

To: Commerce Township Board of Trustees

From: Commerce Township Planning Department
David Campbell, AICP – Planning Director

Date: February 7, 2019

RE: February 2019 Monthly Planning Department Report
(covering December 28, 2018 through February 6, 2019)



Development Proposals

- **Five & Main mixed-use PUD** – At their meeting on January 8, 2019, the Township Board approved an amendment to the Five & Main Planned Unit Development (PUD) that was originally approved in April 2018. The most significant change is the addition of a 4-story hotel to the Development Plan, in the general area of the former Township Library. The next step in the PUD approval process is for the developer (Bruce Aikens of Robert B. Aikens & Associates) to return to the Planning Commission with a fully-developed PUD Site Plan that is consistent with the Development Plan the Township Board approved on January 8. The approved Development Agreement includes the flexibility for the developer and the Planning Commission to agree to some reasonable changes to the PUD Site Plan relative to that which the Township Board approved on the Development Plan, but more significant changes would have to return to the Township Board for their approval.
- **Amendment to the Commerce Towne Place condominium** - Concurrent with the above, the Township Board on January 8 approved an amendment to the Commerce Towne Place master condominium to split Unit 9 into two new condominium Units 13 & 14, with Unit 13 absorbing the parcel of the former Township Library. Unit 13 would be Phase 1 of the Five & Main development, and Unit 14 would be future Phase 2. Per the Zoning Ordinance, any amendment to a condominium requires a recommendation from the Planning Commission and approval by the Township Board.
- **Conceptual discussions** – The Planning Department continues to have discussions with potential developers on several significant properties throughout the township including:
 - **Beaumont property** (NW corner of M-5 and Maple) – Beaumont continues to market their vacant properties on the north side of Maple west of M-5, and most of the interest that is discussed with the Planning Department is for some form of residential development. Beaumont is continuing to evaluate and establish a baseline for the potential ground contamination on the site from the former industrial building on the Welch Road side of the property.
 - **Fetter property** (Haggerty north of 14 Mile) – The 25-acre vacant property on the west side of Haggerty north of the Newberry Square shopping center has been targeted for development for decades, and at various points through history was going to be developed with a Kmart, Lowes, and new Kroger. The interest the Planning

- Department receives is for retail along the Haggerty Road frontage, with a more passive use (residential, office, age-restricted living, etc.) behind the frontage uses.
- Faranso property (SE corner of Wixom and Glengary) – Pulte Homes continues to work on the potential to develop the 32-acre property with single-family homes. 93 homes were proposed to the Planning Commission in September, and the PC's concern was with the density and the proposed lot sizes. Ralph Faranso had approval for a 78-home neighborhood in 2006, but never started construction.
 - Sleeth Road “gravel pits” – The owners of one of the three gravel pit properties continue to meet with the Township on the potential for a waterfront residential development on the property. The challenge is the water & sanitary sewer infrastructure would have to be extended to the properties, which would be a significant cost to any developer.
 - **Rock Ridge rezoning** – On January 8 the Township Board approved an amendment to the Township's Zoning Map to rezone the undeveloped 10 acres of the Commerce Ridge mobile home community from MHP (Mobile Home Park) to R-1D (One-Family Neighborhood Residential). Commerce Ridge is a 42-home mobile home community on the north side of Pontiac Trail east of Beck Road. The property is approx. 15 acres, but the existing mobile home community only occupies about 5 of those acres and the other 10 remains undeveloped. The owners (Dennis & Jacob Park) will split off the undeveloped 10 acres as a new parcel, and rezone that new parcel R-1D so they can develop a new 17-home neighborhood to be called Rock Ridge. With the Zoning Map amendment approved, the owner / developer will come back before both the PC and the TB for approval of a condominium site plan, including details of the lot sizes, road layout, civil engineering and infrastructure, landscaping, open space, etc.

Zoning Board of Appeals (ZBA)

- January 24, 2019 special ZBA meeting – The ZBA will held an educational special meeting prior to the regular meeting, which is something our ZBA does on an annual basis.
- January 24, 2019 regular ZBA meeting – The ZBA considered an appeal for a proposed new home on Farrant. The home included a “walkout basement”, but because of how much of the “basement” was exposed above grade, the Zoning Ordinance defines it not as a basement but as a story. Since two stories were proposed above it, the home would be three stories where the Zoning Ordinance allows up to 2.5 stories. The petitioner requested to be tabled so he could work with his architect to find a better solution, and the ZBA honored his request. The appeal might be back before the ZBA on March 28.
- February 5, 2019 special ZBA meeting – The ZBA considered an appeal for a proposed new home on Arlis that would not meet the minimum side setbacks. The ZBA approved the variances for the proposed home in September 2017, but the owner at the time never started construction, and the variances expired after one year. At the Feb. 5 meeting, the current property owner received new approval for the exact same variances to build the exact same house. The meeting had to be rescheduled from 4pm to 7pm to ensure there was a quorum of three regular ZBA members.

Planning Commission

- January 7, 2019 – At their January meeting, the Planning Commission held a public hearing for the rezoning of a portion of the Commerce Ridge property on the north side of Pontiac Trail, east of Beck, from MHP (Mobile Home Park) to R-1D (Single Family). The PC recommended approval of the rezoning, and the Township Board approved the rezoning the next night.
- February 4, 2019 – At their February meeting, the Planning Commission held two informal discussions:
 - A Township-initiated rezoning of eleven properties along the south side of Commercial between Comstock and Broadway from B-2 (Community Business) to R-1D (One-Family Neighborhood Residential). The Planning Commission and the homeowners in attendance agreed that rezoning the eleven properties would protect the existing homes by making them conforming land uses, and would also be consistent with the Future Land Use Map in the Township’s Master Plan. A public hearing on the Zoning Map amendment will be held during the PC’s meeting on March 4, and potentially will be included on the Township Board’s March 12 agenda for adoption.
 - Wilson Marine received direction from the Planning Commission on screening the outdoor storage area of their service building at 4266 Haggerty. Wilson Marine is seeking special land use approval for expansion of that outdoor storage area. They hope to implement the Planning Commission’s direction into a revised site plan that the PC could consider approving at their meeting on March 4.

M-5 non-motorized bridge

The concrete medallion of the Township’s official seal was installed on the westerly bridge abutment in late January. The engineered shop drawings for the wave panels and the “Commerce Township” letters have been re-submitted by the contractor to MDOT for review. It appears there are still questions from MDOT on how those panels are going to be safely lifted into place and installed by the contractor while keeping M-5 open to traffic below.

M-5 roundabout fences

The MDOT, RCOC, and Township agreed to install a chainlink fence w/ opaque fabric covering within the medians of northbound M-5 and westbound Pontiac Trail at the M-5 roundabout. The fence reduces the average speed of traffic entering the roundabout by forcing drivers to slow down and look to their left for traffic already circulating through the roundabout. The Township, RCOC, and MDOT considered different options for the barrier in the medians, including walls and landscaping. The chainlink fence was agreed upon as an interim solution, and will be re-evaluated once it can be determined what the ultimate buildout of the roundabout will be based upon pending development in the vicinity. The fence was installed in the fall, and it didn’t take long before a northbound vehicle spun out and ran into it. In hindsight, we’re glad we didn’t do something more elaborate (and expensive) than a chainlink fence only to see it get run over. RCOC will repair the damage, although it’s fair to assume the fence repair is not at the top of their list of priorities given the havoc the weather fluctuations are having on County roads.