

**PLANNING COMMISSION OF THE  
CHARTER TOWNSHIP OF GRAND RAPIDS  
Minutes August 24, 2021**

A regular meeting of the Planning Commission of Grand Rapids Charter Township was held at the Township Hall on Tuesday, August 24, 2021.

Present were Chair Wayne Harrall, Vice Chair Scott Conners Secretary Dave Van Dyke; Commissioners Dan Ophoff, Mark Prein and Steve Waalkes. Also present were Township Attorney Jim Scales and Planning Assistant Lindsey Thiel. Commissioner Doug Kochneff was absent.

**1. Approve minutes of July 27, 2021 regular meeting.**

**Steve Waalkes**, seconded by **Dan Ophoff** moved to approve the minutes with the following changes:

- Page 2, paragraph 1, insert “setback” before “distance”;
- Page 2, paragraph 2, sentence 2, insert “the” before “watermain”;
- Page 2, paragraph 5, sentence 1, insert “of the northerly portion” after “cross section”.

**Motion approved, 6-0.**

**2. Public Hearing – Avanterra Forest Hills Preserve – Request for a major amendment to the R-PUD located at 2409 Knapp St NE.**

Sara Johnson, Continental Properties, introduced the project. The proposal is for 149 single family rental homes with a clubhouse and amenities. The homes would range from one to four bedrooms and would range from detached to three homes attached. The original plan had 176 homes and the new plan is down to 149 homes. The applicant asked the Commission for consideration to allow lower square footage on the first floor of the single units, since they don't currently meet the first floor square footage requirements.

Wayne Harrall asked about the density and why the applicant decided to connect units. Sara Johnson responded it was after discussions with their engineer. She said the original plan required large retaining walls that would restrict access to the open space. She added that attaching the garages allowed them to bring the units together and made more space for sidewalks, parking and snow storage.

Scott Conners asked if the applicant was aware of the Knapp Street improvements that were required of the previous application. Sara Johnson replied they are planning to do the required improvements on the Knapp Street frontage and the sidewalk. Steve Waalkes asked if they had talked with the Kent County Road Commission on a turn lane. Sara Johnson responded that they had and a turn lane was shown in the schematics.

Wayne Harrall asked if they are working on the watermain with the City of Grand Rapids. Sara Johnson said they are working with the City of Grand Rapids on options and easements on the north side of the property for Dean Lake access and possible future connection.

Attorney Jim Scales gave the legal review.

Wayne Harrall asked for clarification regarding the Public Hearing since there is a drastic difference between the current plan and what was originally proposed. He asked if it would be proper to hold the Public Hearing or reschedule for another Public Hearing. Jim Scales responded that it would probably be prudent to schedule another Public Hearing.

Scott Conners said the current plan is vague and he wouldn't feel comfortable making a recommendation at this point. Dan Ophoff agreed and added he would be interested in seeing school impact and traffic impact studies for the site. He noted they were mentioned on page ten of the legal review. Jim Scales responded those studies are something the Planning Commission can request.

Dave Van Dyke asked how many bedrooms are approved for the site currently. Sara Johnson responded she didn't have the specific number but she thought it would still be in a comparable range.

Mark Prein asked who they are appealing to with these units. He commented that empty nesters wouldn't want 3 or 4 bedrooms. He asked how many kids they thought would be in the community and how it would affect the schools. She said that the informational packet shows that 40 of the residents, which equates to 8% of all residents, at The Springs at Knapp's Corner are kids. He would expect more kids in this community. Dan Ophoff asked if school buses go to The Springs at Knapp's Corner. Sara Johnson replied that they coordinate with the schools for pickup at the clubhouse.

**Mark Prein**, seconded by **Steve Waalkes**, moved to open the Public Hearing at 7:38pm.

**Motion approved, 6-0.**

There were no residents who wished to speak.

**Scott Conners**, seconded by **Dan Ophoff**, moved to close the Public Hearing at 7:39pm.

**Motion approved, 6-0.**

Steve Waalkes commented he liked the idea of fewer units so the site is not quite as tight. He added that the plan is not very detailed but the applicant will have more time since there will be another Public Hearing. Mark Prein agreed and said he liked the direction of the new plan compared to the initial submittal. He said he would like to see comparisons of the no disturb areas on the North and next to St. John's Home between the two plans. Scott Conners said he would like to see more detailed information as well.

Wayne Harrall asked how the other Commissioners felt about allowing a lower square footage on the first floor. Dan Ophoff said, if granted, the Planning Commission should clearly articulate how the decision was made and the standards that were met to receive the variance.



