

MINUTES OF THE GAINES CHARTER TOWNSHIP PLANNING COMMISSION  
FOR THE REGULAR MEETING HELD ON  
September 22, 2016  
AT THE GAINES CHARTER TOWNSHIP OFFICES  
8555 KALAMAZOO AVENUE SE • CALEDONIA, MICHIGAN 49316

I. **CALL TO ORDER AND ROLL CALL**

The meeting was called to order at 7:05 p.m. by Chair DeWard. A quorum was present.

**MEMBERS PRESENT:** Brad Burns, Robert DeWard, Tim Haagsma, Ronnie Rober, Lani Thomas,

**MEMBERS ABSENT:** Connie Giarmo (with notice), Louis Waayenberg (with notice)

**OTHERS PRESENT:** Mark Sisson, Township Planner / Zoning Administrator,  
Matt McKernan, Assistant Planner

II. **CONSIDERATION OF MEETING AGENDA**

No Changes

III. **CONSIDERATION OF MEETING MINUTES**

August 25, 2016 – Regular Meeting Minutes

**Motion:** By Member Rober supported by Member Thomas to approve the minutes, with the listed corrections for the August 25, 2016 Planning Commission Regular Meeting.

**Discussion:** None

**Ayes:** Brad Burns, Robert DeWard, Tim Haagsma, Ronnie Rober, Lani Thomas,

**Nays:** None

**Abstain:** None

**Motion:** Passed

IV. **INQUIRY OF CONFLICT OF INTEREST**

Chair DeWard stated that his son is a pastor with the Reformed Church of America, but that it wouldn't impact his ability to be impartial with regards to the Site Plan Review for the Reformed Church of America office expansion.

V. **PUBLIC COMMENT ON NON-AGENDA ITEMS**

None

**VI. New Business**

**1. Advertised Public Hearings**

**a. Special Use Permit for Accessory Building: 6931 Cornerstone Drive SE**

*Special Use Permit request to allow for construction of an accessory building with a floor area of 384 feet, exceeding the maximum square footage (309 SF) allowed by right in a RL-10 District*

Chair DeWard asked the applicant, James Davis of 6931 Cornerstone Drive to introduce his request.

**James Davis, 6931 Cornerstone Drive SE**

Mr. Davis stated that he wished to erect a 384 square foot accessory building on an existing concrete pad that had previously been used as a basketball court in the rear yard of his home. Mr. Davis stated that he was proposing the 384 square foot building to utilize the majority of the existing concrete pad. The accessory building will be a prefabricated, 13 foot tall wood frame structure, which will be used for the storage of lawn equipment and items related to maintenance of the in ground pool.

Chair DeWard opened and there being no one in attendance regarding the matter, immediately closed the Public Hearing at 7:05 PM.

**Motion:** By Member Haagsma supported by Member DeWard to accept the affirmative findings and conclusions outlined in the Staff Report, and based on those findings approve the Special Use Permit for detached residential accessory buildings in the rear yard of 6931 Cornerstone Drive SE, subject to the following conditions:

1. That now or in the future, no exterior yard lights are to be attached to the structure that would cause glare in the rear yards or windows of adjacent lots.
2. That the floor elevation of the building, site grading, and roof drainage be handled with consideration of avoiding excessive drainage on adjacent properties.
3. That the use of the building and the items stored are not to be business related.

**Discussion:** None

**Ayes:** Brad Burns, Robert DeWard, Tim Haagsma, Ronnie Rober, Lani Thomas,

**Nays:** None

**Abstain:** None

**Motion:** Passed

**2. Site Plan Review**

**a. Reformed Church of America, 4560 60th Street SE**

*Site Plan Review and approval for two additions totaling 11,694 SF, to an existing office building to accommodate additional offices and a new conference room.*

Chair DeWard asked Rick Eenigenburg, speaking on behalf of the applicant, the Reformed Church of America, to introduce the request.

**Rick Eenigenburg, The Hamstra Group, Inc.**

The expansion of the office complex at 4560 60<sup>th</sup> Street will consist of two additions. The addition on the northeast side of the building will provide additional office space. The expansion on the southwest side of the building will be add a conference/meeting room and kitchenette area.

