

**CHARTER TOWNSHIP OF MERIDIAN  
PLANNING COMMISSION  
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES**

**February 22, 2021**

**Meeting held virtually using the Zoom web conferencing application**

**7:00 P.M.**

**PRESENT: Commissioners McConnell, Hendrickson, Cordill, Shrewsbury, Premoe, Snyder, Blumer, Trezise, and Richards**

**STAFF: Director of Community Planning & Development Mark Kieselbach, Principal Planner Peter Menser, Information Technology Director Stephen Gebes, and Multimedia Producer Samantha Diehl**

**1. CALL MEETING TO ORDER**

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

**2. PUBLIC REMARKS – NONE**

**3. APPROVAL OF AGENDA**

Commissioner Cordill moved to approve the agenda.

Seconded by Commissioner McConnell.

VOICE VOTE: Motion approved unanimously.

**4. APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

A. February 8, 2020 Regular Meeting

Commissioner McConnell moved to approve the minutes.

Seconded by Commissioner Blumer.

A friendly amendment was made to erase Commissioner Blumer's comments noted in the adjournment section as he was able to download the ordinance during another attempt.

VOICE VOTE: Motion approved unanimously.

**5. COMMUNICATIONS**

A. Chair Hendrickson noted two communication items were received and included in the packet.

**6. PUBLIC HEARINGS**

A. Zoning Amendment #21010 (Township Board), amend the Code of Ordinances to require Township Board approval of special use permits for motor vehicle sales and service establishments and automobile dealerships in the C-2 and C-3 (Commercial) zoning districts.

Chair Hendrickson opened the public hearing at 7:04 p.m.

Principal Planner Menser provided an overview of the Zoning Amendment request. The proposed amendment would continue to allow new vehicle dealerships in C-2 by special use permit but the final decision on the special used permit would be made by the Township Board. In the C-3 zoning district new and used vehicle dealerships would be allowed by special use permit subject to Township Board approval. The ordinance would also require any expansion of existing dealerships receive special use permit approval from the Township Board.

Trustee Opsommer stated he and Supervisor Styka brought the discussion to the Township Board when historical content was reviewed regarding the ordinance in 2007 surrounding the request by Williams Auto Dealership on Jolly Road to expand their business. At the time of the request the property was in C-3 zoning district and they requested to rezone some property to C-2 in order to expand the dealership. The Township Board was not in favor of rezoning and elected into the zoning ordinance to allow the Planning Commission to permit the dealership to expand in C-2. He further noted that in the Master Plan adopted in 2017, the focus is on transforming most of the C-3 zoning into a more traditional town center and walkable corridor and the auto dealerships conflict with the overall mission in the Master Plan.

Public Comments:

None

Planning Commission Discussion:

- According to Trustee Opsommer the final decision would be moved from the Planning Commission to the Township Board due to greater oversight of intensive development patterns and special use permits.
- The last time auto dealerships within the zoning ordinance were amended was in 2007 and at that time C-3 was a use by right and no ability to operate an auto dealership existed in C-2.
- According to Trustee Opsommer another consideration for change is because of what happened with the LaFontaine Dealership and how they abandoned the community after getting the special use permit, clear cutting the trees on the site near Powell Road and Grand River Avenue, and looking at how vast C-2 is along the corridor and how many undeveloped sites exist currently.
- According to Trustee Opsommer intensive development requires strict oversight by the Township Board when dealing with a volume of development over 25,000 square feet and impervious surface space of a vehicle dealership.
- It was noted Section 86-2 definitions for New and Used Automobile Dealerships is identical word for word. Principal Planner Menser stated this was an error and he would review the draft language and revise the wording.
- New dealerships are allowed in C-2 zoning districts and only used vehicle dealerships are allowed in C-3 zoning districts.
- The 2007 amendment has only been used once for Williams Auto Dealership.
- The three auto dealerships were all built by use by right.

The ordinance amendment was split into two sections for the straw poll. The first straw poll indicated the Planning Commission would be in support of recommending approval of a revised version of the proposed zoning amendment. The second straw poll was more difficult but narrowly in support of the change in the approval process from the Planning Commission to the Township Board. A resolution will be provided for the March 8, 2021 Planning Commission meeting and additional conversation will take place.

Trustee Opsommer asked if staff could provide a list of special use permits for the next meeting. They include drive-thru windows, flood plain work, assisted living facilities and auto dealerships which have the greatest impact on development. Principal Planner Menser noted he would provide the information for further discussion.

Chair Hendrickson closed the public hearing at 7:41 p.m.

**7. UNFINISHED BUSINESS - NONE**

**8. OTHER BUSINESS**

A. 1999 Saginaw Highway

Principal Planner Menser provided an overview of the letter included in the packet from Mr. James Phillipich, Owner of The Meridian Company and noted the business owner is looking for rezoning guidance from the Planning Commission relating to future business growth.

Planning Commission Discussion:

- The Planning Commission noted a disclaimer to offer their opinions but not an approval.
- The current use map is consistent with surrounding uses and rezoning seems appropriate for the suggested changes.
- The C-2 zoning is surrounded by industrial zoning currently and is considered split zoning. Rezoning makes sense.
- Amending the property as C-2 could have unintended consequences in the future like what is currently being discussed regarding Zoning A #21010.
- There is a small area near The Meridian Company that is a 0.42 acre site that would remain commercial. We would not want to negatively impact the existing business in order to help another business.

Principal Planner Menser stated he would follow up with Mr. Phillipich and thanked the Planning Commission for their feedback.

B. Mixed Use planned Unit Development (MUPUD) ordinance review.

Principal Planner Menser mentioned the sub-committee met on February 16, 2021 and focused their meeting on amenities and density topics. A revised draft will be presented at the March 8, 2021 Planning Commission meeting for review and consideration.

**9. REPORTS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS**

A. Township Board update.

Principal Planner Menser provided a summary of the Township Board meetings. On February 16, 2021 they held a study session to discuss Recreational Marijuana, and on February 20, 2021 they had a retreat. He also noted the next Township Board meeting will be February 23, 2021.

Chair Hendrickson asked if a joint meeting might be scheduled with the Township Board when it comes time to begin the discussions at the Planning Commission level regarding Medical Marijuana and Principal Planner Menser noted he would pass on the request to the Township Board.

B. Liaison reports.

None

## 10. PROJECT UPDATES

A. New Applications

1. Rezoning #21020 (Martin Investment Properties, Inc.), rezone approximately six acres (three parcels) located on the north side of Jolly Road, east of Kansas Road from I (Industrial) and RA (Single Family-Medium Density) to PO (Professional and Office).
2. Special Use Permit #21011 (Lansing Mart Associates, LLC), excavate approximately 2,275 cubic yards of soil from the floodplain to construct a detention pond at 2020 Grand River Avenue that will serve several commercial properties in the surrounding area.

B. Site Plans Received - None

C. Site Plans Approved - None

## 11. PUBLIC REMARKS - NONE

## 12. ADJOURNMENT

Commissioner Richards moved to adjourn the meeting.

Supported by Commissioner Blumer.

VOICE VOTE: Motion carried unanimously.

Chair Hendrickson adjourned the regular meeting at 8:04 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Debbie Budzynski, Recording Secretary