



**AGENDA**  
CHARTER TOWNSHIP OF MERIDIAN  
ZONING BOARD OF APPEALS MEETING  
May 21, 2025 6:30 pm

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1. CALL MEETING TO ORDER
2. APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA
3. CORRECTIONS, APPROVAL AND RATIFICATION OF MINUTES
  - A. April 16, 2025
4. COMMUNICATIONS
5. UNFINISHED BUSINESS
6. NEW BUSINESS
  - A. **ZBA CASE NO.: 25-03 (Playmakers Inc.), 2299 West Grand River Avenue, Okemos, MI 48864**  
LOCATION: 2299 West Grand River Avenue  
PARCEL ID: 21-131-002  
ZONING DISTRICT: C-2 (Commercial)  
The variance requested is to repair/maintain a nonconforming sign.
7. OTHER BUSINESS
8. PUBLIC REMARKS
9. BOARD MEMBER COMMENTS
10. ADJOURNMENT

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Variance requests may be subject to change or alteration upon review of request during preparation of the staff memorandum. Therefore, Sections of the Code of Ordinances are subject to change. Changes will be noted during public hearing meeting.

Individuals with disabilities requiring auxiliary aids or services should contact the Meridian Township Board by contacting:  
Assistant Planner Keith Chapman, 5151 Marsh Road, Okemos, MI 48864 or 517.853.4580 - Ten Day Notice is Required.  
Meeting Location: 5151 Marsh Road, Okemos, MI 48864 Township Hall

CHARTER TOWNSHIP OF MERIDIAN  
REGULAR MEETING ZONING BOARD OF APPEALS 2025  
5151 Marsh Road, Okemos MI 48864-1198  
517.853.4000, Township Hall Room  
Wednesday, April 16<sup>th</sup>, 6:30 pm

PRESENT: Vice-Chair Koenig, Member Benoit, Member Brooks, Member Trezise

ABSENT: Chair Mansour

STAFF: Associate Planner Chapman

1. CALL MEETING TO ORDER

Vice-Chair Koenig called the April 16<sup>th</sup>, 2025, regular meeting for the Meridian Township Zoning Board of Appeals to order at 6:31 pm. Vice-Chair Koenig called the roll of the Board. Chair Mansour absent.

2. APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA

**Member Trezise moved to approve the agenda for the April 16<sup>th</sup>, 2025, regular meeting for the Meridian Township Zoning Board of Appeals. Seconded by Member Brooks.**

**ROLL CALL VOTE YEAS: Vice-Chair Koenig, Members Benoit, Brooks, Trezise**  
**NAYS: None**  
**Motion carried: 4-0**

3. CORRECTIONS, APPROVAL AND RATIFICATION OF MINUTES

**Member Brooks moved to approve the minutes from the February 19<sup>th</sup>, 2025, regular meeting for the Meridian Township Zoning Board of Appeals with correction. Seconded by Member Trezise.**

**ROLL CALL VOTE YEAS: Vice-Chair Koenig, Members Benoit, Brooks, Trezise**  
**NAYS: None**  
**Motion carried: 4-0**

4. COMMUNICATIONS

NONE

5. UNFINISHED BUSINESS

NONE

6. NEW BUSINESS

- A. **ZBA Case NO.: 25-02 (Meridian Township), 5151 Marsh Road, Okemos, MI 48864**  
LOCATION: Vacant Lot (Tax ID #33-301-014)  
PARCEL ID: 33-301-014  
ZONING DISTRICT: RAAA (Single Family)

The variances requested are to construct a pathway that will cross the Smith Consolidated Drain.

Associate Planner Chapman gave an overview of the application.

Caycee Hart, Township Engineer, added details, noting that the Township has already communicated with the Drain Commissioners Office.

Members asked questions regarding the location of the project and contacting neighboring property owners. Ms. Hart clarified the location and noted that property owners have been notified.

Vice-Chair Koenig stated that the request meets criteria one.

Vice-Chair Koenig stated that the request meets criteria two.

Vice-Chair Koenig stated that the request meets criteria three.

Vice-Chair Koenig stated that the request meets criteria four.

Vice-Chair Koenig stated that the request meets criteria five.

**Member Trezise moved to grant the variance requested for ZBA Case No. 25-02 (Meridian Township), 5151 Marsh Road, Okemos, MI 48864. Seconded by Member Benoit.**

**ROLL CALL VOTE**

**YEAS: Vice-Chair Koenig, Members Benoit, Brooks, Trezise**

**NAYS: None**

**Motion carried: 4-0**

7. OTHER BUSINESS

NONE

8. PUBLIC REMARKS

NONE

9. BOARD MEMBER COMMENTS

Member Trezise welcomed Member Benoit to the Board.

