

**MINUTES OF THE GAINES CHARTER TOWNSHIP PLANNING COMMISSION  
FOR THE REGULAR MEETING HELD ON  
MARCH 23, 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 Chair Giarmo. A quorum was present.

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

**MEMBERS ABSENT:** Louis Waayenberg (With Notice)

**OTHERS PRESENT:** Matt McKernan, Assistant Planner

**II. CONSIDERATION OF MEETING AGENDA**

No Changes

**III. CONSIDERATION OF MEETING MINUTES**

February 23, 2017 – Regular Meeting Minutes

**Motion:** By Member Haagsma supported by Member Rober to approve the minutes for the February 23, 2017 Planning Commission Regular Meeting.

**Discussion:** None

**Ayes:** Billips, Burns, Giarmo, Haagsma, Rober, Thomas

**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. 610 Sunmeadow Drive: Special Use Permit-Accessory Building (RL-10)**

*Special Use Permit Request to allow an accessory building with a floor area of 576 square feet, exceeding the maximum square footage (392 SF) allowed by right in the RL-10 District.*

**Nick Danzig, 610 Sunmeadow Drive SE**

Danzig explained that his family would be using the accessory building for the storage of household items and recreational vehicles. Danzig stated that the proposed size of his accessory building was not excessively large in relation to the size of his lot.

Assistant Planner McKernan gave a brief overview of the pertinent elements of the request. The maximum size of accessory buildings allowed by right in the RL-10 district is calculated as 1.5% of the total lot area,

up to 1,200 SF. The applicant's property is 26,000 SF, which allows him to construct a 392 SF accessory building by right. The proposed size of the applicant's structure is 576 SF. The exterior of the structure will be complimentary to the primary building. The structure will conform to all other requirements of the zoning ordinance and should not create a nuisance for neighboring properties.

Chair Giarmo opened and closed the public hearing at 7:07 PM.

The Planning Commission asked the applicant several questions pertaining to the placement of the building and how he planned to access the structure. Danzig informed the Planning Commission that the building would be constructed outside of the drainage easement and away from the steep hill on the south side of his property. Danzig has no plans to create a new driveway to access the building.

**Motion:** By Member Haagsma supported by Member Thomas, to approve the Special Use Permit for a detached residential accessory building in the rear yard of 610 Sunmeadow Drive SE, based upon the findings of the staff report, and 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:** Billips, Burns, Giarmo, Haagsma, Rober, Thomas  
**Nays:** None  
**Abstain:** None  
**Motion:** Passed

- b. StoneCo Annual Operating Plan Review, StoneCo (StoneCo PUD-MR)**  
*Annual review of the operating plan for the StoneCo Mineral Removal Operation.*

Chair Giarmo invited Tony Halloran of StoneCo to introduce the request.

**Tony Halloran, StoneCo**

StoneCo is seeking approval of their 2017 operating plan. StoneCo began excavating the parcels on 100<sup>th</sup> and Kalamazoo in 2016. Berms have been built up around these parcels and seeded with grass. Work started in the southwest corner of this area and will proceed northward in 2017. StoneCo will also continue its work toward creating a "wetland bank" on the Kent County Road Commission property in the southern portion of the PUD.

Assistant Planner McKernan informed the Planning Commission that StoneCo is expected to return to Planning Commission in 2017 with final restoration plan for the mining operation. Final plans for the "wetland bank" will be included as part of that discussion.

Chair Giarmo opened the public hearing at 7:13 PM

**Robert Vandermeer, 10241 Eastern Avenue SE**

Vandermeer lives across the street from the processing area on Eastern Avenue SE. Vandermeer thanked StoneCo for working to keep the dust down on the site. There has been an overall improvement in the number of semi-trucks using “Jake brakes/engine brakes” in the area, but it has been getting worse again in the last few weeks. Some of the trees on the berms along Eastern Avenue have died and need to be replaced. Vandermeer asked for StoneCo to look into installing motion sensors for the back-up alarms on their equipment.

**Kathy VanderStel, 10034 Kalamazoo Avenue SE**

VanderStel lives across the street from the new excavation site on Kalamazoo Avenue. VanderStel stated that the berm on the corner of Kalamazoo Avenue and 100<sup>th</sup> Street has been effective and looks nicer now that grass has begun to grow. Vanderstell recommended that StoneCo consider placing a few trees along the berm to break up the visual monotony somewhat.

