

Minutes of the Gaines Charter Township Planning Commission

Regular Meeting held April 25th, 2024, at 7 pm

8555 Kalamazoo Ave., SE, Caledonia, MI 49316

MEMBERS PRESENT: Thomas, Waayenberg, Wiersema, Billips, Haagsma

MEMBERS ABSENT: Rober and Giarmo, with notice.

STAFF PRESENT: Dan Wells, Community Development Director; Dakota Swan, Assistant Planner; Ken Van Hall, Fire Chief

I. CALL TO ORDER AND ROLL CALL

Secretary Lani Thomas called the meeting to order at 7:00 PM.

II. CONSIDERATION OF MEETING AGENDA

- a. Nomination of Commissioner Haagsma as alternate chair due to Chair Giarmo and Vice Chair Rober's absences.

Motion: Motion by Waayenberg, supported by Billips to appoint Commissioner Haagsma as the temporary Chair for this meeting.

DISCUSSION: None

AYES: All

NAYS: None

ABSTAIN: None

DECISION: Motion Carried (5-0)

III. CONSIDERATION OF MEETING MINUTES

Consideration of the March 28th, 2024, regular Planning Commission meeting minutes.

Motion: Motion by Wiersema, supported by Waayenberg to approve the minutes of March 28th, 2024, as is.

DISCUSSION: None

AYES: All

NAYS: None

ABSTAIN: None

DECISION: Motion Carried (5-0)

IV. INQUIRY OF CONFLICT OF INTEREST

None.

V. PUBLIC COMMENT

VI. NEW BUSINESS

1. Public Hearings

a) 4598 84th Street – Special Use Permit - Accessory Building

Mike Naber, the applicant for this project, explained his request for a Special Use Permit. He stated that there is an already existing accessory building on the property that he intends to add an additional 1,600 square feet (SF) to for storing trophy mounts and hosting family gatherings.

Planner Wells gave an overview of the staff report for this project and confirmed that all standards of review have been met through this application, and that staff doesn't anticipate any adverse effects on adjacent property owners or general health, safety, and welfare. Wells stated the only concern staff had was the height of the building; the maximum permitted height of accessory buildings in this area is 20 feet. Wells also mentioned that staff recommends a condition in which the proposed building should be architecturally similar to the existing buildings on the property.

Chair Haagsma opened the public hearing and subsequently closed it after nobody approached the podium.

Commissioner Wiersema inquired about total square footage calculations and if covered porches are to be included; Planner Wells confirmed that covered porches do count towards total square footage.

Secretary Thomas also inquired about the height of the building, to which Naber stated that the new building will either be the same height as the existing building or shorter. Naber also added that the addition will be stick-built rather than pole barn construction to match the existing building on the parcel.

Motion: Motion by Waayenberg, supported by Thomas, to approve the Special Use Permit with the condition that the height will meet development standards, the addition will be architecturally similar to existing buildings on the parcel, and it will not be used for commercial purposes.

DISCUSSION: None.

AYES: ALL

NAYS: None

ABSTAIN: None

DECISION: Motion Carried (5-0)

b) 820 92nd Street – Special Use Permit – Accessory Building

The applicant, John VanderMeulen, explained his request for a Special Use Permit and stated that he intends to build a 32' x 48' pole barn for working on his hobbies and storing his motor home.

VanderMeulen stated that the barn is planned to be grey initially, and that he intends to install wood siding eventually so that it will match the home on the parcel.

Planner Wells gave an overview of the project and said that there are currently no accessory buildings on the site, and that staff found all standards of review and setback regulations to be met. Wells added that an accessory building of this size is typical in this area of the Township, therefore this request is consistent with the Zoning Ordinance and the intent of the Master Plan.

Chair Haagsma opened the public hearing and subsequently closed it as nobody approached the podium to speak.

Commissioner Wiersema inquired about the staff recommended condition that the accessory building will not be used for commercial purposes; Wells stated that standard is included as a means of clarifying to the applicant that commercial use of the building would be prohibited.

Motion: Motion by Waayenberg, supported by Wiersema to approve the Special Use Permit with the conditions that it will be architecturally similar to the home on the parcel and that it will not be used for commercial purposes.

DISCUSSION: None

AYES: ALL

NAYS: None

ABSTAIN: None

DECISION: Motion Carried (5-0)

c) 163 68th Street – Special Use Permit – Accessory Building

Applicant Daniel Suarez-Lopez explained his request for a Special Use Permit. He stated that he currently has a one stall garage and intends to tear it down and rebuild a bigger garage for two reasons; one, he said the garage looks “sad” compared to other garages in the neighborhood, and two, his family has outgrown the current garage, and the lack of space is affecting traffic flow on the street/ snow plowing. Suarez-Lopez added that he intends to redo the siding on the house so that it matches the new garage.

