

**PLANNING COMMISSION OF THE  
CHARTER TOWNSHIP OF GRAND RAPIDS  
Minutes June 26, 2018**

A regular meeting of the Planning Commission of Grand Rapids Charter Township was held at the Township Hall on Tuesday, June 26, 2018.

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

**1. Approve minutes of May 22, 2018 regular meeting.**

**Scott Conners**, seconded by **Dave Van Dyke**, moved to approve the minutes with one change on the bottom of page 2 (in the motion), change the word "Ave" to 'Rd' (after "*located at 2345 Robinson*")

**Motion approved, 5-0.**

**2. Public Hearing - Katerberg VerHage - Request for a Special Land Use to allow for Commercial Landscaping Services to continue operating on their current site comprised of 10 individual parcels, totaling 87.86 acres along Michigan St.**

Due to a conflict of interest, Secretary Dave Van Dyke recused himself.

Chair Wayne Harrall gave a brief background on the 'how and why' the applicant has submitted their Special Land Use request, stating there have been work sessions with the applicant prior to this Public Hearing in order to get where we are today.

Tom VerHage, owner of Katerberg VerHage, gave the background of the request;

- residential, commercial landscape
- providing landscape supply and snow removal
- tried their best to be good neighbors over the 65 years of operation
- never been a complaint or concern with their buildings and grounds; one issue has been trucking and they have taken that concern into consideration
- the road is in poor shape to begin with
- they have never had an accident or incident on the nearby roads with their trucks

Todd Stuive, with Exxel Engineering, continued the presentation;

- 10 individual parcels make up site, total site is 87.86 acres, approximately 21 acres of the site is open water
- only 31% of the site is used for operations
- lots of physical setbacks from surrounding neighbors
- areas of stockpiles have been identified on the site
- site uses 3 driveways (not including the residential sites) - 2 along Michigan and 1 (gated) along Bradford
- evergreen buffer shown along the east property line
- additional hoop house has been identified and an addition to their main building have also been included in the request

- composting material is all natural
- using black top millings for their driveways and work areas and it is a product that is used on site and off site areas

Attorney Jim Brown gave the legal review.

Dan Ophoff stated he was not at the meeting in May, but has been involved in the work sessions and is familiar with the request at hand, and wanted to make sure Jim Brown was satisfied with his participation. Jim Brown stated he is more than satisfied with Ophoff's participation.

**Dan Ophoff**, seconded by **Doug Kochneff**, moved to open the Public Hearing at 7:23 pm.  
**Motion approved, 4-0.**

*Chair Wayne Harrall noted the numerous amount of public comment/input that was submitted to the Township and provided to the Planning Commissioners in their packets.*

William Holcomb, 230 Oakshire Ct NE, 49301;  
supports KBVH, thinks the Township should just leave well enough alone

John Amash, 359 Saddleback Dr NE, 49525;  
thinks there should be clarity of what is discretionary and the list of what possible uses can be done, did some google searches and noted the applicant has been doing numerous activities with landscaping and roads and numerous other activities that do not necessarily fit within the allowance of the special land use requirements, not about liking it or not liking it is about following the rules and the zoning ordinance

Joseph Branc, 4312 Saddleback Ct NE, 49525;  
biggest concern is of the grinding and blacktop, the surface water and drainage issues, the silica dust blowing to the adjacent neighborhoods and the long term affects those may or may not have on the surrounding neighbors

Dave Pocklington, 4209 Michigan St NE, 49525;  
can hear the concrete crushing and/or loading of the trucks all the time, something changed and brought it to the attention of the Township, noise just started in the last few years, read about the new development and concerned with the truck traffic, already feeling the impact and an unsafe area for neighbors and the future residential developments

Susan Pocklington, 4209 Michigan St NE, 49525;  
built their house 30 years ago, friendly toward KBVH, want them to be successful, but do not want the increase in trucks and the crushing to continue, the Township recently approved a new residential development and does not feel that the Planning Commission should allow a commercial use to be approved

William Worfel, 3966 Bradford St NE, 49525;  
been there for 38 years, most of the time KBVH has been a good neighbor, the water encroached on his property, asked Tom VerHage to address it and he did so in a quickly manner, should be a major concern to all the people in the room that the saddlebag drain



system is working properly and it has been a significant change to the topography, all the trucks go by and the tailgates banging all hours of the day

Larry Leatherman, 4411 Michigan St NE, 49301;

