

**CHARTER TOWNSHIP OF MERIDIAN  
PLANNING COMMISSION  
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES  
December 14, 2009  
5151 Marsh Road, Okemos, MI 48864-1198  
853-4000, Town Hall Room, 7:00 P.M.**

**APPROVED**

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

**1. Call meeting to order**

Chair Wilcox called the regular meeting to order at 7:00 P.M.

**2. Approval of agenda**

**Commissioner Klemans moved to approve the agenda. Seconded by Commissioner Reicosky.**

VOICE VOTE: Motion carried 7-0.

**3. Approval of Minutes**

**Commissioner Deits moved to approve the Regular Meeting Minutes of November 23, 2009 as submitted. Seconded by Commissioner Beyea.**

VOICE VOTE: Motion carried 7-0.

**4. Public Remarks**

Chair Wilcox opened and closed the floor for public remarks.

**5. Communications (None)**

**6. Public hearings**

A. Special Use Permit #09101 (Design Services Co.), a request to construct a 94-bed, 57,464 square foot assisted living/skilled care facility, a non-residential use in the RR (Rural Residential) district.

Chair Wilcox opened the public hearing at 7:04 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 the proposed special use permit as outlined in staff memorandum dated December 10, 2009.
- Applicant  
Mark Clouse, Eyde Co., 4660 S. Hagadorn Road, Suite 660, East Lansing, addressed the sewer issue for this site. He spoke to the Board request to first bring the project to the Planning Commission for consideration and then an amendment to St. Martha's 1989 special use permit could be discussed. He availed himself for questions after the conclusion of the presentation.

Leo Whitt, Trilogy Health Services, 1650 Lyndon Farm Court, Suite 201, Louisville, KY, operator of the facility, spoke to the Certificate of Need process by the State of Michigan, Department of Public Health. He gave a brief overview of his company and highlights of this project.

Mike Bettinger, Douglas Company and Design Services Company, 1716 Perrysburg-Holland Road, Holland, OH, addressed his communication with the Michigan Department of Transportation relative to drive locations onto Grand River Avenue with the Ingham County Drain Commissioner (ICDC) relative to stormwater and the Ingham County Road Commission (ICRC) relative to the public roadway onto Grand River. He requested Planning Commission consideration of the request for 92 parking spaces.

- Planning Commission discussion:  
Commissioner Reicosky inquired as to who owns the property on the east side where the road is going to be constructed.

Principal Planner Oranchak responded it is currently owned by the Eyde Co., but will become an Ingham County road once constructed.

Commissioner Deits inquired of the applicant why it is necessary to have a second small exit onto Grand River Avenue.

Mr. Bettinger responded he was asked to provide the east entrance by the Eyde Company in order for trucks not to traverse through the entire site and enable the lot at the northeast corner of Grand River Avenue and Cornell to use the entrance once developed.

Commissioner Deits requested an explanation of the sewer issue in the area.

Principal Planner Oranchak responded there is a sewer line that is connected to the Township sewer system and runs along Grand River Avenue from Meridian Meadows to St. Martha's Church. She indicated it was developed specifically for church use

Mr. Clouse added that the Township public safety departments will require two access points for this parcel. He believed not having additional curb cuts along Grand River to service the additional lot was the best for long term planning.

Mr. Clouse indicated the public sewer the applicant would attach to is a single use force main constructed by St. Martha's Church. He indicated he has been in discussion with the church for several months and worked out an agreement pending Township approval to amend St. Martha's special use permit.

Mr. Clouse noted in the long run, the sewer which serves Georgetown will be brought down to this site, the force main will probably be terminated and, in the future, this site will be served by gravity and part of the Mud Lake Drain Interceptor.

Commissioner Beyea inquired as to staff comments on the Master Plan designation of low density rural residential as it relates to this project.

Principal Planner Oranchak responded she did not believe staff has ever applied the same density calculations used for single or multiple family housing to an assisted living facility. She believed it is more of an institutional commercial use.

Commissioner Beyea inquired as to staff comments on the Priority Conservation Corridor along the west side and some of the wetland issues.

Principal Planner Oranchak stated the Priority Conservation Corridor overlays the wetland area and does not capture upland, non-wetland or environmentally sensitive areas.

Commissioner Beyea indicated the Priority Conservation Corridor touches the subject property and inquired how that issue has been handled in the past.

Principal Planner Oranchak indicated staff looks at the linking of environmental areas and the corridor is on the edge. She did not believe there was anything in the greenspace plan which discussed upland on the edge of a priority conservation corridor.