Planner Wells gave an overview of the staff report for this project and said that the new garage will be approximately 584 SF larger than what is permitted ‘by right’, hence the need for a Special Use Permit, and that the intended use is for residential storage. Wells highlighted that all standards of review and setbacks were found to be met, and that a neighbor directly to the east of this parcel had submitted a public comment via email expressing support for this request. Wells also discussed the unique nature of this property; the residence on this parcel is lawfully nonconforming due to the orientation of the home on the parcel. It is a corner lot so it appears as though there are two front yards, however, staff would consider the existing garage to be in the side yard in this instance, therefore all setbacks were found to be met. The Special Use Permit request wouldn’t be making the nonconformity any worse, and Wells stated that staff recommends approval of this Special Use Permit.

Chair Haagsma opened the public hearing and closed it after nobody approached the podium to speak on behalf of this project.

Commissioner Wiersema sought clarification about the dimensions of the proposed garage, and Suarez-Lopez confirmed that the garage is intended to have 2 doors but enough space for 3 cars.

Motion: Motion by Waayenberg, supported by Thomas to approve the Special Use Permit request with the conditions that it will be architecturally similar to the home on the parcel, and it will not be used for commercial purposes.

DISCUSSION: None

AYES: ALL

NAYS: None

ABSTAIN: None

DECISION: Motion Carried (5-0)

d) 44 Brownell Street - Special Use Permit – Production Brewery

Matt Szukalowski and David Sawyer of Adesanya Mead and Microbrewery explained their request for a Special Use Permit. They intend to use their space at 44 Brownell solely as a production space for wine, mead, and cider; no retail sales or consumption are intended to occur at this facility. Szukalowski said that this space was particularly appealing to them and their business because of the excellent drainage capabilities at this site, and that the brewing process is relatively quiet, so they do not expect to generate excessive noise. He clarified that waste byproducts from the brewing process include spent grain, which is planned to be used as feed for livestock in the area as they will have local farmers picking it up from time to time. They also stated that nobody else will be working in this space or brewing besides the two of them, and they don't anticipate major changes to traffic in the area. They do expect traffic to be a little heavier in the beginning as they're getting equipment delivered and set up, but after that, traffic will mainly be from the two of them arriving and leaving, in addition to local farmers picking up grain, and deliveries being made to their main storefront in Grandville.

Planner Wells offered an overview of the staff report on this agenda item. He stated that this is one of the first breweries to enter the area, and that while there is some cooler space and some office space on the site, it's really a small-scale manufacturing space. Wells stated that all standards of review for Special Uses were found to be met, however, one area of concern pertaining to the welfare of adjacent landowners could be odor emitted from the fermentation process, or the spent grain that results from the brewing process. Wells added that this area is zoned as Neighborhood Commercial, which accounts for businesses like this and is considered in the Master Plan. He also clarified that the scale of this operation is indeed appropriate for the area, however, if they were to exceed 12,000 barrels a year, they would have to relocate to a different area. The applicant later commented that they anticipate brewing approximately 500 barrels a year, which is perfectly in line with the scale of business intended for this area. In terms of emergency services, Wells said that there are no proposed changes to the interior or exterior of the building that would warrant significant changes in fire protection. Wells stated that the applicants will need to obtain permits from the City of Wyoming for wastewater discharge, but that there aren't any adverse effects to the environment. He went on to mention that this building is lawfully nonconforming and is approximately 30 years old, meaning it was constructed long before current

setback regulations were imposed, and nothing the applicant intends to do would be making the nonconformity any worse, so staff didn't find any issues with this request. Planner Wells concluded by saying that staff waived the need for a full Site Plan Review because there aren't any proposed alterations to the exterior of the building, and that overall, staff recommends approval of this request if the applicant acquires the necessary permits.

Chair Haagsma opened the public hearing; nobody approached the podium to speak so he closed the hearing.

Commissioner Wiersema inquired about the location of the dumpster on the site; Szukalowski responded that they are unsure of the exact location of the dumpster at this time, but assured the Planning Commission that it's a gated area and the dumpster will be gated during non-business hours.

Wiersema then inquired about the need for landscaping requirements at this site, to which Planner Wells said if the Planning Commission feels as though that is necessary, it is a condition they could impose. Wiersema then expressed his desire to see some vegetation in the front of the building in addition to an ornamental tree to beautify the site.

Planner Wells asked if they own the space or are leasing it; Szukalowski said that they have a five-year lease contract.

Secretary Thomas inquired about how often farmers would be coming to pick up grain; Szukalowski said that the exact frequency of pickups is undetermined at this time, but it will depend on how often they brew. They anticipate brewing approximately two batches a day at the most, and plan to synchronize their brewing schedule with farmer pickups.

Commissioner Billips asked about farmer pickups and what that process would look like; Szukalowski responded that the plan is to store the spent grain in big barrels and reuse them for future pickups.

Motion: Motion by Waayenberg, supported by Billips to approve the Special Use Permit with the conditions that the wastewater discharge permit is obtained from the City of Wyoming and reviewed by the Township Engineer, and that landscape requirements are imposed including at least one ornamental tree and other assorted landscape vegetation.

