

**PLANNING COMMISSION OF THE  
CHARTER TOWNSHIP OF GRAND RAPIDS  
Minutes January 24, 2023**

A regular meeting of the Planning Commission of Grand Rapids Charter Township was held at the Township Hall on Tuesday, January 24, 2023, starting at 7:00 P.M. EST.

Present were Chair, Wayne Harrall, Vice Chair, Scott Conners, and Secretary, Dave Van Dyke; Commissioners Doug Kochneff, Dan Ophoff, Mark Prein and Steve Waalkes. Also present was Township Attorney, Jim Scales and Recording Secretary, Laura Peters.

**1. Annual election of officers:**

Election of Chair, Vice Chair and Secretary for the year of 2023 commenced.

Motion made by Scott Conner, seconded by David Van Dyke, to re-elect Wayne Harrall, as Chair, Scott Conners Vice Chair, and Dave Van Dyke as Secretary.

A unanimous vote of the Planning Commission approved the re-election of said individuals to these positions.

**Motion Approved: 7-0**

**2. Approve minutes of November 11, 2022, regular meeting:**

Motion made by Scott Conners, seconded by David Van Dyke, moved to approve the minutes with the following changes:

- Page 1, 3<sup>rd</sup> order of business, 5<sup>th</sup> paragraph, last sentence, add “between garages and sidewalk or drive.”
- Page 2, 3<sup>rd</sup> order of business, 10<sup>th</sup> paragraph, last sentence, correct from “the” to “they”.

Motioned by Scott Conners, seconded by David Van Dyke, moved to approve the meeting minutes of the November 11, 2022, regular meeting as so amended.

**Motion approved: 7-0.**

**3. Public Hearing- Meadowood (originally Evergreen East)- Request for amendment to the Franklin Partners PUD located at 3300 East Beltline NE.**

Ryan Wheeler, of Wheeler Development Group, 32 Market Ave SW Suite 500, Grand Rapids, MI 49503 and representing Meadowood, approached the podium to speak. Thanked the Planning Commission.

Stated that they amended their plans to address the Commission's concerns. As of right now to meet the requirement of 50% open space based on their revised calculations the project supports 96 units but can be reduced by three to four units depending on the final calculations of easements and other excluded areas. The parking and garage areas remain the same as the original plan. Re-designed the layout to get away from the commercial parcel and avoid traffic conflicts, as noted at the last meeting. Signs consist of one monument sign with the name of the complex. Ryan Wheeler believes at this time that everything has been addressed from prior requests from the Planning Commission.

Jim Scales, Township Attorney, gave the legal review; Based on revised calculations, 96 units are permitted if the measurements are accurate. Two and three-bedroom units would be available. No additional parking is required for three-bedroom units with 3.48 parking spaces per unit.

Motioned by Dan Ophoff, seconded by Steve Walkes to move to open the public hearing.

**Motion Approved: 7-0.**

Heather Osborn- Heaford, 4578 Old Grand River Trail NE, inquired where the exits and entrances are going to be located for the parking lot of the development and how it will affect traffic flow.

No further Public comments.

Motioned by Dan Ophoff, seconded by David Van Dyke to move to close the public hearing.

**Motion Approved: 7-0.**

David Van Dyke wants to verify density for qualification and standards for storm water by staff. Agreed that they did make improvements, such as moving the dog park to the rear area of the development, reducing the driveways backing on to the entrance drive, and moving the buildings away from the commercial lot.

Wayne Harrall noted that the development needs to meet the new ordinance for storm water quality standards. Posed the question if it will disturb the wood line to the East and South of the development area during any part of the process. Ryan Wheeler advised that they will not be disturbing the woods. Requested verification if a reduction must be made in the final number of units based on the final design.

Mark Prein voiced concern of whether there is enough space for vehicles, garbage trucks, etc. to safely get in and out of those spaces of the narrow roadway and garages. The Easement area is only 30 foot wide and poses challenges with tight spots.

Dan Ophoff voiced concern about the brand-new day care that Scott Conners noted just opened this week causing conflict with traffic, and may need to do an evaluation of traffic since the daycare has opened.

Ryan Wheeler verified that if the easement and other excluded areas change on the final plan, they can remove units and make the plan work by replacing some of the units with 3-plex's instead of a 4-plex's with the basic layout staying the same.

Motioned by David Van Dyke, seconded by Scott Conners to moved to approve request for amendment to the Franklin Partners PUD located at 3300 East Beltline NE for Meadowood Townhomes if the following conditions are met:

- Meet current storm water quality standards.
- Maximum of 96 units. The number of units may have to be reduced based on final design. To be checked by staff.
- No disturbance of the tree lines to the east and south.

Motioned by David Van Dyke, seconded by Scott Conners to move to recommend approval of the amendment to the Franklin Partners PUD as in the proposed ordinance, with the above conditions.

