

**CHARTER TOWNSHIP OF MERIDIAN  
PLANNING COMMISSION  
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES  
March 26, 2012**

**APPROVED**

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

PRESENT: Commissioners Cordill, Deits, Goodale, Hildebrandt, Honicky, Jackson, Norkin, Scales,  
Scott-Craig  
ABSENT: None  
STAFF: Principal Planner Gail Oranchak

**1. Call meeting to order**

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

**2. Approval of agenda**

**Commissioner Goodale moved to approve the agenda. Seconded by Commissioner Scales.**

VOICE VOTE: Motion carried unanimously.

**3. Approval of Minutes**

**Commissioner Scales moved to approve the Regular Meeting Minutes of February 13, 2012, the Work Session Meeting Minutes of February 13, 2012 and the Work Session Meeting Minutes of March 12, 2012. Seconded by Commissioner Hildebrandt.**

VOICE VOTE: Motion carried unanimously.

**4. Public Remarks**

Chair Deits opened and closed the floor for public remarks.

**5. Communications**

- Orlando Todd, Secretary, Delhi Township Planning Commission, 2074 Aurelius Road, Holt; RE: Notice of Intent for Delhi Township to amend its Master Plan

**6. Public hearings**

- A. Mixed Use Planned Unit Development #12014 (Capstone), request for 153 multiple-family (student) apartments on approximately nine acres south of Hannah Blvd.

Chair Deits opened the public hearing at 7:03 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 Phase 2 of the proposed mixed use planned unit development (MUPUD) as outlined in staff memorandum dated March 22, 2012.
- Applicant  
Mark Clouse, representative for Eyde Company, 4660 S. Hagadorn Road, Suite 660, East Lansing, noted rezoning of this property transpired in June of 2008. He spoke to the success of Phase 1 (Lodges of East Lansing) which has led to the decision to begin the second phase.

John Acken, Capstone Collegiate Communities, 431 Office Park Drive, Birmingham, Alabama, outlined the design elements of the project, beginning with the intent to create a sense of place.

- Planning Commission discussion:  
Commissioner Cordill inquired as to when other uses will occur within this MUPUD.

Mr. Acken responded the retail component will be established in Phase 3 and Phase 4 once the human component (Phase 1 and 2) has been established. He noted the people must first be established in order to attract retail in the development. Mr. Acken pointed out one of the unique aspects of this site is that it is in close proximity to existing retail, including restaurants.

Commissioner Honicky inquired as to the occupancy rate of Phase 1.

Mr. Acken responded he believed it to be approximately 97% or 98%.

Commissioner Honicky inquired as to when Commissioners could walk the property and view the trees, since no trespassing signs were posted on the property.

Mr. Clouse responded although he did not fill out the application, he knew there was a safety factor involved as both ongoing drain and construction work were taking place on the site. He believed it best to have Ms. Oranchak coordinate a group tour, accompanied by a representative from Kebs, Inc. or Capstone.

Mr. Acken added Capstone would be happy to provide a tour for Planning Commissioners.

Commissioner Honicky expressed concern with a group tour given the requirements of the Open Meetings Act.

Mr. Acken indicated Capstone could provide multiple tours in an effort not to conflict with the Open Meetings Act

Ms. Oranchak added that staff could post a site tour which complied with the 18-hour noticing requirement of the Open Meetings Act.

Commissioner Honicky inquired if there was a way to create eye appeal other than use of the "older Tudor" style.

Mr. Acken indicated when Capstone was first contemplating a project in Meridian Township, a team of its architects toured the area, including Michigan State University. He noted this team was inspired by the architectural history of the older buildings on campus and incorporated that idea into the buildings for Phase 2 while complementing the architecture of Phase 1.

Commissioner Honicky indicated his interest in seeing architectural variation in Phases 3 and 4. He spoke to the use of pillars to lend variation and suggested incorporating some of the elements which will be used in Phases 3 and 4 in Phase 2.