10. ADJOURNMENT

**Vice-chair Koenig adjourned the April 16<sup>th</sup>, 2025 regular meeting for the Meridian Township Zoning Board of Appeals. Approved unanimously.**

Meeting adjourned at 6:46 pm.

## VARIANCE APPLICATION SUPPLEMENT

**A variance will be granted, if the following Review Criteria are met:**

- (1) Unique circumstances exist that are peculiar to the land or structure, that are not applicable to other land or structures in the same zoning district and these unique circumstances are not self-created.
- (2) Strict interpretation and enforcement of the literal terms and provisions of this chapter would result in practical difficulties that would prevent the owner from using the property for a permitted purpose.
- (3) Granting the variance is the minimum action necessary which would carry out the spirit of this zoning ordinance, secure public safety, and provide substantial justice.
- (4) Granting the variance will not adversely affect adjacent land or the essential character in the vicinity of the property.
- (5) Granting the variance will be generally consistent with public interest and the purposes and intent of this chapter.



**To:** Zoning Board of Appeals  
**From:** Keith Chapman, Associate Planner  
**Date:** May 14, 2025  
**Re:** ZBA Case No. 25-03 (Playmakers Inc.)

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**ZBA CASE NO.:** 25-03 (Playmakers Inc.), 2299 West Grand River Avenue, Okemos, MI 48864  
**LOCATION:** 2299 West Grand River Avenue  
**PARCEL ID:** 21-131-002  
**ZONING DISTRICT:** C-2 (Commercial)

The applicant is requesting variances from the following sections of the Code of Ordinances:

- Section 86-682(c), Repairs, alterations, and improvements. Nothing in this article shall prohibit the repair, reinforcement, alteration, improvement, or modernizing of a lawful nonconforming sign or outdoor advertising structure, provided that such repair, reinforcement, alteration, improvement, and modernizing do not exceed an aggregate cost of 30% of the appraised replacement cost thereof, as determined by the Director of Community Planning and Development, unless the subject sign or outdoor advertising structure is changed by such repair, reinforcement, alteration, improvement, or modernizing to a conforming structure.

Playmakers Inc., the applicant, is proposing to repair/maintain a nonconforming sign at 2299 West Grand River Avenue. The current sign was installed in 1957 and is nonconforming in size and height. The sign will be taken down to restore and modernize. Playmaker's previously attempted to repair/restore the sign in 2023, with the sign still installed. The work at that time was unable to completely fix all the issues, so in order to permanently fix the sign, they are proposing to remove it temporarily, so it can be completely restored in a sign shop.

The zoning ordinance requires any nonconforming sign that receives repair, reinforcement, alteration, improvement, or modernizing not to exceed 30% of the appraised replacement cost. Staff worked with the Township Assessor to determine comparable prices for the sign but given the age of the sign and the design, we were unable to get a definitive value/cost of replacement.

The Board needs to determine whether or not to allow for the repair/maintenance of the sign.

#### **Attachments**

1. Variance application with attachments
2. Site Location Map

**CHARTER TOWNSHIP OF MERIDIAN  
PLANNING DIVISION  
5151 MARSH ROAD, OKEMOS, MI 48864  
(517) 853-4560**

**VARIANCE APPLICATION**

A. Applicant \_\_\_\_\_  
Address of Applicant \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Telephone (Work) \_\_\_\_\_ Telephone (Home) \_\_\_\_\_  
Fax \_\_\_\_\_ Email address: \_\_\_\_\_  
Interest in property (circle one):      Owner      Tenant      Option      Other

B. Site address/location \_\_\_\_\_  
Zoning district \_\_\_\_\_ Parcel number \_\_\_\_\_

C. Nature of request (Please check all that apply):  
 Request for variance(s)  
 Request for interpretation of provision(s) of the "Zoning Ordinance" of the Code of Ordinances  
 Review an order, requirements, decision, or a determination of a Township official charged with interpreting or enforcing the provisions of the "Zoning Ordinance" of the Code of Ordinances

86-682, subsection (c). You are asking to repair/maintain a non  
Zoning Ordinance section(s) conforming sign in an amount to exceed 30% of its replacement cost.

