

**PLANNING COMMISSION OF THE
CHARTER TOWNSHIP OF GRAND RAPIDS
Minutes of the February 23, 2010 Meeting**

A regular meeting of the Planning Commission of Grand Rapids Charter Township was held at the Township Hall on Tuesday, February 23, 2010 at 7:00 pm.

Present were Vice Chair Stephen Fry, 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. Chair Susan Molhoek and Commissioner David VanDyke were not present.

1. Approve Minutes of January 26, 2010.

Ed Robinette, seconded by **Bev Wall**, moved to approve the minutes with the following changes;

- 1st page, 3rd bullet under item #1, change work to word
- 1st page, 2nd bullet under item #3, capitalize the c in Church
- 2nd page, 3rd paragraph from bottom, change an to a, omit the word internal, change purposed to proposed and insert the word “internal” before concrete sidewalk
- 3rd page, 2nd paragraph, insert “along the bike path on Leffingwell” after the word tape and before the word for
- 3rd page, 4th sentence under Betsy Coutchie, omit the word on
- 4th page, 3rd paragraph, change form to from
- 4th page, 5th paragraph, change purposed to proposed
- 4th page, 2nd bullet from the bottom, insert “or other shared lot” after property and before and, add “approval” at the end of the sentence and omit “further review”

Motion passed unanimously.

2. Public Hearing – PUD Amendment for Signage – 618 Kenmoor Ave.

Tim Gort, Global Forex Trading, requests to amend an approved PUD-4, Office PUD (Ordinance #201 and #220) to allow for additional signage;

- recently relocated world headquarters within Grand Rapids Township from Alten Oaks
- new facility houses 150+ employees and will meet demands of the company’s future growth
- made a 12 million dollar investment with the facility relocation
- feel the proposed signage is decorative, low impact and tastefully designed
- renovation of building is complete with exception to signage
- removed Atrium Woods sign on south end of building (approx 16 sq ft)

- do not have any opportunity for GFT signage until Kenmoor ends-tough to let visitors know exactly where they are as they arrive
- vast ample vegetation and foliage hide the building and existing signage
- building sits back significantly from Kenmoor compared to adjacent businesses and those off the highway with larger signs
- want potential employees to easily locate the world headquarters
- host many international partners where the visual representation of the brand and leadership are highly important for initial and ongoing business transactions
- the signs would be low ambient, back lighting, no fluorescent lighting, no front lighting
- square footage would be the same, wall signage would only be visible to one neighbor, not visible from the highway
- neighboring business has given consent
- new signage will not result in any traffic or other safety hazards
- low-level, back-lighting will minimize impact while increasing visibility of company
- signage design is clean, visually attractive and not lit with fluorescent lighting

Rick Sprague noted some items from the Staff Report:

- properties zoned PUD-4 are allowed one individual ground sign per parcel, to be no larger than 24 sq ft, total signage is not to exceed 32 sq ft
- the ground sign meets the requirement for height (less than 8 ft) but is much larger than 24 sq ft when measured using the outside perimeter (57.5 sq ft)
- wall signs total 61.25 sq ft, the combined request for all new signage is 118.75 sq ft which is more than 3.5 times the amount of signage allowed per section 30.13

Wayne Harrall asked when the building was constructed. Steve Fry responded approximately thirty years ago.

Ed Robinette, seconded by **Wayne Harrall**, moved to open the Public Hearing at 7:23 pm.

Motion approved unanimously.

Paul Rissi, 4228 Baywood

- explained the building is located immediately behind his property
- he is not in favor of granting proposal
- believes it will be a negative impact on the neighborhood
- GFT increased outdoor lighting and took the original green barrier away
- surrounding property values have been negatively effected
- GFT owner has demonstrated he does not care about the neighborhood

Judy Benson Fowler, 4050 Baywood

- explained the lights from the building have not been turned off on her side
- complained about the lights glaring in her windows

- said GFT had no consideration for the neighborhood when the green barrier was removed
- feels it effects the neighborhood horribly

Dave Cooper, 4242 Baywood

- explained he would like to see the green barrier that was removed, put back

Wayne Harrall, seconded by **Ed Robinette**, moved to close the Public Hearing at 7:28 pm.

Motion passed unanimously.