Mr. Acken indicated his company will be seeking input from the Planning Commission in the future as to their ideas for the character of the next two phases.

Commissioner Cordill expressed concern with the size and scale of the building and felt the extended length had a “barracks” look to it.

Mr. Acken stated the look created in the rendering on paper does not play out in reality because of the way the building is situated and a person’s field of view on site.

Commissioner Cordill inquired if the buildings in subsequent phases would be of the same scale.

Mr. Acken responded in the affirmative.

Commissioner Cordill expressed concern with the number of neighbors which would be in close proximity under one roof.

Mr. Acken pointed to two units which tie into one corridor in between. He indicated his company “cut the building in half”, spread the parking inside, so it is screened by the exterior. This allows for six units to a common breezeway instead of 12 units within a conventional type of development which makes the “group” of neighbors smaller. He noted there are representatives from the buildings which serve on a student government association to obtain feedback and improve communications with the occupants.

Commissioner Norkin stated that as Grand River Avenue becomes more congested, Mount Hope Road becomes more congested and there are not enough arteries to handle traffic from Michigan State University at 5:00 P.M. to Meridian Township. He inquired if there has been discussion as to what the development and traffic flow in this area look like in 20 years. He also inquired if the property owner and developer would be opposed to a Master Plan revision which would call for a major artery from campus, on top of Hannah Boulevard, run parallel to the railroad tracks and onto Grand River Avenue.

Mr. Clouse responded having Hannah Boulevard continue to Grand River Avenue would be a large challenge; however, having this site connect to others in the future would be beneficial. He believed the cost of bringing this item through to fruition long range could be prohibitive. Mr. Clouse added that this thought should be taken into consideration when the senior housing component of this MUPUD is developed.

Commissioner Norkin noted that with the addition of 400 students to the 600 students across the street, there is considerable pressure on Hagadorn Road.

Mr. Clouse indicated street planning and light issues were discussed when increased traffic on Hagadorn was taken into consideration during the rezoning process.

Commissioner Norkin expressed continued concern with the bottleneck created when 12 trains a day cross Hagadorn Road and believed that number will increase to 50 within three (3) years.

Commissioner Hildebrandt requested the applicant seriously consider Commissioner Norkin’s proposition as access from Grand River for emergency vehicles to the future senior housing project will be important.

Mr. Clouse stated that a connection from the proposed site to Grand River Avenue will not happen without a major reconstruction using federal, state and county monies. He noted that there is a connection to Tonapah Trail from the future senior housing project which could be used by emergency vehicles. Mr. Clouse indicated there is also an emergency connection which goes into Phase 1 of the Capstone development.

Commissioner Norkin asked if there was a study which showed a need for 153 additional units.

Mr. Acken stated he believed there is a need based, in part, on the speed with which Phase 1 leased out. He indicated this location is convenient for students, using bussing, biking and walking as the main modes of transportation.

Chair Deits reviewed the concept plan discussion last September where multi modal transportation was extensively discussed. He indicated the plan before the Planning Commission does not address that issue. He stated the state is currently implementing complete streets principles into state law for all future planning.

Mr. Acken responded that Phase 2 is building off the experience of Phase 1. He noted students are accessing campus through a sidewalk system, noting all streets within the development are marked for bicycles on both sides of the sidewalks. He suggested Planning Commissioners walk through the site to obtain a sense of scale and the buildings themselves. Mr. Acken stated the development is linked together by internal sidewalks and Capstone has exceeded the number of bicycle spaces required under the MUPUD ordinance. He added Phase 1 incorporated the complete street concept by marking the roads to allow bikes and cars to use the shared lanes, and Phase 2 would continue with that concept.

Chair Deits clarified he was speaking about travel from the development to campus and noted Hannah Boulevard is not a good street for bicyclists to use. He suggested the possibility of upgrading Eyde Parkway for use by bicyclists to campus.

