

**PLANNING COMMISSION OF THE  
CHARTER TOWNSHIP OF GRAND RAPIDS  
Minutes October 27, 2015**

A regular meeting of the Planning Commission of Grand Rapids Charter Township was held at the Township Hall on Tuesday, October 27, 2015.

Present were Chair Wayne Harrall, Vice Chair Bev Wall, Secretary Dave Van Dyke, Commissioners; Scott Conners, Mark Prein, Bill Culhane and Doug Kochneff. Also present were Township Attorney Jim Brown and Planning Assistant Kara Hammond.

**1. Approve minutes of September 22, 2015 meeting.**

**Scott Conners**, seconded by **Bev Wall**, moved to approve the minutes with one change;

- ♦ p.1, very last bullet on page, omit very last word; "out"

**Motion approved unanimously.**

**2. Public Hearing - Frederik Meijer Gardens - Request to amend current Special Land Use to include maintenance building additions and improvements at 3420 Leonard St NE.**

David Hooker, President of Frederik Meijer Gardens & Sculpture Park, gave a brief presentation;

- ♦ new building to be built, greatly improved maintenance capabilities, additional parking, truck dock, sculpture storage area
- ♦ greatly improved access to their property along Leonard, reducing entrances from 3 to 1

Steve Weir, Horticulture Director for Frederik Meijer Gardens & Sculpture Park;

- ♦ explained the diversity of plantings that will be placed along Leonard
- ♦ three times the amount of plantings than the ordinance requires
- ♦ goal is to look great for four seasons
- ♦ the screening will be plentiful
- ♦ PowerPoint; demonstrating the plantings and buffering along Leonard

Wayne Harrall asked about the initial height of the trees. Weir stated coniferous will be 8 ft. and 12 ft. for deciduous. Dave Van Dyke noted there are currently existing large trees on the side of the tall evergreens and asked if those trees would stay or go. Cheryl Scales noted they will be removed as they are in the new proposed parking lot, but they will be replanting large trees at the entrance off Leonard.

Cheryl Scales explained the reason they need the larger parking area is due to land limitations, regarding wetlands, etc..., and showed a rendering demonstrating the semi-truck radii.

Steve Weir stated the existing large trees are not long term trees, meaning they are not healthy. Cheryl Scales added they are working with grading issues as well in that particular area.

Wayne Harrall stated it appears that they could actually reduce asphalt at the entrance by moving the parking lot boundary to the south, even 10 ft. to the south. Dave Van Dyke added that using the existing buffering would be beneficial.

Dave Van Dyke asked about the turning diameter of the tram. Ken Wenger stated it is 31 feet. Cheryl Scales added the tram has to pull completely out of the garage before turning, so there needs to be some additional room. Dave Van Dyke said he did not think adjusting the asphalt 10-15 feet would be a problem, in fact it would be beneficial in keeping the existing vegetation. Steve Weir stated keeping existing vegetation is not always good, or healthy, and not necessarily the best way to go, adding that an existing buffer is not necessarily a long term buffer.

Attorney Jim Brown gave the legal report.

**Bev Wall**, seconded by **Bill Culhane**, moved to open the Public Hearing at 7:27 pm.  
**Motion approved unanimously.**

Karin Smith, 3794 Leonard St NE

- supports the improvements, especially relocating the entrance
- need to continue to support FMG, they have been a great neighbor

Linda Fletcher, 3436 Eagle Ridge Ct NE

- submitted a letter of support to be included with the minutes, added she supports the FMG and anything they plant
- more concerned about the old UAW property; the lack of buffering and the accessibility for vehicles to access the driveway/property

Wayne Harrall noted an additional letter submitted from a resident in support of the proposed Special Land Use.

**Bev Wall**, seconded by **Mark Prein**, moved to close the Public Hearing at 7:31 pm.  
**Motion approved unanimously.**

Wayne Harrall addressed David Hooker about Mrs. Fletcher's comment; asked what the long term plan is for the driveway off Leonard. David Hooker stated short term; they recognize the entrance off Leonard and they are going to address it as soon as possible, long term; they want to bring those 20 acres in the FMG, they do not know how, but that is the plan to incorporate that property into the Gardens. Scott Connors confirmed with David Hooker that it is as important to him as it is to the Planning Commission to come up with a short term plan/solution for that drive. David Hooker agreed undoubtedly.

Dave Van Dyke suggested if they could gain 10-15 ft. that would be great, if not, then they need to work through it, suggesting the Gardens and Site Plan Review Committee work together to come to an agreement.

Scott Connors stated he is in agreement with what the Gardens has proposed; he understands the hesitation of losing the existing buffer but explained he does not want to make the flow with the tram circulation too tight.

Wayne Harrall said he would like the Gardens to at least consider moving the parking 9 ft.; explaining the Gardens would only lose one spot and it will save existing vegetation. Scott Connors noted any extra green space is going to allow the new vegetation more width to take hold and grow.

**Mark Prein**, seconded by **Bev Wall**, moved to approve the requested Amendment to the Special Land Use for the proposed maintenance building and additions with the following condition;

*“the Gardens shall consider re-locating the parking up to nine feet south of its location as shown on the plan, to achieve greater green space along the Leonard Street frontage, if such relocation will still permit the safe and convenient circulation of the trams used in the Gardens’ operations and, further, the Gardens will confer and work with Township zoning staff as to the feasibility of such revised location of the parking”*

**Motion approved unanimously.**

**3. Public Hearing - Universal Forest Products - Continuation of the; Rezoning request, O-PUD, for (current and) a 3.75 acre parcel adjacent to the west of 2801 East Beltline Ave NE.**

**Mark Prein**, seconded by **Bev Wall**, moved to open the Public Hearing at 7:49 pm.

**Motion approved unanimously.**

Scott Weir, Corporate Construction Manager for Universal Forest Products;

- ✦ Mentioned the concern the Planning Commission had previously commented about, regarding the detention/retention pond, and stated it will be taken care of as well as the rest of the property

**Mark Prein**, seconded by **Bev Wall**, moved to close the Public Hearing at 7:51 pm.

**Motion approved unanimously.**

Attorney Jim Brown gave the legal report and touched on certain aspects of the drafted ordinance.

**Dave Van Dyke**, seconded by **Bill Culhane**, moved to recommend the rezoning request, in collaboration with the proposed ordinance amendment as written by the Township Attorney, to the Township Board for final approval with the following changes (*to the proposed ordinance amendment*);

- ✦ Section2(4)(i); include the letter from the Township Engineer, dated October 21, 2015
- ✦ Section2(12); existing buildings to remain

**Motion approved unanimously.**

**4. General Public Comment.**

No persons were present for the general public comment.

The Commissioners discussed potential upcoming items and decided to hold a December meeting.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:15 pm.



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David A. Van Dyke, Secretary