

**PLANNING COMMISSION OF THE
CHARTER TOWNSHIP OF GRAND RAPIDS
Minutes of the November 25, 2008 Meeting**

A regular meeting of the Planning Commission of Grand Rapids Charter Township was held at the Township Hall on Tuesday, November 25, 2008 at 7:00 p.m.

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

1. Approve minutes of the regular meeting of September 23, 2008.

Wayne Harrall, seconded by **Edward Robinette**, moved to approve the minutes as presented. **Motion passed unanimously.**

2. Approve minutes of the regular meeting of October 28, 2008.

Edward Robinette, seconded by **Wayne Harrall**, moved to approve the minutes with the following conditions.

- Page 1 -first paragraph – “September 23” should be “October 28”
- Page 2 – paragraph before the motion – “for” should be after “them”
- Page 5 – first paragraph in sexually oriented business discussion – the last word of the paragraph should be removed.

Motion passed unanimously.

3. Public Hearing – Catholic Secondary Schools – Special Land Use Amendment.

Mark Wrona, URS, introduced the request. He reviewed meetings that have previously occurred and changes that have been made for this request. He also gave a brief history of the site and issues that brought about this request. If this request is approved they hope to be able to play games on the field by fall 2010.

Mark Wrona listed organizations that have supported the request. They have letters from Kent County Road Commission, Kent County Sheriff’s Department, and Township Engineer’s office stating there are no big issues with the request. It has also been established that a traffic study would not be required.

Steve Passinault, Catholic Central Principal, explained they are working to improve relationships with the neighbors. There is an entire new management staff for the facility and their goal is to address the neighbors concerns.

Steve Passinault outlined Policy changes that have been implemented for the site in order to manage it more effectively.

- Hours of operations will be 7:00 a.m. to 9:00 p.m. Monday – Saturday and 12:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m. Sunday with Friday night games extending to 10:00 p.m. Clean up will take place after all events.
- Catholic Central has installed additional “No Parking” signs along Leffingwell to inform persons attending events not to park along Leffingwell. Additional measures would be taken during large events.
- A written policy of how trash removal will be handled; trash will be removed the same day as an event has been included.
- Emergency contact numbers have been provided to the neighbors and are included in the policy so the neighbors would know who to call with concerns.
- A new neighborhood service program has been implemented. Student athletes will be available one day in the fall and one day in the spring to help neighbors with yard work. A couple of the neighbors have already taken them up on this offer.
- They will not seek to rent the facilities as a revenue source to outside non Diocesan users. If another user would approach them to use the field they will come to the Township Planner for approval.
- One of the biggest concerns that were voiced was regarding the safety of students walking across Knapp Street, to and from the north soccer field at New Life Christian Fellowship. It is now in the policy that no student users shall cross Knapp Street by foot and students will be picked up either by bus or vehicle.

Steve Passinault told the Planning Commissioner items they have already done to improve the site for the neighbors; they want to be respectful to their concerns.

Mark Wrona outlined the proposed events to be held at the stadium. Some are already taking place on the site, but would be moved onto the field to play under the lights. Mark Wrona outlined the parking requirements and plan. Using the onsite parking lots, two lots at New Life Christian Fellowship, and Knapp Charter Academy would provide spaces for over 4,000 spectators, which they have not exceeded this year. They are awaiting approval from Kent Intermediate School District for permission to construct a paved path between their parking lot and bike path. If the need arises to access the KISD parking lot, staff and players would be directed to park there leaving the on site parking for spectators.

There is no timetable on when they would like to begin hosting varsity basketball games on the site, but would like approval now so they would not have to return in the future for an approval. They would be happy to come back at a later date if the Planning Commissioners would like more accurate attendance numbers.

Mark Wrona discussed LEEDS, which encourages the use of grass parking areas and shared parking to reduce paved areas.

Mark Wrona used several area stadiums as examples.

Rick Sprague, Township Planning Director, gave an overview of his Staff Report on the project.

- Mark Wrona did a good job of updating the parking issues.
- Township Engineer has conditions in his report that must be met.
- Proposed lighting would require a height modification.
- Based on past attendance for Varsity Basketball games, there would be adequate parking on the site to add basketball to the Special Land Use.
- Fencing along the expressway must be replaced.
- The Township Attorney has submitted a Draft Resolution for review and adoption if the Planning Commissioners agree.

Sue Molhoek discussed the Master Plan for the site and this request fits within those guidelines.

Steve Fry, seconded by Michael Fuller, moved to open the public hearing at 7:35 p.m. Motion passed unanimously.

Dan Hoover, 1495 Leffingwell, owns five parcels on Leffingwell and supports the request.

Judy Frantz, 2558 Knapp, lives directly across the expressway from the project. She discussed changes that have taken place since they moved into their home 30 years ago. She would encourage the Planning Commissioners to look at the project in terms of current issues not eleven years ago. In the interest of common good this project should be approved.

