

**PLANNING COMMISSION OF THE
CHARTER TOWNSHIP OF GRAND RAPIDS
Minutes March 28, 2017**

A regular meeting of the Planning Commission of Grand Rapids Charter Township was held at the Township Hall on Tuesday, March 28, 2017.

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

1. Approve minutes of the February 28, 2017 regular meeting.

Bill Culhane, seconded by **Dan Ophoff**, moved to approve the minutes as they are with no changes. **Motion approved unanimously.**

2. Informal Presentation - Frederik Meijer Gardens - Request to amend current Special Land Use to incorporate the newly developed and proposed site master plan.

David Hooker, President of Frederik Meijer Gardens, gave a short presentation;

- 22 years (next month) of serving the community
- their job is to bring joy to people and they are so lucky and blessed to be able to do it
- the future looks to hold some very bright things and very excited to share their vision
- “welcoming the world: honoring a legacy of love” is an intentional title for naming their proposed next step
- main entrance no longer meets their needs; too small, only 925 sq. ft. and with increasing attendance they have outgrown the once accommodating area
- new transportation to allow guests to see all the gardens has to offer
- art and horticulture collections have grown and need area to accommodate that
- further their mission
- 68,000 LEED certified welcome center, allow people to move around with comfort
- Covenant Learning Center (still operating on the 2 classrooms they opened with in 1999) will allow more rooms for sharing and educating the horticultural world
- Cook Transportation Center; both trams and waiting areas to be covered, restrooms and places for volunteers to work
- expanding the amphitheater, while still keeping the intimate feel
- new outdoor picnic pavilion located next to the amphitheater, restrooms will be available and accessible
- expanded parking; create a better flow, more parking spaces accessible and located near the main entrance
- hoping to start construction fall of this year and ending in the summer of 2021

Wayne Harrall thanked the applicant for the extremely thorough plans that were submitted, as it made it easier to understand the request. Bill Culhane echoed Harrall’s statement and asked about the potential classes; do they see an increase in the class numbers now and do they intend to see the educational program turning into a daily schedule. David Hooker stated they do not have plans to make any scheduled classes but they have seen an increase in “class” attendance on a daily basis. Culhane clarified that the future classes would be more along the line of field trip classes vs curriculum classes. Hooker stated that is correct.

Bill Culhane brought up the fact that the parking on the southwest looks to be a little crowded and asked why the applicant decided to utilize that particular area, versus not make parking available to

the north of the entrance. David Hooker stated that is the most convenient area for accessibility to the facilities.

Bill Culhane asked if there is a sidewalk planned along Bradford Street. Cheryl Scales stated no, it is not planned. Culhane asked about the expanding parking lot to the south, noting how close the proposed parking lot would be situated in proximity to the road. David Hooker replied they intend to have a nice thick screening along the entire perimeter.

Dave VanDyke stated his biggest concern, on the whole plan, is that the new proposed parking appears to be right on top of the road (Bradford) and is very worried about the screening, or potential lack thereof. Cheryl Scales stated they intend to screen not only the entrance and drive, but the entire perimeter, in order to have the visual focus be solely on the main building when pulling into the parking lot area. David Hooker added there is an importance of the proposed road "disappearing" in order to give the visitor the ultimate experience as they pull into the parking lot and see the main building/facility.

Mark Prein asked Cheryl Scales about drainage and the direction it goes, in regards to the parking lot on the southwest corner he asked about any flooding issues, etc.... Scales stated it would continue to go into underground detention and across the road and noted they have not had any issues.

Mark Prein asked with all the growth and expansion the Gardens is (and has) experiencing, where do they go from here, adding they are running out of room. David Hooker said this is it; this is their last shot to get it right. Hooker added over the years they have done piecemeal things here and there, but they have studied and researched over the past 4 years to get it right and the proposed site master plan is it.

Wayne Harrall suggested possibly giving a visual of the overlaying (old and proposed) for their benefit and any public that attends the Public Hearing.

Attorney Jim Brown gave the legal review.

Wayne Harrall clarified the procedure of the special land use amendment regarding if the phases come back to the Planning Commission or just the Site Plan Review Committee. Jim Brown said it would be best to make sure it is all spelled out after the Public Hearing is held, adding it is ultimately up to the Planning Commission on how they would like to proceed. Bill Culhane stated he would like to see the significant changes come back to the full Planning Commission, but the smaller items can be handled with the Site Plan Review Committee. Scott Conners said he thinks some of the phases are rather large and would like to have the public have an opportunity to voice any concerns, etc. Mark Prein said he thinks they should be a little cautious as to their time frame, making sure the Planning Commission gives them long enough time lines in order to get all their phases completed.

Wayne Harrall brought up the potential of a sidewalk on Bradford Street, adding the applicant may want to consider somehow incorporating the potential for a pathway to be constructed.

Mark Prein, seconded by **Bill Culhane**, moved to set the Public Hearing for April 25, 2017.
Motion approved unanimously.

3. General Public Comment.

No residents were present for Public Comment.

The meeting adjourned at 8:00 pm.



David A. Van Dyke, Secretary