Dave Van Dyke said he liked the revised plan better than the previous plan. He continued that he preferred the detached style, but understands the density and layout issues. He inquired about the depth of the garage. Sara Johnson responded they are about 22 feet and the driveway can park two cars without encroachment on the sidewalk. Dave Van Dyke suggested showing on the plans that you can fit a car in front of the sidewalk. Sara Johnson commented that they do have another four bedroom unit style which meets the first floor square footage minimums but it takes away driveway length and parking.

Wayne Harrall recommended that the applicant work with the Kent County Road Commission for a traffic study. Dan Ophoff commented that he is interested in school and traffic impacts. He would want to see impact studies so there aren't issues like Celadon.

Wayne Harrall said he would like to see the Engineer's review and touched on the Knapp Street improvements. Steve Waalkes agreed and recommended the applicant be sure the sidewalk meets ADA standards, if raised, as they proposed. He also noted that some units have longer driveway aprons and suggested they should use the unit that meets the Township's square footage standards.

Scott Conners asked if the sidewalk would be a different material than the street. He said he would like to see it differentiated so the sidewalk is not just a paved shoulder. Wayne Harrall agreed and added that people will park on the paved shoulder if there is not something to separate it, like a rolled curb. Sara Johnson responded that they were not landscaping between the road and the street because there is not space.

Dave Van Dyke asked about the road width. Sara Johnson replied it is a 26' standard road. Scott Conners said he would like to see more detailed plans for the roads.

**Mark Prein**, seconded by **Dan Ophoff**, moved to table and schedule a Public Hearing on the revised plan for September 28, 2021, taking the Planning Commission comments into account.

**Motion approved, 6-0.**

**3. Initial Review – Grand Forest Townhomes Rezoning request, R-PUD, for an 11.41 acre parcel located at approximately 1137 Forest Hill Avenue.**

Eric Starck, Miller Johnson, introduced the application. He said they are requesting R-PUD zoning with R-1 density. The market is demanding the townhome style of housing and the product goes quickly. The client he represents also owns Heather Hills and he wants to protect that use. He mentioned the parallel plan that was submitted and it would not have greenspace or wetland preservation. With the rezoning, the benefits provided are: open space, wetlands, 2 stall garages, zero step option, and consistent maintenance.

Attorney Jim Scales gave the legal review.

Dave Van Dyke asked if there is storm water detention on the parallel plan. Eric Starck responded that the parallel plan just shows potential sites. Dave Van Dyke responded that number of sites as shown wouldn't be possible, due to storm water ponding and retention.

Scott Conners commented that he appreciated how setback the site is from Forest Hill Avenue. He said he would like to see a cross over on the boulevard, so people don't go the wrong way.

Wayne Harrall said this would set a precedent if they changed from the current zoning to R-PUD. He added that he does like the idea of the whole site being maintained, but would like to see close to the true number of units that would be done with R-1 zoning.

Dave Van Dyke quoted the minutes and denial language from the July 28, 2020 meeting. He said Heather Hills is a Special Land Use and is zoned R-1. He added that there is a need for single family housing lots. He also said the Township has only put these types of developments on main roads. He said he is not ready to change the conclusions that the Planning Commission came to a year ago and still doesn't believe it is consistent with the Master Plan.

Steve Waalkes commented that he has seen transitional sites around town but the Commission needs to decide if they think it is compatible with the Master Plan. He added that he would like to hear from the neighbors. Mark Prein agreed and added that it is a density question, since everything is more compact with this plan.

Dave Van Dyke mentioned the recent approval of townhomes by Kuyper College, along with potentially more at the Sunshine Church property. He said there have been 600-700 attached units approved in the last two years and no new single family neighborhoods. Scott Conners commented that the Planning Commission has been looking at fringe properties lately. He added that the townhomes with their backyards on the drive would not be ideal.

Wayne Harrall encouraged the Commissioners to drive to the site before the next meeting.

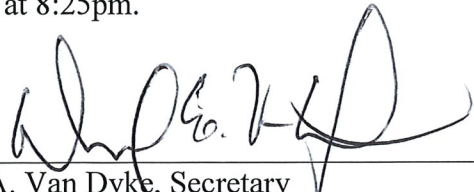
**Dan Ophoff**, seconded by **Scott Conners**, moved to set a Public Hearing for September 28, 2021.

**Motion approved, 6-0.**

4. **General Public Comment.**

There were none.

It was moved by **Steve Waalkes**, seconded by **Dan Ophoff**, to adjourn the meeting. The motion passed unanimously, and the meeting was adjourned at 8:25pm.

  
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David A. Van Dyke, Secretary