Jamerson Ries, Kebs, Inc., 2116 Haslett Road, indicated Eyde Parkway is presently striped for bike lanes on both sides. He believed as that corridor develops, additional sidewalks will be constructed. Mr. Ries addressed conversation which took place at the concept meeting relative to the Ingham County trail system and its connectivity from campus through the Capstone Development. He stated that the interested parties met with Mr. Bennett, Director of Ingham County Parks, who indicated there were no plans for this connection at this time, due to lack of funding. Mr. Ries discussed the possibility of signage and stencils along Hannah Boulevard to make it a more appropriate bike channel for residents to reach campus.

Chair Deits stated that how the newest traffic signal would “work” for bicyclists must be contemplated now while the Planning Commission is considering Phase 2 of the development.

Commissioner Norkin indicated Hannah Boulevard is treacherous for bicyclists now and needs to have the typical “road diet” fix. He stated he would require cooperation from the developers to put forth a solution before he could cast his vote of approval for Phase 2.

Commissioner Cordill acknowledge that while Phase 2 exceeds the minimum requirement for bicycle parking, she inquired if more bicycle parking is needed given the development is for students.

Mr. Acken replied that Phase 1 was an excellent indicator of need, and believed the proposed amount was appropriate.

Commissioner Jackson inquired how the additional parking given to the applicant in Phase 1 has served the community.

Mr. Acken believed it has worked well and is looking to have an overall ratio of 1:1 for Phases 1 and 2.

Commissioner Jackson inquired if all the sidewalk widths were the same.

Mr. Ries believed they were all drawn at five (5) feet but, if there was a discrepancy in the plans, corrections would be made. He did not believe any seven (7) foot widths are needed.

Commissioner Jackson inquired of staff if sidewalks were considered an amenity.

Principal Planner Oranchak responded not all sidewalks.

Mr. Ries clarified he believed it was the connection to sidewalks within public road right-of-ways and other trail systems (e.g., connection to Hannah Boulevard) which were the amenities.

Commissioner Scott-Craig spoke to the construction on Eyde Parkway just beyond the site and inquired if this was part of the proposed development.

Mr. Ries responded there is drain work being performed by the Ingham County Drain Commissioner's (ICDC) Office.

Commissioner Scott-Craig inquired if the sidewalks from the proposed development would connect to that area.

Mr. Ries indicated that for the present time, the sidewalk would end with this phase, and there would be a gap until further development occurred.

Commissioner Scott-Craig stated that there has been much discussion about both bicyclists and pedestrians using that street as a way to travel to campus, and completion of that sidewalk connection is essential.

Mr. Clouse stated he did not believe there was much frontage around the curve and all parties would need to look at the plans in an effort to close the gap and create connectivity. He believed it important for that connectivity to be included in the next rendering of the plan.

Commissioner Scott-Craig inquired as to the bus ridership of residents in Phase 1. He indicated the number of additional trips proposed by the traffic consultant was small.

Mr. Acken indicated the bus runs every 20 minutes to campus and is not completely full; therefore, capacity remains available for residents of Phase 2. He noted many residents are walking and biking to campus.

Commissioner Scott-Craig indicated the traffic consultant's remarks noted it is critical to have a light at the intersection of Eyde Parkway and Hagadorn Road. He asked if there was an alternative plan in the event the ICRC does not approve this change.

Mr. Acken stated that his company is putting forth a big investment in this development, and wants to make sure all residents have easy ingress and egress.

Commissioner Scott-Craig inquired if the breezeways were open for public walk-through.

Mr. Acken responded they are unlocked and open, but the design makes it feel like private space.

Commissioner Goodale inquired if the developments would effect the agreement with the City of East Lansing regarding water usage.

Principal Planner Oranchak stated this development would not have a significant impact on the overall capacity.

Commissioner Goodale suggested staff look for environmentally friendly ways to deliver the Planning Commission packet.

