

**FINAL
CHARTER TOWNSHIP OF COMMERCE
PLANNING COMMISSION MEETING**

Monday, November 4, 2024
2009 Township Drive
Commerce Township, Michigan 48390

A. CALL TO ORDER: Chairperson Parel called the meeting to order at 5:00pm.

ROLL CALL: Present:

Brian Parel, Chairperson
Brian Winkler, Vice Chairperson
Joe Loskill, Secretary
Bill McKeever
George Weber
Brady Phillips
Caitlin Bearer

Also Present:

Dave Campbell, Township Planning Director
Paula Lankford, Senior Planner

B. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

MOTION by Loskill, supported by Phillips, to approve the Planning Commission Regular Meeting Agenda of November 4, 2024. **MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY**

C. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

MOTION by Winkler, supported by Loskill, to approve the Planning Commission Regular Meeting Minutes of October 7, 2024, as written.

MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

Regarding the October 7th minutes, Phillips commented that someone reviewing the minutes might confuse the DDA Treasurer Phillips with Planning Commissioner Phillips. He wondered if there might be any point in time where it needs to say Molly versus Brady in the minutes.

D. UPDATE OF ACTIVITIES

George Weber – Township Board of Trustees

- The last scheduled meeting was on October 8th. I think it was maybe the lightest agenda in my 10 years as Trustee.
- Two SAD's were approved; one for a road project, and one for the Cooley Lake aquatic weed control.
- We awarded the contract for the Victory Park dog park. They're starting on the entrance and the parking lot, and by December, they'll start on the fencing.

Dave Campbell – We put up a great big sign that says, “Dog Park Coming Soon”, just so people understand what's happening in the park.

Discussion took place regarding dog park rules and enforcement, the large and small dog areas, preventing dog fights, verifying vaccinations, and park access. Weber *NOTED THAT THE PARK WOULD BE “ENTER AT YOUR OWN RISK”, AND HE* explained that there is a potential plan to provide a key or an RFID card for access to get into the park. In order to get that, the dog would need to be licensed, which leads to the vaccination trail. Fees were also discussed, and he believes Commerce Township residents might not be charged fees; however, non-residents likely would be.

Weber –

- We approved the DDA Interest Agreement.
- We basically finalized the discussion section for the Township Budget. We went through all the departments and all the line items. I believe Tuesday will be the final approval for the budget.

Bill McKeever – Zoning Board of Appeals

- We did not meet since our last meeting.

Brian Winkler – Downtown Development Authority

- The October 15th DDA meeting was very routine.
- Regarding the Insite Commercial Report:
 - Work continues on both the Continental and LaFontaine developments.
 - Five & Main – Aikens: Prospective market, entertainment, and hotel tenants have been reviewing the project.
 - Bruce Aikens is scheduled to update the DDA at the December meeting.
- The DDA approved the 2025 meeting schedule.
- Directors Report: The Outrun Hunger 5K race through the DDA is scheduled for this Saturday, November 9th. I believe Dave Campbell is running in that.

Dave Campbell – I'm volunteering for it with my son. They still need volunteers if anybody is looking for something to do on Saturday morning for a good cause.

Chairperson Parel – Dave, do you have any idea what Bruce's plan is?

Dave Campbell – I know that he would like to develop at least two new buildings out along Pontiac Trail, to the west of the main entrance into Five & Main. He apparently has a deal with Dort Federal Credit Union, and then he also wants to do what he is calling a shopette, which is a fancy word for a retail plaza. It would be 3-4 tenants, with one being Starbucks, so they of course would have a drive-through component. This would all be consistent with the master development plan for that whole area. I assume he will give the DDA more details on that. I know his engineer and architect have been talking to me about the timeline. My questions back to them were, how does this fit into the overall plan? Is the credit union going to do their portion of the landscaping now, or will they wait and do one big landscaping planting once the project is further along?

Discussions took place regarding phasing of the retail portion of Five & Main, including the credit union, shopette, restaurants, gourmet market and hotel.

Dave Campbell – There are advantages to developing along the perimeter in that rather than having to tie into the infrastructure that goes through the center of the site, he can tie into the existing water and sewer along the road, up to a certain point. That also probably generates cash flow that can be reinvested back into the core of the development.

Jay James – Building Department

On behalf of Jay, Dave Campbell provided the following:

- Jay provided his standard report of activities in the Building Department.
- I told Jay he did not need to attend this meeting.

E. PUBLIC DISCUSSION ON MATTERS FOR WHICH THERE IS NO PUBLIC HEARING SCHEDULED

Chairperson Parel opened to Public Discussion on matters for which there is no public hearing scheduled.

Garry Bucholz, 8598 Golf Lane Dr, Commerce Township – I live on the Union Lake Golf Course. My purpose for being here tonight is I understand the golf course sold to a developer. I don't know whether anyone on the Planning Commission has heard about it?

Dave Campbell – I can speak to it. It has been owned by a developer for many years, and they have been leasing it to an operator who has been operating the golf course. Now, to the best of my knowledge, that developer doesn't have any specific plans for it as of yet. They have just been sitting on it for quite a while as a potential investment or development opportunity. Maybe that's coming in a year or 10 years, I honestly don't know.