DISCUSSION: None

AYES: ALL

NAYS: None

ABSTAIN: None

DECISION: Motion Carried (5-0)

2. Site Plan Review

a) None

3. Items not requiring a Public Hearing

a) Alexander Trails PUD – Major Amendment Preliminary

Planner Wells introduced this agenda item by saying that Alexander Trails was established and rezoned as a PUD back in 2020, however, construction got delayed due to the COVID-19 pandemic and the increase in material costs. Site Plan Review approval expires within a year if no progress is made, so Alexander Trails essentially became a “ghost” PUD where the rezoning was still in effect, but the Site Plan Review had expired. Both the applicant and staff were originally hoping to bring Alexander Trails back to the Planning Commission as a Site Plan Review, however, there were changes made to the proposed setbacks within the development, hence the need for them to return requesting a Major PUD Amendment. Wells stated that besides the differences in setbacks, the new plan is quite similar to what the Planning Commission had seen and approved previously.

Applicant Mike McGraw of Eastbrook Homes discussed the changes to the site plan and expressed that he believes the new plan is far better. The biggest changes are apparent near the east side of the development and the central area; they replaced 2-story townhome condominiums featuring front-loaded garages with detached terrace homes and reworked some of the green spaces to make them more thoughtful and functional for residents. McGraw stated that this development features a variety of housing types, including front loaded townhomes, ranch options, rear-loaded attached townhomes, and a variety of floor plans for terrace homes. They reworked some of the road designs to make the view when entering the main road more open and inviting. McGraw also highlighted that there will be a fully paved ADA compliant walking path around the entire development and pedestrian connection points throughout. While the unit count is similar to what it was previously, McGraw stated that this submission features more variety in housing types, more duplexes, and less two-, four-, and six-unit buildings. He also stated that they would like to implement hiking trails in the wooded areas.

Commissioner Wiersema inquired about whether there are any attached terrace homes, to which McGraw responded that no, these terrace homes are longer and narrower which provide the advantage of having more space between the garage and the unit itself, which provides residents with more outdoor space.

Wiersema then highlighted that with Plaster Creek running through this area, it’s one of the main watersheds in the township. He then inquired about the possibility of a paved nonmotorized path through the development that could potentially provide connectivity to the Dutton area. McGraw responded that this could be problematic since the water level of the creek fluctuates a lot and often floods, which would make maintaining a paved trail particularly difficult in this area, however, a nature trail could be an alternative option that still ensures people can use and enjoy the creek.

Planner Wells chimed in to add that when the time comes for Site Plan Review, this can be discussed in further detail, and the Township Engineer can offer insight on options for the trail. Wells also mentioned that as far as maintenance is concerned, the Township Board would have to weigh in on Township involvement of the trail, and that if the Township wasn’t responsible for maintenance and upkeep, the HOA would then be the responsible party.

Wells went on to say that while it is unlikely that 76th Street will see any improvements in bike facilities anytime soon, it is possible that there could be an opportunity for a bike corridor/ other nonmotorized connections along Breton down the line.

Chair Haagsma inquired about the added density, and McGraw responded that density did increase, alongside the number of detached homes, however, the number of single family platted lots decreased

in this iteration of the design. Haagsma then inquired about the location of the sidewalks in the development and why they are only seen on one side of the road throughout numerous spots in the PUD, and McGraw stated that this was intentional; the layout can get messy when sidewalks cause interruptions and run through the driveways of front-loaded townhomes, however, all public roads have sidewalks on both sides of the road. McGraw added that some residents have expressed disinterest in having sidewalks on their side of the street, and this design choice provides prospective homeowners with an option.

Fire Chief Ken Van Hall expressed that he would prefer there not to be an obstruction in one of the island cul-de-sacs featured in the development, to which McGraw said he'd be willing to work with the Fire Department to ensure that all requirements from their end are met.

Commissioners Wiersema and Billips discussed the differences between the old design and this one, and how details like ponds illustrate the amount of consideration and intentionality that went into this design.

Billips stated that this development is large and a lot to process; McGraw stated that it is intentional, and this will likely be a long-term project, but they need that so they are able to serve a broader spectrum of customers.

Motion: Motion by Waayenberg, supported by Wiersema to grant the applicant Preliminary PUD Amendment approval and allow the applicant to decide when they're ready to return for Site Plan Review and their Public Hearing.

DISCUSSION: None

AYES: ALL

NAYS: None

ABSTAIN: None

DECISION: Motion Carried (5-0)

VII. GENERAL DISCUSSION

Planner Wells stated that the agenda for next month's meeting is already full, and staff is attempting to limit agendas to five items due to the influx of new projects. He added that if things get too backed up, next month there is a possibility for two meetings to be held in order to catch up, but that is ultimately dependent on how many projects come in within the next month.

VIII. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at 8:35 PM.

CERTIFICATION:

I hereby certify that the above is a true copy of the minutes from the April 25th, 2024, Planning Commission 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". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned above the printed name.

Lani Thomas,

Secretary

Gaines Charter Township Planning Commission

Date:  2024