

**PLANNING COMMISSION OF THE
CHARTER TOWNSHIP OF GRAND RAPIDS
Minutes April 23, 2013**

A regular scheduled meeting of the Planning Commission of Grand Rapids Charter Township was held at the Township Hall on Tuesday, April 23, 2013 at 7:00pm.

Present were Chair Wayne Harrall, Vice Chair Stephen Fry, Secretary David A. VanDyke, Commissioners; Bev Wall, Dave Pierangeli and Scott Conners. Also present were Township Attorney Jim Brown and Planning Assistant Kara Hammond. Commissioner Mark Prein was absent.

1. Approve minutes of March 26, 2013 meeting.

Steve Fry, seconded by **Bev Wall**, moved to approve the minutes with the following changes:

- p.2, 2nd paragraph, last sentence, change “as” to “than”
- p.2, 3rd paragraph, 1st sentence, change “300” to “330 East Beltline”
- p.2, 3rd paragraph, add “East Beltline” to end of last sentence, following ‘330 and 360’

Motion approved unanimously.

2. Public Hearing – Limited & Temporary Outdoor Sales – Zoning Ordinance amendment recommendation to the Township Board.

Township Attorney Jim Brown gave updates/changes/modifications to the Ordinance in correlation with the requirements/recommendations from the Planning Commission from the last meeting.

Steve Fry, seconded by **Scott Conners**, moved to open the Public Hearing at 7:08pm.

Motion approved unanimously.

Steve Fry, seconded by **Dave Pierangeli**, moved to close the Public Hearing at 7:08pm.

Motion approved unanimously.

Steve Fry, seconded by **Bev Wall**, moved to approve the current Zoning Ordinance amendment regarding Limited and Temporary Outdoor Sales as drafted by the Township Attorney and recommend approval to the Grand Rapids Township Board.

Motion approved unanimously.

3. Informal Discussion – YMCA of Greater Grand Rapids – Special Land Use application for a two-story recreation facility at 4300 Leonard St NE.

Mary Ellen Rogers, Chair of YMCA Board of Directors, who also resides in Winterwood, spoke on behalf of the YMCA:

- Stated it is a huge benefit to have the YMCA in the Township
- Current location is the oldest YMCA facility and no longer fits the communities needs
- Worked hard for the past few years to find a location for a new, state of the art YMCA
- The proposed YMCA will be the first of its kind in the country

Ron Nelson, President and CEO of the YMCA, presented the proposed request:

- The current YMCA has been at its current location since the late 70s
- Proposed building plan will be of “silver certification”
- Location has moved since the first time plans were submitted, to a larger and better location
- Two separate entrances to mitigate some traffic and concerns about traffic
- Moved the parking to the back of site, per public/resident input and requests
- Traffic study will be completed on Friday (4/26/13)
- Planning to have a left turn lane at both entrances
- The YMCA has adopted a new value, “inclusion”, and the proposed facility is completely adaptable for people with disabilities
- “Universal design” –the proposed building will be extremely handicap accessible
- Family locker rooms will be provided – (2) map tables will be inside the family locker rooms
- 2 pools: one warm water and one competitive
- “Healthy Living” – Michigan is the 5th obese state in the country, which is a huge concern
- There will be a teaching kitchen, green house, raised bed gardens – farm to table concept is very important to the YMCA
- Proposed building is 2 floors, 118,500 sq. ft. – will look more like a walkout than a 2 story building

Cheryl Scales, consulting engineer from progressive ae, gave her presentation:

- Working to keep the large green/buffer across the site
- Main plan is to total landscape and berm the site
- Met the parking counts for the building requirement, but aware the volume may exceed the required amount
- Small pavilion between the field area
- Will follow whatever the Kent County Road Commission recommends for public street access
- Intend to follow the Township and City of Grand Rapids’ Master Plan, that was put into effect a number of years ago, re: water/sewer
- Understands it will be at the expense of the YMCA to make sure the water/sewer is done and will preserve the regulated wetlands
- Being a LED Silver site, they will be going above and beyond and doing extra storm water filtration systems
- Lighting – no fields will be lit up at night, following the Township standards and requirements

Mike Perry, consulting engineer from progressive ae, gave his presentation:

- Building layout – 2 story building, entering on the 2nd floor/main level
- Building will have a circulation core – hub of the building – “Universal Design”
- Layout will encourage people to walk between floors, not use the elevator
- Aquatics environment is on the lower level which will give a panoramic view and give people an idea of where they are in the building
- Simplistic shape, rectangular building
- Running track has contrasting lane colors, for visually impaired individuals
- Buried most of the mechanical functions of the building
- Exterior – made up of simple materials

- Took advantage of the natural slope of the site
- One story will be visible to the south and two stories will be visible to the north
- Simple signage on the building

Wayne Harrall asked, comparatively, what the size difference would be from the existing YMCA to the proposed building. Mike Perry stated the existing building is 30,000 square feet and the proposed building will be 118,500 square feet.

