

**CHARTER TOWNSHIP OF MERIDIAN
PLANNING COMMISSION
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES
November 10, 2014**

APPROVED

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

PRESENT: Commissioners Cordill, Hildebrandt, Honicky, Ianni, Jackson, Salehi, Scott-Craig,
Van Coevering
ABSENT: Commissioner Deits
STAFF: Director of Community Planning and Development Mark Kieselbach, Principal Planner
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 Work Session Meeting Minutes of October 6, 2014 and the Regular Meeting Minutes of October 27, 2014. Seconded by Commissioner Ianni.

VOICE VOTE: Motion carried 8-0.

4. Public Remarks

Chair Jackson opened the floor for public remarks.

Renee Korrey, 4633 Okemos Road, Okemos, spoke in support of Rezoning #14070 with the caveat that the MUPUD ordinance be utilized. As a member of the Downtown Development Authority (DDA) and a resident and property owner in the downtown Okemos area, she noted the DDA discussed the proposed rezoning and supported the zoning change with the recommendation that the site be developed conditioned upon use of the MUPUD ordinance.

Scott Weaver, 4609 Comanche Drive, Okemos, spoke to his personal support for Rezoning #14070 conditioned that a MUPUD be recommended. As a business owner in the downtown Okemos area and a member of the DDA, he believed the property developed under a MUPUD plan would attract more developer interest in the property and support the Township's strategy of a walkable downtown community.

Chair Jackson closed public remarks.

5. Communications (None)

6. Public hearings (None)

7. Unfinished Business

- A. Rezoning #14070 (Township Board), request to rezone 0.5 acres at 2150 Clinton Street from RB (Single Family-High Density) to C-2 (Commercial)

Director Kieselbach summarized the proposed rezoning as outlined in staff memorandum dated November 6, 2014.

Commissioner Hildebrandt moved [and read into the record] NOW THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED THE PLANNING COMMISSION OF THE CHARTER TOWNSHIP OF MERIDIAN hereby recommends approval of Rezoning #14070 to rezone approximately 0.48 acres located at 2150 Clinton St. from RB (Single Family, High Density) to C-2 (Commercial). Seconded by Commissioner Ianni.

Planning Commission discussion:

- Money and time has been put into the downtown Okemos area
- Plans envisioned by the DDA for the downtown Okemos area encourage a variety of housing types
- Subject parcel is ripe for infill development
- Potential heritage tree on the property may be just outside of the road right-of-way
- Next step in the development process after the rezoning would be to look at trees and natural features
- Planning Commissioner preference to establish whether the large tree is a viable heritage tree
- Condition of the sale that the site be developed as a MUPUD can be placed by the Township Board as the Township is the current owner of the property
- Possibility of the Township letting a request for proposal (RFP) for a MUPUD
- Township Board can authorize the sale of the property
- Written documentation of the DDA findings and the concept plan to be provided to Planning Commissioners
- Environmental Commission (EC) began a process several years ago to determine if a tree was heritage
- As part of that process, the EC also considered recommendations from property/business owners
- The best time to address the heritage designation for the subject tree so as to not hold up the rezoning
- Heritage tree designation does not preclude tree removal
- Preference to table the rezoning until information is provided about the proposed heritage tree and a possible condition relative to the MUPUD
- Inclusion of the MUPUD condition in one of the WHEREAS clauses
- Inclusion of the tree and the DDA recommendation for Board consideration in the resolution
- Interest in obtaining the DDA recommendation letter and integrated development plan which outlines the DDA's objectives on the Friday prior to the next Planning Commission meeting

- Environmental Commissioner Kielbaso will determine whether the subject tree is of heritage quality prior to the next Planning Commission meeting
- Environmental Commission process to determine if a tree should be given a heritage designation
- DDA was created in 2006 with the requirement to establish a development plan which outlines their objectives prior to receiving Tax Increment Financing (TIF) funds
- DDA's integrated plan shows long-term development of the downtown area
- Request for the DDA's integrated plan to be shared with the Planning Commission while it is working on the Master Plan
- Designation of a tree as heritage does not impact how the land can be used

The maker moved to table the motion until the next meeting and instructed staff to insert the condition that this parcel be developed under the terms of a MUPUD. Seconded by Commissioner Honicky.