Commissioner Goodale inquired as to the setback from the internal roads.

Mr. Acken responded it varies between ten (10) to 15 feet.

Commissioner Goodale asked what type of curbs would be installed, as he had concern with students traveling on the internal streets late at night, going off the road and hitting a building.

Mr. Acken responded that in addition to trees, there was parallel parking on the internal roads which had a "buffer" effect.

Commissioner Goodale asked for the total number of residents in the development, if capacity was 100%.

Mr. Acken responded there would be 387 bedrooms across Phase 2.

Commissioner Goodale inquired as to the actual number of bicycle parking spaces.

Mr. Clouse stated there are 64 covered and 144 outdoor bicycle parking spaces.

Mr. Acken added there are also bars under the stairwells where students can store bicycles. He acknowledged some students store their bicycles on balconies.

Mr. Ries noted the Township's ordinance stipulates there should be a maximum of 50 bicycle parking spaces on any development, so the applicant is applying for a waiver to that cap.

Principal Planner Oranchak indicated the Township would not impose the bicycle parking cap on this particular project, given the fact it is a student housing project.

Chair Deits suggested the Planning Commission revisit this requirement as some future date.

Commissioner Jackson clarified that during the bicycle parking component of this ordinance, the Planning Commission was focusing on commercial and retail spaces.

Principal Planner Oranchak indicated that multi-family residential was also considered, but student housing was not part of that discussion.

Commissioner Goodale asked how snow removal is handled with parallel parking.

Mr. Acken stated that Phase 1 has parallel parking, and it was not an issue for that phase.

Commissioner Goodale inquired if there are ADA (American with Disabilities Act) accessible units in each building.

Mr. Acken responded there are requirements for the number of handicap accessible units and the proposed development meets that requirement. He indicated there must also be a specific number of units which are adaptable to accessibility and the proposed development meets those requirements as well.

Commissioner Goodale suggested handicap accessible parking spots not be clustered, but spread out throughout the project.

Mr. Acken responded that the location was set because of its proximity to the breezeway and ease of access to that breezeway, while taking the requirements regarding grade into consideration.

Mr. Ries indicated there is an opportunity to spread the handicap parking spots out among Phase 2.

Chair Deits expressed appreciation for the track record of the applicant with Phase I of this development. He suggested a replacement for the cross timber look on the sides of the buildings as it looks "cheap."

Commissioner Honicky inquired as to the adaptability of the plan 20 years from now.

Mr. Acken responded that his company is creating an urban grid network that "has good bones" which would make it easier to redevelop in the future. He added there was intent to make the buildings last as long as possible with the use of brick, the type of siding which is easily replaceable and the exterior materials being made of metal.

Commissioner Honicky inquired as to the type of construction material which will be used to contain fire to a specific section.

Mr. Acken's responded there are firewalls in between the breezeways for separation. There is also specific material used on the floor level for suppression and everything is "sprinkled" according to code.

Commissioner Jackson inquired if leasing of the apartments was limited to registered students.

Mr. Acken responded that anyone who would like to live within the development may do so.

Commissioner Hildebrandt concurred that it may be more appealing if it looked less like barracks, even from the back. She inquired if there was a question regarding bicycles on the applicant's student survey. She stated that except at night, 70% of the bicycles are not on site at any given time.

Mr. Acken stated he would need to go over the survey to see what questions were asked.

Commissioner Hildebrandt inquired about the future parking spaces behind the retaining wall as drawn on the map.

Mr. Ries commented that the retaining wall would be built out in such a manner that the future parking could be constructed.

Commissioner Scott-Craig noted the assessment report indicated in excess of 700 trees on the property (including sugar maples, etc.) He asked how many of the viable trees will be incorporated into the site.