Steve Fry asked Rick Sprague about the requirements for the green barrier and if it was part of the site plan approval. Rick replied the trees and bushes were cut before the Township was made aware of the happenings. Rick explained since then Global Forex has gone in and planted Evergreens because they had removed a portion of the required green space. Global Forex is also waiting for the undergrowth to grow in to see how that impacts the neighbors.

Wayne Harrall noted the existing sign is 57 ½ square feet and questioned if the original was the same size. Rick Sprague confirmed they are using the same size base.

Wayne Harrall questioned if the wall signs were not meant to be seen from the highway, then why the need for them to be so large. Wayne also stated he has no problem with re-facing the sign, but does not see the need for the size. Wayne also commented he would like to see something done with reestablishing some green space and what could be done with the lighting.

Ed Robinette asked the applicant, Tim Gort, if they have checked for light trespass with a meter. Tim stated yes they had and there was less than a foot candle along the tree line.

Steve Fry explained the unique characteristics of the property. Steve stated the sign is probably 300 feet back from the turnaround and the image can not be seen from the street. He also explained the wall signage is for the street purpose, in order to be seen from the street. Steve noted this has always been an issue for this property.

Wayne Harrall noted the intent for previous signage approvals was so the business's signage could be seen from the freeway, which Global Forex said was not their purpose for the wall signage.

Bev Wall countered Steve Fry's previous comment by stating Mazda Great Lakes occupied the same building for years in which they had many international visitors and did not receive complaints on finding the building. Bev said she was not finding a hardship for the wall sign. Bev agrees with the sign, but not on the wall sign.

Mark Prein stated the ground sign is the same square footage so there is no modification in size, and the wall sign essentially faces another building. Mark asked Rick if there was

consent from the other business. Rick explained the applicant stated they did receive consent from the business, but the Township had not received any verification.

Bev Wall questioned if there is a hardship that needs to be addressed regarding the wall signage. Bev stated there were thirty plus years of success in a business with the existing sign.

Steve Fry explained the building sat empty for five to seven years after Mazda because a business big enough to occupy the building could not be found. Steve said GFT is a very good use for the property and the applicant has done a great job with the design of the sign. Bev Wall asked if the hardship had been addressed. Steve Fry stated it is a unique lot and the signage presented had been done in tasteful manor. Steve said this is a world headquarters for GFT and does not believe they are over asking for the signage. Bev explained it is three times more than what Grand Rapids Township allows.

Wayne Harrall stated he does not believe the wall sign would cause any type of traffic hazard and he is not totally opposed to it, but he would like to see it smaller. Bev Wall asked if he was proposing GFT cut the size of the wall sign in half. Wayne replied no, he would just like to see them scale it down.

Steve Fry asked the applicant if they were willing to reduce the size of the ground in order to get the wall sign. Angela, from GFT, stated the whole idea was to use the existing ground sign.

The applicant, Tim Gort, stated the wall sign occupies only 4% of the wall. Bev Wall explained the issue is the Ordinance.

Wayne Harrall asked the applicant about their timing and if they are willing to reduce the ground sign for the wall sign. Wayne also said he would like more information on the green space from the Planner.

Wayne Harrall, seconded by **Ed Robinette**, moved to table the applicants request to allow additional signage.

Motion passed unanimously.

3. Public Hearing – Sign Ordinance Amendments.

Planner Rick Sprague explained no changes had been made and it is the same Ordinance that the Commissioners looked at last month. Rick explained the Ordinance outlaws electronic signs and reader boards.

Ed Robinette, seconded by **Wayne Harrall**, moved to open the Public Hearing at 7:55 pm.

Ed Robinette, seconded by **Mark Prein**, moved to close the Public Hearing at 7:56 pm.
Motion passed unanimously.

Ed Robinette, seconded by **Wayne Harrall**, recommended approval to the Township Board.

Motion passed unanimously.

4. 2009 Annual Report.

Planner Rick Sprague explained it is required by a new Planning Act to submit a summary of the years happening to the Township Board.

Ed Robinette, seconded by **Wayne Harrall**, moved to accept the report and recommended to forward the report to the Township Board.

Motion passed unanimously.

5. Public Comment.

No Township residents were present for public comment.

6. Update from the Township Planning Director.

Planning Director Rick Sprague stated there was nothing on the agenda for March, but it is possible Global Forex will be back.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:01 pm.

Wayne A. Harrall – Secretary