Commissioner Beyea noted the Planning Commission should look at the intensity level being proposed for this project relative to the vision of the Master Plan.

Commissioner Beyea expressed concern with site distance exiting the property onto Grand River Avenue from the proposed ICRC right-of-way.

Mr. Clouse responded the Michigan Department of Transportation and the ICRC inspected the site and approved the secondary entrance location across from Ethel Street for adequate site distance.

Relative to the density issue, Mr. Clouse indicated the requested type of use adjacent to St. Martha's Parish and its school is consistent with what is happening throughout that Grand River Corridor area and a good transition to future single family homes behind the subject property.

Commissioner Beyea asked if consideration was given to shared parking with St. Martha's Church.

Mr. Whitt indicated there has been discussion concerning parking for employees, although there is no formal agreement with St. Martha's due to proximity of the assisted living facility's parking to St. Martha's in terms of crossing the new public road. He added that shared parking is an issue which they will explore over the long term.

Commissioner Beyea asked for the applicant to comment on large tree removal and any open wells on the site.

Mr. Bettinger responded there is one well on the site which will be capped in accordance to Michigan regulations. He added a tree survey was conducted and the applicant will attempt to save as many trees as possible, given the constraints of the detention required by the ICDC. Mr. Bettinger added there is no Township ordinance for the saving of trees, only a tree survey requirement.

Commissioner Beyea asked if there was any consideration given to adjusting front parking to accommodate the natural features on the site.

Mr. Bettinger indicated that between the size of the building and the detention required by the ICDC, it is difficult to save trees. He added there will be an extensive landscaping plan and new trees planted wherever necessary.

Mr. Whitt added his company would be happy to discuss the extensive landscaping plans which would be provided to the satisfaction of Meridian Township officials

Commissioner Beyea asked what consideration was given to the current density of this site when the Master Plan was adopted given the fact St. Martha's Church was already constructed.

Principal Planner Oranchak responded the church is identified on the Master Plan as an institutional use which is allowed in any residential zoning category provided they meet the location and development standards. She indicated there has been no discussion the use may be inappropriate because the Future Land Use Map designation is low density residential.

Commissioner Beyea asked if, based on staff recommendations, there is any conflict with the intensity of the proposed use with the anticipated intensity as part of the Master Plan for the area.

Principal Planner Oranchak responded that at this point, staff is looking at the zoning district and the standards that are in the zoning district for this particular category of use. She indicated there is nothing in the zoning ordinance or Master Plan which states specific types of uses are excluded because they are not consistent with the density of the Master Plan.

Commissioner Deits noted the special use permit standards call for consistency with applicable land use policies. He added land use policies are a different question from the legality of zoning. Commissioner Deits expressed concern with moving development significantly eastward into the Township where it has not been developed in the past. He indicated he is not comfortable with the concept that St. Martha's Church is a precedent for this project, as it has a different standard of protection. Commissioner Deits noted that due to the constraints placed on the Township relative to church site regulation, the sewer line was constructed as a single use force main because it was there to service only the church. He expressed concern with the development encouraging sprawl and believed it to be a good development in the wrong place.

Commissioner Klemans asked staff to expound on the evaluation of the new road for consistency with the Master Plan.

Principal Planner Oranchak answered it is about the land use and whether this is an appropriate extension of the road network for the Township.

Commissioner Klemans asked for clarification on the hookup to the private force main and inquired when a decision "holds" if there was a prohibition on other hookups.

Ms. Oranchak responded the decision is like any other condition of a special use permit; an applicant can come back to the Township and ask for the decision to be modified.

Commissioner Klemans believed the project will promote sprawl, is an intensity of land use not envisioned for a rural residential area and lacks consistency with surrounding land uses. She also expressed concern with a new road being constructed less than ¼ of a mile from Cornell Road. Commissioner Klemans believed the mentioned future expansion adds to concerns expressed over the intensity of the land use.

Mr. Whitt added that Design Services Company would never construct independent living villas on this site as it is not suited for such construction. He believed a 30 unit memory care unit would be the only project considered for potential future expansion.

Commissioner Reicosky inquired as to the owner of the strip of land on the east side of St. Martha's Church.

Principal Planner Oranchak responded it is a Consumer's right of way.

Chair Wilcox inquired if there has been discussion of this project with neighboring homeowners in the vicinity.

Mr. Clouse stated public notice was given to neighbors to the south as required by law.

Chair Wilcox indicated public notice alone is not sufficient for a project of this size.

Chair Wilcox inquired as to how close the proposed project is to the next Township.