**Motion Approved: 7-0.**

**4. Public Informational Hearing- Reserve at Knapp Bluff- Request for a 40-Unit site condominium development on a 22.83 parcel located at 4700 Knapp St.**

Pete Engles from Covenant Developments, 5136 Cascade Road SE, Suite 2A, Grand Rapids, MI began by thanking the Planning Commission and everyone that showed up for the hearing. He then further proceeded with advising that Covenant Developments is the number one active adult no step community builder in the community. They are providing new stage of life housing to benefit 44% of empty nester buyers and provide temporary or permanent living situations in this development. The housing will have a zero-step living style, with no maintenance for those who reside in this new community. The site plan for 4700 Knapp will be 23 acres while maintaining 8.5 acres of open space within the parcel of land located South of Blackberry and North of Catamount. It would be categorized as SR-Zone Residential Condominium in relation to the Grand Rapids Township Zoning and Ordinance standards. The water system would be public with a private community sewer system. The homes will not have lower levels, accessory buildings, or structures reducing visual impact.

In accordance with the feedback from the Planning Commission at the last meeting on November 22, 2022, they have made the following changes:

- Increased all units to 12,000 square feet or greater.
- Widened the road ends to 26 feet.
- Add an outbound left turn lane onto Knapp Street.
- Add sidewalks, streets, and trees.
- Have Township Engineers and Fire Chief approval.

Jim Scales gave the legal review; He advised the site condominium is subject to Chapter 25 of the Township Zoning Ordinances. This is not a Planned Unit Development seeking smaller lot sizes than permitted in the district. Consider as the criteria in the ordinance approval:

- All lots comply with SR- district, minimums.
- Public water is provided.
- Stub streets widened to 26 feet.
- Fire Chief gave approval to the stub streets.
- Conceptual approval granted for the entrance location, and sight distance by Kent County Road Commission.
- The sidewalk was added.
- Streetlights installed at intersection for sidewalks.
- Included easements for water extension to the south.
- Review of the final plans by the Township engineers
- Permits for wetlands work required from EGLE.
- Approval from EGLE and the County Health Department for the sewer system.

Wayne Harrall asked Pete Engles if a delineation was performed on the wetlands? Pete Engles responded that it had been done by Barr Engineering and he would confirm that.

Motioned by David A. Van Dyke, seconded by Dan Ophoff to move to open the informational hearing.

**Motion Approved: 7-0**

Joshua Kooistra, 4719 Catamount Trail #3, stated being a resident for the last 16 years of Grand Rapids Charter Township, 10 of those years were lived at Blackberry, the other 6 years in Catamount. Concerned it is not a functional or ideal spot for the development. Believes that drainage from the septic tank would poison the well water forcing those who use well to have to use city water. If the septic tanks fail, who is held responsible to fund fixing the problem? It falls back on us, not the developer and not the township. Additionally, he was worried about the amount of traffic that would potentially increase on Knapp putting everyone and children at more risk of danger and accidents.

Brian Nylaan, 2843 Dean Lake Ave NE, addressed the board that the only way he was informed was through the internet the day prior to today's meeting, and it was his 1<sup>st</sup> time attending a function like itself. He agrees with Joshua Kooistra on all the points he made. Further concerned about sewer issues, how close the development is to the Grand River, being able to safely get out of his driveway with the potential risk of increased traffic, and final point being if the cost of retirement is so great now will anyone be able to afford those units anyway. He objects to the new development.

Tara Pennington, 4740 Knapp St NE, mentioned sending a letter to the Planning Commission Board, which Wayne Harrall confirmed it was received and distributed. She

owns the small property to the right of the parcel where the new development would be built. Concerned that if septic fails it will contaminate wells, rivers, and the soil and her property. Too close to the Grand River for comfort if something were to go wrong. She demanded that a traffic report and wetland study be provided to the public for consideration before approving this development. Has lived at her current residence since 2016, and since then her house has flooded every spring and fall. On average they receive 6 inches of water during rainy season.

Tom Mellentine, 2375 Oakridge Trail NE #2, agreed with everyone who has presented prior and reiterated ground water is a main concern in this area, believes we will not have open space or clean water within 30 years after the development is built if approved. Low land and not enough support for the sewer and septic systems.

Ron Williams, 2580 Oakridge Trail NE, concerned that the map of the development does not show what is north of Knapp, and does not see how it will safely line up with Blackberry Court if they do put an entrance there. Concerned whether a traffic light would get put there. Concerned about the spacing and room for the condominiums. Worried about the rules and regulations that would get enforced by unlicensed vehicles, boats, RV's, and other miscellaneous congesting the streets. What about the problems of the dead ends being too small and causing nuisances with the garbage trucks for their residents that already live there. The last concern is about the safety and use of the units with owners offering Airbnb.

Denyse Seiler, 4756 Knapp St NE, advised that she lives right next to the parcel that the new development would be constructed on and is concerned about the stream next to her house being protected if they build the entrance and exit over the stream, she does not want it destroyed. Traffic is already horrendous and is difficult to get out of her driveway as is, and the concern of potential traffic increase is worrisome. Will Knapp be widened?