40 years ago moved to current home, KBVH has always been a good neighbor, addressed the issue of water because of all the developing, everybody hears noise but the real issue is the safety, especially on the corner

Paula Ritsema-Jacobsen, 600 Bradford Place NE, 49525;

sits on the board of neighborhood and never had an issue with KBVH, small business is mainly the issue, concerns are gentrification causing a small business extinction and urban sprawl, feels that suggestions of the traffic can be addressed by the Planning Commission, explained that developers and neighbors knew KBVH was there when they bought, concerned about a financial conflict with Blackhawk and the Planning Commission

James Kubicek, 4215 Michigan St NE, 49525;

referenced the zoning ordinance and explained that the use has changed over time, so the increase with the traffic over time has potentially become hazardous, increase of residential use along the road and there is a safety issue with the truck traffic, the issue with the road wear and tear, questioned the traffic study and feels that the speed limit should be lowered and a sidewalk be built

Susan Priest, 641 Twin Lakes Dr NE, 49525;

speed is an issue, last summer a neighbor was killed and it is a serious concern, now that the road has been repaired which has in turn made the traffic increase as well as the traffic speed, contacted KBVH about the truck traffic and they were less than responsive, gave examples of the trucks speeding and poor driving, the dust is terrible and an issue with the entire neighborhood, change should be made or adapted as necessary and they are the ones in the residential area

Linda Mefford, 560 Forest Hill Ave SE, 49546;

lived in area for 50 years, watched corn fields turn into housing developments, watched water seep onto surrounding properties, felt the trucks have always been respectful, Blackhawk trucks are not respectful, VerHage's are a pillar of the community, respectful to people, will address any concerns the neighbors have and always willing to help out, the neighborhoods are going to add more noise, does not feel a big developer should come in and push out a local business for their own profit, it is not ok

Erika Caddick, 761 Twin Lakes Dr NE, 49525;

dodging trucks all her life, lived there since she was 4, people drive way too fast for that road, a lot of people are angry about a lot of things, gave some statistics on trucks and stopping and stated the real issue is the trucks and speed and the fact that they are not abiding by the speed limit, snow plows are going too fast, overall the trucks and speed are the main issue

Jo Wilcox, 3996 Michigan St NE, 49525;

lived there for 37 years, KBVH have been nothing but great neighbors, most of the issues have started since the development and construction started with the new neighborhoods

and the extension of the utilities, any issue or concern with KBVH and Twin Lake have addressed it right away and never had the concern of safety raising kids in that area

Louis Dykstra, 978 Bradford Hollow Dr SE, 49525;  
representative of the Bradford Hollow association recently became aware of an upsetting letter and would like to make sure the Planning Commission knows they support fully the business and is disappointed in the Township

Mary O'Field, 550 Crahen Ave NE, 49525;  
long time foundational family owned business, not necessary to eradicate a long time family business to facilitate new growth, been excellent neighbors, developer is attempting to portray KBVH in negative light-is not a positive light nor is any of it true, believes it is the PC duty to be harmonious with the existing landscaping business that is respectful and upstanding and an overall good neighbor, progress can be welcomed while honoring the preexisting

Steve LaWarre, Frederik Meijer Gardens-1000 East Beltline Ave NE, 49525  
director of horticultural at FMG, good relationship with KBVH, their success as a cultural institution is partly due to KBVH

Martin Hilbrands, 3544 Michigan St NE, 49525;  
agreed with everything stated by Mary O'Field

Jason Berghoef, 2960 5<sup>th</sup> St, 49344;  
employed with KBVH for 17 years and counting, wife also works for KBVH, literally a family business, feels like he is part of this community, worked on the majority of the neighborhoods and schools and churches, primary concern is safety, very cautious and always aware of their surroundings, being a good neighbor is ultimately their goal because good neighbors lead to good and growing business, been there awhile and would like to stay there and continue to do work for the community

Neil Boerkoel, 3605 Michigan St NE, 49525;  
800 ft. from KBVH, very good neighbors to them, appreciate what they have done over the years for them, the issue is the road and it needs to be widened

Craig Sattler, 3725 Michigan St NE, 49525;  
agrees with continuing with a lawful business, most affected neighbor because he lives right in the middle of the KBVG property, does not hear the crushing at all

Marjorie Giesken, 3610 Bradford St NE, 49525;  
in support of KBVH, just learned tonight they are crushing concrete, borders KBVH, but the issue is the road, KBVH have been phenomenal neighbors, it would be a tremendous loss for the community if they were to leave, their drivers are curious and safe drivers, it is the drivers cutting through that are speeding, will not walk out to get the mail because the cars drive so fast

