

**MINUTES OF THE GAINES CHARTER TOWNSHIP PLANNING COMMISSION  
FOR THE REGULAR MEETING HELD ON  
JANUARY 25, 2018  
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, Brad Waayenberg

**MEMBERS ABSENT:** NONE

**OTHERS PRESENT:** Mark Sisson, AICP; Township Planner  
Matt McKernan, Assistant Planner

**II. CONSIDERATION OF MEETING AGENDA**

No Changes

**III. CONSIDERATION OF MEETING MINUTES**

December 21, 2017 – Regular Meeting Minutes

**Motion:** By Member Haagsma supported by Member Rober to approve the minutes for the December 21, 2017 Planning Commission Regular Meeting.

**Discussion:** None

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

**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 Hearings**

**a. Dutton Christian Elementary School, 6980 Hanna Lake (RL-14)**

Special Use Permit request to allow an electronic changeable copy sign at Dutton Christian Elementary School.

**Dan Netz, Administrator for Dutton Christian Elementary School**

Dutton Christian is seeking to replace an existing monument sign with a monument sign featuring an electronic messaging center. Dutton Christian would like to place the new sign in the same location as their existing sign. The staff report mentioned that moving the sign to the north entrance could alleviate some concern about visual impacts to neighbors. Dutton Christian would prefer not to relocate the sign

to the north entrance because this would cause issues with snow removal. The new sign would actually be an improvement because the existing sign remains lit all night long, whereas the new sign would be required to be turned off at 11pm every night.

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

Planner Sisson explained that he did not necessarily disagree with Dutton Christian's stance, but it was worth discussing whether or not relocating the sign would be desirable. No one in the surrounding area has contacted the Township with any concerns regarding this request. This could possibly be attributed to the fact that the houses most affected by this request are duplex rentals. Rental properties tend to have more transient tenants who may not be as concerned about the long-term impacts of this request as permanent tenants would be.

Planning Commission members expressed general approval for the applicant's request. Several members had visited the property and did not find the location of the sign to be an issue. The sign will face a church to the north and a cemetery to the south, and won't be close enough to properties along Glen Creek Drive to cause any concerns with glare. It was stated that the new sign could very well be an improvement over the existing sign because its illumination would decrease automatically as the sun sets and the sign would be turned off at 11pm every night. Planner Sisson informed the Planning Commission of their right to impose an earlier shutoff time for the sign, but the panel did not find it to be necessary.

**Motion:** By Member Haagsma supported by Member Billips to approve the special use permit for a monument sign with the following conditions as outlined in the staff report:

1. The display of the sign shall remain static in nature. No animated messages shall be permitted.
2. Messages shall be of at least 8 seconds in duration.
3. The rate of change between messages shall be instantaneous.
4. The sign will make use of an ambient light meter to lower the intensity of the lighting during evening hours.
5. Physical evidence/documentation of an intent to comply with all of the above stipulations, and those of Section 17.7, shall be requirements for the issuance of all necessary sign and electrical permits, and preconditions to the approval of all final inspections.
6. Non-compliance with the above conditions during the sign's operation may be considered grounds for the revocation of the special use permit.

**Discussion:** None

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

**Nays:** None

**Abstain:** None

**Motion:** Passed

**2. Site Plan Review**

**a. Adventure Credit Union, 6672 Crossings Drive (Crossings PUD)**

Site Plan Review for an expansion to the parking area for Adventure Credit Union resulting in an increase of 6 parking spaces.

**Karen Wietzke, Adventure Credit Union**

Adventure Credit Union is seeking to add six parking spaces to their lot on Crossings Drive. Adventure Credit Union’s lot currently has 9 spaces. 4 of these spaces are generally taken up employees and another space is reserved for handicap parking. This leaves only 4 spaces for customer parking, which has proven to be insufficient during busier periods. Employees sometimes have to park along the entrance drive to the lot which creates a potential traffic hazard. The new spots will be installed on the west side of the dumpster. The existing landscaping in this area will be relocated to the north and west of the new parking spaces.

Planner Sisson explained that Township staff had noticed the parking problem the previous summer and commended the applicant for taking the initiative to fix the problem. There are no discernable problems with the request. The existing landscaping will be relocated to accommodate the parking expansion.