D.      Required Supporting Material                      Supporting Material if Applicable  
-Property survey    -Architectural sketches  
-Legal description    -Other  
-Proof of property ownership or  
    approval letter from owner  
-Site plan to scale  
-Written statement, which demonstrates how all the review criteria will be met (See next page)

Andrew C. Marshall                      \_\_\_\_\_                      \_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Applicant                      Print Name                      Date

Fee: \_\_\_\_\_ Received by/Date: \_\_\_\_\_

*I (we) hereby grant permission for members of the Charter Township of Meridian Zoning Board of Appeals, Township staff members and the Township's representatives or experts the right to enter onto the above described property (or as described in the attached information) in my (our) absence for the purposes of gathering information including but not limited to the taking and the use of photographs. (Note to Applicant(s): This is optional and will not affect any decision on your application.)*

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Applicant(s)                      \_\_\_\_\_                      Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Applicant(s)                      \_\_\_\_\_                      Date

## VARIANCE APPLICATION SUPPLEMENT

### **A variance will be granted, if the following Review Criteria are met:**

1. Unique circumstances exist that are peculiar to the land or structure, that are not applicable to other land or structures in the same zoning district and these unique circumstances are not self-created.
2. Strict interpretation and enforcement of the literal terms and provisions of this chapter would result in practical difficulties that would prevent the owner from using the property for a permitted purpose.
3. Granting the variance is the minimum action necessary which would carry out the spirit of this zoning ordinance, secure public safety, and provide substantial justice.
4. Granting the variance will not adversely affect adjacent land or the essential character in the vicinity of the property.
5. Granting the variance will be generally consistent with public interest and the purposes and intent of this chapter.

### **Effect of Variance Approval:**

1. Granting a variance shall authorize only the purpose for which it was granted.
2. The effective date of a variance shall be the date of the Zoning Board of Appeals approves such variance.
3. A building permit must be applied for within 24 months of the date of the approval of the variance, and a Certificate of occupancy must be issued within 18 months of the date the building permit was issued, otherwise the variance shall be null and void.

### **Reapplication:**

1. No application for a variance, which has been denied wholly or in part by the Zoning Board of Appeals, shall be resubmitted until the expiration of one (1) year or more from the date of such denial, except on grounds of newly discovered evidence or proof of changed conditions found by the Zoning Board of Appeals to be sufficient to justify consideration.

## Playmakers – Variance Application Statement

**Address:** 2299 W. Grand River Ave, Okemos, MI 48864

**Parcel Number:** 33-02-02-90-519-910

**Zoning District:** C-2 Commercial Personal

**Applicant:** Playmakers

**Contact:** Andy Marsh | andy@playmakers.com | (517) 349-3803 (Work) | (517) 420-0432 (Cell)

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### Nature of Request:

Playmakers is requesting a **variance to Section 86-682** of the Meridian Township Zoning Ordinance in order to complete the preservation and restoration of the historic roadside sign known locally as the “**Shopping Cart Lady**.”

Although no increase in size, structure, or lighting intensity is proposed, the sign is considered **nonconforming** under current standards. Restoration work involves the aesthetics, lighting, and repairs to non-structural elements that may exceed the scope of "ordinary maintenance," in an amount that exceeds 30% of the replacement cost.

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### Description of the Project:

Since 1957, the Shopping Cart Lady has stood tall over Grand River Avenue, first as part of Schmidt’s Food Market, then Barnes & Noble, and for the last 23 years, Playmakers. The sign remains a local icon, but after nearly 70 years, it is in need of preservation, updates, and maintenance, what we are calling a “Glow Up” at Playmakers.

### Proposed Restoration Work

#### A. “Shopping Cart Lady” Figure (Top of Sign):

- **LED Lighting Conversion:** Replace deteriorating neon tubes with energy-efficient LED lighting that replicates the original neon glow. This upgrade, recommended by *Signs By Crannie*, will reduce maintenance needs while preserving the sign’s historic appearance.
- **Cabinet & Graphic Restoration:** Repair structural deficiencies in the figure's cabinet, update the graphic overlay, and repaint the Shopping Cart Lady to restore her to a near-original condition.

- **Temporary Removal:** The Shopping Cart Lady figure will be carefully removed during the restoration process and reinstalled upon completion.

## **B. Entire Sign Structure:**

- **Historic Paint Restoration:** Repaint the full sign structure using historic color references, including family photos and descriptions provided by the Schmidt family.
- **Lighting Upgrades:** Replace outdated fluorescent tubes behind the *Peak Performance & Lotte Market* placard with LED lighting—similar to the upgrade made to the Playmakers placard in February.
- **Cabinet Repairs:** Perform necessary repairs on both the *Playmakers* and *Peak Performance & Lotte Market* sign cabinets to improve durability and aesthetics.
- **Pole Covering Update:** Update and refurbish the pole covering to align with the refreshed look of the overall sign.