VOICE VOTE: Motion carried 8-0.

B. Commission Review #14083 (Planning Commission), amendments to the Goals and Objectives section of the 2005 Master Plan

Principal Planner Oranchak explained the comparison chart of Goal #3 Revisions as outlined in staff memorandum dated November 6, 2014.

Planning Commission discussion:

- Need for appropriate consistency in the “voice” the document will have
- Attract new business and retain existing businesses was placed in Goal 3 as new Objective D
- Need for consistent conciseness throughout the document
- Suggestion for creation of a new economic development department is outside of the purview of the Planning Commission and should not be included in the Master Plan
- Master Plan strategies will change in the near future
- Master Plan is not the appropriate vehicle for an organizational structure change
- Chair's belief EDC Version of Goal 3, Objective C relative to implementing strategies to adopt the results from the recent Grand River corridor visioning project belongs in Planning Commission/EDC Version Goal 3, Objective A, Strategy 1
- Three rounds of planning visioning: original Grand River Corridor Study, CATA study of the Bus Rapid Transit (BRT), and charrettes
- Planning Commissioner preference for Planning Commission/EDC Version of Goal 3, Objective A Strategy 1 than EDC version of New Goal: ATTRACT NEW BUSINESS AND RETAIN EXISTING BUSINESS, Objective C (incorporate v. implement)
- Planning Commissioner belief the Commission reached a compromise position in Planning Commission/EDC Version for Goal 3, Objective A, Strategy 1 by integrating the Township Board and EDC version into one
- Language regarding redevelopment of the Grand River corridor in Planning Commission/EDC Version for Goal 3, Objective A, Strategy 1 allows for reference to existing and future studies
- Language in Planning Commission/EDC Version for Goal 3, Objective A, Strategy 1 which incorporates results where appropriate as some of the decisions on the Grand River Corridor and BRT may be opt-in/opt-out choices

- EDC version of New Goal: Attract new business and retain existing business, Objective C Strategy 1 (Create a Township economic development plan) is covered by the Economic Chapter of the Master Plan
- EDC version of New Goal: Attract new business and retain existing business, Objective C Strategy 1 (Create a Township economic development plan) and Strategy 2 are too specific
- EDC version of New Goal: Attract new business and retain existing business, Objective C Strategy 3 is incorporated into a new goal, Planning Commission/EDC version Goal 7, Objective F, New Strategy: Create a pipeline of grant-ready projects
- Planning Commissioner preference not to have ownership of grant-ready projects without having the financing and a predetermined viability
- Idea behind having a pipeline of grant-ready projects is that they will create an economic development stimulus and bring money into the area
- Request for clarification of “grant-ready projects” noted in New Goal: Attract new business and retain existing businesses, Objective C, Strategy 3
- Examples of grant-ready projects: Art Downtown and Pathway at Wonch Park, Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) grants for Clean Cities, monies available through Michigan Economic Development Corporation (MEDC), Department of Natural Resources (DNR), Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT) and Michigan Department of Environmental Quality (MDEQ)
- Chair preference to retain the remaining EDC suggestions with possible placement in other sections of the Master Plan, not in Goals and Objectives
- Commissioner suggestion to include development of low-income housing as a land use strategy
- Commissioner preference for grant-ready projects to be included in the Implementation Chapter of the Master Plan, not in Goals and Objectives
- EDC Proposed New Goal of creating and marketing an effective Township brand was assigned to the Communications Department
- EDC Proposed New Goal of developing a system of metrics to gauge Township Performance
- Difficulty in obtaining community participation for the Master Plan
- Attainment of goals communicated to the public makes them more engaged
- Planning Commissioner interpretation that metrics means numbers and use of them is limited
- Quantitative v. qualitative ways of looking at improvement
- Method(s) to communicate achievement of goals
- National Citizen Survey to be conducted in 2015
- Various ways to interpret survey results
- Planning Commissioner objection to metrics becoming the driving force instead of stated goals and quality of life
- Request for a rewrite of the Goals and Objectives with the incorporation of EDC approved language
- Need for a discussion of the Township Board distributed version compared to the Planning Commission version with the incorporation of EDC approved language

