

**PLANNING COMMISSION OF THE
CHARTER TOWNSHIP OF GRAND RAPIDS
Minutes January 25, 2011**

A regular meeting of the Planning Commission of Grand Rapids Charter Township was held at the Township Hall on Tuesday, January 25, 2011 at 6:59 pm.

Present were Chair Susan Molhoek, Secretary Wayne Harrall, Commissioners; Edward J. Robinette, Mark Prein and Beverly Wall. Also present were Township Planning Director Richard Sprague Jr. and Treasurer Clerical Assistant Kara Ronda. Absent were: Vice Chair Stephen Fry and David VanDyke.

Chair Sue Molhoek announced this would be Planning Director Rick Sprague's last meeting.

1. Approve minutes of November 23, 2010.

Wayne Harrall, seconded by **Ed Robinette**, moved to approve the minutes with the following changes:

- p.1, 1st sentence, change date from September 28 to November 23
- p.1, last bullet, remove the word "help" and insert "improve traffic flow"
- p.2, 3rd paragraph from bottom, sentence starting Mark Prein, insert "would" between "it" and "hurt"
- p.3, 2nd paragraph, change "east" to "west"
- p.3, 3rd paragraph, add a "d" to the end of "indicate"

Motion approved unanimously.

2. Annual Election of Officers.

Sue Molhoek nominated Wayne Harrall as Vice Chair and Dave VanDyke as Secretary. Ed Robinette nominated Sue Molhoek as Chair.

Ed Robinette, seconded by **Bev Wall**, made the motion to approve the election of officers.

Motion approved unanimously.

3. 2010 Year End Report.

Rick Sprague explained this is an annual report that is passed on to the Township Board. Rick gave a brief overview of the happenings in 2010.

Ed Robinette, seconded by **Wayne Harrall**, made the motion to pass the 2010 Planning Commission Annual Report on to the Township Board.

Motion approved unanimously.

4. Public Hearing- Development Plan for a rezoning request at Cascade and Forest Hill Avenue which includes a Walgreen's Pharmacy.

Todd Stuive, from Exxel Engineering, representing the developers, updated the commissioners on the changes since the conceptual plan:

- 3 acres of property at the southwest corner of Forest Hill Ave and Cascade Road, currently there are 2 office buildings on the site and a Macatawa Bank
- the parking lot has been reconfigured to allow a direct connection to Macatawa Bank, giving the bank an independent drive, the bank enter/exit has been changed to Forest Hill Ave, which allows 65 feet of open space at the bank
- parking spots have been reduced down to 67 from 72, which is under the township's requirement
- a sidewalk along Medical Park Drive has been added
- the ground signs have been revised to eliminate LED reader (replaced with a stationary text sign), a joint 'Macatawa' and 'Walgreen's' sign will be placed on Forest Hill Ave
- a 4 foot easement, so the sidewalk on Forest Hills Ave will not have to be relocated, has been added
- signage: instead of 3 signs with 60 square feet per side, the applicant would rather do 2 signs of 90 square feet and eliminate the sign on Medical Park Drive, asking to put the maximum into 2 signs instead of 3
- updated landscaping plans with a revised drainage system, which is designed for 100 year event hard surface along Forest Hill Ave and the township engineer agrees with this concept

Rick Sprague summarized his staff report. Rick also noted there were emails submitted and should be acknowledged during the Public Comment.

Wayne Harrall asked Rick Sprague about the current allowance on ground signs. Planner Rick Sprague stated the proposed ground signs will meet the township's ordinance, the exception is wall signage.

Ed Robinette, seconded by **Wayne Harrall**, moved to open the Public Hearing at 7:24pm.

Motion passed unanimously.

Mort Hoffman, 42 Robinhood Dr SE, is opposed to the proposal:

- resident of the township for 36 years
- against proposal because Forest Hills Foods in the same area and believes it will be detrimental to their community involved based business

- noted Forest Hills Foods has been in business for 59 years and currently employs over 250 people
- noted Walgreen's is a national company, unlike Forest Hills Foods, and Walgreen's is not concerned with the township
- expressed there are already 6 pharmacies in the immediate area and feels we do not need anymore
- concerned about traffic
- urged the board to deny the proposal and stick with friends and neighbors

Deena Haynes, resides in Cascade but husband has a business in building to be torn down, is opposed to the proposal. She agreed with Mort, does not believe there needs to be another pharmacy in the area and is concerned with traffic.

