

**CHARTER TOWNSHIP OF MERIDIAN
PLANNING COMMISSION
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES
March 9, 2015**

APPROVED

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

PRESENT: Commissioners Cordill, DeGroff, Honicky, Ianni, Jackson, Scott-Craig, Tenaglia, Van Coevering
ABSENT: Commissioner Deits
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 7:00 P.M.

2. Approval of agenda

Commissioner Cordill moved to approve the agenda. Seconded by Commissioner Ianni.

VOICE VOTE: Motion carried 8-0.

3. Approval of Minutes

Commissioner Tenaglia moved to approve the Regular Meeting Minutes and Work Session Minutes of February 23, 2015. Seconded by Commissioner Jackson.

VOICE VOTE: Motion carried 8-0.

4. Public Remarks

Chair Scott-Craig opened the floor for public remarks.

Neil Bowlby, 6020 Beechwood Drive, Haslett, inquired about Planning Commission action to move forward with amending its bylaws. He displayed a recent *Free Press* news article titled "Business-minded Student Living" and stated if there is existing commercial use(s) on either the Okemos Pointe or The Avenue of Grand River sites, it could be counted toward a mixed use planned unit development (MUPUD). Mr. Bowlby addressed similar scenarios previously approved by both the Planning Commission and Township Board, suggesting a possible change to the MUPUD ordinance.

Chair Scott-Craig closed public remarks.

5. Communications

- A. Eckhart Dersch, 2203 Butternut Drive, Okemos; RE: Meridian Mall Proposed Development
- B. Michael Corr, 2355 Coyote Creek Drive, Okemos; RE: REZ #15010 (Forsberg Family, LLC)
- C. Ken and Brenda Miller, 3681 Kansas Road, Okemos; RE: REZ #15010 (Forsberg Family, LLC)
- D. Michael Corr, 2355 Coyote Creek Drive, Okemos; RE: REZ #15010 (Forsberg Family, LLC)
- E. Teresa Parsons, 2346 Taos Trail, Okemos; RE: REZ #15010 (Forsberg Family, LLC)

6. Public hearings

- A. Rezoning #15010 (Forsberg Family, LLC), request to rezone approximately 39.46 acres from I (Industrial), PO (Professional and Office), RR (Rural Residential), 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.

Chair Scott-Craig opened the public hearing at 7:08 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 rezoning request as outlined in staff memorandum dated March 5, 2015.
- Applicant
Brent Forsberg, 2422 Jolly Road, Okemos, offered a brief overview of the proposed rezoning request for the development. He indicated his company is employing a new way of development by inviting both outside commercial and residential neighbors into the development itself, with a focus on walkability and connectivity with commercial development. He pointed out the proposed connectivity to the Township's pathway system.

Mr. Forsberg spoke to meetings with the Ingham County Drain Commissioner (ICDC), the Parks Department, Superintendent of Okemos Public Schools and Michigan Energy Options. He noted meetings have taken place with neighbors to hear their concerns, indicating the strongest feedback was how to keep traffic off Kansas Street and the building's sight lines. Mr. Forsberg stated it is his intent to offer a condition to follow the rural residential setback and height restriction guidelines with the conditional rezoning of C-2.

Mr. Forsberg emphasized his continued commitment to work with the neighbors as they move through the rezoning process. He indicated the proposed project will bring approximately 100 new students into the Okemos Public Schools system, adding it is his intent to involve Okemos High School students in the design of the rain gardens. Mr. Forsberg stated his company is working with the Greater Lansing Housing Coalition to engage in work force housing. In response to earlier public comment, he stated studies (e.g., Sierra Club) on new urbanism show walkability and multi-family housing increases property values of surrounding single family housing.

Will Randall, WesPac, 4409 Dobie Road, Okemos clarified their intent to revise the language of the conditional rezoning to abide by the height restriction in the RR zoning for the six (6) acres currently zoned RR adjacent to Kansas Street, as well as limit density to 10 units per acre on that RR portion and reduce density on the balance of the site to no more than 14 units per acre.

- Public

Lynne Page, 3912 Raleigh Drive, Okemos, expressed concern with the traffic impact on the Okemos Road/Jolly Oak Road and Jolly Road/Jolly Oak Road intersections. She addressed traffic patterns for land zoned PO versus a multi-family high density residential community. Ms. Page voiced concern over the impact on the wetlands and the Smith Drain with a development of this density. She noted the concept plan can change once the rezoning is approved, stating the rezoning of the RR parcels would have an adverse impact on the single family residential neighborhoods and the Coyote Creek condominiums. Ms. Page questioned the accuracy of traffic studies performed when Michigan State University was on its winter break.

