

Minutes of the Gaines Charter Township Planning Commission

Regular Meeting held March 27th, 2025, at 7 pm

8555 Kalamazoo Ave., SE, Caledonia, MI 49316

MEMBERS PRESENT: Billips, Rober, Waayenberg, Wiersema, Giarmo, Haagsma

MEMBERS ABSENT: Thomas, with notice

STAFF PRESENT: Dan Wells, Community Development Director; Dakota Swan, Assistant Planner

I. CALL TO ORDER AND ROLL CALL

Chair Giarmo called the meeting to order at 7:02 PM.

II. CONSIDERATION OF MEETING AGENDA

No changes to the agenda.

III. CONSIDERATION OF MEETING MINUTES

Consideration of the February 27th, 2025, regular Planning Commission meeting minutes.

Motion: Motion by Haagsma, supported by Rober to approve the minutes of February 27th, 2025, with corrections.

DISCUSSION: On page two, 78th Street should be corrected to say 76th Street.

AYES: All

NAYS: None

ABSTAIN: None

DECISION: Motion Carried (6-0)

IV. INQUIRY OF CONFLICT OF INTEREST

None.

V. PUBLIC COMMENT

Tom Werkema of 3547 68th Street said that he feels as though the Planning Commission should be including more than five items on their meeting agendas and that limiting the agenda to five items is holding back economic activity in the Township. He also shared some of his thoughts on the proposed updated Zoning Ordinance. Werkema stated that he feels as though inoperable vehicles should be permitted to be on someone's property longer than 48 hours. He also stated that he does not approve of the limitation on how many RV's are permitted to be stored on someone's property and the regulations regarding how they

should be stored. Planner Wells assisted Werkema in identifying the difference between the Future Land Use Map and the Zoning Map.

Bruce Beebe of 4645 76th Street approached the podium to speak about his experience negotiating a land deal with Microsoft. He explained that after the last Planning Commission meeting, Microsoft's Community Affairs Director was supposed to reach out to Beebe; 13 days passed with no contact. Beebe contacted Microsoft and got a response from Chris Irwin, Microsoft's Senior Land Acquisition Manager, who said that in late November he had instructed Microsoft's broker to contact Beebe's broker. Beebe said he still has not heard from Microsoft and he has questions for them.

Brian Sikkema, a land broker in the area, explained that Microsoft didn't do anything illegal. Negotiations were made in good faith; Microsoft has an extensive due diligence period, and although they put a lot of pressure on Beebe during negotiations, they were still acting within the due diligence period. Sikkema added it was never communicated that Microsoft had cold feet. Although Microsoft did nothing illegal, Sikkema said he feels as though this was a jarring way to treat people.

VI. NEW BUSINESS

1. Public Hearings

a. None

2. Site Plan Review

a. Eden Forest – Site Plan Amendment

Brad Walsh and Justin Longstreth of Orion Construction explained that they are seeking a site plan amendment to account for some changes they have implemented in the Eden Forest development. The changes implemented are as follows: remove one 4-unit building from site plan, increase one 4-unit building to become a 6-unit building, realign pedestrian path/ add a mid-street crossing, and relocate the playground equipment.

Walsh explained that the 4-unit building removed from the site plan was identified as having impacts on wetlands; Orion eliminated that building and increased the unit count of an adjacent building from four units to six units. Walsh said the playground was slightly shifted due to grading problems; collaboration with the Township Engineer on stormwater calculations revealed that the detention pond would have to increase in size, and therefore the playground would have to be relocated. Now the playground is proposed as being adjacent to an auxiliary building.

Commissioner Wiersema stated that his understanding was that the auxiliary building would be eliminated, however, he now can see that the playground will be between the building and Chartway Drive.

Chair Giarmo inquired about the relocation of the pedestrian path to the other side of the road; Walsh explained that Kentwood Community Church had concerns about the path's proximity to the road, so they shifted the roadway closer to the development and relocated the sidewalk to the eastern side of the road to create a buffer between the playground and the road.

Commissioner Wiersema and Planner Wells inquired about whether the road was actually relocated or if the sidewalk was not installed; Longstreth explained that they removed part of the road and shifted it approximately 10 to 15 feet westward. Longstreth added that they also included an elevated pedestrian crossing to slow traffic. Chair Giarmo said that the sidewalk not being on the same side of the road as the playground is not ideal in her way of thinking, as that would complicate access to the park space.