Garry Bucholz – Okay. Well, that's good news for everyone living on the golf course. We were under the impression, and I don't believe in rumors, so that's why I'm here, about having commercial stores with apartments up above and multi ... development of homes, whether apartments or single-family homes, et cetera.

Dave Campbell – Nothing like that has been proposed, or certainly not approved.

Garry Bucholz – Well, that will put a lot of people's minds at ease.

Dave Campbell – Now, Paula has been here longer than me. People have come and gone and looked at that property for a long time. The challenge of that property is the floodplain and the soil conditions. It's basically the overflow for Union Lake. As you probably know, it's very soggy. So, to build anything, and especially anything of the magnitude that you're describing, it would take a whole lot of engineering and moving of dirt. I think that's the big reason why that property remains undeveloped at this point. In fairness to you and your neighbors, somebody is going to do something with it someday, and it's just a matter of when. I honestly don't know when.

Garry Bucholz – Right, but they'll have to go through the approval process, through Planning and Building?

Dave Campbell – Yes, and it is zoned single-family. So, for someone to do anything other than single-family homes, it would require a zoning change, or what we call a PUD, and there's certainly a process for all of that.

Garry Bucholz – We were worried. We moved there because of the wildlife that's there. It's not a highly professional golf course. We've enjoyed our 8 years there, and we're hoping to enjoy many more years.

Weber – I think the present developer has owned it for more than 10 years. As Dave said, it's zoned single-family residential. So, the likelihood that there's going to be apartment buildings or retail is ... you don't want to say never, but it's not likely.

Garry Bucholz – Right now it's not zoned for that, so as Dave said, it would have to go through a zoning change.

Dave Campbell – One thing Paula wanted to clarify, and she's right, is that the actual hard corner, where Sally's Bar used to be, that is zoned commercial. But the entirety of the golf course is zoned single-family. Again, lots of people through the years have looked at that corner. At one point, somebody wanted to do a Tim Horton's there. But again, they get hung up on the soil conditions. It gets really expensive to put a foundation on that property because it's so mushy.

Garry Bucholz – I went on the EGLE website for wetlands and there's various different designations for the creek, the ponds and everything.

Discussion continued regarding the history of the golf course.

Dave Campbell – At the risk of repeating myself, I would be silly to try to promise you that it's going to be a golf course forever. At some point, it is going to be worth it to someone to make the expenditure to use it for something else.

Garry Bucholz – So if a developer went in, they would have to treat the wetlands under special conditions.

Dave Campbell – If they're going to impact the wetlands, then in addition to needing necessary approvals from the Township, they would also need approvals from the State of Michigan.

Garry Bucholz – Well, I appreciate that. I'm going to go back and give the good news to the neighbors because there's a lot of concern there. Dave, you answered all my questions.

Discussion continued regarding the development rumors and where they may have started.

Chairperson Parel – Dave, where is the best place for this gentleman to check with Commerce Township to find out what's going on?

Dave Campbell – My card is on the Planning Department counter. You can always check in with me and Paula. There's also an option on our website to get our newsletter. Within that newsletter are all of the agendas for all of the meetings, including the Planning Commission.

Garry Bucholz – I get those.

Dave Campbell – Okay, so as those agendas come out, keep an eye on them and if you see anything that pertains to that property...

Loskill – Would they be within the 300 feet to be notified in case something was going on?

Dave Campbell – I don't know. Do you think you're within 300 feet of the property line?

Garry Bucholz – Oh, yes.

Dave Campbell – The reason that 300 feet is relevant is if they were to try to rezone the property, which I suppose is possible, then by State law, we send a letter out to every property owner within 300 feet.

Garry Bucholz – Yes. One of my questions was, if it was at the Planning Commission already, is there a conceptual plan. And two, if I sit on my back deck, what am I seeing?

Loskill – Same thing you're seeing now for a while.

Garry Bucholz – Which is great.

Chairperson Parel – If that does happen, and they do come in for a rezoning, as Dave mentioned, it will be posted on the property, and we post it in the newspaper, and there is an opportunity for a public hearing when you could come in to speak.

Dave Campbell – You're correct. We put a sign on the property that says, "Rezoning Proposed". There is a notice that goes in the Oakland Press, and everybody within 300 feet gets a letter in the mail.

Garry Bucholz – Actually I think most of the neighbors that back up to the golf course, we actually maintain a good chunk. We go beyond the border of our property and maintain that grass. I appreciate it. Thank you very much everyone.

Chairperson Parel closed Public Discussion on matters for which there is no public hearing scheduled.

F. TABLED ITEMS

None.

G. OLD BUSINESS

None.

H. SCHEDULED PUBLIC HEARINGS

None.

I. NEW BUSINESS

ITEM I1. Planning Commission Bylaws

Chairperson Parel – Dave, it's my understanding that not much has changed.