Leonard Provencher, 5824 Buena Parkway, Haslett, noted new urbanism is acceptable in urban areas, but Meridian is suburban or semi-rural in design. He addressed intensification of traffic patterns with additional development at the Jolly Road/Okemos Road intersection. He expressed opposition to the project.

Bob Mollhagen, 2333 Taos Trail, Okemos, spoke in opposition to the proposed project as traffic at Jolly Road/Okemos Road has greatly increased over his 16 year residency in Coyote Creek. He stated the project did not conform to the Township's Master Plan.

Jay Murthy, 2483 Robins Way, Okemos, spoke in opposition to the proposed development, as he believed it would adversely affect adjacent land. He indicated this and two other recent approvals (hotel and Michigan State University Federal Credit Union) will add too much traffic to the area's existing roadway. Mr. Murthy addressed the purchase of his land at a premium because of the rural setting of the property.

Sandra House, 2348 Coyote Creek, Okemos, expressed opposition to the proposed development as it is too dense. She addressed the additional traffic and stress on the Smith Drain.

Brent Felton, 2470 Robins Way, Okemos, moved to the area eight (8) months ago because of its rural nature. He believed the environmental impact of this development on Kansas Street would be significant. While not opposed to commercial development in this area, he is opposed to development which would affect residents on Kansas Street.

Ann Zimmerman, 2344 Coyote Drive, Okemos, expressed concern with potential crime, traffic, reduction in property values, noise pollution, light pollution, stress on the Smith Drain and the pedestrian pathway connection.

Steven Freemire, 3622 Kansas Road, Okemos, moved to his home 22 years ago because it was zoned rural residential. He expressed concern with the noise pollution, traffic, LED lighting in the parking lots, pedestrian pathway connection, etc.

Mark Wiznewski, 2414 Kansas Road, Okemos, voiced strong opposition to the development.

Neil Bowlby, 6020 Beechwood Drive, Haslett, reviewed the traffic study and believed the increased car trips (200) during peak hours, the overall daily increase of vehicle trips and associated pollution would be detrimental to the area. He did not believe the walkability feature would attract young people as they would use their cars.

Carlene Hooker, 3663 Kansas Road, Okemos, expressed opposition to the entire development as she desires for the setting to remain as is.

Suresh Muringathery, 2422 Kansas Road, Okemos, spoke in opposition to the proposed project.

- Planning Commission and staff discussion:

Chair Scott-Craig noted the rezoning discussion is not about the MUPUD project, but only the rezoning request from PO, RR and Industrial to C-2. He reminded Commissioners of the rezoning criteria and stated increased traffic should not be a reason to deny the rezoning request.

Commissioner Tenaglia expressed appreciation to the applicant for efforts to seek input from the neighbors beginning with the concept plan process.

Commissioner Van Coevering noted the rent of \$1,000 to \$3,000 per month does not show the project is being marketed as student housing, stating there will not be separate leases within a unit. She noted there is never a guarantee that any nearby property will not be rezoned at some point in the future. Commissioner Van Coevering voiced her appreciation for the creative architecture of the buildings, and believed some of the concerns can be effectively addressed (i.e., landscaping and dark sky lighting). She complimented the applicant for consideration of low-income housing and expressed her support for the project, adding the builder would not invest \$60 million if the market did not support the investment.

Commissioner DeGroff addressed the RR zoned component being changed to C-2 as problematic. He believed that planting trees between neighboring uses does not make them harmonious, but simply mitigates non-harmonious uses. Commissioner DeGroff addressed the value of a walkable community as noted in the Township's Master Plan.

Commissioner Cordill inquired about the applicant's statement of a new proposed condition.

Commissioner Ianni asked the applicant to comment on the wetland delineation.

Mr. Forsberg responded the wetland delineation was done as part of a PO rezoning several years ago.

Commissioner Jackson reiterated the applicant was requesting the rezoning to commercial so that a mixture of residential and commercial can be placed on the property, noting the proposed layout would not infringe upon the existing wetlands or wetland setbacks. She inquired as to the acreage of the property zoned RR near Kansas Street.

Mr. Forsberg responded it is approximately +/- six (6) acres for a total of 60 units.

Commissioner Jackson inquired how many units are allowed on one (1) acre of RR zoned property.

Principal Planner Oranchak responded RR zoned property is designated at one (1) unit per acre.

Commissioner DeGroff inquired if there would be an entrance from Kansas Street into the development.