Ann Zelner, 852 Pinnacle Run, spoke in support of the project.

Gary Bond, 2594 Blackhorse Ct, does not feel that the few games that will be held at the stadium each year will bring excessive traffic. He supports the project.

Anthony Licari, 3620 Oakwright Ct, believes the stadium would be a pleasant addition to the township and bring a place for healthy entertainment for the youth. He supports the project.

Nancy White, 2940 Knapp, moved into her home in 1959 and has seen many changes. The added traffic that will occur on game nights will be for a short time and the vehicles will clear out. She supports the project.

Joanne Perchbacker, 1422 Leffingwell, is in favor of the request. This is about the future of our youth.

David Kubiak, 1768 Leffingwell, presented a petition signed by 29 neighbors in opposition of the request. They believe the request is trying to put too much in a small area.

Joyce McCarthy, 1828 Leffingwell, discussed traffic on Knapp and the new Celadon development. She is opposed to the project.

Mark Rasmussen, 2490 Greenings, spoke in favor of the request.

Brian Markly, President of Student Congress at Catholic Central High School and a member of the football team, discussed the 2008 season and the difficulties for the team to travel to every game. Adequate practice fields are also difficult to find.

Maggie Hummel, 3434 Briarbank Place, a cheerleader for Catholic Central High School, feels that the students miss out on the home field advantage. The students would be willing to comply with whatever is asked of them.

Scott Hummel, 3434 Briarbank Place, understands the neighbors concerns for traffic but this seems to be a well conceived plan. He encouraged approval.

John Kennedy, 4610 Bradford, is a major donor for Catholic Central and was involved with the original plan 11 years ago. If they had anticipated this need then they would have designed things differently. They would like to continue to play at Houseman Field and approached the City with a proposal that was rejected.

Larry Endre, 2984 – 3 Mile Rd, biggest concern is the added traffic which is being addressed. He supports the project.

John Astetine, 631 Prospect, is involved with New Life Fellowship and has put a deposit on a home in Celadon. Where he currently lives the catholic schools have improved the community. He appreciates that the township is protecting the community and carefully considering this request. He is in support of the project.

Brian Mulder, 1288 Leffingwell, believes they have done a great job with the plans and feels it should be approved.

John Krauss, 2770 Elger, is a previous board member for the school. The school fosters specific values to bring up honorable citizens; he respectfully requests an approval.

Lonnie Shields, Sr Pastor at New Life Fellowship Church, asks the neighbors to consider this as a sacrifice for generations to come. He is in support of the project.

Linda Sikema, 1814 Leffingwell, did sign the petition that was presented to the Commission but is not opposed to the project. She is concerned with traffic and asked if

the Planning Commission could guarantee that Leffingwell would not be widened in the future.

Jerry Pettersch, 4101 Maguire Ct, spoke of East Grand Rapids schools clean up of their stadium and believes Catholic Central will do the same. He supports the project.

Gene Idziak, 2631 Lenwood, is an ex-coach for Catholic Central and now coaches for West Catholic. He believes the kids deserve a home stadium and supports the request.

Sue Molhoek acknowledged the petition of 29 Leffingwell residents.

As there was no one else in the audience wishing to comment motion by Wayne Harrall, seconded by Steve Fry to close the Public Hearing at 8:17 p.m.

Bev Wall asked why Catholic Central couldn't play their home games at Houseman Field on Saturday mornings. Mark Wrona explained that the conference does not allow Saturday games.

Dave VanDyke stated the plan presented is an improvement over the one from August. He asked if there had been further consideration of improvements on Knapp St.

Wayne Harrall said there could be discussion for a tunnel under Knapp when the street is excavated but the Road Commission has no time line for that at this time. Kent County Road Commission has compared this project with other stadiums in the county and road expansion would not be required at this time.

Wayne Harrall explained Sgt. Dabkowski's plan for traffic flow on game nights. Peak times for games will not be the same as existing traffic on Leffingwell. The proposal to connect the sidewalk to the KISD parking lot is a good thing.

Sue Molhoek questioned if wet weather would cause problems for the grass parking areas. Mark Wrona explained that a reinforced system is planned for that area to prevent issues.

Steve Fry explained the Planning Commission does not consider economic issues when reviewing a project; they look at land uses and impacts such as traffic, lighting, traffic, and setbacks.

Steve Fry agrees this plan is a better plan than previously submitted. The applicant has shown that they can accommodate the stadium. He doesn't think the south lot of KISD would be needed for parking and believes it should be removed from the plan.

Michael Fuller is concerned with landscaping; this can be addressed when the final site plan is reviewed.

Ed Robinette agreed that the plan has improved. He disagrees with Steve Fry; even though the south lot may not be needed for parking at this time in 5-10 years it may be needed and it would be better to have it in place now.