It was the consensus of the Planning Commission that it will not utilize the last two proposed EDC goals. Further, the Planning Commission will discuss the suggestions by the Environmental Commission and the Board changes prior to commencing compilation.

8. Other Business

A. Master Plan Update

Planning Commission discussion:

- Decision on the structure of the Master Plan document
- Request to look at two (2) Master Plans (e.g., Midland) which have a similar population to Meridian Township to ascertain their priorities
- Comparison of City Master Plans v. Township Master Plans
- Possible use of the City of Kalamazoo's Master Plan as a template
- Entire last section of Kalamazoo's Master Plan was its Action Plan
- Appreciation for the chapter structure of Kalamazoo's Master Plan
- Review of seven "data-rich" chapters by Planning Commission subcommittees to cull information
- Review of two (2) or three (3) chapters at each meeting for the remainder of the year
- In consultation with the Planning Commission, staff will write a request for proposal (RFP) on the Planning Commission's decision as to what it will require of the consultant
- Once proposals are received, they will be evaluated, two (2) or three (3) will be reviewed and one (1) will be selected
- Staff to provide Planning Commissioners with a compilation of comments received from subcommittee members for each chapter when complete

It was the consensus of the Planning Commission to schedule the demographic, natural features and housing chapters for discussion at the November 24, 2014 Planning Commission meeting.

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

Commissioners Hildebrandt and Scott-Craig attended the Built Environment Showcase sponsored by Michigan State University's School of Planning, Design and Construction on November 7, 2014, noting it was a "remarkable" conference with large data sets. Information on the conference is available at www.bestt.spdc.msu.edu. Commissioner Hildebrandt spoke to an interesting presentation on public/private partnerships, specifically as it relates to directing the type of development wanted (e.g., the now closed central fire station and the property which houses it). She explained the 80-45-39 demographic buzz phrase mentioned: 80 being the percentage of millennials looking for urban settings, 45 being the percentage of baby boomers looking for urban settings and 39 being the percentage of the overall population. Commissioner Hildebrandt offered two book titles on data collection for Planning Commissioners to read: Numerati by Stephen Baker and Big Data by Kenneth Cuiker.

Commissioner Salehi met with Township Attorney Ditschman to discuss the topic of Planning Commissioner contact with applicants and the public by "going out" to speak with them on issues before the Planning Commission. He learned there are no legal restrictions, adding this issue will be a topic of a future Planning Commission training session with the Township Attorney.

10. New applications

- A. Special Use Permit #14-13121 (Meridian Township), a minor amendment to reduce the size (square feet) of the fire station at 5000 Okemos Road

- B. Special Use Permit #14111 (MF Okemos), request for a fast food drive-through window in a new retail building at 2049 Grand River (former Northwest Tire site)

11. Site plans received

- A. Site Plan Review #14-09-2 (Meridian Township), a minor amendment to reduce the size (square feet) of the fire station at 5000 Okemos Road
- B. Site Plan Review #14-11 (Fedewa), request to construct an 8-unit townhome development at 1730 Chamberlain Way
- C. Site Plan Review #14-13 (MF Okemos), request for a fast food drive-through window in a new retail building at 2049 Grand River Avenue (former Northwest Tire site)

12. Site plans approved (None)

13. Public remarks

Chair Jackson opened and closed public remarks.

14. Adjournment

Chair Jackson adjourned the regular meeting at 9:10 P.M.

Respectfully Submitted,

Sandra K. Otto
Recording Secretary