Chair Giarmo asked Tony Halloran to respond to the public comments.

Halloran stated that he was happy to hear that Mr. Vandermeer noticed a reduction in dust because StoneCo has been making a concerted effort in this area. Halloran promised to identify areas on the berms with dying trees and replace them. StoneCo hadn’t planned to plant trees along the new berms on Kalamazoo and 100<sup>th</sup> Street, but is willing to look into the possibility. StoneCo has difficulty dealing with the back-up alarm issue because they are required by law to have them.

Chair Giarmo closed the public hearing at 7:18 PM

Planning Commission members asked Halloran if StoneCo was on schedule to conclude mineral removal operations on the site by 2020. Halloran responded by stating that if current construction trends continue, StoneCo should be concluded with mineral removal operations by 2020. The creation of the wetland areas in the southern portion of the PUD has been hampered by fluctuating weather patterns this winter, but StoneCo still plans to make progress in that area later this year.

**Motion:** By Member Rober supported by Member Billips to approve the 2017 StoneCo operating plan for the 100<sup>th</sup> Street Operation based on the findings of the Staff Report that the plan contains no major discrepancies. The approval is subject to the following conditions:

1. StoneCo agrees to inspect existing berms for dead or dying trees and replace them where they are needed.
2. StoneCo will investigate the possibility of planting several trees along the berm on the corner of Kalamazoo Avenue and 100<sup>th</sup> Street.
3. StoneCo will remind drivers that the use of “Jake”/engine braking is not permitted.

**Discussion:** None

**Ayes:** Billips, Burns, Giarmo, Haagsma, Rober, Thomas

**Nays:** None

**Abstain:** None

**Motion:** Passed

- c. **Major PUD Amendment to Preservation Lakes PUD at 9900 Eastern Avenue**  
*Amendment to the Preservation Lakes Planned Unit Development to incorporate detached and 2-Unit condominium phase in the southeast corner of the PUD.*

Chair Giarmo invited Mike McGraw of Eastbrook Homes to introduce the request.

**Mike McGraw, Eastbrook Homes**

Eastbrook Homes is requesting an amendment to the Preservation Lakes PUD to allow detached and 2-unit condominium buildings in the southeast corner of the overall PUD. There has been a large increase in demand for this type of development since the time of the last amendment to the PUD in 2014. The increase has largely been driven by “empty-nesters” who waited until housing prices recovered from the recession before selling existing homes and moving to lower-maintenance residential developments. The development will contain a mixture of one and two-unit buildings to provide a variety of price points for consumers. The new layout of the property will feature a landscaped pond area and will result in a net increase of one acre of open space on the site. Eastbrook is committed to ensuring that a variety of home styles are present in this development. There are three styles of detached homes and one style of 2-unit dwellings, each with several floor plan options which helps to vary the looks of the home. Eastbrook is careful not to place two similar looking units next to one another. McGraw concluded by giving the Planning Commission a slide-show presentation that included the landscaping plan for the site and an overview on the various different housing types and floor plans.

Assistant Planner McKernan gave the Planning Commission an overview of the staff findings relative to the proposed PUD Amendment. The proposed amendment would consist of 45 detached single-family units and 18 two-unit dwellings for a total of 81 units. This is an increase of 31 units over the 50 single-family homes currently planned for the area. The condominium portion of the site will have a housing density of 2.2 units per acre and will increase the overall density of the Preservation Lakes PUD from 1.05 to 1.25 units per acre. The 100<sup>th</sup> Street Subarea plan identifies this area as planned for “open-space development”, which has an allowable housing density of 4-6 units per acre. The proposed condominium area is not expected to generate any additional traffic than the original plan for 50 single-family homes, despite the net increase of 31 dwelling units on the site. This is due to the fact that “empty-nester” communities have been shown to generate 60% less traffic on-average than traditional single-family homes. The Township Engineer has informally evaluated the plans and did not identify any major areas of concern. A more thorough analysis will be conducted in the future if the plan moves forward. The proposed site plan does not indicate plans for sidewalks within the condominium area. The Planning Commission should require that sidewalks be provided on at least one side of all streets within the development.