Steve Fry suggested that if more parking would be needed in the future they could develop the land purchased from the church. The Planning Commissioners discussed the issue and the consensus was to leave the south parking at KISD on the plan.

Steve Fry, seconded by **Wayne Harrall**, moved to approve the amendment with the following conditions.

- Allow Varsity Football and Basketball.
- Height modifications requested are approved.
- Setback modifications as presented.
- Require an 8' fence on the west side along the expressway.
- All requirements of the Township Engineer, dated August 1, 2008 and November 21, 2008, must be met.
- The south KISD lot would be the last to be used with controls in place to direct pedestrians to pathways and out of resident's yards.
- Catholic Central would be responsible to construct a pathway from the north KISD lot to the pathway if given the approval from KISD.
- Final plan must be submitted to Township Planner for compliance.

Yes: Steve Fry, Wayne Harrall, Sue Molhoek, Mike Fuller, Ed Robinette, Dave VanDyke

No: Bev Wall

Motion Approved.

4. Public Hearing – Meijer Gardens and Sculpture Park – Special Land Use Amendment.

Due to a conflict of interest Sue Molhoek excused herself from this request and Steve Fry took over as Chair.

Rick Sprague explained that the Township Board has been approached by several citizens complaining about the number of concerts Meijer Gardens had in their Summer Series this past summer. He outlined comments from the Township Board.

A letter was submitted from David Hooker, President and CEO for Meijer Gardens, in favor of the amendments proposed for the Special Land Use.

Wayne Harrall, seconded by Ed Robinette, moved to open the public hearing at 8:42 p.m. Motion passed unanimously

Gwen Powers, 772 Bradford, feels there were too many concerts. Noise is an issue; the new sound system has made things worse. She requested that a limit be put in place for the number of loud concerts.

Lois Lettinbeiner supports the concerts but wishes the selection of music would be chosen better. She discussed the noise from I-96 and East Beltline traffic; new projects bring extra noises.

As there was no one else in the audience wishing to comment motion by Wayne Harrall, seconded by Ed Robinette to close the Public Hearing at 8:48 p.m.

Steve Fry stated that the only issue he can see is the number of concerts.

Wayne Harrall, seconded by **Ed Robinette**, moved to approve the Special Land Use Amendment; based on the Draft Resolution submitted by the Township Attorney, with the following conditions.

- Maximum 2,000 persons allowed at an event, not seats.
- Outdoor events must end by 10:00 p.m..
- Indoor events must end by 11:00 p.m.

Motion Approved Unanimously.

5. Public Hearing – Winterwood Site Condo addition.

Kevin Einfeld, the applicant, stated that he has purchased 7.8 acres adjacent to his Winterwood Development.

Kevin Einfeld is requesting to include the acreage into the Winterwood Development by adding three home sites. The homes would have individual septic systems and public water would be extended from Winterwood.

Kevin Einfeld informed the Planning Commissioners that he has presented the request to the Winterwood Homeowners Association and they approved the addition.

Wayne Harrall asked if lot #46 would be accessed off of Winterwood Dr. or Leonard St. Kevin Einfeld explained that all three lots would have Winterwood Dr addresses and lot #46 would be a temporary construction drive to limit wear and tear on the road system.

Sue Molhoek inquired how the water main would be extended. Kevin Einfeld explained he is working with township staff on the best plan.

Township Planning Director Rick Sprague gave a brief outline of his staff review.

- The site borders the Township Parks.

- Because of the lot sizes the Ordinance allows an exemption from the sidewalk requirements.
- The new plan reflects the “General Common Area” as “Open Space” as requested.

Wayne Harrall discussed the extension of the water main; he noted it would extend beyond the development to the Township Park. Steve Fry suggested that because the bike path had just been constructed, the applicant be allowed to post a bond for future extension. Rick Sprague said it is the intention of the developer to install the entire water main extension in at one time.

Steve Fry, seconded by Michael Fuller, moved to open the public hearing at 9:05 p.m. Motion passed unanimously. As there was no one in the audience wishing to comment on this request the public hearing was closed at the same time.

Wayne Harrall stated he has walked the ravine and believes the three lots would be nice home sites.

Susan Molhoek noted that it is a nice addition to finish the Winterwood Development.

Wayne Harrall agreed that sidewalks should not be required; there are not any in the rest of Winterwood.

Steve Fry, seconded by **Michael Fuller**, moved to approve the Site Condominium expansion of Winterwood Site Condominiums with the following conditions:

- Exempt from sidewalk requirements.
- Must provide an Open Space agreement.
- Must supply a Master Deed to the Township Planning Department.
- Must install a water main or bond for a water main per Township Engineer requirements.
- Construction access on lot #46 is allowed for 24 months.

Motion Passed Unanimously.

6. **Public Comment.**
7. **Update from Township Planning Director.**

Rick Sprague said that there is no meeting scheduled in December.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:08 p.m.

Wayne A. Harrall – Secretary