan.

Chair Scott-Craig reported receipt of copies of the Economic Development Corporation (EDC) report on its meeting with developers and suggested the document be a Planning Commission topic of discussion in the near future. He reminded fellow Commissioners of the Site Plan Review Training on March 5, 2015 from 5:00 PM until 9:00 PM at the Hampton Inn.

**10. New applications**

- A. Rezoning #15010 (Forsberg Family, LLC), request to rezone approximately 39.46 acres from I (Industrial), PO (Professional and Office) and C-2 (Commercial) to C-2 (Commercial) with an offer of conditions to develop as a mixed use planned unit development and restrict density to no more than 18 dwelling units per acre. The site has frontage on Kansas Street and Jolly Oak Road.
- B. Rezoning #15020 (George F. Eyde Family, LLC) request to rezone approximately 8.7 acres from PO (Professional Office) and RA (Single Family, Medium Density) to C-2 (Commercial) at 1614 and 1622 Grand River Avenue and an undeveloped parcel on Central Park Drive

**11. Site plans received**

- A. Site Plan Review #15-01-30 (Michigan State University Federal Credit Union), request to amend an approved site plan to add four parking spaces at 1775 Central Park Drive
- B. Site Plan Review #15-01 (Fedewa), request to develop a 5-unit townhouse project to be located at 2043 Hamilton Road
- C. Site Plan Review #15-14-14 (Boomer Group), request to amend an approved site plan for an all-suites hotel by increasing the building size from 57,000 to 62,684 square feet and increasing the number of rooms from 107 to 111, to be located at the northeast corner of Jolly Oak Road and Water Lily Way (2350 Jolly Oak Road)
- D. Site Plan Review #15-14-04-2 (Wolverine Building Group), request to amend an approved site plan to add 2,080 square feet to the Whole Food's building under construction at 2750 Grand River
- E. Site Plan Review #15-14-04-2 (Wolverine Building Group), request to amend an approved site plan to add a 3,275 square foot mezzanine to the Whole Food's building under construction at 2750 Grand River

**12. Site plans approved**

- A. Site Plan Review #15-04-2 (Wolverine Building Group), request to amend an approved site plan to add 3,600 square feet to the Whole Food's building under construction at 2750 Grand River Avenue
- B. Site Plan Review #15-15 (Dawn Avenue Associates), request for a roof addition, redesign of the parking lot and stormwater management plan at 4884 Dawn Avenue
- C. Site Plan Review #15-88-13-2 (St. Martha Church), request to amend an approved site plan to reduce the building addition size at 1100 Grand River Avenue

**13. Public remarks**

Chair Scott-Craig opened and closed public remarks.

**14. Adjournment**

Chair Scott-Craig adjourned the regular meeting at 9:04 P.M.

Respectfully Submitted,

Sandra K. Otto  
Recording Secretary