Planner Wells gave a brief overview of the request and explained that since there have been changes to the site plan that the Planning Commission had previously approved, Orion was required to come back to the Planning Commission for their consideration of the changes. Wells reiterated that two units were added to building 16, and that the reduction of 2 units from the removal of a four-unit building avoids impacts to wetlands. Wells added that although it is unclear what playground equipment will be used, Orion has committed to fencing the street facing side of the playground, but has not submitted detailed plans.

Commissioner Wiersema inquired about whether the sidewalk will be ADA compliant, to which Walsh responded yes. Planner Wells added that during the permitting process, the building official will also check for ADA compliance. Chair Giarmo stated that adequate playground space in a development is appreciated, however, she is unsure if crossing the road twice to get there is ideal.

Commissioner Wiersema said that the removal of a four-unit building makes sense to him, although he does have issues with the elevated pedestrian crossing being installed without approval from the Fire Marshall. Wiersema referenced previous discussion regarding poor communication from Microsoft and argued that the same thing may be happening here. Wiersema agreed with Giarmo and said he has concerns about children having to cross the road several times to access the playground and also mentioned that he was under the impression that the auxiliary building would be removed. Wiersema specified that he is unsure this request satisfies standards H, I, and M, which pertain to vehicle circulation, pedestrian circulation, and safety/ general welfare, respectively.

Commissioner Haagsma agreed with Wiersema that he has no issue with the reconfiguration of residential buildings; however, he expressed that it is unclear to him why the sidewalk to the playground has to cross the road. Planner Wells responded that there is a steep drop on the other side of the road; Commissioner Wiersema added that although topographical challenges persist on the site, this was an issue before the road was moved. Haagsma explained that he has concerns with Orion relocating the road and relocating the sidewalk to the other side of the road. He added that the playground feels like it was an afterthought.

Vice Chair Rober commented that once residents get used to the area, they will likely be driving at high speeds near the playground. Chair Giarmo agreed, and reiterated that although speeding is anticipated, two road crossings are necessary to access the playground, and she is not fond of this idea. Giarmo also said that moving the road and sidewalk without letting the Planning Commission know is a concern and was not done in good faith.

Commissioner Haagsma stated that if the sidewalk remained on the west side of Chartway Drive, he would feel more comfortable with the playground being relocated to its proposed location. Haagsma added that if the proposed pedestrian crossing is vegetative or includes significant landscaping, it could obstruct vision when looking to the north. He added that he understands the reconfiguration of residential buildings, but that he was struggling to grapple with the rest of the changes, especially since they were executed without approval or consideration from the Planning Commission.

MOTION: Motion by Wiersema, supported by Rober, to separate the first two items (removal of one 4-unit building and increase unit count of one building from 4 units to 6 units) from items 3 and 4.

DISCUSSION: None

AYES: ALL

NAYS: None

ABSTAIN: None

DECISION: Motion Carried (6-0)

MOTION: Motion by Haagsma, supported by Waayenberg, to approve the removal of one 4-unit building and allow for an increase in the unit count on one 4-unit building to become a 6-unit building.

DISCUSSION: None

AYES: ALL

NAYS: None

ABSTAIN: None

DECISION: Motion Carried (6-0)

MOTION: Motion by Waayenberg, supported by Billips, to postpone items 3 and 4 on staff report; realignment of pedestrian path, addition of a mid-street crossing, and relocation of playground.

DISCUSSION: Haagsma suggested addressing the relocation of the road in a separate motion, as that was a change to the site plan that was not granted approval by the Planning Commission or addressed in the staff report. Rober agreed that the road relocation is serious enough to warrant a separate motion to address it.

AYES: ALL

NAYS: None

ABSTAIN: None

DECISION: Motion Carried (6-0)

MOTION: Motion by Haagsma, supported by Rober, to require the applicant to ask for road realignment when they return to the Planning Commission for further consideration.

DISCUSSION: Commissioner Haagsma inquired about denying certificates of occupancy until the road is remedied. Planner Wells advised that the Planning Commission may not have the authority to deny occupancy. Haagsma said that he thinks the Planning Commission needs to have Orion return for consideration since the road was moved without approval or consideration from the Planning Commission. Longstreth responded that the road was not moved in an effort to deceive the Planning Commission and that they did not realize moving the road would be of such concern. Ultimately the road was relocated for the sake of being a good neighbor to Kentwood Community Church. Commissioner Haagsma added that in addition to two road crossings being necessary to access the playground, the sidewalk terminates into a parking lot, which may confuse pedestrians. Planner Wells inquired about whether Orion has any plans to stripe the crosswalk near the playground, to which Longstreth responded that crossings are not planned for any other locations, however, if the Planning Commission would like to see that, Orion would be willing to incorporate striping into their site plan. Planner Wells advised that staff recommends striping on all crossings, and staff also requests the location of the playground and the equipment be determined and submitted for consideration. Chair Giarmo agreed and added that typically the Planning Commission requires sidewalks on both sides of the street, and that she thinks Orion would be well served to return to the Planning Commission and demonstrate sidewalks on both sides of the street.