Principal Planner Oranchak responded a few miles.

Chair Wilcox inquired as to the setback standards for Williamstown Township's rural residential designation from the highway.

Principal Planner Oranchak was unsure of Williamstown Township's setback standards.

Chair Wilcox believed Williamstown Township had a standard that any kind of development in a rural residential area needed to be setback a specific length from the highway so as not to be visible and requested staff find out that information.

Chair Wilcox inquired if the applicant had considered the Eden approach in the management standards for institutions such as the proposed. She indicated it is a sound approach relative to environmental and greenspace standards.

Mr. Whitt responded in the affirmative, indicating his company will open seven (7) campuses in 2010, and his company adheres to as many energy saving and environmentally friendly principles as possible. He indicated he will provide specifics to the Planning Commission.

Chair Wilcox stated she was particularly concerned about the greenspace around the building, while noting one of Eden's standards is that residents do not have a view of the parking lot from their room. Chair Wilcox indicated that situation appears to be the case for this assisted living facility as requested this standard of quality be considered.

Commissioner Beyea added his voice that the intensity of this use is inconsistent with the spirit and intent of the Master Plan and the location is not appropriate for this facility.

Commissioner Reicosky noted traffic concerns with the incline going from east to west. He suggested a speed reduction recommendation be conveyed to the Ingham County Road Commission. Commission Reicosky believed the traffic signal at Cornell Road will assist in traffic calming. He added there are landscaping opportunities to take advantage of the wetland areas and viewsapes which could be developed for residents and workforce of this facility. Commissioner Reicosky indicated the project has appropriate appeal for location on this site.

Commissioner Klemans voiced her concern over sprawl. She believed that since there is surrounding vacant land, the project cannot be viewed in isolation, but viewed in terms of development of this project establishing a precedent for the area. Commissioner Klemans noted the Planning Commission must consider how a decision for this project will be used to defend or reject additional proposals in the general area.

Mr. Clouse clarified his statement that the site is next to St. Martha's Church was in context of the issue of clustering uses which would benefit one another. He cited the example that residents who are not "nursing home bound" could take advantage of both worship services and social functions the church provides. He did not believe the long term plan of Grand River Avenue from Meridian Road to Marsh Road was intended to be single family homes with driveways onto Grand River. He viewed this area as transitional and could serve the community with synergy.

Chair closed the public hearing at 8:20 P.M.

## 7. Unfinished Business

- A. Zoning Amendment #09070 (Township Board), a request to add Section 86-443 Wind Energy Overlay District and amend other applicable sections of the Code of Ordinances to establish regulations pertaining to wind energy systems.

Principal Planner Oranchak offered an update to the wind energy overlay district ordinance based on comments from the Planning Commission at its November 23, 2009 meeting.

Planning Commission and staff discussion:

- Need for a wind energy ordinance to help guide community members who wish to produce wind energy
- Concern with level of sophistication required for residential systems as an initial threshold
- Need to ensure that surrounding property owners are not disadvantaged by a neighboring installing a wind energy system
- Minimal requirements so that there can be a system for accessory use in a residential district
- Kilowatt limits which will give the maximum economic benefit to the homeowner
- Change in introductory language for impact analysis, but extensive list remains the same
- Another option mentioned in the impact analysis section is the impact on the list of features would only be necessary if there is application for a special use permit
- Ground wind energy systems v. off-ground wind energy systems
- Same format and list is being used as with the cell tower ordinance
- Modeling the ordinance after a utility (i.e., cell tower) is institutionalizing to too great an extent
- Imposing the cell tower standard into someone's backyard
- Wind energy system(s) not a simple accessory structure(s) issue in a residential neighborhood
- Concern with overregulation on residential properties
- Staff awareness of the potential impacts on wildlife/endangered species for utility scale wind energy systems
- Necessity to change the way society thinks in order to address environmental problems
- One to one requirement for the fall distance will prohibit wind energy systems in many residential areas
- Self-collapsing systems where the zone of collapse must be within the boundary of the property
- Suggestion for staff to look at Grand Haven Township's language in Ottawa County which is based on engineering specifications of the system so that the burden is placed on the applicant to demonstrate how the system will minimize the impact upon collapse

- Concern with safety provisions when blades are iced
- Proposed amendment with Planning Commission changes a good first step on this issue
- Good possibility it will be economically beneficial for homeowner to put larger systems on houses in the near future
- Staff to make changes and bring back to the Planning Commission in the near future