Mr. Forsberg responded there would not be ingress or egress between Kansas Street and the development. He stated there would be a fire stabilized ground access which will not be paved to allow fire truck access to the development.

Commissioner Van Coevering noted the Jolly Road/Okemos Road intersection is not on the Ingham County Road Department's (ICRD) 2015 or 2016 construction plan due to right of way issues. She inquired about the pedestrian access across I-96, while acknowledging that location is not in Meridian Township.

Principal Planner Oranchak was not aware of the pedestrian access being on the ICRD's construction plans.

Commissioner Jackson noted earlier applicant comment which addressed the impact of growth at a major employer in the area on the applicant's interest in adding residential housing as proposed. She acknowledged neither the ICRD nor the State of Michigan is considering a different road configuration based on existing heavy traffic at that intersection, stating that issue would be a changing condition in the area. Commissioner Jackson stated Kansas Street is likely the only rural residential development in the nearby area, adding that PO and Industrial are less appealing uses of the land, albeit both uses by right.

Commissioner DeGroff stated the Planning Commission has had discussions regarding the need for work force housing in the subject area and expressed appreciation to the applicant for incorporating this need into the development.

Chair Scott-Craig clarified for the public it is a long-time policy of the Township to create pathways for all forms of non-motorized transportation, acknowledging that studies indicate property values increase when non-motorized pathways are constructed nearby. He viewed the proposal to expand and connect pathways as a positive step. Chair Scott-Craig noted it is a desire of the Planning Commission to provide buffers or transitions between different uses, stating the RR zoned piece near Kansas Street is of concern to both Planning Commissioners and Board members and will be looked at closely as the project moves forward.

Chair Scott-Craig closed the public hearing at 8:32 P.M.

- A. 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

Chair Scott-Craig opened the public hearing at 8:32 P.M.

- Summary of subject matter
Principal Planner Oranchak summarized the rezoning request as outlined in staff memorandum dated March 5, 2015.
- Applicant
Mark Clouse, George F. Eyde Family LLC, 300 S. Washington Square, Suite 400, Lansing, noted the site is immediately adjacent to commercial property both to the east and west. He stated this request is consistent with the development pattern throughout the area, as it is within a prime corridor for commercial uses. Mr. Clouse indicated there is no specific use for the site as the purchase is currently under contract.

Mr. Clouse stated the applicant's traffic engineer did not indicate any traffic concerns with the site as noted in the submitted traffic study, while acknowledging the Township's traffic consultant expressed a need for the applicant to work with ICRD for placement of driveways on Central Park and Grand River. He indicated the wetlands have been flagged, acknowledging the one wetland located on the site is less than .25 acre, and another wetland towards the edge of the subject site is also less than .25 acre. Mr. Clouse stated the detention pond on the adjacent property will be looked at more closely during development of a project to address any setback issue which may result.

Mr. Clouse reminded Commissioners that while the Master Plan indicates PO zoning for this site, development of offices in the Township is currently limited to the areas adjacent to the Okemos Road/I-96 corridor and area adjacent to Michigan State University.

- Planning Commission and staff discussion:
Commissioner Van Coevering inquired if there is an existing access off Central Park Drive to the subject site.

Mr. Clouse responded he did not believe so, but it "works it way" off Grand River.

Commissioner Honicky noted Panera and the bank area are zoned C-2 even though half of it is shown as PO on the Master Plan, requesting zoning designations for the entire Grand River/Central Park Drive intersection.

Mr. Clouse responded all four corners of Grand River and Central Park Drive/Dobie Road are zoned commercial.

Commissioner Cordill noted the property in question is irregularly shaped.

Mr. Clouse explained the property is under the control of one family who desires to sell all three (3) parcels, while stating he was unsure whether it would be interconnected although there is a connection point and the land is currently used as one large parcel. He noted the intent here is to first obtain the zoning, and then bring future uses before the Planning Commission for approval.

Commissioner Cordill stated the development of the land is open at this point in time, as a use could be placed on this property by right, or a special use permit (SUP) could be requested, etc.

Mr. Clouse explained the SUP would likely be a component as the overall square footage of the buildings would be greater than 25,000 square feet.

Commissioner Cordill spoke to the great need for protected left turns at the intersection of Grand River/Dobie Road due, in part, to the higher topography of Central Park Drive as it approaches Grand River Avenue. She believed the need will increase as property near that intersection is developed.

Mr. Clouse noted it is unfortunate that corrective action related to traffic signals on state roads are usually a result of traffic accidents/fatalities.

Commissioner Honicky inquired as to the frontage and the acreage for the parcel on Central Park Drive.

