

**PLANNING COMMISSION OF THE
CHARTER TOWNSHIP OF GRAND RAPIDS
Minutes September 28, 2021**

A regular meeting of the Planning Commission of Grand Rapids Charter Township was held at the Township Hall on Tuesday, September 28, 2021.

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

1. Approve minutes of August 24, 2021 regular meeting.

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

- Page 1, first paragraph under item 2, sentence three, add "is" after the "new plan";
- Page 1, first paragraph under item 2, sentence four, add "of the single units" after "first floor";
- Page 2, fifth paragraph, fourth sentence, change "He" to "She";
- Page 4, second paragraph, first sentence, add "set" before "a precedent";
- Page 4, in the motion, add "to" after "moved".

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 and her colleague, Max Saichek, to present the application. This project allows a lock and leave lifestyle with the luxuries of a single family building. The units would be one to four bedrooms in single buildings up to triplexes with garages for each unit. The site is over 30 acres with 5 acres of wetlands. It is a housing segment not currently offered in the area and would bridge the gap from apartment to home ownership. The units would be built in 9 phases and the applicant has talked with the Kent County Road Commission on the scope of traffic improvements. The updated plans show the raised curb and sidewalk and the boundary conditions. They are currently working with the school district to determine impact.

Attorney Jim Scales gave the legal review.

Scott Conners said he was concerned about the lack of detail shown on the plans and asked if they had engineering plans. Sara Johnson said they are working with Exxel Engineering, but the plans are still preliminary. The engineer has been working on utilities before finalizing plans. Scott Conners said he would like to see grading and road improvements, as well. Dan Ophoff agreed and said he was concerned with the lack of detail. He added that he would like to see the plans back before the Planning Commission and not just the Site Plan Review Committee. Scott Conners agreed and said he doesn't want to cut the public out.

Steve Waalkes, seconded by **Dave Van Dyke**, moved to open the Public Hearing at 7:25 pm.

Motion approved, 6-0.

Keith Paasch, 2501 Knapp St NE, was looking for clarity on the setbacks; wants to make sure the applicant is following the rules.

Jim Scales clarified the setbacks.

Scott Conners, seconded by **Dan Ophoff**, moved to close the Public Hearing at 7:29 pm.

Motion approved, 6-0.

Steve Waalkes commented that the plan is an improvement from the previously approved plan. He said he is overall supportive, but concerned with the lack of detail. Wayne Harrall agreed and added he likes it better than the apartment plan. He said drainage, sidewalks, and retaining walls are issues of concern. Dave Van Dyke agreed and said he likes much of this plan better than the previous plan. He asked about the distance between the buildings that back up to each other. Max Saichek responded there is 24 feet in the rear yards.

Scott Conners asked about the grading of the site and where the buildings would sit in relation to the neighbors. He said he has concerns with the exterior perimeter. Dan Ophoff agreed and said the applicant needs to provide more detailed plans and would like to review them at the Planning Commission. He also said he is concerned with the number of children this development would bring and the potential effect on schools. Doug Kochneff agreed that the lack of detail is problematic. He said he is overall in favor of the project. Sara Johnson responded regarding the schools and said she anticipated more school aged kids at this site than The Springs. She said at The Springs there are 39 school aged residents

Dave Van Dyke said the grading is something they need to see, so they can protect the current neighbors. He thought there were large drops on the site. Scott Conners agreed and said they also need to see landscaping to shield neighbors.

Steve Waalkes touched on the variance for the first floor unit square footage for the single units and said he would be supportive. He added it would provide more parking but the overall unit is still very large. Dan Ophoff agreed and said the room in the driveway is needed. Wayne Harrall asked how many units would need the variance. Sara Johnson responded that 10 units would need the waiver.

Scott Conners, seconded by **Dan Ophoff**, moved to table the application pending submittal of the following engineering plans:

- storm water;
- grading;
- retaining walls;
- clearing;
- landscaping.

Motion approved, 6-0.