Township Attorney Jim Brown gave the legal report and mentioned the following items;

- p.2B. – building size
- p.2B. – parking
- p.2C. – encouraged commissioners to use the criteria given
- p.3D.2. – the property (was, is, and should) be used for residential purposes only

Steve Fry asked if all findings have to be positive. Jim Brown stated not necessarily, the commissioners may find a negative item but the outcome may be positive, not all findings will be the same.

Wayne Harrall stated the key is finding if the applicant meets, or does not meet, the criteria for a special land use. Wayne asked the commissioners if they needed any clarification from the applicant. Scott Connors stated he believes the traffic study is a huge missing piece. Dave VanDyke explained that taking into consideration the size, location and character of the proposed building it would be to-date, the largest building in the Township, even larger than the Spectrum Health complex. Dave stated he is having a hard time putting, what would be, the largest building in the Township on property that is zoned Suburban Residential (SR).

Steve Fry clarified the requested special land use is being considered only because the YMCA is a nonprofit organization and if this were a public entity this request would not be allowed from the beginning. Jim Brown confirmed that a business or commercial or profit making enterprise would not be allowed, but nonprofit fields and a facility would be permitted.

Steve Fry stated he agreed with Scott Connors and needs to see the traffic study. Steve agreed with Dave VanDyke and also does not see how the building location would be harmonious with the surrounding neighborhoods. Steve touched on the master plan and explained he does not see how this request applies to the master plan of the Township. Scott Connors said he was curious to what other thought went into moving locations and what may be in store for the surrounding property.

Dave VanDyke stated the proposed building is beautiful, but the commissioners need to start at the beginning and see if the request meets the criteria. Dave explained the request is set at a high bar and the commissioners need to get over the first hurdle by determining if the request is a Special Land Use, or not.

Scott Connors added he would like more detail on schematics, costs, etc... from the applicant.

Wayne Harrall noted there were letters and emails submitted from residents (and read off their names), and explained some feedback was positive but there were a lot of questions, the most frequent was about traffic.

Wayne Harrall said the Planning Commission needs to look at the size of the building and figure out if it is harmonious to its surroundings. Wayne explained that if it were another health club, the Planning Commission would not even look at the proposal.

Steve Fry agreed with Dave VanDyke and said if the applicant wants to go through with the public hearing, they need to get over the first hurdle which is deciding if it meets Special Land Use criteria.

Wayne Harrall stated the traffic study is an important document the applicant needs to have. Scott Connors explained he would like to see what costs, or future costs, may incur on the Township and possibly the residents. Dave VanDyke explained the items submitted by the applicant should still be general, not so in-depth, until the Planning Commission has determined whether it meets the Special Land Use criteria. Bev Wall asked what the options are. Wayne Harrall stated the next step is for the applicant to go to public hearing, if they so desire.

Dave VanDyke, seconded by **Bev Wall**, moved to set a public hearing for the YMCA for May 28, 2013, pending the proper submittal items from the applicant.

Motion approved unanimously.

4. General Public Comment.

Hank Fuhs, 3848 Leonard St NE, opposed the request;

- Thanked the Planning Commission for being fair and listening
- Increased traffic – main concern
- Not against the YMCA, it is about the residents and the kids and the safety of all
- Pre-warning the Planning Commission about a serious problem
- This is a residential area

Robert Upton, 1407 Laurel Ave SE, supported the request;

- Cautioned everyone not to get too far ahead of the process – need to wait for traffic count to come back before making assumptions
- Making sure the bar is set at the criteria to which is allowed
- Stated everyone should be able to enjoy our “beloved” community
- The YMCA is a strong pillar within our community – strong track record of success
- Wants to make sure the rules are followed and how the decision is made in the best of the public interest

David Sadler, 751 Bradford Farms Ln NE, opposed the request;

- Golf course was a major developing factor in surrounding subdivisions
- Proposed YMCA will decrease surrounding home value
- Township will lose revenue
- All night lighting in the parking lots will be a hindrance on the homes in Whitewood Farms
- Roads will need to be widened, turn lanes and signals put in all at the residents expense
- Planning Commission has not approved any commercial use beyond Eagle Crest
- Possible increase in break-ins

