

City of Grand Ledge
Planning Commission Meeting
Minutes from Meeting Held on
Thursday, April 2, 2015

Chairman Mike Stevens called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

Attendance - Present: Mike Stevens, Bob Doty, Bill Kane, Jamie Malecki, Todd Gute, Ron Graber, Steve Baribeau, Eric Morris & Matt Salmon. Also present: Zoning Administrator Sue Stachowiak, City Administrator Adam Smith & Council Representative Keith Mulder.

Pledge of Allegiance – Mr. Salmon led those present in the pledge of allegiance.

Approval of the Agenda

Mr. Doty made a motion, seconded by Mr. Baribeau to approve the agenda as printed. On a voice vote, the motion carried 9-0.

Approval of the Minutes

Mr. Doty made a motion, seconded by Mr. Gute to approve the March 5, 2015 minutes as printed. On a voice vote, the motion carried 9-0.

Notice of Agenda Items Conflicts - None

Business from the Floor - None

NEW BUSINESS

Proposed Meadow Woods Site Condominium Development – Vacant property east of existing Meadow Woods Subdivision

Ms. Stachowiak said that the site plan is for Phase 1 (21 lots) of a proposed condominium development located on the vacant land immediately east of the existing Meadow Woods subdivision. The subject parcel is zoned R-MD, Single Family Residential, which district permits site condominium developments in accordance with the standards of Section 220-17 of the Zoning Ordinance. She said that the proposed site condominium plan is consistent with the plan that was approved in 1997, upon annexation from Oneida Township, for the complete build out of Meadow Woods Subdivision.

Ms. Stachowiak reviewed some of the responses to the questions that were raised at the public hearing in March. She stated that condominiums are a form of ownership rather than a type of development. The only real difference is the way in which the ownership of the land is recorded through the County Register of Deeds. From a development standpoint, they are exactly the same. She said that both types of development must adhere to the exact same development standards. This includes, but is not limited to, minimum lot size, building setback requirements and standards for infrastructure improvements. All lots in the proposed site condominium development meet or exceed the minimum lot size requirements established by the Zoning Ordinance for the R-MD district (8,450 square feet in area, 65 feet minimum lot width).

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Ms. Stachowiak said that the Zoning Ordinance determines what land can be used for. Both the Planning Commission and City Council must make their decisions based on whether the development plans demonstrate compliance with the regulations and evaluation criteria established in the Zoning Ordinance and its consistency with the land use pattern being advanced in the City's Master Plan. If found to be in compliance with all standards of the Zoning Ordinance and Master Plan, from a legal standpoint, the City does not have the discretion to deny the plan.

Ms. Stachowiak said that the property is zoned R-MD, Medium Density Residential, which permits single family residential use only. She said that apartments cannot be constructed on the site. She also said that the minimum square footage for the homes will be 1,400 square feet and the maximum is 3,100 square feet. There will be a variety of building designed, several examples of which are available for review at City Hall.

Ms. Stachowiak said that the sign, along with the other junk and debris at the east end of Bolton Farms Lane has been removed. She said that the trailers and construction equipment at the east end of St. John's Chase has also been removed. Therefore, all violations on the subject property have been corrected.

Ms. Stachowiak said that Phase 1 of Meadow Woods Subdivision contained 26 lots on 12.89 acres of land for a gross density of 2.01 dwelling units per acre. The proposed condominium development is for 21 dwelling units on 6.22 acres of land for a gross density of 3.37 dwelling units per acre. The primary difference between the 2 phases is that the lots on the west side of Hawks Ridge have depths of 180-200+ feet in order to provide greater building setbacks from Tallman Road which is unpaved and therefore, generates a great deal of dust/dirt. The majority of the lots in the rest of the subdivision have depths of 150 feet which is consistent with what is being proposed for the condominium development. For further comparison purposes, the other phases in Meadow Woods Subdivision have gross densities ranging from 1.76 dwelling units per acre to 3.00 dwelling units per acre.

Ms. Stachowiak said that there is no evidence to suggest that newly constructed home of the same size and in compliance with the same development standards as the existing houses would have any negative impact on their property values. She also said that the roads in the subdivision were built to City standards which the knowledge that there would continue to be development of the land to the east and hence, additional construction traffic on the roadways. She stated that it was never intended that there would be an additional access point from the development to W. Main Street.

Mr. Stevens stated that he understands the concerns of the neighbors but the proposed development complies with the Zoning Ordinance in all respects and is consistent with the development plan that has been in place for the remaining build out of the subdivision.

Ms. Malecki asked about the minimum size requirement for houses in comparison to what the applicant is proposing.

Ms. Stachowiak stated that the minimum ground floor area for a house in the R-MD district is 500 feet and the minimum total floor area requirement for a house in this district is 950 square feet. She said that

the applicant is proposing to construct houses that range in size from 1,400 square feet to 3,100 square feet.

