

**CHARTER TOWNSHIP OF COMMERCE
PLANNING COMMISSION MEETING**

Monday, February 6, 2012
2009 Township Drive
Commerce Township, Michigan 48390

CALL TO ORDER: Tom Jones, sitting in as Chairperson, called the meeting to order at 7:00pm.

ROLL CALL: Present: Tom Jones, Vice Chairperson
Brian Winkler, Secretary
Bill McKeever
Debra Kirkwood
Jay Czarnecki
Absent: Larry Haber, Chairperson (excused)
Also Present: Kathleen Jackson, Planning Director

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

MOTION by Kirkwood, supported by Winkler to approve the Planning Commission Meeting Minutes of January 16, 2012, as written.

MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

UPDATE OF ACTIVITIES

Debra Kirkwood – Township Board of Trustees

- A quarterly discussion meeting was held two weeks ago.
- Negotiations were reviewed for the paid on call employees.
- A suggestion was also presented to combine the Planning and Building Departments with an appointed director; however, the Board was not in favor of the idea.

Bill McKeever – Zoning Board of Appeals

- No update as there has been no agenda.

Brian Winkler – Downtown Development Authority

- Our last meeting was short.
- Budget shortfalls for 2012 were discussed along with repayment of advances.
- Randy Thomas of Insite Commercial delivered a brief presentation on the property and discussed leads.

PUBLIC DISCUSSION OF MATTERS NOT ON THE AGENDA

None

ITEM I: SP11-10-29 – AUGUSTA WOODS

Hunter Pasteur Homes of Farmington Hills MI is requesting an amendment to the existing approved landscape plan for the Augusta Woods Subdivision located on the south west inside corner of Wise and Carroll Lake Roads.

Kathleen Jackson, Planning Director gave a review.

The petitioner, Randy Wertheimer, President of Hunter Pasteur Homes, 32255 Northwestern Hwy, Ste 180, Farmington Hills, MI, was present along with Neil Blazofsky, Michigan Automatic Sprinkler, 4350 Pineview Dr, Ste A, Commerce Township, MI, and Bennett Mazell, Landscape Design, 31175 Kingsley Ct., Novi, MI, to address the proposal.

Randy Wertheimer – We purchased Augusta Woods from a private equity firm that had taken over the property from the original developer. Upon review of the landscape plans, we felt it was very important for the development and the community to redo the entrance landscaping. Page 2 of the report shows a detailed plan including extensive landscaping on each side and 55 evergreens along the front on Carroll Lake Road. We have no issues with planting along the front of the berm as Kathleen Jackson indicated. I would also mention that item #2 in the report, regarding the island landscaping, has not been changed from the original plan.

Kathleen Jackson – This was approved under previous staff and the species were not originally indicated. The Planning Commission now insists upon species that are salt tolerant and drought resistant as too many plantings have died in previous developments.

Randy Wertheimer – The evergreens are salt tolerant and will have a 2-year warranty. Currently there are only a few homes in the area. We plan to spend the money to maintain this area until most of the homes are sold and an association is then formed. The entrance landscaping will be something to be proud of and will help us to sell houses. It will also increase the value of the existing homes. As for trees in the backyards, these lots are not huge. We are not trying to save \$250 per house. We feel that young families with kids would prefer to have the open space in the backyard for play area. We've sold similar houses in other communities and know that a tree can disrupt the ability to play in the yard. We'd rather see a second tree in the front yard. Also, adding the tree on Wise Road will not be an issue. That was simply an error and it will be added.

Bennett Mazell – We do a lot of maintenance and we are responsible for the plant materials. I spray all trees down with a wax coating once or twice to protect them. Because salt flies, I usually go up a little higher with the plantings to keep them away from the salt. And I have no problem with providing a 2-year warranty. I cannot provide a warranty for the front entranceway without proper irrigation. As for other areas, I can work with the sprinkler extensions and spigots. The island trees are Colorado Spruce, Douglas Fir, or Norway. Again, I will be maintaining the area and I have a reputation to uphold. I will cut the grass, fertilize and install everything. A 2 year warranty will be given.