Playmakers has secured approval from the property owner, **Vlahakis Companies**, and is working with the **Corridor Improvement Authority (CIA)** to explore funding offsets. The sign restoration will be managed by **Signs By Crannie**, a professional sign company that has previously worked on the sign.

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## **Review Criteria Response:**

1. **Unique Circumstances (Not Self-Created):**

This sign is a historic and iconic structure, unique in its age, cultural identity, and place in township history. Its size and format were legal at the time of construction (1957). The need for updates is not self-created but rather stems from natural aging, deterioration, and obsolete lighting.
2. **Practical Difficulties Without Variance:**

Strict enforcement of the ordinance would prevent Playmakers from performing necessary repairs that go beyond "ordinary maintenance." Without the variance, the sign would likely continue to deteriorate and eventually require complete removal, eliminating a local landmark and erasing a unique part of the community's heritage.
3. **Minimum Necessary Action:**

The variance request does not seek to expand, elevate, or illuminate the sign beyond its current state. The goal is strictly to preserve and restore what is already there using more durable, efficient, and updated materials where needed. This is the least intrusive

way to maintain the sign's legacy while securing its structure.

**4. No Adverse Effect on Adjacent Property or Character:**

On the contrary, restoring the Shopping Cart Lady will improve the appearance of the corridor and preserve the unique charm of the area. This is not a new sign but a beloved fixture that reflects the township's commercial history.

**5. Consistent with Public Interest and Zoning Purpose:**

The project aligns with public interest by preserving a recognized community icon. It reflects the spirit of Meridian Township's commitment to sustainability (via LED upgrades), cultural enrichment, and corridor enhancement.

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**Closing Statement:**

Playmakers intends to celebrate this restoration with community engagement, including commemorative merchandise and a celebratory walk/run event. The project does not ask for new allowances in signage construction—just the ability to honor and restore a piece of Okemos history.

We respectfully request the Zoning Board of Appeals approve this variance so we can bring Shopping Cart Lady into her next chapter—refreshed, respected, and preserved for future generations.

**OPTION #2**



**Existing Pylon Sign - Qty. 1**  
 - Existing Double Face, Illuminated Structure  
 - Reuse Existing Pole Structure & Foundation  
 \*All Sizes are Approx. Conceptual Only

- Existing Metal "Shopper" to be Refurbished  
 - New Paint & Vinyl Graphics  
 - New LED Tube Lighting  
 - Repair as Required

- New LED Illuminated Alum. Cabinet  
 - Reinstall Existing Polycarbonate Faces  
 \*From Previous Installation

- New LED Illuminated Alum. Cabinet  
 - Reinstall Existing Polycarbonate Faces

- New Fabricated Alum. Pole Cover  
 - Painted Stripes

Night View - NTS



Existing Sign



**SIGN TYPE**  
Pylon Sign

**SCALE**  
1/4"-1'-0"

**COLORS**

- A**  White
- B**  Light Pink TBD
- C**  Pink TBD
- D**  Dark Pink TBD
- E**  Light Red TBD
- F**  Dark Red TBD
- G**  Beige TBD TBD

**NOTES**  
X

**READY FOR PRODUCTION**

**SALESPERSON**  
Paul Swatzell

**FILENAME**  
Playmakers-25-PylonSign2

**Customer / Address**  
Playmakers  
2299 W Grand River Ave.  
Okemos, MI 48864

**DRAWN BY / DATE**  
K.Wright 2-18-25  
KW 2-24-25 GA 4-22-25

Proud Member Of The

ORIGINAL ARTWORK, DESIGNS & LAYOUTS ARE THE SOLE PROPERTY OF SIGNS BY CRANNIE AND MAY NOT BE REPRODUCED, DISPLAYED, TRANSMITTED TO ANYONE, IN FULL OR IN PART WITHOUT THE WRITTEN CONSENT OF SIGNS BY CRANNIE.  
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RAA

This is an aerial photograph of a residential and commercial area. The image is overlaid with black lines representing property boundaries. A prominent road runs diagonally from the top left to the bottom right. A large, multi-story building with a white roof is outlined in red and labeled 'C-2'. To its right is a parking lot and another building labeled 'PO'. In the bottom right corner, there is a residential area labeled 'RA'. On the left side, there is a large green area, likely a golf course, labeled 'RAA'. The overall scene shows a mix of residential housing, commercial buildings, and recreational space.

C-2

PO

RA