Dave Campbell – Nothing has changed. We do this every year; we review the bylaws to make sure that they still say what you want them to say. I don't think we've changed them since 2021 during covid when we were doing remote meetings, and we had to make changes to comply with the OMA, which the State changed at that time. If you see anything that is worth discussing in terms of change, now would be the time to discuss it.

Weber – Dave, in the discussion of the documents, it talks about how I'm not eligible to be either the Chairperson, Vice Chairperson or Secretary. But, in the bylaws itself, it does not say that. It only says I cannot be the Chairperson.

Dave Campbell – I want to double check.

Paula Lankford – Yes, it says shall not serve as the Chairperson.

Dave Campbell – Are you in 1.6?

Paula Lankford – 1.2.

Weber – So that should also include Vice Chairperson and Secretary.

Dave Campbell – We can certainly add it. I suppose any officer could serve as chair, but I have no objection to making the edit that the ex-officio shall not serve as an officer.

Loskill – Do we need to say that?

Dave Campbell – State law says we must have an elected official on our Planning Commission, but that elected official may not serve as chair. If ever the chair and vice chair were absent, then the secretary would have to chair the meeting. Therefore, he can't be any of the officer roles.

MOTION by Weber, supported by Loskill, to update Section 1.2 of the Bylaws to identify that the ex-officio member would not be serving as an officer of the Planning Commission. **MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY**

ITEM I2. Election of 2025 Officers

MOTION by Weber, supported by Phillips, to retain Chairperson Brian Parel, Vice Chairperson Brian Winkler, and Secretary Joe Loskill as the Officers of the Commerce Township Planning Commission for 2025. **MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY**

ITEM 13. Planning Commission 2025 Meeting Schedule

Dave Campbell – I think the only date we moved was September for Labor Day. Paula looks at all holidays for conflicts. And, if something does come up, we can always propose a change.

Chairperson Parel – Any opposition to any of these dates? If not, could someone please make a motion?

MOTION by Loskill, supported by Phillips, to approve the Planning Commission 2025 Meeting Schedule as presented. **MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY**

J: OTHER MATTERS TO COME BEFORE THE COMMISSION:

Weber inquired about when Kroger would be coming back before the Planning Commission. Dave Campbell noted that the developer is still negotiating with Kroger, and they are not yet ready. Weber is not in favor of gas pumps in front of that location. He counted 102 pumps within a mile of the site, once Costco opens its new gas station. Open discussions continued regarding the proposed development, whether it will be a Special Land Use or a PUD amendment, the alternative development which was apartments, and potential impacts on existing gas stations. Weber also compared the Kroger proposal to the apartments and noted that the latter would have provided more landscaping as opposed to a sea of asphalt. Dave Campbell added that there were public benefits proposed with the original PUD for the apartments. Chairperson Parel also discussed back filling the location that Kroger would vacate.

Discussion took place regarding the possible sale of the *It's a Matter of Taste* restaurant.

K: PLANNING DIRECTOR'S REPORT

Dave Campbell discussed the following with the Commissioners.

- **NEXT REGULAR MEETING DATE: MON., DECEMBER 2, 2024, AT 7:00PM.**
- We've covered Kroger.
- The other development that you saw as a concept is Crumb Road, next to Goodwill. That's where the Schafer Group, who is also doing Midtown on Haggerty, wants to do condos. They're working on that and maybe we will see that in December.
- I'll also mention, there are several pieces of property that we keep getting calls about, including today, located at the northeast corner of S. Commerce and Oakley Park, to the north of 7-Eleven, and kiddie corner to Walled Lake Central. There is a 20-some acre wooded piece there owned by a family named Vanderpool. It sounds like there's interest in the market.

Chairperson Parel – What's it zoned?

Paula Lankford – Single-family.

Weber – I can't fathom that's 20 acres. It doesn't feel that big.

Dave Campbell – It's very wooded.

Dave Campbell -

- Then there's the properties we collectively call the Hopkins' Properties. There's one next door to Long Farm on the north side of Commerce Road. Hopkins also owns another 40 acres further west, closer to the corner of Commerce and Carey Road. We've had people tire-kicking that area too.

Chairperson Parel – Also single-family and nothing solid?

Dave Campbell – Everybody is asking about single-family, but of course, no one wants to do R-1A zoning. That's what both of those properties are zoned. Everybody is going to want to do a cluster option where they keep the houses close together and they don't have to put in as much infrastructure.

Chairperson Parel – The boat guy is moving along. He missed his deadline, but he's moving dirt.

Dave Campbell – There are tangible signs of progress at Lakeside Marine. I also hope you've all seen the progress on either side of Walmart, both with Five & Main and the apartments, and with LaFontaine going vertical.

Weber – And there's an Acura sign on LaFontaine's other location.

Discussion continued regarding site improvements at the LaFontaine Acura location at 2199 Haggerty Road.

Vice Chairperson Winkler noted that he will not be in attendance at the December Planning Commission meeting.

L: ADJOURNMENT

MOTION by Phillips, supported by Weber, to adjourn the meeting at 5:44pm.

MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

Joe Loskill, Secretary