Doug Kochneff, 841 28th St SW, Wyoming MI, is in support of the proposal:

- owns 2 buildings on Cascade Rd and 1 on Forest Hill Ave
- believes if the 2 current office buildings on the site were full, traffic would be worse at peak times
- stated the buildings currently there are functionally obsolete
- believes there is over built office space in the current area
- stated Walgreen's also has generous programs, like Forest Hills Foods, and believes Walgreen's would be a good tenant
- likes the proposed green space at the Walgreen's location, but would like to see more vegetation

Patty Smeelink, 1000 East Paris Ave SE, is in support of the proposal:

- local business owner, owns the pharmacy at 1000 East Paris Ave
- thinks competition is good
- Walgreen's would create jobs and revitalize the area
- noted her hours are limited, and believes on a personal level the Walgreen's would help her business
- stated Forest Hills Foods is great, but it is primarily a grocery store

Dr. James Eldersveld, 4500 Cascade Rd SE, part owner of building immediately west of the property in discussion:

- explained the hardship/difficulty on Medical Park Drive- not a road, better described as a driveway which links 5 office buildings
- "sharing arrangement" started back in 1974
- the traffic volume on Cascade Rd has complicated the egress of Medical Park Drive do to how busy it is at rush hour/busy times
- noted the traffic is terrible and it is hazardous to turn left
- stated when the drive was established, Cascade Rd was a 2 lane road, now it is 5 lanes
- explained the traffic situation has become worse since the increase of Forest Hills and Cascade businesses and residential areas
- stated there must be a traffic light at the intersection
- not opposed to the Walgreen's, but concerned about traffic and safety

Sue Molhoek explained traffic light concerns go to the Kent County Road Commission, not the Township.

Mark Buddy, with HB Real Estate Holdings, is in support of the proposal:

- noted several letters have been submitted from local businesses in support of the Walgreen's
- stated there is a maintenance agreement in place for his property and Dr. Eldersveld's property and explained the drive was repaved a few years ago

Mort Hoffman, 42 Robinhood Dr SE, commented that usually where there is a Walgreen's, there is usually a CVS or Rite Aid.

Wayne Harrall, seconded by **Ed Robinette**, moved to close the Public Hearing at 8:44pm.

Motion passed unanimously.

Sue Moelhoek mentioned letters of opposition from neighbors have been received.

Bev Wall asked about the 5 standards for approval of a PUD. Rick Sprague noted the 5 standards are stated in the ordinance submitted by the township's lawyer, Jim Brown, on page 13.6.

Mark Prein indicated he had the Master Plan and:

- does not feel the proposal meets the requirements, referring to 21.1, "small scale stores"
- feels the intent of the Master Plan is not to allow drive-thru's in the area
- 21.3.1.g, regarding architecture, the site is at the crown of the hill which will highlight the inconsistency
- 3 spaces in the driveway are a concern
- does not feel larger wall signs are justified, does not meet the intent of the zoning district

Ed Robinette stated the square footage is smaller than allowed. Mark Prein questioned a small square store or foot print. Ed noted that is the language. Ed also noted drive-thru's are not listed as permitted or prohibited. Wayne Harrall asked Rick Sprague if drive-thru's could be permitted. Rick Sprague stated because of the location, distance to homes and surrounding uses, it may not have a negative impact. Sue Molhoek noted a drive-thru could be well done, or masked, at this location.

Wayne Harrall noted the west side of the building will get a lot of exposure and may need fake windows (spandrel glass) to be more consistent with the other sides of the building, agrees with Mark Prein that it does not meet the architectural flow.

Todd Stuve stated internally, that space will not allow for real windows because it is in the pharmacy area, they would have to be spandrel glass.

Ed Robinette touched on the parking concern and wondered if the 3 parking spaces

should go. Mark Prein believes they should, make it a clear drive way. Wayne Harrall agrees they should be eliminated to make more green space.

Mark Prein asked if the Macatawa Bank ground sign will go away if the Macatawa sign is on the Walgreen's. Rick Sprague stated he does not believe that is their intent because it is the main bank sign.

Wayne Harrall asked about the retaining wall heights. Todd Stuiwe stated they are 2-3 feet, 3 feet max and fall protection will be added along wall near sidewalk. Wayne noted it makes sense to have a sidewalk on the east side. Wayne also touched on the letter signed by GDK and Heather Hills.

Wayne asked about the intent of the sidewalk; easement to the township or to function as a sidewalk. Rick Sprague stated it would be for pedestrian access only. Sue Molhoek asked about the signed letter between GDK and Heather Hills. Wayne Harrall noted Heather Hills concern is committing to a location, they do not want a commitment, but open to expansion in the future. Andrew Vredenburg, a lawyer for Foster Swift, explained the easement is very simple and noted Rick has a copy, but encouraged the board to come up with a more formal agreement.