Mr. Kane pointed out that the applicant has the right to construct smaller houses as long as they comply with the minimum requirements set for the in the Zoning Ordinance.

Mr. Morris said that the applicant's proposal complies with the requirements for development in the R-MD district and therefore, he is supportive of the request.

The other members of the Commission agreed with Mr. Morris.

Mr. Morris made a motion, seconded by Mr. Gute to recommend approval of the site condominium plan for Phase 1 (21 lots) of Meadow Woods Condominiums, prepared by Kebs, Inc., dated January 19, 2015, conditioned upon compliance with the applicable items contained in this staff report, the City Engineer's letter dated February 24, 2015 and the Fire Dept. letter dated February 19, 2015. On a roll call vote (9-0), the motion carried unanimously.

A member of the audience that did not identify himself asked the Commission is they are elected or appointed.

Mr. Gute said that the Commissioners are appointed by the Mayor and confirmed by the City Council.

Special Land Use Permit – Gasoline Station at 720 S. Clinton Street

Ms. Stachowiak said that there were some issues raised at the March meeting that needed to be resolved:

1. Location of bike racks
2. Relocation of the dumpster enclosures to the area east of the retail building
3. A pedestrian entrance to the dumpster enclosures
4. The location of the tank vents
5. A buffering plan for the area along the west property line, north of the retail building, to address the concerns regarding light glare and storm water run-off between the subject property and the neighborhood to the west.

Ms. Stachowiak stated that while the large sets of the site plan show all of the required information, just to make it easier to identify the items needing to be addressed from last month's meeting, she had the Speedway engineer identify them in red on the 11" x 17" copy that is included in the packet.

Mr. Stevens stated that the detention pond was not shown on the plan that the Commission reviewed at the last meeting. He said that this is a concern as it is a major change to the plans. He said that it is right up against the retaining wall to the north and will be very aesthetically unappealing. Mr. Stevens stated that he does want to see the curb along the west property line. He also said that the turning movements from both Saginaw and Clinton Street seem very awkward and may not function as well as they appear on paper.

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Mr. Doty said that he cannot support the site plan with the detention basin as shown.

Ms. Stachowiak stated that there could be underground detention, although it is more expensive.

Mr. Kane said that having storm water retention the property is a mistake, even if it is underground as it will negatively impact the future use of the property north of the gas station building.

Mr. Morris asked what the applicant will be doing that will require a permit from MDOT.

Mandy Gauss, CESO, Inc., 8164 Executive Court, Civil Engineer representing Speedway, said that it will cost an additional, approximately \$150,000. She also said that reconstruction of the site, by itself, requires a permit from MDOT. She said that there is a 6" City storm water drain on M-43 and an 8" MDOT drain on Clinton. She said that MDOT will not allow them to discharge storm water into the system at a rate higher than what is being discharged right now.

Mr. Kane stated that he is supportive of the development and is happy to see that the bike racks and the pedestrian entrances to the dumpster enclosures have been included. He said, however, that he cannot support the detention pond.

Mr. Baribeau agreed with Mr. Kane and stated that he too, cannot support the detention basin.

Mr. Morris said that there is green technology that could be utilized such as rain gardens, porous pavement, etc. He said that he is not supportive of the detention basin as proposed. He also said that he is not supportive of underground detention either as it prevents future construction on the site and is difficult to maintain.

Ms. Gauss said that above-ground detention is difficult to clean. She also said that porous pavement and rain gardens are not appropriate for a gas station as there is no way to prevent contaminants from seeping into the ground.

Mr. Stevens said that the Commission is business friendly but there may be better solutions to handle the storm water without having a large detention basin on the site. He said that this is a major intersection in Grand Ledge and the Commission wants to ensure that it is developed in an aesthetically pleasing manner.

Ms. Gauss said that the pond can be kept 10 feet off the retaining wall to the north.

Mr. Morris said that the gas pumps and hence, the contaminants that may be on the pavement will be confined to the south end of the site and should not impact storm water management systems at the north end of the site.

Ms. Stachowiak said that City Engineer Greg Minshall said that he would be glad to work with the City and the developer to come up with some solutions that everyone can live with.

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Mr. Gute said that this is good development and he is pleased that they found a way to utilize part of the former Family Fare building. He stated that this is the major intersection in Grand Ledge and he would like to get Greg Minshall's input on this matter to see what kind of downstream options are available to handle the capacity generated by the development. Mr. Gute said that the site is already almost 100% covered by impervious surface and since the run-off will not be increased, he is questioning why detention is being required at all. He asked why the lot line between the 2 sites is so irregular.