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

Rick Pulaski, Nederveld, presented the application. The site is 11.4 acres and they are proposing 32 townhomes on a private road with a professionally landscaped boulevard. The site would have the townhomes concentrated which increases the open space and stay away from the wetland. This development would generate less traffic than a subdivision per unit. According to analysis, there would be 40% more traffic in a subdivision or 70-95 more trips. A subdivision would also use more of the land because it only requires 20% open space versus 68% with the proposal. The townhome use controls sensitive areas and preserves the open space. The applicant showed photos of the site and potential backyard views with a single family development. Since this is a residential use, the applicant believes it fits into the Master Plan as transitional housing.

Eric Stark, Miller Johnson, touched on the Master Plan. He said in his opinion the site is transitional. The site could be developed as a matter of right as single family. He believes residential use, not single family residential, was purposely written in the Master Plan. The townhomes would be built in one phase and be an additional housing type for Grand Rapids Township.

Attorney Jim Scales gave the legal review.

Steve Waalkes, seconded by **Scott Connors**, moved to open the Public Hearing at 8:15 pm.

Motion approved, 6-0.

Stanley Lis, 1190 Farnsworth, said this plan looks less objectionable than last time; still does not want apartments behind his home.

Rachel Ogilvie, 4483 Orchard Creek Dr SE, surrounded by single family homes and believes they bring wealth to the individuals; kids have a problem crossing Forest Hill Ave; single family homes are more healthy for the community; the development would be inconsistent with the goals of the community; concerned about the long term maintenance of townhomes; would like to see the space as greenspace; the objection before was setting precedent on secondary streets and that hasn't changed; opposes the plan.

Chuck Clemence, 1112 Forest Hill Ave, lives across from the proposed development; doesn't oppose the project; there is a need on southbound Forest Hill Ave for a deceleration lane for turning onto Medical Parkway.

Ed Schwenke, 1118 Forest Hill Ave, lives across from Medical Parkway and has to go around the block to turn into his driveway; traffic goes beyond his house at 5:00 pm; traffic is very bad in the area.

Taryn Frey, 1100 Forest Hill Ave, traffic is a big concern; it is difficult to see with the hill; there are lots of accidents of Forest Hill Ave; people speed thru the neighborhood.

Joan Casterline, 4423 Orchard Creek, concerned about traffic; that is currently a very busy intersection; it takes 2-3 lights to turn left at Forest Hill and Cascade.

Scott Conners, seconded by **Dan Ophoff**, moved to close the Public Hearing at 8:32 pm.

Motion approved, 6-0.

Wayne Harrall commented that not a lot has changed in the proposed use. The main issue is if it conforms to the Master Plan. He said in terms of traffic, there will be more with either type of development. He said the owner controls Medical Parkway and the development could potentially tie into the street.

Steve Waalkes said he shares the concerns regarding the traffic on Forest Hill Ave, but there is not a good solution. He agreed that a deceleration lane for Medical Parkway would help. He said he tends to like transitional use properties and from a planning perspective he is very torn.

Dave Van Dyke commented that there were good points raised by the Township Engineer and Attorney. As the representative of the Township Board, he questioned the need for more attached residential units. He added that the Township has tried to keep attached dwelling developments in areas of major thoroughfares and this would be out of those areas. He continued that there has been an abundance of attached housing units and the Township needs single family residential units. He would like to see the site kept as R-1.

Scott Conners said he likes the use as a transitional use but he would like it even better as condos. He appreciated that the community is walkable. He said he would be okay with the rezoning.

Dan Ophoff said he lives a mile away and knows the Forest Hill Ave traffic issues. He appreciates the lower density proposed in this plan, but the reasons for denial of the previous plan are still applicable. This proposal is still not compatible with the area and is not consistent with the Master plan. He also doesn't think this provides benefit to the community that couldn't be achieved with R-1 zoning. He understands the points made by the applicant but he will be opposed. Doug Kochneff agreed and said he appreciates the changes made by the applicant. He added he thinks it is a good development in the wrong location. He voted against the rezoning previously because he doesn't believe it meets the Master Plan.