Member Thomas explained that she works in the building adjacent to Adventure Credit Union and confirmed that the credit union sometimes experiences parking shortages. Member Haagsma explained that the credit union has limited options due to the fact that parking is now prohibited along Crossings Drive. The parking lot expansion is the most logical solution to the parking problem.

- Motion:** By Member Rober supported by Member Thomas to approve the six parking spaces.
  
- Discussion:** None
- Ayes:** Burns, Billips, Giarmo, Haagsma, Thomas, Rober, Waayenberg
- Nays:** None
- Abstain:** None
- Motion:** Passed

**VII. UNFINISHED BUSINESS**

**1. Stonewater-Crystal Springs PUD**

Chair Giarmo explained to the audience that a public hearing had already been held in December, but due to the level of interest from the community she would allow residents another chance to address this topic. Chair Giarmo opened the public hearing at 7:15 pm.

**Bruce Beukema, 1553 old lantern court**

Beukema lives on the west side of Kalamazoo and is concerned about the impacts to his property. Beukema is concerned about the aesthetics of the development due to the fact that Crystal Springs recently removed a row of pine trees that would have blocked his view of these buildings. Beukema is also concerned about additional noise because neighbors already deal with garbage trucks emptying bins at 4:30 AM on the west side of Kalamazoo. Beukema also listed sidewalk maintenance and lighting as other issues of importance.

**Glenn VurMurlen, 733 Avonlea Lane-Caledonia**

After the property was sold to Watermark Holdings there were numerous discussions about possible uses for the site. If a small group of neighbors hadn't purchased this property it would have been sold to residential developers who may very well have removed the golf course. Watermark has entertained numerous options for the property but were not permitted to compete with the uses on the west side of Kalamazoo. The uses being proposed are a good fit for the neighborhood and will complement existing businesses in the area.

**Mark Berghoef, 1749 Spring View Ct**

Berghoef explained that there is a large amount of golf cart traffic on Crystal Springs Boulevard and he is concerned with how they will interact with the extra traffic that will be generated by this development.

**Dean Webster, 7196 Misty Morning Drive**

Webster supports the development. The property hasn't been well maintained and is currently an eyesore. The developers will clean up the property and raise nearby property values in the area.

Giarmo closed the public hearing at 7:29 pm.

Sisson gave an overview of the development. This corner was originally planned as the location of the golf course club house. The PUD was amended in 2008 to change the location of the clubhouse to the west side of Kalamazoo. The 2008 amendment did not specify what uses would be suitable for the eastside of Kalamazoo. The property is going to be split into 3 lots along Kalamazoo Avenue and two lots in the rear adjacent to the Crystal Springs neighborhood. The lots along Kalamazoo will feature a credit union, a medical building, and a multi-tenant retail building. A day care center and a professional office building are tentatively planned for the back lots.

**Doug Stalsonburg, Exxel Engineering**

Stalsonburg explained the revisions that have been made to the site plan following the December meeting.

- The site plan has been revised to better illustrate the proposed uses of the rear of the property. There are now two lots proposed containing a daycare operation and professional office building respectively. These uses are still somewhat speculative in nature, but discussions have progressed far enough that the applicants feel comfortable putting it in on the plan. Issues such as landscaping and lighting will be more thoroughly addressed as part of site plan review.
- A golf cart path has been added to the median of Crystal Springs Boulevard to address the concerns about conflicts between golf carts and cars. The Kent County Road Commission has reviewed this and has no issues with it.
- A 2-3 foot tall berm will built along the eastern property line with a row of pine trees planted 15 foot on center. A golf cart path connection will be located between the berm and the ravine. The golf course will continue to maintain the golf cart paths.
- Neighbors have previously expressed concerns related to the cleanup and maintenance of the ravine that runs along the east side of the property. The Kent County Drain Commission has an easement that allows them to intervene if the ravine begins to cause issues upstream. The developer intends to clean up the ravine prior to construction on the rear two lots. The PUD

resolution mentions that future property owners will be responsible for maintenance of the ravine. The developer would like the Township to provide clarification on the expectations for the upkeep of the ravine.

- The lot lines of Parcel F will be adjusted so that the pump house is located on a separate parcel than the parking area for Parcel C. The golf course will continue to maintain the pump house. Parcel F will remain part of the Stonewater-Crystal Springs PUD for the sake of simplicity of administration.