John Kello, 27995 Halstead Road, Farmington Hills, MI, stated that the lot line involved the need to provide adequate setbacks for the gas station canopy and to keep the parking along the west lot line north of the property retail building with that site.

Mr. Gute stated that if there has to be detention, he would prefer to see it concentrated to the northwest corner of the site and screened with trees.

Mr. Stevens said that the detention basin on the Meijer property is screened by the building but everyone knows that it is there.

Mr. Graber said that he is not in favor of moving the detention basin closer to the neighbors to the west.

Mr. Gute said that with the pathways in the area, the site will get a lot of pedestrian and bicycle traffic as it is very uncomfortable to cross M-100 and M-43.

Alan Chakonas, 730 Jolliet Street, Speedway, stated that they will work with the City Engineer on the detention basin issues. He said that this is a 3-4 million dollar project and they want to be a good neighbor.

Mr. Doty said that this is an outstanding development and he looks forward to what can be done with the detention situation so that it can move forward.

Mr. Kane complimented the representatives from Speedway on the development. He said that they need to work with MDOT to evaluate the run-off from the site. He also said that the detention pond will be dry most of the time anyway and hopefully, there is a way to avoid having detention on the site altogether.

Mr. Stevens suggested removing the pavement north of the retail building to reduce some of the impervious surface on the site.

Mr. Gute asked that the applicant place some more arborvitae around the tank vents to help screen them from view of the street.

Ms. Gauss agreed. She said that they will work with the City to come up with some alternative methods of handling the storm water.

Mr. Gute suggested working with MDOT to get the requirement for storm water detention waived altogether.

Ms. Stachowiak stated that both the SLU and the site plan will have to be tabled since the Zoning Ordinance requires approval of the site plan by Council as well since it is a Special Land Use permit for a gasoline station.

Mr. Doty made a motion, seconded by Mr. Baribeau to table the Special Land Use permit request for a new Speedway Gasoline Station at 720 S. Clinton Street until the next meeting. On a voice vote (9-0), the motion carried unanimously.

Mr. Doty made a motion, seconded by Ms. Malecki to table the site plan for a gasoline station and retail building at 720 S. Clinton Street until the next meeting. On a voice vote (9-0), the motion carried unanimously.

Zoning Ordinance Amendments – Section 220-80, Site Plan Review

Ms. Stachowiak said that there is no rush to move this forward since there are already some ordinance amendments pending at the Council level.

The Commission decided to hold off on moving this item forward.

OTHER BUSINESS

Joint Planning Committee Report

Mr. Doty said that the Committee met last Thursday. He said that \$30,000 of the millage money will go to the DDA.

Grand River Water Retention, i.e. Dam

Mr. Doty said that the Planning Commission has gone on the record recommending that the City Council put together a plan to go with boulders in lieu of the dam.

Mr. Kane said that the DDA and Parks & Recreation Commission will be asked to make a similar recommendation.

Mr. Stevens said that it needs to be in the Master Plan. He said that the reason that W. Jefferson is 3 lanes is because it is in the Master Plan.

River Park Master Plan from Rounds property to Fitzgerald Park – no new information

Boat dock and ramp with proper circulation and parking

Mr. Smith said that the development grant has been put on hold pending the property acquisition grant. He said that it is highly unlikely that this project will occur in 2015.

Use and disposal of Jefferson St. City Hall & Police Department

Mr. Smith questioned why this item is on the Planning Commission agenda each month.

Several Commissioners stated that they like having this item on the agenda so that if there is a proposal for the reuse of the former City Hall, the Commission will have input into its reuse or redevelopment.

Mr. Baribeau stated that the Planning Commission should have had input into the process for purchasing the new city hall building and utilizing it for a city hall.

Mr. Smith said that the Master Plan is what the City Council uses as a guide for the reuse of its properties. He said that the current Master Plan is due for its 5 year update and the reuse of the former City Hall can be addressed in that document. Mr. Smith said that the site does qualify for an "OPRA" which stands for Obsolete Property Rehabilitation Act and is a tax incentive to encourage the redevelopment of obsolete buildings. This Act allows the taxable value of the property to be frozen for a period of time to allow for some of the rehabilitation costs to be recovered.

Mr. Smith said that it is critical for the City to work at the speed of business from an economic development standpoint. He said that this is the first Planning Commission that he has worked with that only met once each month. This means that while an issue may only take a day or two to resolve, the matter has to wait 30 days to come back which eats up a lot of time that could be used for construction. He said that in the case of Speedway, there is a 4 million dollar project that will be on hold for another 30 days over an issue that could probably be resolved in a day.

Mr. Stevens said that the Commission has held special meetings at times and the Commission is sensitive to the needs of business. He said that the Commission just felt that the detention issue was too big of an issue to pass with just a condition of approval.

Ms. Malecki said that the detention pond was not a good idea and was a major change to the plans from what was submitted last month.