B. Zoning Amendment #09080 (Township Board), a request to allow ancillary uses at golf courses by special use permit.

**Commissioner Jorkasky moved [and read into the record] NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THE PLANNING COMMISSION OF THE CHARTER TOWNSHIP OF MERIDIAN hereby recommends approval of Zoning Amendment #09080, to allow ancillary uses to locate by special use permit on golf courses. Seconded by Commissioner Deits.**

Planning Commission discussion:

- Special use permit (SUP) criteria will address the size of a proposed hotel
- Trailers for special events would be covered under an outdoor gathering permit application
- Size restrictions under a special land use requirement better addressed on a case-by-case basis
- Concern that setting upper limits open ups a complicated “puzzle” relative to overall intensity of the project
- Catalyst for this zoning amendment

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

NAYS: None

Motion carried 7-0.

## 8. Other Business

A. 2010 Planning Commission Meeting Schedule

**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:**

1. **The Planning Commission will meet for regular meetings on certain Mondays, January through December in 2010 in the Town Hall Room of the Meridian Municipal Building, 5151 Marsh Road, Okemos, MI 48864, 517-853-4000.**

2. **The specific dates for meetings are as follows:**

**January     11 - regular meeting  
               25 - regular meeting**

**February    8 - regular meeting  
               22 - regular meeting**

**March        8 - regular meeting  
               22 - regular meeting**

**April         12 - regular meeting  
               26 - regular meeting**

**May          10 - regular meeting**

**24 - regular meeting**

**June 14 - regular meeting**  
**28 - regular meeting**

**July 12 - regular meeting**  
**26 - regular meeting**

**August 9 - regular meeting**  
**23 - regular meeting**

**September 13 - regular meeting**  
**27 - regular meeting**

**October 11 - regular meeting**  
**25 - regular meeting**

**November 8 - regular meeting**  
**22 - regular meeting**

**December 13 - regular meeting**  
**20 - regular meeting**

3. **Meetings will begin at approximately 7:00 p.m.**
4. **Special meetings of the Planning Commission may be called pursuant to the statute thereto appertaining.**
5. **Regular meetings may be canceled, recessed or postponed by members of the Planning Commission pursuant to the statute thereto appertaining.**
6. **A summary of this resolution stating date, place, and time shall be posted in the Meridian Municipal Building within ten (10) days after the first regularly scheduled meeting of the year in accordance with MCL 15.265.**

**Seconded by Commissioner Beyea.**

**ROLL CALL VOTE: YEAS: Commissioners Beyea, Deits, Domas, Jorkasky, Klemans, Reicosky, Chair Wilcox**

**NAYS: None**

**Motion carried 7-0.**

## **9. Announcements**

Commissioner Beyea requested that Planning Commission packets be delivered such that several business days are available to contact staff and conduct research prior to the meeting.

Commissioner Deits suggested draft materials be sent to Planning Commissioners electronically as a precursor to the final packet.

Commissioner Klemans suggested that even if staff provided only draft ordinance changes, it would be helpful to Planning Commissioners.

Commissioner Reicosky voiced concern that meeting next week does not allow sufficient time after this meeting for staff to prepare materials.

Commissioner Deits reported the Downtown Development Authority held a Holiday Marketplace in the Meridian Activity Center on December 5, 2009 where a number of vendors participated. He stated it is the vision for the DDA to hold four (4) events per year. Commissioner Deits indicated the DDA has applied for stimulus money to upgrade streetlighting for the streets within the DDA to LED lighting. Commissioner Deits spoke to additional members being sought to serve on the DDA Board.

Chair Wilcox did not believe the two unfinished business items to be discussed at the December 21<sup>st</sup> meeting would be sufficiently complete for Planning Commission action. She proposed that the December 21, 2009 be cancelled.

Principal Planner Oranchak indicated she will discuss postponement with the two aforementioned applicants and contact Planning Commissioners accordingly.

Commissioner Reicosky and Chair Wilcox discussed the upcoming Joint Meeting of Boards and Commissions to be held on January 5, 2010 at 7:00 P.M. in the Township Hall Room.

**10. New applications**

- A. Special Use Permit #09101 (Design Services Co.), a request to construct a 94-bed, 57,464 square foot assisted living/skilled care facility, a non-residential use in the RR (Rural Residential) district.

**11. Site plans received**

**12. Site plans approved**

**13. Public remarks**

Chair opened and closed public remarks.

**15. Adjournment**

Chair adjourned the regular meeting at 9:28 P.M.

Respectfully Submitted,

Sandra K. Otto  
Recording Secretary