AYES: ALL

NAYS: None

ABSTAIN: None

DECISION: Motion Carried (6-0)

3. Items not requiring a Public Hearing

a. 6326, 6330, and 6338 Hanna Lake Avenue – Preliminary PUD – Authentix

Jordan Teichen of Continental Properties explained that Continental is seeking preliminary PUD approval to build a multifamily development featuring 336 units that also includes a dedicated park space to honor the legacy of the current property owner. The site plan provided has a reduction in the number of units as compared to previous submissions, in which 360 units were being proposed. Continental revised their site plan to eliminate a residential building, providing additional open space in the development and better pedestrian circulation. Continental intends to dedicate almost five acres of park space on Hanna Lake to the Township to honor the Verduin's legacy on the parcel, and Continental intends to present this idea to

the Township Board to get feedback on how they would like management of the park to be run; Teichen added that Continental will present the Board feedback at the next Planning Commission meeting. The architecture of the clubhouse has also been revised to better compliment the aesthetics and architecture of the residential buildings, and masonry is planned to be incorporated in the front façade of the clubhouse. Teichen stated that Continental is interested in getting feedback from the Planning Commission on the proposed color scheme of the residential buildings and added that the revised architecture and proposed color schemes aim to pay homage to a farmhouse style. Two building types are being proposed with two color schemes each, for a total of four different building variations. Teichen also clarified that the apartments will be garden style with individual points of entry for ground level units, and second floor units will share corridors for access. Teichen concluded by adding that wetland impacts have been significantly reduced since their submission for initial consideration.

Planner Wells clarified that if approval is granted, Continental would move on to seek final site plan approval from the Planning Commission and approval on the PUD rezoning from the Township Board.

MOTION: Motion by Waayenberg, supported by Haagsma, to take this item off the table for further discussion.

DISCUSSION: None

AYES: ALL

NAYS: None

ABSTAIN: None

DECISION: Motion Carried (6-0)

Discussion: Commissioner Wiersema explained that he had visited Continental's Authentix property in Holland to view the development and inquired about building counts in the proposed Authentix community for Gaines Township. Wiersema suggested potentially relocating the clubhouse to be more central to the development to provide adequate access by foot to all residents. He added that it may be prohibitive to community building if only two residential buildings are in close proximity to the clubhouse. Wiersema also expressed concern that Continental is seeking PUD approval and site plan approval all in one application, as they are both reviewed under different sets of standards from the Zoning Ordinance. Although relocating the clubhouse would likely imply the elimination of several residential buildings, Wiersema advocated that centralizing the clubhouse would enhance the community aspect of the development and provide adequate access to all residents. Planner Wells clarified that if that many units were eliminated from the development, Continental would not be able to afford to finance the two lane bridge over the creek, which is required by the Fire Department. The proposed bridge is an expensive piece of infrastructure, and eliminating units would likely make the project impossible to finance.

Teichen echoed Wells's comments and added that there has been much discussion about the clubhouse location, and trying to find a balance between street frontage for the clubhouse and ease of access to

residents. To accommodate residents that would be farther from the clubhouse and other amenities, Continental is committing to providing a multi-use trail on the east side of the development, and plenty of parking spaces at the clubhouse.

Commissioner Waayenberg said that he appreciates the applicant not abandoning this project since the site is highly complicated and has required additional preliminary work, and he also appreciates the public benefits associated with this project. The Planning Commission previously expressed uncertainty regarding the unit counts of the residential buildings; Waayenberg added that these will not be the only 24-unit buildings in the township, and this PUD allows the Planning Commission to do something different. He also said that the location of the clubhouse closer to Hanna Lake would not be of nuisance to him if he lived in this development, and he anticipates that the walk to the clubhouse will be appreciated by residents who choose not to access the clubhouse by car. Overall, Waayenberg said that he is pleased with the progression of this project.