Eenigenburg addressed several issues noted in the Staff Report:

- In addition to normal meetings of day to day employees, the proposed conference room will also be used to host conferences and gatherings for guests of the Reformed Church of America. The applicant feels that the proposed number of parking spaces is necessary to accommodate these meetings and conferences.
- Eenigenburg stated that the size of the existing berm along 60<sup>th</sup> Street will be slightly reduced to accommodate the installation of a sidewalk per Township requirements.
- During the process of preparing the site plan, the Church decided to update the existing site lighting. A photometric plan was submitted to Staff indicating that the lights on all existing poles will be replaced and that all proposed lighting will conform to Township Standards.
- Eenigenburg stated that they are still working with the Township Engineer to address drainage issues on the site.

Chair DeWard questioned Eenigenburg on the 134 parking spaces provided on the site Plan. Eenigenburg reiterated that the conference area will be for people outside of usual office workers. The current parking lot (90 spaces) is generally about 75% full on a normal work day. Chair DeWard asked Staff how the parking requirement was determined. Assistant Planner McKernan stated that Staff had calculated the parking based on the requirements for general office uses and had not adjusted the numbers to reflect the fact that the conference room would be used to accommodate additional guests. Planner Sisson stated that in light of the fact that the conference room will be used to accommodate meetings beyond the normal number of personnel, the parking requirements for that portion of the building should be calculated for an assembly building and not as general office use. Using these calculation, the provided parking spaces would likely meet Township Standards.

Member Haagsma asked Staff to comment on the landscaping plan for the site. Planner Sisson stated that the only issue Staff identified with the proposed landscaping plan is that the northeast portion of the site was sparsely landscaped in comparison to the rest of the site. Staff has suggested that the applicant landscape around the existing monument sign to add some additional groundcover in this area.

Eenigenburg gave an overview of the drainage plan for the site. He stated that he would be working with Township Engineer Jeff Gritter to address the issues raised in his report. The original drainage plan called for multiple retention ponds, but Gritter has stated a preference that the existing retention pond be expanded instead. Eenigenburg was not yet sure if this would be accomplished by increasing the foot print of the pond or by increasing its depth. Eenigenburg informed the Commission that the wetland areas on the site plan would not be disturbed by this expansion.

On question by Chair DeWard Sisson stated that the applicant had provided justification for the excess parking spaces and He recommended that the conditions of approval should stipulate that the Planning Commission approves the amount of spaces indicated on the site plan. The other two conditions were as stated in the staff report: that the applicant should landscape the existing sign on the northeast corner of the site and continue working with the Township Engineer on drainage plans.

**Motion:** By Member Thomas supported by Member Haagsma to accept the affirmative findings and conclusions outlined in the Staff Report, and based on those findings approve the site plan for the expansion of the Reformed Church of America Office Building subject to the following conditions:

1. That the site Plans are approved with the parking layout and spaces indicated
2. That the base of the sign be landscaped in accordance with Section 17.6
3. That all of the requirements of the Township Engineer and Fire Chief are met.

**Discussion:** None

**Ayes:** Brad Burns, Robert DeWard, Tim Haagsma, Ronnie Rober, Lani Thomas,

**Nays:** None

**Abstain:** None

**Motion:** Passed

## VII. UNFINISHED BUSINESS

### 1. Site Plan Review

#### a. McDonald Plumbing, 7791 Eastern Avenue SE

*Site Plan Review for an expansion of up to 720 square feet to an existing 1500 SF office building. Continued from 8-25-15 Meeting.*

Planner Sisson introduced the site plan. On August 25, 2016 the Planning Commission postponed a decision on an addition of up to 720 feet to the north side of an existing office building at 7791 Eastern Avenue SE, pending a decision on a use variance by the Zoning Board of Appeals to allow for the expansion of a home occupation. The use variance was approved at the September 14 meeting of the Zoning Board of Appeals.

In its decision, the ZBA found that the request was not a significant departure from a use variance that was originally granted in 1987 and expanded in 2011. The Board also found that Ed McDonald still lives at 7791 Eastern Avenue and that he is still a 50% owner of the company, satisfying that use is still a "home occupation."

The McDonalds are returning to the Planning Commission to request approval of the site plan related to the expansion. Staff analyzed the site plan and did not identify any areas of concern. The expansion is still within the setbacks for a property in a RL-10 district and is buffered from neighboring properties by existing trees. The addition will be used to accommodate more room for file storage, a changing area, a new furnace, and potentially a restroom. The expansion will not be used to accommodate more employees or otherwise expand the commercial operation. The addition will not create or remove any parking spaces on the property. The main difference between this site and neighboring residential properties are the number of buildings and what they are being used for. These issues were addressed by the use variance granted by the ZBA on September 14.

