

**MINUTES OF THE GAINES CHARTER TOWNSHIP PLANNING COMMISSION
FOR THE REGULAR MEETING HELD ON
JANUARY 26, 2017
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 7:00 p.m. by Vice Chair Giarmo. A quorum was present.

MEMBERS PRESENT: Talimma Billips, Brad Burns, Connie Giarmo, Tim Haagsma,
Ronnie Rober

MEMBERS ABSENT: Lani Thomas (With Notice), Louis Waayenberg (With Notice)

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

II. CONSIDERATION OF MEETING AGENDA

No Changes

III. CONSIDERATION OF MEETING MINUTES

December 15, 2016 – Regular Meeting Minutes

Motion: By Member Haagsma supported by Member Rober to approve the minutes for the December 15, 2016 Planning Commission Regular Meeting.

Discussion: None

Ayes: Billips, Burns, Giarmo, Haagsma, Rober

Nays: None

Abstain: None

Motion: Passed

IV. INQUIRY OF CONFLICT OF INTEREST

None

V. PUBLIC COMMENT ON NON-AGENDA ITEMS

None

VI. New Business

1. Advertised Public Hearing Items

a. Paul Henry Trail in Dutton

Formal public hearing to receive public comments regarding proposed plans for the Paul Henry Non-Motorized Trail Connector in Dutton. The trail is to connect the existing trail north of 76th Street to 68th Street and to additionally extend a connection to Shadyside Park.

Planner Sisson gave an overview of the elements of the trail under consideration. The trail has been under consideration for the last 15 years. The original plans to build the trail fell through when it was discovered that it wouldn't be eligible for Community Development Block Grant funds. The Kent County Road Commission is serving as the lead agency for the current project to ensure the trail is eligible for grant funding. The route of the trail is based off of the 2008 Dutton Subarea Plan and the 2010 Township Transportation Plan. The Township will be paying for 30% of the trail. There was an open house on January 19 to gather comments from the public. The Planning Commission is the advisory body for this plan. The public hearing at this meeting will help the Planning Commission make a recommendation to the Township Board, who will make the final decision about the proposal. The details of the plan have not been finalized as the Road Commission is still working to obtain easements and working out other details. The primary question left to answer about how the trail will circumvent the two industrial properties along Hammond Avenue that exist within the former railroad right-of-way. Two options being discussed would be to relocate the evergreen trees that screen the industrial properties and place the trail along the right-of-way on the east side of Hammond Avenue. The other option would have the trail cross Hammond at this juncture and continue north, eventually transitioning to a sidewalk and terminating at 68th Street.

Vice Chair Giarmo opened the public hearing at 7:10 pm

Marilyn Scott, 3657 Merrville Court

Scott mentioned that she often bikes on the White Pines Trail in Comstock Park and frequently sees presence of police/security personnel. Scott asked if there would be security personnel along this trail. Scott asked if consideration for trash removal had been considered. Scott lives in the Hammond Estates condominium complex and wondered if that portion of the trail would be resurfaced. Scott added that it might be a good idea to place signs that advertised parking at Dutton Shadyside Park intermittently along the trail.

Terry DeVries, 4635 100th Street

DeVries requested more information about maintenance of the trail. DeVries asked why a second trail was necessary, when the Paul Henry trail already goes north up East Paris Avenue. DeVries stated that grant money wasn't "free money" and was in reality someone else's tax money. Care should be taken to not be wasteful with spending. DeVries stated that lack of parking was a concern for the trails. The Township should find a way to keep horses and snowmobiles off the trail.

Vice Chair Giarmo closed the public hearing at 7:18 pm

Member Haagsma explained that the trail route that follows East Paris Avenue is intended to connect the Paul Henry Trail to a trail in Kentwood. The area along East Paris was chosen as the connection to the Kentwood trail because Steelcase donated land to connect the trail to the newly constructed bridge over M-6, which had a wide enough shoulder to accommodate the trail. The current proposal is a spur trail to connect the businesses and residents of Dutton to the main Paul Henry Trail. Vice Chair Giarmo added that a well-designed, interconnected trail system has always been a goal of the Parks & Recreation committee.