Mr. Baribeau said that he is not interested in meeting twice each month. He said that it is important for things to be done right instead of rushed through the process. He also said that when the Commission has moved ordinance amendments up to the Council, they do not get acted upon in a timely manner any way. Mr. Baribeau said that he likes the way the Commission does things.

Mr. Graber asked about the status of the ordinance amendments that are pending at the Council level.

Mr. Smith said that he has the list of ordinance amendments as contained in the Planning Commission's Annual Plan and 2015 Work Plan. He said that they will be provided to the City Council. He also said that he will continue to work with on relationships between the various Boards, Commission, staff and Council.

Zoning Administrator's Report - None

Zoning Board of Appeals Representative's Report

Ms. Stachowiak stated that there two setback variance cases for the upcoming ZBA meeting.

Council Representative's Report

Mr. Mulder stated that communication is important and he thought that the Planning Commission kept in the loop on the City Hall project. He said that the Commission did a good job this evening and he agrees with the Commission on the detention basin matter. Mr. Mulder asked the Commission to consider a special meeting to keep the Speedway project moving at the speed of business.

Mr. Stevens said that sometimes there is not much that needs to be done to make good development great development. He said that sometimes the Commission has to challenge the applicant to improve the development. Mr. Stevens said that the detention issue prevented the Commission from moving the Speedway project forward this evening. He also said that in some communities, such as Meridian Township, a project of this nature could take up to a year to get its approvals.

Mr. Morris said that it is not the Commission's place to "teach the applicant a lesson" but rather to help facilitate the development. He said that he would not be opposed to a special meeting so that the requests do not have to wait till next month which would eat up 30 days of the construction season which is already limited in Michigan.

Mr. Morris made a motion, seconded by Mr. Doty to schedule a special meeting in 2 weeks to revisit the Special Land Use Permit and Site Plan Review requests for 720 S. Clinton Street. On a voice vote (9-0), the motion carried unanimously.

Mayor's Report - None

Comments from Commissioner's

Mr. Doty stated that the City Administrator has a new website for the City and it is outstanding.

Mr. Doty said that while there not many details to be shared, there is a builder looking to annex 155 acres into the City.

Mr. Kane welcomed Mr. Salmon to the Commission.

Mr. Graber welcomed Mr. Salmon as well.

Mr. Baribeau said that he was glad that Ms. Stachowiak made it clear that the Commission did not have the discretion to say no to the Meadow Woods Site Condo request inasmuch as it complied with the Zoning Ordinance. He said that he likes having the plans delivered to his house as it is much easier to review a large plan on paper rather than on the computer. Mr. Baribeau said that the email from the Mayor as regards development was very good.

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Mr. Baribeau said that Mr. Doty has placed a lot of historical pictures of Grand Ledge on Facebook that are really interesting to look at.

Mr. Gute asked Mr. Graber if there are any “hot button” issues that the Commission needs to be aware of with respect to the development of the Speedway site

Mr. Graber said that he was not aware of anything.

Mr. Morris encouraged everyone to vote yes on Proposal 1. He said that he is a transportation engineer and read part of an article on the status of the roads and the benefits of Proposal 1. Mr. Morris said that Michigan ranks dead last for road conditions in the United States and it is crucial to invest in our infrastructure. He also welcomed Mr. Salmon to the Commission. Mr. Morris said that he knows Mr. Salmon because he went to school with him wife here in Grand Ledge.

Mr. Salmon said that met with the Mayor last week. He was born and raised in Grand Ledge and is impressed with the depth and diversity on the Planning Commission. Mr. Salmon said that he is a 13 year veteran of the Lansing Police Department, although his degree is in business administration. He said that his wife teaches in the Grand Ledge School System and lives in a house very close to the downtown. Mr. Salmon said that he hopes to be a contributing member of the Commission and is very pro-business.

Ms. Malecki welcomed Mr. Salmon to the Commission. She thanked Adam for the new website. Ms. Malecki said that there is a refrigerator on Main Street that is a safety hazard and needs to be removed.

Comments from Chairman

Mr. Stevens thanked everyone for attending and for the good discussions that took place this evening. He also thanked Mr. Smith for attending the meeting this evening and asked how Proposal 1 would benefit the City of Grand Ledge.

Mr. Smith stated that if approval, Proposal 1 would mean \$304,000 annually for investment in roads, in addition to what the City is receiving from the County millage that was recently approved. He said that the City would also receive 474,000 in revenue sharing from the State.

Adjournment

Ms. Malecki made a motion, seconded by Mr. Gute to adjourn the meeting at 8:50 p.m. On a voice vote, the motion carried unanimously (9-0).

Submitted By:

Susan Stachowiak
Zoning Administrator

Jamie Malecki, Secretary
Planning Commissioner