

**PLANNING COMMISSION OF THE
CHARTER TOWNSHIP OF GRAND RAPIDS
Minutes of the May 27, 2008 Meeting**

A regular meeting of the Planning Commission of Grand Rapids Charter Township was held at the Township Hall on Tuesday, May 27, 2008 at 7:00 p.m.

Present were Chair Susan Molhoek, Secretary Wayne Harrall, Commissioners Michael J Fuller, Edward J. Robinette, David VanDyke, and Beverly Wall. Absent was Vice-chair Stephen C. Fry. Also present were Township Planning Director Richard Sprague Jr and Planning/Zoning Clerical Assistant Robin Rothley.

1. Approve minutes of the regular meeting of April 22, 2008.

- Item 2 – 2nd paragraph “outlet” should be “out lot”
- Item 2 – 3rd paragraph “café” should be changed to “café” in two places.
- Item 2 – page 2 – 2nd bullet “units” should be inserted behind 5.95.
- Item 3 – 2nd paragraph “eat” should be “each”.
- Item – page 3 – paragraph before motion “seams” changed to “seems”.

Wayne Harrall, seconded by **Edward Robinette**, moved to approve the minutes with the above mentioned changes. **Motion passed unanimously.**

2. Approve minutes of the special meeting of May 14, 2008.

- The “s” should be removed from Forest Hills Ave.; it should be Forest Hill Ave.
- Item 1 – 5th Paragraph – 1st sentence; “neighborhood” should be inserted in front of “commercial”.
- Item 1 – 5th paragraph; insert the following sentence after the first sentence – “Mr. Fry stated that this is a future land planning issue, to create a Neighborhood Center, which was the intent of the Master Plan.
- Item 1 – 5th paragraph – last sentence; insert “and Mr. VanDyke concurred” behind “Mr. Fry also mentioned”.

David VanDyke, seconded by **Beverly Wall**, moved to approve the minutes with the above mentioned changes. **Motion passed unanimously.**

3. Public Hearing: Special Land Use Amendment – Orchard Hills Athletic Club.

Due to a conflict of interest Wayne Harrall excused himself at this time. Mr. Harrall indicated that his wife is employed by the same company that owns Orchard Hills Athletic Club.

Mary Jo Smith, representing Orchard Hills Athletic Club, described the organization of athletic clubs in the area. She feels that these improvements will enhance the facility as well as the surrounding neighborhood.

Steve Witte, Nederveld, described the existing facility and presented the proposed site plan. There are three major areas of change proposed:

1. The area where the track and soccer field are currently located:
 - Twelve new tennis courts; four of the courts will be bowl style with stadium seating. The four stadium courts will be lit and they would like to reserve the right to light the others in the future if the need arises.
 - There will be a 1,000 square foot building west of the stadium courts with office space, rest rooms, and a concession area.
 - The perimeter will be fenced.
 - There will be a 30' wide concourse between the stadium courts and the 8 other courts.
 - There will be a prep area for teams to meet prior to their match.
2. The aquatic center:
 - A new kid's pool will be constructed.
 - An existing shed will be replaced with an 800 square foot building for pool equipment storage.
 - A shade structure will be placed near the kid's pool and young kids play court.
3. The parking area will be revamped:
 - An additional 72 parking spaces with parking islands will be installed for a total of 176 parking spaces.
 - A walking path will be installed from the parking lot to the tennis courts.

The wetlands have been reviewed and this project will not disturb them.

Steve Witte displayed renderings of the proposed project; they feel this will be a major improvement to the site. They have attempted to contact the neighbors that will be impacted by the project to answer their questions.

Susan Molhoek inquired as to the type and location of the fencing. Steve Witte said that the existing chain link fence will remain and the fencing around the tennis courts will have a wind screen installed to block the wind on the courts.

Steve Witte said that they have discussed placing landscaping along the northern edge of the property. They didn't include the landscaping on the plans because they weren't sure what the Planning Commission and neighbors would want. Also the property is lower so they aren't sure landscaping would create much of a buffer.

Stephen Fry, seconded by Edward Robinette, moved to open the public hearing at 7:20 p.m. Motion passed unanimously.

Julie McCall, 293 Saddleback Dr NE, said their property abuts the athletic facility near the proposed tennis courts.

She has several comments, questions and concerns.

- Concerned with lighting on the site; the existing parking lot light shines into her home at night. She has talked with Orchard Hills staff about the situation but nothing has been done to address it. She was originally told that the tennis courts would not be lit and now the applicant is suggesting that they will be.
- Concerned with parking; there is not enough for the existing facility now and it appears that there will only be 22 actual new spaces.
- They were told the additions would not be any closer to their lot lines than the existing track is.
- Would like to see landscape screening along the north edge of the project.
- Questioned the need for 12 more tennis courts in the area.
- Asked if there would be a PA system installed and the hours of operation.

Her main issue is with Orchard Hills and their lack of respect for the neighbors. The pool has an alarm that goes off at night; she mentioned several instances when the alarm rang for long periods of time.

Dan Woodruff, 307 Saddleback Dr NE, agreed with Julie McCall's comments. He added that he is offended by the lack of landscaping along the northern line.

The pool alarm is an ongoing issue for the neighbors.

Kimberly Smith, 301 Saddleback Dr NE, said her biggest question is whether the demand justifies the additional tennis courts. She doesn't desire looking out her back yard at tennis courts.