**Motion:** By Member Haagsma supported by Member Rober to grant site plan approval of the proposed building addition, not to exceed 720 square feet, on the basis that that there are negligible site impacts, that the addition meets the dimensional standards for residential accessory buildings and while it exceeds the by right floor area square footage maximum it is a minor addition to an accessory building that has been allowed to exceed the ordained square footage limitations by way of a variance granted by the ZBA on September 14, 2016.

**Discussion:** None

**Ayes:** Brad Burns, Robert DeWard, Tim Haagsma, Ronnie Rober, Lani Thomas

**Nays:** None

**Abstain:** None

**Motion:** Passed

### VIII. GENERAL DISCUSSION

Planner Sisson gave an overview of several items that Planning Staff have been working on.

#### 1. Home Occupations:

In preparing for the hearing on the Use Variance for McDonald Plumbing on September 14, Staff compiled a list of home occupations, which were derived from a list generated by the Assessor's office showing properties claiming personal property exemptions. Staff then researched whether the properties were allowed by right, had received permission from the Township, or were legal nonconforming. Staff highlighted several properties that were similar to McDonalds in that they were large scale home occupations that were being conducted in accessory buildings outside of the home. The list is not comprehensive as it contains only self-reported personal property tax exemptions. Staff was also able to determine that several properties were likely not actually true home occupations, but temporary storage places for personal businesses. Staff will continue to work to compile this list as part of an effort to better regulate home occupations within the Township. Chair DeWard asked about the status of Stroos Funeral Home on 68<sup>th</sup> Street. Sisson responded that it is currently a legal nonconforming use in a residential area. Staff is considering adding funeral homes as an accepted use in residential areas by way of a special use permit. Requirements will likely include minimum lot sizes and that they be located on arterial roads.

#### 2. Parks & Recreation/ Non-Motorized Transportation Plan Survey Update

Sisson gave a brief overview of the latest results of the survey, which now has over 100 responses.

#### 3. Upcoming Agenda Items

Sisson informed the Planning Commission of a meeting that Township Staff had with representatives from Siliconature, a company that manufactures plastic release liners. The company is looking to build a facility on 68<sup>th</sup> Street, within the Steelcase LS-PUD. The company is planning to have about 15 employees at the site initially, with up to 60 when at full capacity. The request will be handled the same as a site plan review, with no need for a decision from the Township Board. Siliconature may make a preliminary presentation before the Planning Commission before making a formal request.

Staff is anticipating that South Christian High School will be requesting a Special Use Permit and for their new high school on Kalamazoo Avenue in November. Hanna Lake Trails might be ready for further review by the Planning Commission in October.

Sisson stated that he had been in contact with representatives of Switch about their plans to erect a security fence on the northwest corner of their property. The plan is to erect a 10 foot tall fence along the perimeter and a 25 foot tall wall farther back. They are having difficulty complying with Township Landscaping requirements. There are several utility easements on the property, which in combination with large road right-of-ways along East Paris makes the placement of landscaping in the area difficult. The Planning Commission has some right to waive landscaping requirements, but this level of deviation might require a variance. Sisson stated that he would continue to work with representatives from Switch to address the situation.

Sisson stated that he had met with a representative from Steelcase to discuss future plans for the Steelcase properties on the east side of the township. There are no immediate plans to develop the property by Steelcase. Their plan is to hold onto the property until acceptable offers are made to purchase the land. The Steelcase representatives were surprised to learn that several of their properties were still zone for Agricultural uses. The question of future uses for the Steelcase properties will need to be part of future planning efforts.

#### IX. ADJOURNMENT

<b><u>Motion:</u></b>	By Member Rober supported by Member Haagsma to adjourn the meeting.
<b><u>Discussion:</u></b>	None
<b><u>Ayes:</u></b>	Brad Burns, Robert DeWard, Tim Haagsma, Ronnie Rober, Lani Thomas
<b><u>Nays:</u></b>	None
<b><u>Abstain:</u></b>	None
<b><u>Motion:</u></b>	Passed

Meeting adjourned at 8:05 P.M.

**CERTIFICATION**

I hereby certify that the above is a true copy of the minutes from the September 22, 2016 Regular Meeting of the Gaines Charter Township Planning Commission held at the time and place mentioned above pursuant to the required statutory procedures.

Respectfully submitted,



Lani Thomas, Secretary  
Gaines Charter Township  
Planning Commission

Dated: October 27 2016