Mr. Clouse responded the frontage on Central Park Drive is 359 feet for a total of three (3) acres.

Commissioner Honicky inquired as to the frontage and the acreage for the parcel which fronts onto Grand River Avenue.

Mr. Clouse responded the frontage onto Grand River is 351 feet with acreage of approximately 5.7 acres.

Commissioner Honicky stated he viewed a separation between the parcels, including the issue of rezoning.

Commissioner Ianni agreed the current zoning for these properties is outdated, noting the unlikelihood of single family (medium density) homes being constructed on the property to the north zoned RA. He recognized the overabundance of existing PO in the Township, and believed there was not a need for the PO zoning in this area as currently designated for the two (2) parcels to the south. He believed the requested rezoning would fit into the commercial area around the intersection.

Commissioner DeGroff agreed the character of the area is commercial notwithstanding the professional office use in the Sparrow Facility immediately to the east.

Commissioner Van Coevering asked if the Township encourages service drives.

Principal Planner Oranchak responded there may be an opportunity to connect to the Panera site. She explained the subject site is five (5) to six (6) feet lower than the Sparrow site which has a large retaining wall.

Commissioner Jackson inquired as to the standard for acceptable level of service (LOS) and who "sets" that standard.

Principal Planner Oranchak responded the LOS up to, and including, D is the minimum acceptable delay for waiting at a traffic signal in an urban area.

Chair Scott-Craig listed the uses by right and by SUP allowed on these parcels if rezoned, reminding Commissioners the rezoning goes with the land, not the owner. He voiced concern with C-2 backing up to RA to the east and south. He addressed the inaccuracy of the aerial photo contained in the applicant's traffic study and requested the correction be made.

Commissioner Van Coevering asked if the property to the east behind the pond has public water and sewer available.

Mr. Clouse responded the area is part of the Mud Lake Lift Station which he believed services the area just beyond Powell Road.

Principal Planner Oranchak clarified public water and sewer has not yet been extended that far and the two properties on Grand River are not connected to public water and sewer.

Commissioner Jackson noted rezoning from PO and RA to C-2 broadens the possible uses allowed on the property, adding a change to C-2 would allow for a MUPUD.

Chair Scott-Craig closed the public hearing at 9:16 P.M.

7. Unfinished Business (None)

8. Other Business

A. 2015 Planning Commission Meeting Schedule amendment

Commissioner Cordill moved [and read into the record] NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT THE PLANNING COMMISSION OF THE CHARTER TOWNSHIP OF MERIDIAN hereby revises the 2015 meeting schedule by adding a work session on Monday, March 16, 2015. Seconded by Commissioner Ianni.

ROLL CALL VOTE: YEAS: Commissioners Cordill, DeGroff, Honicky, Ianni, Jackson, Tenaglia, Van Covering, Chair Scott-Craig

NAYS: None

Motion carried 8-0.

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

Commissioner Scott-Craig reported that Commissioner Ianni, Commissioner Cordill and he attended the Michigan Association of Planning training on site plan review last Thursday.

Commissioner Tenaglia reported her attendance at last Thursday's Economic Development Corporation (EDC) meeting where she apprised attendees regarding the proposed development on the Forsberg property.

10. New applications (None)

11. Site plans received (None)

12. Site plans approved

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 #15-14-04 (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

13. Public remarks

Chair Scott-Craig opened public remarks.

Leonard Provencher, 5824 Buena Parkway, Haslett, expressed appreciation for the Chair's conduct and demeanor in handling the meeting. He believed all components of a project should be discussed for the benefit of the public, regardless of whether that specific issue is before the public body. Mr. Provencher believed an applicant can bring high density residential to property rezoned C-2 through use of the MUPUD process, and suggested an additional residential zoning category titled RE (residential extreme).

Nancy Knight, 2333 Coyote Drive, Okemos, expressed concern with the impact of the proposed Forsberg development on the existing wetlands. She spoke to the difficulty for residents in dealing with “extreme change” which will come with Rezoning #15010 (e.g., foot traffic with the pathway system and high density residential on the more rural nearby neighborhood).

Steven Freemire, 3622 Kansas Road, Okemos, continued to voice his strong opposition to Rezoning #15010.

Sandra House, 2348 Coyote Creek, Okemos, spoke to the history of reducing the speed on Jolly Road for safety reasons. She voiced concern with the extra traffic which will be brought to the area through Rezoning #15010.

Chair Scott-Craig closed public remarks.

14. Adjournment

Chair Scott-Craig adjourned the regular meeting at 9:31 P.M.

Respectfully Submitted,

Sandra K. Otto
Recording Secretary