Member Haagsma explained that the portion of the trail running through Hammond Estates would be resurfaced as part of this effort. The trail will be an extension of a Kent County trail and they would ultimately pay for maintenance. There are security personnel that occasionally ride these trails. The County uses trained volunteers to accomplish this.

Planner Sisson explained that there have been discussions in the past about passing ordinances in regard to snowmobiles and horses. Member Haagsma added that there are some rules at the County level pertaining to this as well.

Vice Chair Giarmo gave the Planning Commission instruction pertaining to the resolution provided by Township Staff. The resolution doesn't approve a final plan.

Vice Chair Giarmo instructed the Planning Commission about the resolution provided to them by Township Staff. The resolution doesn't approve a final plan, but allows for work to continue toward that end. It is important to note that the resolution specifies that the proposed trail is consistent with the Township Master Plan and the 2010 Township Non-motorized Transportation Plan.

Motion: By Member Haagsma supported by Member Burns, Seconded by Member Rober to approve the resolution of support of the plans for the Dutton Trail Spur, recognizing that the final plans for its route remain subject to adjustment. The Planning Commission recommends that the Gaines Charter Township Board proceed with the planning and with the capitol project to completion, in concert with and under the direction of the Kent County Road Commission.

Discussion: None

Ayes: Billips, Burns, Giarmo, Haagsma, Rober

Nays: None

Abstain: None

Motion: Passed

b. 7900 Kalamazoo Avenue SE-Rezoning Request

Request to rezone 7900 Kalamazoo Avenue from A-R Agricultural-Rural Residential to RL-10 Low-Density Residential.

Paul Williams, Five Star Realty

Williams presented on behalf of the applicant Michael Black. Williams expressed to the Planning Commission that Kalamazoo Avenue has changed considerably since the Master Plan was first adopted. At the time Kalamazoo Avenue was a narrow two-lane road with no water and sewer access. Now the road will be widened next summer, water and sewer are available to the property, and South Christian High School will be constructed across the street. The 2.2 acre parcel located at 7900 Kalamazoo Avenue was split from the property directly to the north. Due to its location, the property wouldn't be very marketable as currently zoned. The requested rezoning from A-R to RL-10 would allow the applicant to construct up to 3 upscale duplex condominium units.

Planner Sisson gave an overview of how the proposed request related to the Township Master Plan. The property is planned for Low-Density Residential (1-4 residential units per acre). The Zoning Ordinance contains two "Low-Density Residential" districts. RL-14 allows single-family homes on 14,000 square foot lots and has been traditionally been implemented in areas planned for Low-Density Residential. The applicant has requested that the property be rezoned to RL-10, which allows 10,000 square foot lots and duplexes along arterial roads. RL-10 has traditionally been implemented in areas planned for Medium Residential (4-6 units per acre). The RL-10 district has been used in the northern part of the Township and parts of Dutton. The RL-14 district has been used in the transitional area between Medium Density and Agricultural areas. The Master Plan gives a rationale for duplexes in specific circumstances. Duplexes

are generally intended to be used in larger developments in exchange for the preservation of open space. This has traditionally been accomplished through Planned Unit Developments. Rezoning a 2 acre parcel away from the rest of the RL-10 district could likely be considered a spot zone. There are also drainage concerns with the property, which could be more adequately addressed if it was part of a larger development.

Vice Chair Giarmo opened up the public hearing at 7:50 pm.

Rick Hapner, 8000 Kalamazoo Avenue

Duplexes are not compatible with the other residential uses in the area. It seems that most of the duplexes in the Township have occurred farther north in the Township. This area is supposed to be transitional. If this property is rezoned to RL-10 it might set a precedent that would allow the large farm property to the east to be developed denser than what was originally envisioned.

Paul Meyer, 7692 Kalamazoo

Meyer owns the large farm property to the east of the property. This property has issues with drainage as several acres drain through the property to a drain along Kalamazoo Avenue. If the property were to be developed either as duplexes or single-family homes, they would have to create a plan on how to distribute this water. The property also seems somewhat small for the type of development that is being proposed.

Vice Chair Giarmo closed the public hearing at 7:55 pm.