Mr. Acken responded that he did not have a figure at this time. One of the challenges on this site is that is slopes and cannot be built up because of the necessity of the retaining wall. He added that in Phase 1, they increased the number of trees by placing them at 25 foot intervals across the entire site. Mr. Acken noted focus will be on planting street trees and caring for as many existing trees as possible over the long term.

Mr. Ries added there are existing conditions relative to the grade as Eyde Parkway slopes to the north with an eight (foot) grade change. He added there is an additional 8-10 foot drop in the grade from the intersection of Eyde Parkway and Hannah Boulevard to the project's east entrance on Hannah Boulevard.

Commissioner Scales asked what type of feedback the applicant was receiving from the local businesses in the area and neighbors.

Mr. Acken responded that during Phase 1, neighbors had two concerns. First was the potential connection through their neighborhood and representatives explained the phases would not include a connection. He indicated the second concern was whether the cut fill would have any impact on flooding and the site was developed in such a way as to ensure there would be none.

Mr. Clouse noted the owners of the Hannah Plaza, the Michigan Athletic Club (MAC) and the ice arena have indicated overall benefits from Phase 1.

- Public

Angela Wilson, 4767 Mohican Lane, Okemos, expressed concern with a possible connection between Phase 4 (senior housing) and Indian Lakes Estates. She also believed there was a safety issue relative to inappropriate use of the green space by students between Indian Lakes and the apartments. Ms. Wilson spoke to the strain on Township resources relative to calls for police and fire services from occupants in Phase 1. She added that when students first moved into Phase 1 in the fall, there was late night noise.

Commissioner Scales asked what the applicant was doing to educate, gain input and the type of feedback received from neighbors.

Mr. Acken voiced appreciation for the feedback from Ms. Wilson and would work with her to ensure the noise issue is addressed. He stated Capstone would continue its outreach efforts to the community.

Chair Deits closed the public hearing at 8:41 P.M.

[Chair Deits recessed the meeting at 8:41 P.M.]

[Chair Deits reconvened the meeting at 8: 49 P.M.]

**7. Unfinished Business (None)**

**8. Other Business**

A. Hannah Farms Mixed Use Planned Unit Development – Phase 3 Concept Plan

Principal Planner Oranchak introduced the concept plan for Phase 3 of Hannah Farms as outlined in staff memorandum dated March 22, 2012.

Mr. Clouse, representative for the Eyde Company, 4660 S. Hagadorn Road, Suite 660, East Lansing outlined the benefits of working with Capstone for additional phases of Hannah Farms.

John Acken, Capstone Development, 431 Office Park Drive, Birmingham, Alabama, noted his company's intent to continue the "block" network from Phase 2 to the west. He indicated the concept plan was divided into four (4) separate blocks which could each have a different character through change in architectural patterns. Mr. Acken stated all four blocks would have higher density than Phase 1 and Phase 2, typically a five (5) story building. He walked through his company's initial concepts for each of the four (4) areas.

Planning Commission and applicant discussion:

- Views out of second story windows and higher is a brick wall
- Retail on the first floor
- Garages will be hidden
- Need for a comprehensive transportation plan
- Focus growth by infill development
- Potential retail facing outward is "car oriented" retail
- Place potential retail for Area 2 inside so that customers must enter the property first
- Concern with transportation gridlock along the Hagadorn corridor
- Need for a public transportation component
- A turn onto Eyde Parkway is the only opportunity for public transportation
- Some type of connection with CATA #1 (which runs along the Township's main artery) is essential
- Commercial vacancies currently exist along Hagadorn Road
- Any study must show there is a need for additional commercial space
- Possibility of turning some of the first floor of the Eyde Parkway Buildings into commercial uses to create a "bridge" and create continuity
- Building "in" v. building "out"
- Internal road in the center will help encourage commercial use in the center
- Village concept is 2-3 stories
- Concept of high density for this area has been discussed since its inception
- Apartments in lieu of condominiums due to the market
- Apartments will be built so that they could be converted in the future
- Demographics in the academia world is undergoing significant changes
- Mixed use concept denotes different peak hours for different uses relative to parking
- Current office use is probably at its maximum
- Need for ongoing conversation with the Ingham County Road Commission (ICRC)
- Contingency plan for areas marked potential retail would be first floor residential
- Inquiry if any analysis for the need of this type of density for apartment dwelling will be undertaken
- Population is shifting and the number of high school graduates will significantly decline in five (5) years
- Applicant is looking at market absorption and a corresponding phase-in schedule
- Underground parking considerations must take into account proper ventilation for exhaust
- Underground parking is cost prohibitive