Chair Giarmo opened the public hearing at 7:52 PM

**David Mete, 1269 100<sup>th</sup> Street SE**

Mete lives on the private drive that runs along the eastern property line of Preservation Lakes. Mete wanted to know if the berm would remain along the property line. Also concerned about whether or not the creation of the ponds within the development would impact the water table in the area and create problems for well-owners.

**Ryan Pazdur, 1273 100<sup>th</sup> Street SE**

Pazdur lives on the private drive that runs along the eastern property line of Preservation Lakes. Pazdur submitted a letter to staff questioning whether this density of this development is justified given the rural nature of the surrounding area. The development is going from 50 to 81 dwelling units, which is a large increase. Pazdur is concerned that the berm running along the eastern property line tapers down near his property line and the new homes may cause noise disturbances. If the Planning Commission, decides to recommend approval of the amendment, they should consider requiring the applicant to remove one or two of the homes at the end of the northern street. The Planning Commission should also be sure that this development won't generate traffic that will worsen the problems already seen on 100<sup>th</sup> Street.

**Mary Flanagan Paiz, 775 100<sup>th</sup> Street SE**

Paiz lives on the corner of 100<sup>th</sup> Street SE and Eastern Avenue SE. Worried that the development will increase traffic concerns at this already busy corner. Also concerned that this will set a precedent for denser developments that might not be in line with the rural aesthetic of the area.

Public Hearing Closed: 8:05 PM

McGraw responded to questions raised during the public hearing. The berm is planned to remain against the eastern property line. The creation of the ponds is not expected to impact the water table in the area. Eastbrook homes consulted with a traffic engineer that provided estimates that condominium units generate 60% as many trips per day as single-family homes. Eastbrook predicts that homes prices in this area in conjunction with an additional \$200-\$300 per month in association fees will more than likely lead to a community comprised of 90-95% "empty-nesters" and retirees. This demographic generally generates less noise and traffic than younger families.

Planning Commission members asked McGraw for clarification on issues pertaining to building setbacks, sidewalks, and street lights. McGraw explained that the homes would typically be setback 30 feet from the road at the garage and as little as 20 feet at the front porch. The nearest house to the eastern property line will be setback about 160 feet. Eastbrook doesn't typically put sidewalks in their condominium developments, but has no issue constructing them in this development since the original plan contained sidewalks. Eastbrook will work with Township Staff on plans for landscaping and streetlights.

Member Haagsma asked for clarification about how much longer the new roads will extend beyond the roads on the 2014 plan. Assistant Planner McKernan responded that the length of the proposed northerly cul-de-sac is approximately 50 feet longer than the current plan and the proposed southern street is approximately 25 feet longer.

**Motion:** By Member Haagsma supported by Member Thomas to postpone a decision on the amendment until the April 27 meeting and direct staff to create appropriate Draft Resolution for amending the PUD.

**Discussion:** None

**Ayes:** Billips, Burns, Giarmo, Haagsma, Rober, Thomas

**Nays:** None

**Abstain:** None

**Motion:** Passed

**2. 2016 Planning Department Annual Report**

Assistant Planner McKernan presented the 2016 Planning & Zoning Department Annual Report. The Planning Department is mandated by statute to present an Annual Report to the Township Board. McKernan informed the Planning Commission that a motion forwarding the report to the Township Board would be appropriate.

**Motion:** By Member Rober supported by Member Thomas to accept the 2016 Planning & Zoning Department Annual Report and forward the report to the Township Board for their approval.

**Discussion:** None

**Ayes:** Billips, Burns, Giarmo, Haagsma, Rober, Thomas

**Nays:** None

**Abstain:** None

**Motion:** Passed

**VII. UNFINISHED BUSINESS**

None

**VIII. GENERAL DISCUSSION**

None

**IX. ADJOURNMENT**

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

**Discussion:** None

**Ayes:** Billips, Burns, Giarmo, Haagsma, Rober, Thomas

**Nays:** None

**Abstain:** None

**Motion:** Passed

Meeting adjourned at 8:45 P.M.

**CERTIFICATION**

I hereby certify that the above is a true copy of the minutes from the March 23, 2017 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,

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Lani Thomas, Secretary  
Gaines Charter Township  
Planning Commission

Dated: April 27, 2017