Commissioner Billips said that she sees both sides to the argument for relocating the clubhouse; it may be nice to leave it rather isolated to reduce nuisance for the majority of residents, but it also could be nice to centralize it for the sake of access. Building elevations identified workspaces in the clubhouse; Billips inquired about how many workspaces will be provided. Teichen responded that he would guess there are about 20 workspaces between high top tables and booths.

Commissioner Rober said that she likes the idea of centralizing the clubhouse; Teichen responded that the clubhouse is arguably the most interesting structure in the development, and it would make sense for it to be fronting on Hanna Lake.

Chair Giarmo inquired about how Continental intends to deal with non-residents visiting the park who may attempt to enter the pool, to which Teichen responded that Authentix management staff will be tasked with redirecting park visitors who do not have access to the pool. Chair Giarmo thanked Teichen on behalf of Continental's diligence during the development of this project. Planner Wells added that when Continental comes in for final site plan review, more details will be provided, and the Planning Commission will be able to review and provide comments again.

MOTION: Motion by Waayenberg, supported by Billips, to grant preliminary approval for site plan review and PUD rezoning.

DISCUSSION: None

AYES: ALL

NAYS: None

ABSTAIN: None

DECISION: Motion Carried (6-0)

VII. GENERAL DISCUSSION

a. Use of 7330 Kalamazoo – Moxie Development

Max Grover, a local developer with Moxie Development, explained that he and his partner Trevor Petroelje are interested in getting the Planning Commission's thoughts on what the options for

development may be at 7330 Kalamazoo Avenue. The property is currently zoned as RL-14, and the owner is ready to sell and maximize the value of the property under O-S zoning; Grover and Petroelje are hoping to introduce a similar user to other retail buildings in the area, such as Arbor Credit Union or Heidi Christine's Salon. Grover clarified that they would want whatever goes into that parcel to work well and add value to the community.

Petroelje explained that this parcel fits well with adjacent uses in the area, and that the parcel is naturally buffered to the north and the east. Petroelje added that Moxie has developed sites for Metro Health, veterinary users, and several other multi-tenant buildings with similar uses. Currently they are considering an access drive either off of Kalamazoo Avenue, which may be safer, or an access point off of Crystal Springs Boulevard, which would entail some easement negotiations with another landowner in the immediate area.

Planner Wells explained that the property is future zoned as residential, and rezoning from residential use to something other than residential is going to be a big change. Wells noted that Grover contacted him a month prior to the meeting to inquire about the site, and Wells recommended that he seek preliminary consideration from the Planning Commission before moving forward due to what the future land use plan is designating this property as. Wells added that this parcel may be fitting for a neighborhood commercial development, and that he figured it would be worthwhile to get a "temperature read" from the Planning Commission prior to encouraging Grover to apply for a rezoning or site plan review.

Grover explained that initially a prospective daycare tenant kicked off the discussion surrounding development of this parcel; the daycare tenant has since put development on hold for their own internal reasons, and the parcel very well could become a daycare again, but Grover stated that they would love to see a bakery or similar neighborhood commercial use.

Planner Wells inquired about whether this parcel is included in the Crystal Springs HOA, to which Grover responded no.

Chair Giarmo said that she thinks an access point connecting to Crystal Springs Boulevard may be the safer option.

Commissioner Haagsma said that he has no issue with a doctor or a dentist going in at that location, however, he would not like to see a drive-through, and a restaurant user may make him "uneasy". Haagsma added that office uses wouldn't be too far off from what is already existing in the area, and he also noted the existing buffer. Haagsma added that he would like to minimize the number of curb cuts on Kalamazoo Avenue and would be in favor of an access point off of Crystal Springs Boulevard.

Planner Wells explained that in the event the property gets rezoned, any use permitted under the new zoning district would be permitted, and the Planning Commission would have little ability to dictate what kind of user would occupy the site. Wells added that conditional rezonings typically include a site plan, however, the Planning Commission does not have the ability to request a conditional rezoning from an applicant, and that an applicant would have to request a conditional rezone on their own. Petroelje said that the development team would be more inclined to provide a site plan upon the time of being considered for a rezoning request. Petroelje said that the development team intends to consider their

options internally and return for consideration when they have more details, likely in the next month or two.

VIII. **ADJOURNMENT**

The meeting adjourned at 8:55 PM.

CERTIFICATION:

I hereby certify that the above is a true copy of the minutes from the March 27th, 2025, 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 dark ink and is positioned above the printed name.

Lani Thomas,

Secretary

Gaines Charter Township Planning Commission

Date: April 24, 2025