Mark Prein asked what the township engineer suggested for the slope between the 2 parking lots (Macatawa Bank and Walgreen's). Wayne Harrall stated 1:3, but he would like to see it a little flatter. Brett Doctor noted 1:4 is better for them, but they would require extending a retaining wall. Wayne verified they are discussing the southeast corner of the Walgreen's parking lot. Brett confirmed that is correct. Wayne stated he would be in favor of extending the wall if it could flatten the slope.

Ed Robinette, seconded by **Bev Wall**, moved to approve the rezoning request and recommend to the Grand Rapids Township Board with the following conditions:

- Architectural element on west wall (to break up wall), replicating a similar look as on the other side
- Eliminate the three (3) southerly parking spaces
- Reconfigure to improve traffic flow
- Signage: to be kept at 60 square feet per side with frontage (no change to ordinance)
- Minimum of 1.5 foot tall berm along Cascade Road with shrubs on top, as shown on plan
- Plantings to be approved by interim planner and/or township staff
- Meet condition of township engineer to maintain 1:4 slope
- Add language, "easement needed for sidewalk at Medical Park Drive" to p.5 (f) (2) of the proposed ordinance

AYES: Ed Robinette, Sue Molhoek, Wayne Harrall and Bev Wall

NAYES: Mark Prein

Motion approved 4-1.

5. Discussion- Conceptual Development review for PUD-3 rezoning at 2571 East Beltline Ave which includes a Daycare Center.

Dale Van Kooten, a consulting engineer from Medema, Van Kooten & Assoc, presented the plan:

- state of the art child development care center, there are many centers in Michigan and neighboring states
- center provides care for children 6 weeks of age to 12 years old
- hours of operation are Monday-Friday, 7:00am-6:00pm
- only 25% of the site will be the building
- proposed location is close to elementary schools
- noted an existing water main, south of 3 Mile Rd
- the site will be using a temporary lift station until sanitary sewer becomes available
- noted the drain commission is asking them to update the retention pond to current standards; reshape the pond because of shared access to the north
- explained they originally accepted shared access to the south but are really concerned about it and would prefer not to have it because of traffic; the depth of the parcel is not deep enough, to the south is a steep grade and cannot lower the parking much more
- asking for a variance to a landscaping condition regarding trees; 7 ft. grade change and asking to eliminate screening requirement
- buffering landscape in front
- noted a vinyl clad fence that surrounds almost the entire building
- asking for a fencing variance; intent is to enclose all doors with the exception of the front door

Sue Molhoek noted Rainbow Daycare facilities are well managed and well built.

Rick Sprague gave the staff report.

Rod Blight, from Rainbow Daycare, stated he is willing to do a 3 foot fence along the front and chain link fencing on the sides.

Wayne Harrall stated at lot 253, coming off of Apple Valley Plat, there is an existing concrete pad, he asked how close the houses are and how the residential properties could be buffered. Rod Blight stated if allowed, Rainbow Daycare would have to agree to fix/repair it and the 8 inch sanitary would be abandoned.

Wayne Harrall referenced the egress to the south and stated considering the traffic, he said he would leave as a paper easement, as drawn. Wayne also stated all this is timing; they have to have a driveway and questioned the applicant if the driveway butts up to the eye doctor. The applicant replied they have 630' of frontage on the East Beltline and there are three houses that separate them from the eye doctor.

Mark Prein asked if it was a dry pond with grass and asked if it was mowed and maintained. The applicant replied yes it is a dry pond and there is a restriction to MDOT right of way.

Ed Robinette stated to move up the slope. Mark Prein said there needs to be something to break the visual, he suggested to have something lower, to break up the landscape. Rod Blight made reference to a mowable slope. Wayne Harrall suggested having a visual on the fence.

6. Discussion- Text Amendment regarding Sign measurement.

Planner Rick Sprague asked the commissioners to review the proposed text amendments in regards to determining size of signs.

Wayne Harrall likes it, and says it makes sense. Ed Robinette asked if it is a negative thing to have it written as vague as it is. Wayne Harrall replied he likes the flexibility it gives. Sue Molhoek felt item B on page 2 was not clear. Ed Robinette questioned with it being so vague will it be more of a problem than a solution.

Rick Sprague gave the commissioners the example referring to the 'Thumb' sign, where does the sign start and end; does it just count letters, etc.

Ed Robinette asked if a Public Hearing needs to be held. Rick Sprague replied, yes at some point down the road.

Ed Robinette and Wayne Harrall suggested the Township's attorney, Jim Brown, look at item B on page 2.

7. General Public Comment.

No Township residents were present for Public Comment.

8. Update from the Township Planning Director.

Planner Rick Sprague stated there was nothing on the agenda for February. Rick thanked the commissioners for working with him over the last 7 years.

This will be Planner Rick Sprague's last meeting.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:16 pm.

David VanDyke – Secretary