Other issues she has:

- They are concerned how this project will affect the investment they have in their home.
- The residents were told there would be a walking path and the plans do not show one.
- How will the area be kept clean?
- Concerned with the lighting.
- What will the hours of operation for the tennis courts be?
- Past response by Orchard Hills has been slow to address concerns of the neighbors.
- Currently the land is being used as green space; it will be quite an adjustment to tennis courts.

Julie McCall said she had one more concern with the parking issue. On warm days when the pool is in full use parking is crowded now so if a tennis tournament is added to the mix there will be huge parking issues. She suggested a gate be placed for the neighborhood members to use for an access.

Doug White, Forest Hills Northern Tennis coach, discussed his summer camps and the popularity of tennis in West Michigan. During summer camps all available courts are in full use. Tennis has gotten very big and Orchard Hills adds to the success of the High School programs in the area. He believes they are a first class organization and the new courts will benefit the entire community. He thinks this is a worth while project and hopes it will be approved.

Ted Siereveld, 2714 McIntosh Ave, his observation was that Mr. White had an impressive sales job but he is not a township resident.

John Smith, 301 Saddleback Dr NE, has concerns with his future property values if this project is approved.

As there was no one else in the audience wishing to comment David VanDyke, seconded by Beverly Wall, moved to close the public hearing at 7:45 p.m. Motion passed unanimously.

Rick Sprague, Township Planner, gave an overview of his staff report.

- The existing track is 10' from the property line and the tennis courts would be 20'. The Township Zoning Ordinance does not have setback guidelines for tennis courts.
- Mr. Witte has addressed the Township Engineers concerns.
- Not sure how effective a berm would be as a buffer for the residential properties to the north because those properties are higher than the site.
- All lighting should meet current Township Zoning Ordinance guidelines.

Edward Robinette asked if it had been established that the swale would not affect drainage. He was told drainage would not be affected.

Steve Fry asked about the PA system and hours of operation.

Steve Witte addressed several of the questions and issues that were brought up in Public Comment and by the Planning Commissioners.

- The proposed southern lighting will be 35' tall maximum and meet all Township standards. The existing light does not have a shielding but one could be installed.
- There will not be a PA system. Scores will be posted on a score board.
- The demand is great for additional courts in the area.
- The pool alarm is on a motion sensor which is very sensitive and also required by State Regulations. Mary Jo Smith explained the alarm process and said the alarm time could be shortened.
- The existing trail is 10' wide and 10' to the fence.
- They are not opposed to landscaping on the north side.
- The requested parking meets the Township Zoning Ordinance. There is room for future expansion for parking but they would like to leave it as Green Space until the need arises.

Mary Jo Smith said that the proposed walkway from Saddleback with access to the site was abandoned due to security concerns of people accessing the complex without approval.

The hours of operation would be the same as the existing tennis courts are allowed outside of hours which is 7:00 a.m. – 9:00 p.m. seven days a week. Spring and fall event programming may occur much like the existing soccer programs.

Steve Fry said that if the additional tennis courts could be lit in the future they should consider different setback requirements.

David VanDyke said he would like to see a photometric plan. Steve Fry said existing parking lot lights should be upgraded to meet Township Ordinance regulations.

Steve Fry has issues with the proposed parking; he would like to see parking calculations for each use. David VanDyke concurred that the parking lot would not be large enough.

Steve Fry explained that the property owners have a right to improve their site and it's not part of the job of the Planning Commission to decide if there is a demand for additional tennis courts in the area.

Steve Fry discussed landscaping options. Mike Fuller suggested that the applicant should design a landscaping plan and come back to present it to the Planning Commission.

David VanDyke said he would also like to have a Lumen level plan submitted.

Michael Fuller, seconded by **Beverly Wall**, moved to table the request so the applicant can address the following issues:

- Parking analysis for each use on the entire site.
- Landscaping plan.
- Lighting issues.
- Fence clarity for type and height.

Motion passed unanimously.

Wayne Harrall rejoined the meeting at this time.

4. Ordinance Review.

Rick Sprague, Township Planner, explained that he and the Township Attorney have been reviewing Zoning Ordinance issues as they have come up. There are four items for discussion on this agenda and a Public Hearing will be held at a later date.

1. Sexually Oriented Business.

Regulations have changed so the township has more ability to place more restrictions on these types of use. There are no pending requests at this time; if amended future requests would be reviewed using the amended ordinance.

2. Mineral Removal.

There has been considerable residential growth since the mineral removal process was adopted. More detail should be required when a request is made.

Edward Robinette asked if staff was comfortable reviewing the recommended removal amounts. Rick Sprague said that he would.

Rick Sprague explained that a significant reason for addressing this ordinance is bring it all together before the Planning Commission instead of part to the Planning Commission and part to the Township Board as the process now requires.

The Planning Commissioners discussed the mines located in the township.

3. Condominiums

The existing ordinance does not differentiate between traditional condominiums and site condominiums.

There is the issue of commercial buildings converting to a condominium. This would require that they come to site plan review for approval. Susan Molhoek asked if the township polices this issue and Rick Sprague said that typically the township is informed after it is recorded with Kent County.

4. Existing Private Roads.

This section would address improvement requirements of existing private roads.

Rick Sprague said that Public Hearings will have to be held for each of the amendments. He asked the Planning Commissioners to review the draft Ordinances submitted by the Township Attorney.

Edward Robinette said that he would like to understand the ordinances before Public Hearings are held and suggested a possible Special Meeting to discuss them more in depth.

5. **Public Comment.**

None.

6. **Update from Township Planning Director.**

There are currently seven items on the agenda for the June Planning Commission meeting; five of them are for outdoor seating. All of the items will be Public Hearings.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:30 p.m.

Wayne A. Harrall – Secretary