- Need for dialogue between the Planning Commissioners and developers regarding an exchange of proposed retail space in mixed use for a gain of green space, bicycle paths, road diets, etc.
- Current ordinance requirement which must represent the underlying zoning
- One option for the developer would be to request a rezoning if the market could not support retail or commercial
- Concept should focus on measuring the amount of retail needed to support the residential

**B. Urban Service District Policy Recommendations**

Principal Planner Oranchak summarized the urban service district policy recommendations as outlined in staff memorandum dated March 22, 2012. She noted the proposed amendments to Goal 5 and Goal 7, as well as changes to Chapters 8, 10 and 11 are recommendations to the Township Board.

Planning Commission edits:

- Goal 7, Objective C: Change the second word “and” to “an”
- Chapter 8, second sentence: Insert the word “an” between “for” and “urban”
- Chapter 8, third sentence: Delete the word “affected” and insert the word “participating”
- Chapter 10, second paragraph, first sentence: Delete the word “established” and insert the word “estimated”
- Chapter 10, second paragraph: Rework sentence structure for clarity
- Chapter 10, second paragraph, last sentence: Insert “Therefore, under the 2005 Master Plan,” at the beginning of the sentence and delete the remaining language after “such uses”
- Chapter 11, last sentence: Delete “in order to avoid a legal challenge.”
- Chapter 11, last sentence: Delete “and need”
- Urban Services District Amendment Policies, Private property owners and developers bullet, last sentence:
  - Delete “its” and insert “their”
  - Insert “Planning Commission and” after the first “the”
- Urban Services District Amendment Policies, last criterion: Delete “not result in an” and insert “weigh the benefits and”

**Commissioner Norkin moved to transmit the Planning Commission’s recommendation to the Township Board to amend the 2005 Master Plan in support of an Urban Services District by adding text as amended tonight and a map to Chapter 8 Infrastructure; and to Chapter 10 Future Land Use, text and a proposed amendment to the Future Land Use Map showing the Urban Services District boundary; and text to Chapter 11 Implementation including policies to amend the Urban Services District boundary (attachment herein). Seconded by Commissioner Jackson.**

VOICE VOTE: Motion carried 8-1 (Scales).

- 9. Township Board, Planning Commission officer, committee chair, and staff comment or reports**  
 Commissioner Scott-Craig reported that Commissioners Hildebrandt, Jackson and he attended the Michigan Association of Planners Training Session on the subject of Fundamentals of Planning and Zoning. He found the training session both useful and helpful.

Commissioner Norkin requested the Chair represent the Planning Commission when the urban service management area recommendation is before the Township Board.

**10. New applications**

- A. Special Use Permit #12011 (Capstone), request to construct a group of buildings greater than 25,000 square feet in size.

**11. Site plans received**

- A. Site Plan Review #12-01 (Sparrow), raze an existing restaurant building and construct new urgent care facility at 2682 Grand River.
- B. Site Plan Review #12-02 (Bret Story), add a roof top patio to the Mayfair restaurant at 1525 Lake Lansing Road.

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

**13. Public remarks**

Chair Deits opened and closed public remarks.

**14. Adjournment**

Chair Deits adjourned the regular meeting at 9:53 P.M.

Respectfully Submitted,

Sandra K. Otto  
Recording Secretary