Member Haagsma stated that he felt the request seems like a spot zone. This property exists in an area that has been planned as a transition to higher density parcels to the north. During the discussion for the Kalamazoo Ave & 84th Street Subarea plan there were discussions about higher density and mixed-use development, but these were to occur in large developments that would transition towards lower density development along the edge to better blend in with the area. Even though the property exists on an arterial road it doesn't alleviate some of the spot zoning concerns. Members Burns and Rober concurred with Member Haagsma comments.

Member Haagsma entered the letter from Paul Meyer dated January 20, 2017 into the public record.

Vice Chair Giarmo expressed that the Planning Commission has been very careful to make sure that this area was not developed too intensely. The request to rezone the property from A-R to RL-10 seems inconsistent with the Future Land Use Map designation of Low-Density Residential.

Motion: By Member Haagsma supported by Member Rober to recommend the Township Board of Trustees deny the request to rezone the property located at 7900 Kalamazoo Avenue from A-R to RL-10, based on the findings of the Staff report.

Discussion: None

Ayes: Billips, Burns, Giarmo, Haagsma, Rober

Nays: None

Abstain: None

Motion: Passed

2. Site Plan Review

a. Southland Autowash, 6700 Kalamazoo Avenue SE

Amendment to a site plan condition from February 2013 to allow Southland Autowash to extend the hours of operation to 9pm Monday thru Saturday

Sean Ellis, Southland Autowash

Southland operates 5 car washes. When this location was proposed a closing time of 8pm seemed reasonable. This location proved to very popular and sometime last year Southland made the decision to extend his hours of operation on Monday thru Saturday until 9pm. We didn't realize at the time that this was a violation of the conditions of approval for the site. We are requesting permission to extend our permitted hours of operation until 9pm Monday thru Saturday, with no change to the Sunday hours.

Member Haagsma expressed that he didn't feel the extension of permitted hours of operation would have negative effects on the area. The majority of businesses along Kalamazoo Avenue are open until at least 10pm.

Planner Sisson stated that he is unaware of any issues that have arisen due to the extended hours of operation in the last year. Sisson informed the Planning Commission that they could choose to allow hours of operation beyond 9pm if they felt it was warranted. This would prevent the applicant from having to return to the Planning Commission in the future if Southland desired to keep the carwash open longer.

Motion: By Member Rober, supported by Member Billips to approve an amendment to the 2013 site plan approval for Southland Autowash to permit outdoor activities until 10pm Monday thru Saturday.

Discussion: None

Ayes: Billips, Burns, Giarmo, Haagsma, Rober

Nays: None

Abstain: None

Motion: Passed

VII. UNFINISHED BUSINESS

None

VIII. GENERAL DISCUSSION

1. Paul Henry Trail Expansion in Dutton

Member Haagsma proposed the idea of widening Hammond Avenue and placing bike lanes on both sides as an alternative to the two options discussed earlier in the evening for the portion of the trail just south of 68th Street. There was uncertainty about whether or not trail funds could be used to fund this approach. Planner Sisson agreed that this was an option worth exploring and reiterated that the trail was still in the planning stages.

2. Election of Officers

Motion: By Member Haagsma to nominate Connie Giarmo as Chairperson, Ronnie Rober as Vice Chair, and Lani Thomas as Secretary of the Planning Commission for the year 2017.

Discussion: None

Ayes: Billips, Burns, Giarmo, Haagsma, Rober

Nays: None

Abstain: None

Motion: Passed

3. Four Corners Meeting

Chair Giarmo gave an overview of the 4-Corners Communities meeting she recently attended. The group consists of representatives of the City of Kentwood, Gaines Township, Cascade Township, and Caledonia Township. The group was originally started in the 1980s, but hasn't met in recent years. With the recent increase in development in the area, the Grand Valley Metro Council and The Right Place encouraged the group to begin meeting again.

IX. ADJOURNMENT

Motion: By Member Rober supported by Member Haagsma to adjourn the meeting.

Discussion: None

Ayes: Billips, Burns, Giarmo, Haagsma, Rober

Nays: None

Abstain: None

Motion: Passed

Meeting adjourned at 9 P.M.