The Planning Commission had several comments/suggestions related to the revised site plans for the Stonewater-Crystal Springs PUD:

- Members felt that the renderings for the medical office building do not fit the aesthetics of the rest of the development. The Planning Commission will be looking to see building elevations that more closely match and complement the other newly proposed buildings to the north and south of the medical facility as well as the buildings along the west side of Kalamazoo.
- Sidewalk should be installed along Crystal Springs Boulevard on the south side of the development. The resolution should be amended to include this condition of approval.
- The Planning Commission requested that the buildings within the PUD to be limited to one story. The resolution should be amended to include this condition of approval.

Discussion turned to clarification regarding the future maintenance/upkeep of the ravine. Stalsonburg explained that the developers planned to clean up trash and remove dead/diseased trees and brush from the ravine, but did not intend to brush hog or clear cut this area. There will be no alterations to the drain itself. Stalsonburg requested that the Township clarify the expectations for the cleanup and future maintenance of the ravine. Planner Sisson offered the following proposed wording for the maintenance provision of the resolution: "the ravine shall be kept free of invasive species, dead woody vegetation shall be removed, and the banks shall be kept in a grassy non-manicured state." Stalsonburg was favorable to this interpretation of maintenance responsibilities.

**Motion:** By Member Haagsma supported by Member Rober to approve Resolution 18-01-PC recommending approval of the Stonewater-Crystal Springs PUD to the Township Board with the following amendments:

1. Sidewalks shall be installed along the Crystal Springs Boulevard frontage.
2. The ravine shall be kept free of invasive species, dead woody vegetation shall be removed, and the banks shall be kept in a grassy non-manicured state.
3. The architectural renderings for individual buildings will be reviewed as part of site plan review. The proposed elevations for the credit union and retail building are acceptable (Exhibits A & B).

**Discussion:** None

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

**Nays:** None

**Abstain:** None

**Motion:** Passed

## **VIII. GENERAL DISCUSSION**

### **1. Private Roads Ordinance Update**

Planner Sisson gave the Planning Commission an update on the status of the private roads ordinance. Staff has decided to place the standards within the general code of ordinances rather than making them part of the zoning ordinance. Deviations from the standards would require a variance if the private road standards were placed within the zoning ordinance. This would be a cumbersome process. Placing the private road standards within the code of ordinances will allow the Township Board to be the final arbiter and allow for greater flexibility in dealing with deviations from the standards. The Planning Commission will be able to give their recommendations to the Township Board in these situations.

Private driveways over 150 feet long will need to meet certain standards to allow fire trucks to access homes. Building permits will require applicants to provide details on how the drive will be constructed. Occupancy permits will not be issued until the driveways are inspected by fire and building officials.

All roads in plats and site condos will be required to be built to public road standards regardless of whether they are public or privately owned. The Township Board will be able to grant waivers to these conditions in certain circumstances. This could be accomplished by creating an alternative set of standards or evaluating requests on a case by case basis. The Planning Commission will be involved in the process due to the fact they perform site plan reviews for all site condos and platted developments.

Private roads created as part of a metes and bounds land division will be evaluated at the staff level. The roads will be reviewed by the fire chief, engineer, etc. This is similar to the current process for land divisions. Staff currently approves land divisions but has no standards for evaluating private roads other than the width of the required easement. Private roads that serve 4 houses or less can be constructed of gravel, while private roads serving 5 houses or more will have to be constructed of asphalt.

Staff will be evaluating the standards for "flag" lots as part of this process as well. The current zoning ordinance is somewhat vague as to whether they are actually permitted or not. The Township will most likely allow them in the future with more definitive standards.

Planner Sisson requested that the Planning Commission evaluate the standards because they would be holding an advisory public hearing at the February meeting. The notice will be published in local papers and mailed to interested parties such as residential developers and surveying/engineering firms.

### **2. Byron Township Master Plan Update**

Sisson explained that Byron Township was planning a subarea plan for 84<sup>th</sup> Street and Burlingame Avenue. The Planning Commission evaluated the request and determined that there were no concerns that would impact Gaines Township.

**IX. ADJOURNMENT**

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

**Discussion:** None

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

**Nays:** None

**Abstain:** None

**Motion:** Passed

Meeting adjourned at 8:35 pm.

**CERTIFICATION**

I hereby certify that the above is a true copy of the minutes from the January 25, 2018 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,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Lani Thomas".

Lani Thomas, Secretary  
Gaines Charter Township  
Planning Commission

Dated: February 22, 2018