Neil Blazofsky discussed the irrigation on the berm and at the main entrance, the Township and county permits and fees, and road access to water for the Wise Road and retention pond areas.

Randy Wertheimer – Regarding Article 29 for the detention basin – currently it is a bunch of cattails. Would we need to maintain this area, or put landscaping there?

Kathleen Jackson – When this subdivision was originally approved, these specifics were not in the ordinance. However, the Zoning Ordinance is now very specific for detention basin landscaping and indicates the type of ground cover to be used, the tree requirements, etc. Although the Planning Commission does have some flexibility, the very nature of a detention basin is a fragile eco-system. It is my recommendation that the Planning Commission require this to be Administratively approved. That will allow you to work with me and the landscape architect to ensure this is planted according to the ordinance requirements.

Bennett Mazell – The location of the evergreens is not a problem. The farther away they are from the road, the less impact salt will have upon them. These will be 8-12' evergreens.

Open discussion continued regarding staggering the berm plantings, and providing trees with burlap and cages as a precaution for protection and support.

Commission Comments:

McKeever –

- The report shows evergreens are 10-12', but you said 8'?
- Also, why is the sign only visible for motorists heading north on Carroll Lake Road? It is angled, and even if it were two-sided, you could only see it from one direction. What is the reasoning behind having it facing south?

Bennett Mazell – I have 30-8' trees. I know that 3 are in the island, and we added 20 toward Leo's Coney in the retention area which is so open.

Randy Wertheimer – Some trees along Wise Road are 8'. Could we put a sign on each side of the entrance? If there is only one, we would have to put it too close to the road for it to be visible from both directions. Is there a lot of traffic from the north?

Kathleen Jackson – While the development is under construction and homes are for sale, they are entitled to have a second sign for advertising. Once the development is established, they are then limited to one sign. I can get traffic counts for morning or evening traffic if the Planning Commission is open to which side of the drive the sign may be on.

McKeever –

- In agreement with items 1-8 outlined in the report.
- In response to backyard trees, I'm fine with whatever the Commission approves.

Kirkwood –

- I know you said the lots are small. What are the dimensions?

Randy Wertheimer – The width is about 60' and the length is from 115' to 120'. From a new construction stand point, 50-70' is on the smaller side, and 90' or more is decent. These are 2,000-2,900 square foot homes. The kids will need more space in the backyards.

Kathleen Jackson – Most of the 29 lots that initially went before the Planning Commission are about 9,100 square feet. 8 of them are over 10,000 square feet. The minimum width is 56'. That is less than $\frac{1}{4}$ of an acre.

Kirkwood – With almost $\frac{1}{4}$ acre there's no reason there can be a tree in the backyard.

Kathleen Jackson – We can offer them the choice to put the tree in the front or back yard, but keep the net total of 2 trees per lot.

The Commissioners agreed with this suggestion.

Kirkwood –

- I would also add that the warranties should continue on the trees until such time that maintenance is turned over to the association.
- I have seen situations where it has taken much longer than two years for that to occur.

Czarnecki – Satisfied to this point.

Winkler –

- Other than the retention pond landscaping, does this plan meet the ordinance? (Yes.)

Jones –

- We reviewed maintenance with Jay on the 16th of January. We want to point out that it is important, when building in an area where people already live, to ensure that they have access to get in and out of their property. It is an absolute must.
- When this was approved, wasn't there a construction road that runs out to Wise?

Kathleen Jackson – Yes there is a secondary entrance as required by the Fire Department. It has a break-away gate and this could be used during construction. They have not put a top coat on it yet, and usually don't until they have built 80-85%. I would think they would want to use Wise Road as opposed to Carroll Lake Road. This can be part of the motion, or we the Building Department can make sure it is implemented if any soil erosion issues arise. At that time, they would be required to use the secondary entrance.

Randy Wertheimer – We were not planning on it as there are only 4 current homeowners; however, we would not be opposed to that. We have set aside funds to put on the top coat at around 80%.

Jones – So it would not be mandatory for them to use that entrance?

Kathleen Jackson – If issues arise, you could then force them to use it.

McKeever – Is that an issue with the RCOC? Because it is not a recognized curb cut?