James P. White, 1074 Whitewood Farm Ct NE, opposed to the request;

- Developer of property, zoned residential, nice quiet peaceful area

- Traffic concerns –traffic studies are great, but it does not indicate what may happen in the future
- Most days start at 7/8am, the YMCA starts at 5am and continuously stays busy throughout the day and evening
- Eyesore for the people who live in the area, especially across the street
- Going to have a complete negative affect on the home values in this area
- It is only a matter of time, “creeping cancer” continues once one commercial (business) is built
- Hopes the Planning Commission takes a very strong look at this proposal and ask if it fits within the residential area

Michael Breon, 1061 Whitewood Farms Ct NE, opposed to the request;

- Agrees with all previous points in opposition
- Suggested a larger meeting room for the public hearing in a month
- The proposed building site is relatively in his side yard
- Bought their home because it was a quiet and peaceful place, if the YMCA had been there they would not have bought their home
- His disability is sight, he has to wear contacts – things that are really important to him are the things he can see like a serene golf course and walking path (which already exists), not fields full of kids
- People are going to park on side streets in order to see the fields from their vehicles
- Think about the future, like when Crahen Valley gets developed
- He asked the Planning Commission to please take the voices of the people seriously

James Kuipers, 4625 Catalpa Dr SE, supported the request;

- Huge supporter of the YMCA, hears the concerns but it is change and understands change is hard/difficult
- State of the art facility with larger fields
- Commutes on Forest Hill everyday – minimal traffic issues with the YMCA traffic
- YMCA does not generate a tremendous amount of traffic at their current location, even on Saturday mornings
- Likes the idea that it is close to home
- It will be a draw to our community to have such a high tech YMCA
- Opportunity to set GRT apart
- YMCA will be a great asset to our community

Kris Wilson, 1772 Park Trail NE, supported the request;

- Longtime member of the YMCA
- YMCA is a community builder
- Likes that it is close, her son can get on the trail and ride his bike to the YMCA
- YMCA will bring the community together
- It is all of them...not just the neighborhoods around there

Larry McDonough, 4535 Leonard St NE, opposed to the request;

- Asked the Planning Commission to consider the 200 acre park (GRT property) in the traffic study
- This is a residential area and is not understanding why this request is even continuing
- Read some of the points previously mentioned by our attorney
- Made mention to 24.11 from the Zoning Ordinance

- A lot of stress has been put forward because of the location – feels it should be stopped because it does not fit any of the criteria
- Request does not meet the master plan and asking that the Planning Commission does not go forward with this

Lois Feichtenbinder, 642 Bradford PL NE, supported the request;

- Surge traffic – no one has mentioned Sunday morning
- Big supporter of the YMCA
- Feels that some residents are vengeful of the school locations and bus traffic, and should not take it out on the YMCA

Andrew Smith, 3794 Leonard St NE, opposed to the request;

- Brought in YMCA tax returns from the last couple years
- They collect money, they collect fees, they work like a business
- They compete with the MAC and East Hills, etc...
- Does not feel it can be placed at that location, it is a residential area, not commercial

Kevin Roosien, 1381 Winterwood Dr NE, opposed to the request;

- The YMCA fails on 7 out of the 10 criteria of the Special Land Use requirements
- What is the actual membership number... family memberships, etc.
- Traffic concerns and safety – surge issue is going to happen in the morning and evening

Nanette Zorn, 2537 Shadowbrook Dr SE, supported the request;

- Chose her current home location based on the proximity of the YMCA
- YMCA member for 20 yrs.
- Need to look at what the YMCA will bring to the community, not take away
- The YMCA brings her and her family closer – it is the glue that holds her family together
- Hopes there can be some consensus of the YMCA location

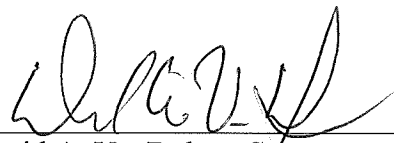
Ben Kieff, 4495 Whitewood Farms Dr NE, opposed the request/location;

- Great building just the wrong location
- Commercial enterprise going into a residentially zoned area
- Family is not in favor of the location but they are YMCA supporters

Bill Boersma, 4447 Bradford Farms Ct NE, requested;

- Understands legally the Township only has to notify properties within 300 ft., but asked to expand that to all the neighborhoods that will be effected – asked as a favor to the community

The meeting was adjourned at 8:45pm.



David A. VanDyke – Secretary