Linda McMurry, 3673 Bradford St NE, 49525;  
in support of KBVH, neighbors directly north of their north drive, absolutely wonderful neighbors, any requests the neighbors have made KBVH are willing to go the extra mile



to do what they can to fix it, the developer is allowed to develop the land and the KBVH is being subjected to ordinances being put into effect after the fact, hears all the issues with road wear and traffic but KBVH has been a very responsible business

Murry R. McMurry, 3673 Bradford St NE, 49525;  
agrees with Craig Sattler's statements, wants to know who wrote the flyer and said they owe KBVH an apology, hopes the Planning Commission does the right thing and do not cause KBVH any inconvenience because they do not deserve it

William Bauman, 710 Twin Lakes Dr NE, 49525;  
neighbor to the person who lost her life 10 months and 3 days ago, avid runner and knows that the curve is extremely dangerous, but once you hit the road along the nurseries the drivers are courteous drivers and share the road with all pedestrians, cannot say enough about that area (the stretch along the nurseries), could not say enough good things about KBVH, the approach that was taken in the flyer was not the approach that should have been taken

Brian Knapp, 3650 Bradford St NE, 49525;  
been a neighbor to KBVH for 37 years, never heard them crushing concrete or asphalt, always been courteous and kind neighbors to a lot of people for a long time

Peggy Volpe Straub, 4471 Michigan St NE, 49301;  
son and grandchildren live close to KBVH, the care the people have and give is unheard of, amazing people and neighbors and care about the environment, 50 years of people and neighbors backing KBVH and what they stand for, not ok to kick them out just to develop land for profit

David Kinsman, 375 Saddleback Dr NE, 49525;  
roads are not sufficient (is the consensus of the entire room), feels like it has turned into defense of the VerHage's vs why they are here and if they are following the allowance of the special land use, does not dispute how great the VerHage's are but wanted to remind everyone they are here to make sure they are following the zoning rules and that safety is a main concern

Brian Sikma, 5500 Cascade Rd SE, 49546;  
former neighbor of VerHage's, sold previous property on a land contract so still concerned about what the future holds for that area, states the site is different, the issue is that things have changed, the site has grown and that is what needs to be addressed

Andrea Wolfe, 329 Saddleback Dr NE, 49525;  
asked about the use, does not feel the business should move, asked for some clarification from the Planning Commission

*(Chair Wayne Harrall stated they are not there to put KBVH out of business, they just want them to adhere to the proper requirements of a special land use designation)*

Scott Dieners, Barnes&Thornburg-171 Monroe Ave NW, Suite 100, 49503;  
not here to put KBVH out of business, but here and concerned about the expansion of the use to the east, the change in character of the business is changed and because the nature of the business has changed, the scope of the business has expanded and is not compliant,

stated the Planning Commission should not treat the expansion of the noncompliance of the business as a nonissue

Carl Hainer, 3940 Michigan St NE, 49525;

talked about the past and all the activities that the nurseries did, mode of operation of the green leaf nursery changed after the peat-moss was done, does not like the traffic with the trucks and believes it changed their operation completely

Gayla Jewell, 235 Saddleback Ct NE, 49525;

does not think this needs to be a contiguous issue, grew up on a farm, and knows that change is in the air and change causes contention, when change is happening there are laws and ordinances that help make sense of it, and it should be continued in a neighborly way

Linda Mefford, 560 Forest Hill Ave SE, 49546;

wanted to know who exactly Blackhawk is

(Chair Wayne Harrall stated Blackhawk is the developer that owns property directly to the east of KBVH)

**Scott Conners**, seconded by **Dan Ophoff**, moved to close the Public Hearing at 8:55pm.

**Motion approved, 4-0.**

Dan Ophoff said that because of the lack of commissioners present and with such a controversial issue, in addition to the magnitude of the request, he believes it should be tabled until the July meeting. Scott Conners and Wayne Harrall both agreed.

**Scott Conners**, seconded by **Dan Ophoff**, moved to table the Special Land Use request for commercial landscaping services at Katerberg VerHage to continue operating until the July 24, 2018 meeting.

**Motion approved, 4-0.**

### **3. General Public Comment.**

No persons spoke during the public comment.

The meeting adjourned at 9:04 pm.

  
David A. Van Dyke, Secretary