Dan Ophoff, seconded by **Doug Kochneff**, moved to deny rezoning request to R-PUD due to the following factors:

- Not compatible with the area;
- Not consistent with the Master Plan and R-1 District;
- Does not provide a recognizable and substantial benefit to the community, which would otherwise be unfeasible or unlikely be achieved through traditional development.

Motion failed, 3-3.

The land owner commented that he agrees there are currently traffic issues. He said he pays taxes and the land will be developed by him or he will sell it. He wants to work with the community on something that will work. He requested that the Planning Commission table the application while he explores a different idea for the site.

Dave Van Dyke, seconded by **Steve Waalkes**, moved to table the request pending updated comments or plans from the applicant.

Motion approved, 6-0.

4. **Initial Review – TowerCo – Special Land Use request for a 125-foot Wireless Communication Facility on property owned by Grand Rapids Township at 533 East Beltline Avenue, S.E.**

Matt Kundert, representing TowerCo, presented the application. They are requesting a 125' telecommunications pole with a 5' lighting rod. It would support the AT&T FirstNet system and there is already an agreement in place. The applicant gave an overview of FirstNet and its history. AT&T would lease the tower and three additional carriers could come on board.

Wayne Harrall commented that he liked the photos of the area in the application, but would like a visual of the site built out. Steve Waalkes asked about the cabinet and said he would like to see a masonry building for the equipment. Matt Kundert responded they would have to run multiple HVAC units for each bay and they are trying to get away from that practice.

Scott Conners asked if the applicant planned to pave the driveway at the East Beltline. He said gravel could potentially do damage to the trail. Matt Kundert responded they would be open to paving the apron and slightly past the trail.

Dave Van Dyke asked if there were plans to screen with something other than a fence. He suggested some trees to obstruct the view. Matt Kundert said they would be open landscaping and would recommend a juniper style tree. Dave Van Dyke said he would just like something to screen the site. He added he didn't see any reason not to move the application forward, the Township already has towers.

Attorney Jim Scales gave the legal review.

Dan Ophoff, seconded by **Steve Waalkes**, moved to set a Public Hearing on October 26, 2021.

Motion approved, 6-0.

5. **Initial Review – The Learning Experience Daycare – Request for a major PUD amendment and site plan approval of a 3.45 acre O-PUD located at 3300 East Beltline Avenue.**

Robb Lamer, Exxel Engineering, introduced the application. He went over the issues presented in the legal memo. He touched on the location of the dumpster and said he thought it was the best option because he can hide it with berms. He said he could move the dumpster to the east side,

but he thinks it will be more visible. He mentioned parking and believes they have the number of spaces needed, but there is space on the site for more. He said they are open to conversation about the drive and its location. There is plenty of room on the site for snow storage and said they are working on lighting. He requested site plan approval with the major PUD amendment approval.

Attorney Jim Scales gave the legal review.

Doug Kochneff asked about the other daycare site at Cascade and Hall. He added that he does not like the bright white fence on the road frontage. A representative from the daycare company responded and agreed about the fence. He said the fence was required because they were not granted allowance for a smaller playground space. Scott Conners asked what the criteria would be to allow a change for playground space.

Wayne Harrall suggested landscaping the berm. Robb Lamer said they would work with their landscape architect.

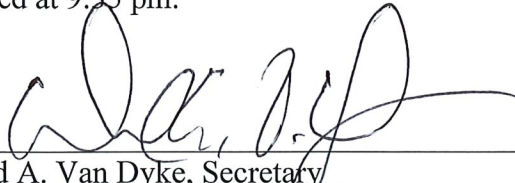
Dave Van Dyke, seconded by **Dan Ophoff**, moved to set a Public Hearing on October 26, 2021.

Motion approved, 6-0.

6. **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 9:35 pm.



David A. Van Dyke, Secretary