Symon Douglas, 3085 Hoag Ave NE, thanked the Planning Commission. Stated he has been a resident in the area for the last 48 years and would be concerned about traffic. Worried about the wildlife, and safety of the citizens as it pushes the animals more into civilization.

Jaie and Denise Loree, 4647 Knapp St NE, have lived on Knapp Street for 50 years. They claimed that the septic system for Blackberry failed at one point and their neighbors well got contaminated by this incident. The owners of that property who had the failed septic tank had to pay to put the neighbors on city water. This accident also was the cause of their septic system failing and cost money out of pocket to fix and clean everything up. He claimed he and his neighbor were not the only ones that were affected. Does not believe their plan and development would be feasible for anything to drain properly. Also has traffic concerns, density concerns, and the fact that if the system fails the people must take responsibility.

Jason Warnes, 4740 Knapp St NE, claims that everyone in the community on Knapp street would be paying the price of the potential issues of this development if it is built. Concerned about the land and animals not being protected and preserved. Reaffirmed that

many in the area live off their wells and the failure of their septic system would contaminate their water and properties and they should be held accountable for those costs.

An unknown audience member stated that she is excited to be able to have her family members live in this new retirement community development and posed the question of the time frame of when the development would complete the condominiums if approved.

Pete Engles responded to an audience member question that it was dependent on when and if the project gets approved, but if it does the current goal, is late December of 2023.

Motioned by David Van Dyke, seconded by Scott Connors to close the public hearing.

**Motion Approved: 7-0**

Wayne Harrall wants the developer to check with the Road Commission to verify that they will line driveways up with Blackberry Court. Boat and miscellaneous vehicle storage would be subject to the ordinances the township already has in place. The Master Deed will be controlling a lot within the development. There would be a pipe or culvert in place to protect the stream and they would build over. The roads will not be widened with future traffic signals, potentially located at Maguire and Knapp Ct. Biggest concern would be the septic system could not be built below the water table. Affirmed that the liability would not be on the township but on the homeowners. Has seen the septic system in Blackberry and it looks fine, how did the septic system fail and how many did it affect? Currently the road sight distance is 610 feet North- West and 1200 feet East and would believe the turn would be an issue and an extra turn lane would be helpful. Felt that this matter needs to be tabled until further information is gathered.

Dan Ophoff believes the Kent Health Department and/or EGLE might need to be involved for evaluations and approvals, to ask if this developer has ever built the same or similar septic system in one of their other developments. Pete Engle stated they have not. Further agreed with tabling the matter to gather more information.

David Van Dyke noted that the developers and owners of the land have met ordinance requirements. Advised that they are allowed to develop if they have met all the ordinances and that all scenarios have already been considered. Supported having another meeting before a Public Hearing with more information before approval, that this is just the 1<sup>st</sup> step of the process. Jim Scales did respond that a further public hearing is not required for this type of development by statute, but the Planning Commission can have one if they want one. Noted that the Township does not have the right to deny a septic system, that is all through the State and County Health Departments. Would like an assessment done by the Township engineers on the storm water situation and concerns of the corner of Knapp Street. Further agreed with tabling the matter to gather more information.

Scott Connors had concerns he would like to address regarding public safety and welfare and concerned about the plans for the septic system overall. Also, does not like the interior stub streets, danger to large vehicles and not good safety practice, the sight distance of the

driveways is not safe, and there is a left turn that is dangerous that is more than 90° to see around and more than 110° to attempt the turn. Asks that the firm performing the wetlands delineation be noted on the plan. Stated he has seen a hole dug in the soil in that area and it filled up with water almost instantly and has known someone personally who had been damaged from all the rain and flooding.

Jim Scales verified the owners would be liable for septic system failures, damage, and expenses. The Township does have the option to take responsibility but is not recommended. Clarification that this development does meet ordinances, subject to approval of EGLE and the Health Department, and storm water ordinance compliance. However, we may ask for further data and information according to the approval process in reference to Mark Prein's question.

Rob Cummins spoke on behalf of Covenant Developments that there are 30 units with individual septic tanks in their Sanctuary development. Each house has a septic tank which drains into a community drain field which is maintained monthly. It is professionally maintained. A lot of septic issues and failures come from not keeping up with the maintenance required to keep the systems from failing.

Pete Engle verified that the Barr wetland assessment was done back around June and July of 2022. The soil was examined by Excel. Does not think the idea of making a mound system would be the correct course to take.

Mark Prein requested a map to show what is around the parcel site for a 500-to-600-foot radius. Advised that this is a clay area so the developers would most likely have to build upwards.

Steven Waalkes is concerned that this is a not a good plan for this parcel.

Motioned by Dan Ophoff, seconded by David Van Dyke to move to table the request so the developer can present all required information for review by the Planning Commission Board. Staff will set a meeting date upon receipt of required information.

**Motion Approved: 5-2.**

Connors and Waalkes opposed.

**5. General Public Comment(s):**

Motioned by David Van Dyke, seconded by Dan Ophoff, to adjourn the meeting. The motion passed unanimously, and the meeting was adjourned at 9:03 P.M. EST.

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David A. Van Dyke, Secretary