Kathleen Jackson – I don't believe so. A lot of subs have had secondary entrances and circulation plans during development.

MOTION by Winkler, seconded by McKeever, to approve, with conditions, Item SP11-10-29, Augusta Woods, the request by Hunter Pasteur Homes of Farmington Hills MI for an amendment to the existing approved landscape plan for the Augusta Woods Subdivision located on the south west inside corner of Wise and Carroll Lake Roads. Approval is for the reason that the information submitted by the applicant and the information presented to the Planning Commission demonstrates that the proposed meets the requirements and standards of the Commerce Township Zoning Ordinance. Approval is subject to the following conditions:

1. Administrative approval of the location and placement of the evergreen trees on the berm; and
2. Administrative approval as to the plant material used in the island, as it is not irrigated. A drought and salt tolerant species should be used;
3. Re submittal of a landscape plan by a sealed landscape architect; and
4. Determination as to the appropriateness of the revised design; and
5. Replacement of the additional evergreen along Wise Road; and
6. Determination of the requirement for the secondary deciduous tree to be located in the rear of the property; and
7. Detention basins landscaped according to the Zoning Ordinance requirements in Article 29; and
8. A copy of the recorded conservation easement for the roadside open space area. The petitioner stated that there is an easement, but the Planning and Building Departments do not have a copy of such; and,
9. The requirement that 2 trees will be provided per lot; and,
10. The landscaping will be under warranty until such time that the maintenance of the site is released to the homeowner's association; and,
11. If any issues arise during development, such as soil erosion or access issues, use of the secondary entrance, off Wise Road, will be required as a construction entrance.

MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

ITEM II: MASTER PLAN DISCUSSION

Kathleen Jackson, Planning Director gave a brief review. The redlining was included to keep you informed of the updates and deletions.

On page 1-3, Legal Basis, the planning act used to be for townships and the other was only for cities and villages. The new Michigan Planning Enabling Act now covers everything so this has been updated with the new statute.

Page 1-5 was the only other change in Chapter 1.

Page 2-2 was updated as we now have our own library. Page 2-7 has been changed to include the Township as a whole. Numbering was also adjusted in this section. On 2-8, this is now reflected in the new ordinance. At the bottom of that page, the sentence was incomplete on item 4.

Chapter 3 was changed in 2006. On 3-7, if you recall when we did the master plan, we initially looked at how many REUs we have left and maybe even trying to stall development because we did not have; but the wastewater treatment plant has changed that. On 3-8 a statement was added on the DDA and the Martin Parkway.

Kirkwood – On 3-8, in the red area, Oakley needs to be corrected.

Chapter 4 covers the census data. I could not have done this without SEMCOG and hope that the Township Board will continue to approve our membership. They were very helpful when we consulted with them by phone. The 2010 census web site is difficult to navigate and SEMCOG is a great help.

Our goal is to present 4 chapters to the Commission each month for 2 more months. Then, the public hearing will be held. We will notify the utilities, railroads, adjacent communities, and the county.

Winkler – Is it too late to add something?

Kathleen Jackson – No, please do.

Winkler – I missed the August meeting, and two things come to mind.

First, I would suggest in the section on existing land uses, we put in a heading about having a healthcare hub, anchored by Huron Valley Hospital and the Trilogy building. There seems to be an opportunity to build upon what is already in the Township as far as medical facilities. Beaumont will also fall into that area of the Township, and it is worth mentioning, particularly with the aging population. The hub will be better and more convenient.

Secondly, on page 2-2, a positive to add would be the conversion of railroads to bike paths, as this is finally getting some traction after several tries.

Kathleen Jackson – Yes, the Rails to Trails. We can add that.

Open discussion continued regarding the progress that has been made in the Township over the past 5-10 years. And the standards have not only been maintained, but they have improved despite the economy. Short sales and the impact upon state equalized values was also addressed.

OTHER MATTERS TO COME BEFORE THE COMMISSION

The next Planning Commission meeting will be Monday, March 5, 2012 at 7:00pm.

ADJOURNMENT

MOTION by Kirkwood, supported by McKeever, to adjourn the meeting at 7:52pm.

MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

Brian Winkler, Secretary